

FOLLOW UNCLE JAMES!

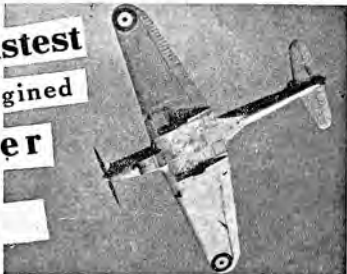
by OWEN CONQUEST



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FOLLOW UNCLE JAMES!

by OWEN CONQUEST



Where JIMMY SILVER leads, his faithful chums, NEWCOME, RABY and LOVELL of Rookwood School, follow. And the scrapes the Fistical Four get into—and out of—are enough to surprise even themselves!

CHAPTER 1.

Three in a Fix!

"LOOK out!"
"What's the row?"
"Classical cads!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, what rotten luck!"
The three Tommies of the Modern side at Rookwood looked exasperated, as they felt.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and the weather, for once in a way, had condescended to be fine. Nearly everybody was out of doors. Jimmy Silver & Co., of the Classical side, were on the footer field. The Classical studies were deserted. So were the Modern studies, for that matter. And the opportunity had seemed excellent to Tommy Dodd for paying a visit to the quarters of his old rivals, and preparing a little surprise for them when they came in.

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were in the junior passage on the Classical side, outside the door of the end study. They had been about to enter that celebrated study, when Tommy Dodd gave the alarm.

There were footsteps on the stairs, and the voices of Lovell of the Fourth could be heard in the distance:

"Rot! We can rehearse after dark, Jimmy, you ass! Much better stick to the footer while the rain's off."

"Oh, my hat! They're coming in to rehearse!" said Tommy Cook.

"Caught, be jabbers!" growled Doyle.

The Modern raiders were fairly caught.

They hadn't raided the end study yet. They had only just arrived on the scene. And the Fistical Four were coming upstairs, and retreat was cut off.

The three Tommies would not have shrunk from a fistful encounter with four Classics; but it would need only one yell to bring a crowd on the scene, and then the venturesome Moderns would certainly have been booked for a ragging, to impress upon them the risk of raiding Classical quarters.

"We've got to bunk!" muttered Cook.

"They're in the way. We can't."

"Rush them before the other bastes can come on," suggested Doyle.

Tommy Dodd shook his head quickly.

"Better dodge. Get into the box-room. We can clear off after they've gone into the study."

"But——"

"Buck up, ass! They'll be along in two ticks!"

Tommy Dodd opened the door of the box-room as he spoke. The box-room was at the end of the passage. The three Moderns hurried into it, and Tommy Dodd closed the door, only a second or two before the Classics came into view at the other end of the long passage.

"Look here——" began Doyle.

"Mum's the word, ass! I suppose they won't come in here?" said Tommy Dodd. "You wild Irish duffer, do you want to be sooted and gummed? They'll make an example of us if they catch us raiding their quarters." Tommy looked through the keyhole. "There's Oswald and Rawson with them, too! Too many for us."

"Look here!" muttered Cook.

He pointed to several queer-looking costumes that lay on the empty boxes in the room. There was a box of grease-paint also, and several wigs, beards, and moustaches, and a wooden leg. Tommy Dodd snorted. The presence of the theatrical props showed that the box-room was to be the scene of the Classical rehearsal.

"They're coming in here, bedad!"

"And we shall be spotted all the same!" grunted Cook. "We should have been safer in the study. You're an ass, Tommy!"

"Get out of sight!"

"Where?"

"Oh, use your brains, fathead!" said Tommy Dodd crossly.

There was no time to be lost. The footsteps and voices of the Classical juniors were approaching the box-room.

Fortunately, there was plenty of cover. Most of the boxes and trunks in the room had been piled in one corner, to keep them out of the way of the rehearsers. The three Tommies squeezed themselves behind the stack, which quite concealed them from view.

"Now keep quiet!" murmured Dodd.

"Faith, but I think——"

"Shurrup!"

"Look here, Tommy Dodd——"

"Do you want me to bash your silly napper on the wall, Tommy Doyle?" demanded the Modern leader, in sulphurous tones.

"Why, you cheeky spalpeen——"

"Shurrup!"

The box-room door opened, and Tommy Doyle grunted and relapsed into silence. The three Tommies scarcely breathed.

Jimmy Silver came into the box-room with his companions. The Fistical Four—Jimmy, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—were all there, with Rawson, Oswald, Flynn, and Jones junior. The odds were far too great for even the redoubtable Tommies to think of tackling, if they could help it. There was nothing for it but to understudy Brer Fox, and lie low.

"Silly rot!" Lovell was saying. "We can rehearse any old time——"

"Fathead!" said Jimmy Silver. "We've had an hour at footer practice, haven't we?"

"Well, another hour would do us good."

"And what about the play?"

"Oh, bother the play!"

"Oh, let's get on with it," said Newcome. "We've had it about for a long time now. Those Modern worms will be nosing out all about it soon, too."

The three Moderns grinned behind the stack of trunks. Newcome was

quite unaware how near his remark was to the facts.

"Yes, shut up, Lovell!" said Baby. "We're going to knock the Modern cads with this play. They've never thought of introducing a wooden-legged admiral into any of their rotten plays."

"And if they knew what a splendid character we've got in Admiral Corker, it would be just like them to collar it," said Jimmy Silver. "This play is going to beat all records. The Moderns aren't going to know anything about it till it comes off."

"That's all very well——" began Lovell, evidently still unsatisfied.

"Of course it is," said Jimmy Silver. "Keep smiling. We've got to have a dress-rehearsal before the play comes off, and we've got to have it this afternoon."

"We've had one dress-rehearsal."

"Well, now we're going to have another."

"Oh, I suppose you're bound to have your way, Jimmy Silver."

"Naturally," said Jimmy calmly. "You follow your Uncle James, and don't jaw!"

"B-r-r-r!"

"The Modern cads haven't heard a whisper of it so far," remarked Rawson. "They don't even know we've booked the Form-room for this evening."

"Don't we?" murmured Tommy Dodd behind the trunks.

"We'll let them know when it's going to start, so that they can come if they like," remarked Jimmy Silver generously. "They can pick up a lot about amateur acting by watching us."

Tommy Dodd shook his fist at the trunks. The amateur actors on the Modern side did not think that they had anything to learn from Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Besides," continued Jimmy Silver, "we've got to have everything pat, as we shall have a very distinguished audience. Bootles has promised to come."

"Good!"

"And old Bulkeley is going to give us a look in. And I'm going to ask Admiral Topcastle."

"Who the thunder's Admiral Topcastle?" demanded Lovell.

"The Head's guest."

"I didn't know the Head had a guest."

"He hasn't, fathead! The guest is coming. Old Mack is taking the car down to the station for him, and he's coming to dinner. I heard the Head telling Mack. The play will take place after dinner, and it would be only civil to send an invitation to the admiral."

"Well, you cheeky ass!" said Lovell. "You're going to have the nerve to ask the Head's guest to come to a junior play?"

"Isn't it a jolly good play?" demanded Jimmy warmly.

"Well, you ought to know as you wrote it," said Lovell sarcastically.

"Exactly. I do know. The part of Admiral Corker will bring the house down—I'm convinced of that."

Jimmy Silver was cast for the part of Admiral Corker in the play, so he knew what he was talking about.

"Blessed is he who bloweth his own trumpet!" grinned Oswald.

"Admiral Corker has jolly nearly all the play!" grunted Lovell. "He comes on in every scene, and does nearly all the jaw!"

Jimmy Silver was sitting on a box, strapping on the wooden leg. He had to twist his own leg up at the knee to fasten on the wooden limb.

"Of course, the best actor has to have the fattest part," said Jimmy modestly. "Besides, it needs an active chap to hop about on a wooden leg. You would come a cropper every other step, Lovell. You're clumsy."

"Why, you ass——"

"Besides, you couldn't tuck your hoot out of sight. It's too big."

"You cheeky ass, your feet are bigger than mine!" roared Lovell.

"Well, my brain's bigger, anyway."

Brains are wanted for a really telling part like Admiral Corker."

"Well, I don't suppose the Head's guest will come," grunted Lovell; "and if he does, he won't be pleased to see a funny admiral in the play, I can tell you that. If he's an admiral himself, he'll think a funny admiral off-side."

"Oh, that's rot! I suppose the old Johnny will have a sense of humour; sailors always have a sense of humour," said Jimmy, still busy with the artificial limb. "And Admiral Corker is a fine character, too; rather touchy and peppery, but with a heart of gold. There must be a comic character in a play. But there are some good patriotic speeches for him—"

"Yes, jolly nearly all the speeches in the play," said Lovell. "I know I only have a dozen lines to speak as an able seaman."

"Well, that's all you could remember."

"And I don't get much as a German spy," said Raby. "I only have to say 'Mein Gott!' half a dozen times. And look here, Jimmy, you mind how you go for me with that wooden leg."

"We've got to have the thing realistic, Raby. Admiral Corker goes for the German spy with his wooden leg, and makes him hop. If you get a bit hurt, and yell, that will add to the realism."

"If you hurt me, Admiral Corker will jolly well get a dot in the eye."

"Look here, Raby—"

"Suppose we get on with the bizney, and jaw afterwards?" suggested Oswald.

"Yes, that's a good idea; these chaps would jaw the hind leg off a mule," said Jimmy Silver.

"Why, you've been doing all the jawing!" bellowed Lovell.

"There you go again! For goodness' sake, let's get on with the washing!"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

And then the amateur actors got on with the washing.

CHAPTER 2.

Unrehearsed!

TOMMY DODD & CO. were as quiet as mice behind the stack of trunks in the corner. The Classics had not the faintest suspicion of their presence there. The three Tommies were grinning hugely. The secret of the Classical play had been well kept, and this was the first Tommy Dodd had heard of it—and it was coming off that evening! But the Moderns knew all about it now. And already Tommy Dodd was turning over in his mind schemes for making the Classical performance a "frost." There was keen rivalry between the Classical Players and the Modern Stage Society; as keen as the rivalry in cricket and football.

Tommy Dodd peered cautiously through a small space between two trunks, which gave him a view of the rehearsal.

The Classical Juniors had donned their costumes.

Jimmy Silver, as the comic admiral, was quite a striking personage. He was padded out to a considerable stoutness. His face was grease-painted to the hue of mahogany, and adorned with a fringe of white whiskers and a white moustache. A white wig covered his curly head. His nose was tinted a deep red, which hinted that Admiral Corker was supposed to be fond of his grog.

Unfortunately, an admiral's uniform was not included among the "props" of the Classical Players, and Admiral Corker was compelled to appear in mufti. But that was all right, as Jimmy Silver explained, because real admirals, retired, don't wear their uniforms at home. Jimmy Silver had donned a somewhat striking suit of grey check and a bowler hat. He looked about sixty years old now. His right leg had disappeared from view as far as the knee, being strapped up inside the trouser-leg. The wooden leg was fixed on at the knee, and looked very natural.

Tommy Dodd had to admit that "Admiral Corker" was good. Jimmy

had a natural turn for acting and for making up, and the gift of throwing himself into a character he adopted. There was little doubt that Admiral Corker would be a success—unless the Moderns intervened.

Raby, as a German spy, wore blond whiskers and a spiked moustache. Probably he did not look much like a spy, but he looked German. And he had practised very assiduously, saying "Mein Gott!" in a grunty, guttural voice.

Rawson was a comic policeman—a caricature of P.-c. Boggs, of Coombe—whose chief business was to chase the German spy in and out of rooms and windows, and to fall over the admiral's wooden leg, and to be chased by the admiral. The fun in Jimmy Silver's ripping play was of a knockabout sort, which Jimmy sagely opined was the sort to "go down" among an audience of juniors.

Newcome and Oswald were two old sailormen who had retired from the sea along with the admiral, and they had to wear sailor clothes, smoke black pipes—without tobacco—walk with a rolling gait, and ejaculate "Shiver me timbers!" and "Blow me topsails!"

Lovell was an able seaman; at least, he was a seaman, though Jimmy averred that he was not very able.

The rehearsal proceeded quite briskly. Having rehearsed a good many times before, the juniors remembered their lines, or nearly all of them. Newcome and Oswald shivered their timbers and blewed their topsails at a great rate. Jimmy Silver played a great part with the wooden leg. In moments of excitement the peppery old admiral was supposed to belabour all and sundry with that wooden leg, and the German spy had the chief benefit of it. Jimmy had become quite an adept at standing on one leg, and prodding, poking, and jabbing the other fellows with the wooden limb.

Raby had some natural objections. It was all very well for Jimmy to explain that if he howled with real pain it would be more realistic. Raby ad-

mitted that it would; but he had decided objections to real pain, all the same.

"This will make a ripping scene!" declared Jimmy. "I've just thought of an improvement. That box is a table—see? I chase you right round the table, Raby, prodding you from behind—"

"Do you?" growled Raby.

"Yes, ass, I do. Right round the table, you yelling all the time. Then you—"

"Then I turn on you and down you, and bash your silly head against the table?"

"No, ass! You clamber on the table to get out of the way, and smash the tea-things. A real smash goes down splendidly in a comedy. People like to hear the smash."

"But what about the tea-things?" asked Lovell.

"We shall have to borrow them up and down the passage."

"The fellows will get pretty waxy if we smash them."

"Rats! It's worth a few old crocks, to make a really effective scene like that," said Jimmy. "The fellows can go and eat coke. Raby sprawls among the crocks, and rolls off the table—"

"Do I?" roared Raby. "Not unless you have a mattress for me to roll on!"

"Fathead, that's where the cream of the joke comes in! You roll off, and I catch you on my wooden leg—"

"You—ybu dangerous ass!"

"I pin you down with the wooden leg on your chest, and you howl with agony—"

"Real agony!" grinned Oswald.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Rawson comes in at the window and falls over you. In the confusion, you jump up and escape, and I chase Rawson and jab him—"

"And I knock you down with my truncheon?" suggested Rawson.

"No, you don't. You mustn't knock an admiral down. You escape through the window again, me prodding you all the time."

"You'll get some of the prodding,

Jimmy Silver, as well as giving it. I'm not going to be prodded!"

"Ass! The audience will simply yell."

"So will you, if you start prodding me."

"Look here, I suppose this play isn't going to be mucked up because you're a shirker, Rawson."

"I think the scene would be much more comic if I felled you with my truncheon," said Rawson obstinately. "I fetch you an awful whack on the napper, you know, and you fall down groaning with real agony—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead! Now, then, Raby, let's get on rehearsing that scene. It's a splendid scene. You start round the table, with me after you."

Raby started round the table, with a somewhat grim look on his face. The programme, as mapped out by Jimmy Silver, did not quite agree with Raby's ideas. The admiral followed him, hopping on one leg and prodding with the other, and Raby yelled. He whipped round suddenly, and caught hold of the wooden leg with both hands, and held it in the air.

"Hold on!" roared Jimmy Silver. "I mean, let go! You don't do that! Mind what you're at: you'll have me over!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think this is an improvement," grinned Raby. "You see, it's making all the fellows yell already."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver hopped frantically.

"You silly ass! Leggo!"

"Isn't this an improvement?" demanded Raby, still holding on.

"Yow! No! Leggo!"

"But you admit it's comic?"

"Will you leggo?"

"No fear! I hold on to your wooden leg," said Raby calmly. "I shove you backwards—like that!"

"Yaroooh!"

Jimmy Silver just saved himself with a frantic backward hop.

"You look awfully funny when you do that, Jimmy! That's splendid!" exclaimed Lovell enthusiastically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I drive you hopping back, right round the table," continued Raby. "The audience will simply shriek to see you hopping backwards!"

"Leggo my leg!"

"Look how the chaps are yelling now!"

"I'll pulverise you if you don't let go! I shall be down in a minute!"

"That will be funny!"

"You frabjous ass—"

"Hop, you beggar!" yelled Lovell. "It's funny—really funny—especially the look on your face, Jimmy! You must look like that this evening!"

"Yow-ow! I'm falling over!"

"Well, hop it, then!"

"Round you go," said Raby coolly. "This is much funnier than prodding a fellow with your wooden leg! This is what I call a really telling scene!"

"Much funnier!" gurgled Lovell.

"It will bring down the house," declared Newcome. "I think it's simply a splendid improvement! We must have that scene!"

"Yow! Leggo! I'll pulverise you! Yaroooh!"

Bump!

Jimmy Silver sat down on the floor, and the wooden leg was jerked out of Raby's grasp. Jimmy roared.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Lovell. "You did that rippingly, Jimmy, considering that you hadn't rehearsed it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow! I'm hurt!" yelled Jimmy.

"All the better!"

"What!"

"That adds to the realism, you know. I suppose that this play isn't going to be mucked up because you're a shirker, Jimmy Silver?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He scrambled to his feet, and started for Raby. Rawson rushed on the scene, flourishing his truncheon.

"Yow-ow!" roared Jimmy, as Rawson's truncheon commenced operations. "Stop! You don't hit me, you fat-head!"

"I jolly well do!" said Rawson.

"There's going to be as much hitting as prodding in this play!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver stumped away frantically, the policeman following him up with the truncheon, while the whole cast—with the exception of Jimmy Silver—roared with laughter.

There was a chuckle from behind the trunks in the corner. The sight of Jimmy, with the tables thus turned upon him, was too much for the three Moderns.

"Hello!" exclaimed Jones minor.

"Who's that? There's somebody——"

"There's somebody here!" exclaimed Lovell.

He ran towards the trunks.

CHAPTER 3.

A Ragging for Threat

TOMMY DODD & CO. exchanged a quick glance.

"Game's up!" murmured Tommy. "Rush for it! Follow your leader!"

Tommy Dodd rushed out of the place of concealment.

He collided with Lovell, and Arthur Edward Lovell went spinning. Tommy Dodd rushed for the door.

Doyle and Cook were after him in a twinkling.

"Collar 'em!" roared Lovell. "Modern cads!"

The rehearsal had ceased suddenly. The three Moderns had hoped to escape by a sudden rush; but they were not so fortunate.

Admiral Corker buried himself upon Tommy Dodd, and tackled him and brought him down, and Flynn and Jones minor and Newcome fastened upon the other two, and they were brought struggling to the floor.

"Modern cads!" exclaimed Raby. "Moderns here! Sit on 'em!"

"Squash 'em!"

"Bump them!"

The three Moderns put up a terrific struggle; but the odds were too great.

Some damage was done to the Classical costumes, but in a few minutes Tommy Dodd & Co. were reduced to helplessness, with the victorious Classics sitting upon them.

"Now, you cheeky rotters, what are you doing here?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Groogh!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Get off my neck, fathead! We've been watching a set of silly owls, if you want to know!"

"They know all about the play now!" grunted Lovell. "This is what comes of rehearsing when we ought to be at football, Jimmy Silver!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Blessed set of asses, bedad!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Do ye call that a play intirely?"

"Of course, you Modern asses wouldn't understand a good play!" said Jimmy Silver loftily. "It's a bit above a Modern intellect. What did you come over here for? You didn't know anything about the play!"

"We came over to jolly well rag you!" hooted Tommy Dodd.

"You're splitting your infinitive, Dodd. I suppose you're allowed to split infinitives on the Modern side!" said Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Fathead!"

"Well, as they're here, we'll give 'em a lesson about sneaking into our quarters!" said Lovell. "Lucky we've got lots of grease-paint!"

"Good!"

"We've got some to spare for them, and we'll give 'em a new set of complexions to take back to the Modern side!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you rotters——" began Tommy Dodd apprehensively.

"Sit on his chest while I doctor him," said Jimmy.

"What about the rehearsal?" asked Jones minor.

"The rehearsal can wait while we attend to these Modern cads!"

"Don't put that muck over me!" howled Tommy Dodd. "Groogh! Groogh! Groogh!"

"What's the matter, Daddy?"

"Gurrgr! You've shoved it in my—gurrgr!—mouth! Groogh!"

"Better keep your mouth shut, then. You always did open your mouth a little too wide, Daddy!"

"Oh, you Classical villain! Groogh!"

Tommy Dodd struggled wildly, but it was no use. Lovell and Newcome were sitting on him, and Jimmy Silver painted his face cheerfully.

Tommy's complexion was soon extraordinary.

With crimson cheeks, and blue chin, and a yellow forehead, and green circles round his eyes, he looked like anything but a junior of Rookwood. Even Doyle and Cook could not help grinning as they looked at him.

But they ceased to grin when Jimmy Silver started upon them.

Jimmy did his work well.

When he was finished the three Moderns were unrecognisable, and their appearance was startling.

"There!" said Jimmy Silver, surveying his handiwork with much satisfaction. "I think they will make a sensation in the quad now!"

"Ha, ha! I think so!"

"You rotters!" roared Tommy Dodd. "You're not sending us out of doors like this?"

"We are—we is! Kick 'em out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oswald opened the door, and the three Moderns were bundled into the passage; and the Classics followed them down the passage, helping them along. Admiral Corker's wooden leg coming in very useful for the purpose.

Classical fellows were coming in to tea now, and Tommy Dodd & Co. had to pass a crowd of yelling juniors on their way out.

They breathed wrath and fury as they fled down the staircase.

As luck would have it, Mr. Bootles was in the Lower Hall when the breathless Moderns arrived there. The master of the Fourth caught sight of them as they tried to dodge out unseen, and uttered a startled exclamation.

"Bless my soul! What—what——"

The three Tommies fled.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "What a very—what a very extraordinary thing! I think it must be some juniors playing an absurd practical joke—I do really!"

The three Tommies were glad to get into the quadrangle to escape the Form-master, but as they appeared there a yell of laughter greeted them.

"Here come the wild men from Borneo!" yelled Muffin.

"Ha, ha! They're escaped lunatics!"

The three unhappy Moderns streaked for their own side of the quad. But the sight of Mr. Manders outside his House made them sheer off in a great hurry. They did not care to face the Modern master in their present state.

"Hook it!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

The three juniors fled through the archway into Little Quad.

"Oh, what an afternoon!" gasped Cook. "Tommy Dodd, if you ever propose raiding those Classical beasts again——"

"Faith, we'll scrag you!" growled Doyle.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, dear! There'll be a row if old Manders sees us like this!"

"Yes, you ass!"

"Yes, you duffer!"

"We can get the worst of it off in the fountain," said Tommy Dodd. "Buck up, before we have a blessed army watching us!"

"Oh, dear!"

The three Moderns hurried to the fountain and dipped their handkerchiefs in the water, and rubbed and splashed at their faces.

A crowd of juniors gathered round to watch them, apparently in a state of great amusement.

The worst of the paint, certainly, came off, but there was a good deal left. The three Tommies had queerly mottled complexions when they gave it up.

"We can sneak into the house now," growled Tommy Dodd. "Ow! I feel

fifty! I'll scrag Jimmy Silver for this!"

Dripping and doleful, the unhappy Moderns limped away to their own house, still followed by a cackling crowd. They dodged into Mr. Manders' house; but their luck was out, and they almost ran into Mr. Manders in the hall.

"Boys!" rapped out Mr. Manders.

Tommy Dodd & Co. halted, with suppressed groans.

"Your faces are dirty!" exclaimed Mr. Manders severely. "How dare you go about the school with such dirty faces? Go and wash yourselves immediately, and take fifty lines each for personal uncleanness. Pah!"

The three Tommies headed for a bath-room with savage feelings in their breasts. There they rubbed and scrubbed, and scrubbed and rubbed, and consoled themselves by vowing vengeance upon Jimmy Silver & Co. and every Classical within the walls of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 4.

The Admiral.

THE FISTICAL FOUR came into the end study to tea in great spirits.

The rehearsal had gone off with great success. The improvements thought of by both Jimmy Silver and Raby had been dropped by mutual consent. But there was no doubt—in the minds of the Classical players, at least—that the play would be a howling success, and that it would go with a bang. As for rivalry from the Moderns, now that they knew all about it, there was nothing to fear. The play was due in a few hours, and it was too late for the Tommies to take measures. At least, the Fistical Four were satisfied that it was.

"It's going to be a regular corker!" said Jimmy Silver. "We'll get the Form-room into order at once after tea. We shall have to dress in the study. I've asked Bootles to speak to Admiral Topcastle, too."

"Like your cheek!" said Raby.

"Well, you can't get on in this world without cheek," said Jimmy Silver philosophically. "Bootles is a little brink. He's coming to the performance himself, and he's promised to ask the admiral to come. Tain't often you get a real live admiral to come and see you play. He's a ripping old Johnny, I hear. He fought in the Great War. Smythe's father knows him, and I've heard Smythe jaw about him. He lives about twenty miles from Rookwood, in a bungalow or something. Mind you treat him with lots of respect. He's one of the old bulldog breed, you know. I hope he'll come to the play. I might work in an extra speech about splendid old sailors who fought for England."

"Look here, you have jolly nearly all the speeches in the play already!" said Lovell warmly. "Where do we come in?"

"I'll give you the speech if you like," said Jimmy Silver generously. "Only don't mix it up with the others. You know what an ass you are!"

And Jimmy Silver, with the aid of a stump of pencil and an old envelope, set about composing the extra speech which was to please old Admiral Topcastle—if he came to the play in the Fourth Form-room.

After tea the Fistical Four and the rest of the amateur actors were busy. Great preparations had to be made in the Form-room.

There was, unfortunately, no stage available, but a portion of the Form-room was marked off for a stage, and the curtains were hung up, and with a certain amount of persuasion they went up and down as desired.

A wall, with a window, was erected on the stage, such as it was. This was very important, as a considerable portion of the play consisted of dodging in and out of the window.

Most of the Fourth Form fellows lent a hand, and many hands made light work. The preparations were all completed a considerable time before the hour booked for the performance.

Then the amateur actors retired to the studies to make-up.

As the Fistical Four came to the stairs, to go up to the end study, they stopped suddenly, and stared at a gentleman who had entered the house in company with Mr. Bootles.

They could not help staring.

The gentleman was a little stout, old man, with a wooden leg, and a very red face fringed by white whiskers.

He bore a startling resemblance to Admiral Corker in the play. Indeed, Lovell & Co. had to glance at Jimmy Silver to make sure that he was with them.

"My hat!" murmured Lovell, under his breath. "Is that the admiral?"

"Must be," said Jimmy.

"You'll have to make some changes in the make-up, Jimmy," said Ruby hurriedly. "Why, the old chap is the living image of you when you're made up!"

Jimmy frowned.

"I'm jolly well not going to alter my make-up! I've had a good bit of trouble with it already."

"But he'll think you're caricaturing him, if he sees us."

"Oh, rot!"

"Especially the wooden leg," said Lovell. "He's got a wooden leg—look at him. He'll think you're taking him off, Jimmy."

Jimmy snorted.

"I'm jolly well not going to drop the wooden leg! Why, the whole play depends on Admiral Corker's wooden leg! I'll make some changes in my chivvy, and wear a different colour in whiskers."

The admiral was coming up the passage with Mr. Bootles. Evidently he was the admiral—the Head's expected guest.

He was glancing about the old, oak-paneled hall with satisfaction and interest.

"Yes, it's forty-two years since I've seen Rookwood," the juniors heard him say to Mr. Bootles. "I should really have looked in before. By gad, the place hasn't changed since I was in the Fourth Form here!"

"By Jove, an old Rookwooder!" said Lovell.

The admiral passed on with Mr.

Bootles towards the Head's study. The Fistical Four mounted the stairs.

"You'll have to drop the wooden leg, Jimmy," said Lovell. "Ten to one he would think it was his wooden leg you were making game of if he saw us play. Hallo, Bootles is making faces at you, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver turned back. Mr. Bootles was not exactly making faces at him—he was beckoning. Jimmy approached very respectfully, and the old admiral's keen eyes blinked at him from under shaggy brows.

"This is Silver, admiral," said Mr. Bootles.

"James Silver, bodad?" said the admiral.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

"I knew your grandfather," said the admiral, shaking hands with Jimmy. "He was in the Navy with me. Kids, both of us, not much older than you are now—midshipmen, by gad! And, by thunder, you're very like him! Give me your fist again!"

Jimmy Silver was highly honoured by a handshake from the admiral. But it nearly doubled him up. There was tremendous strength in the battered frame of the old sea-dog, and in his pleasure at meeting the grandson of his former shipmate, he put his ancient beef into that handshake.

"Jolly glad to see you, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "I don't remember my grandfather."

"And you're getting up a play, is it?" said Admiral Topcastle. "Mr. Bootles tells me you've been kind enough to request my company, hey? Rejoice on me, my boy. Old Topcastle will roll in and give you a cheer!"

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy. "It's awfully kind of you!"

"Not at all, not at all. I'm glad to see old Jimmy Silver's grandson! Just like you, only better looking," remarked the admiral, who had apparently learned to be very candid in the Navy.

Jimmy grinned.

The admiral rolled on with Mr. Bootles, and Jimmy rejoined his chums on the stairs.

"He's coming to the performance," said Jimmy, as they went to the study. "It seems he knew my grandfather a thousand years ago. Jolly old boy!"

"Then you'll have to drop the wooden leg!" said Lovell decidedly. "Dash it all, Jimmy, you can't risk him thinking that you're making game of him!"

Jimmy Silver gave a dismal groan. "I suppose I shall have to. But it's rotten. It'll muck up the play."

"Well, as a matter of fact," remarked Newcome thoughtfully, "it may improve it. I've thought several times there was a bit too much of you and your wooden leg in the play, Jimmy."

"Fathead!"

"You can give me some extra bits," said Lovell. "We can pull the thing through by good acting, you know."

"Ass!"

However, reluctant as Jimmy was to part with the wooden leg—upon which he felt that the success of the play depended—it was agreed on all hands that it wouldn't do. So Jimmy proceeded to make up in a somewhat different style, and the wooden limb was discarded. As they proceeded with the make-up, the chums of the Fourth caught a glimpse of the admiral again. The old gentleman was stumping outside, looking about him, evidently keenly interested in the old school he had belonged to in the far-off days of his boyhood.

CHAPTER 5.

A Very Successful Raid!

"I've got it!" announced Tommy Dodd.

The three Tommies were finishing a very late tea. Their faces showed signs of the rubbing and scrubbing they had been through.

The Modern chums felt a little sore, both about their skins and about their tempers.

Their attempted raid upon the Classics had ended most ingloriously. And the Classics were about to produce a play, and it was too late for the Moderns to think of chipping in.

Tommy Dodd had set his brain to work on the subject, and finally he announced that he had "got it."

Cook and Doyle did not look enthusiastic.

"Is it a wheeze?" asked Cook disparagingly.

"Yes, it's a wheeze."

"Then I hope it's a bit better than the last one."

"Or you can go and boil it, bedad!" said Doyle.

"Oh, don't grouse! We got the worst of it for once, but one swallow don't make a summer. We're going to muck up that play."

"Can't be did. Bootles will be there. You heard what those rotters said. And the Head's guest, very likely. Silver said something about asking him. Can't kick up a row there."

"I'm not thinking of kicking up a row. According to Jimmy Silver, the whole blessed play depends on his little bit as Admiral Coker. I dare say he's right there, too—it is really comic. Well, suppose the play had to come off without Admiral Coker in it."

"Why should it?"

"That's the wheeze, duffer!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "You know those Classical asses have to make up in their studies, and sneak down to the Form-room with their war-paint on."

"Well?"

"Well, suppose Jimmy Silver was collared as he went down?"

"My hat!"

"Suppose a lot of us were over there, and we collared him on the stairs, and simply rushed him off?" grinned Tommy Dodd. "He won't be expecting anything of the kind, of course. We'll collar him, and bag him, and bring him over here—"

"Over here, bedad!"

"Certainly, and keep him in this study," said Tommy Dodd coolly. "And the play can go on without the giddy admiral."

"Ha, ha!"

"We'll lay in some paints and ink and things, and doctor Jimmy Silver as he doctored us," said Tommy Dodd.

"Then we'll let him go, on condition that he signs a paper stating the Modern side is top side at Rookwood."

"He won't!"

"Well, if he doesn't, we'll keep him here till the giddy play's over. They won't be able to rescue him, I rather think."

"Ha, ha! No fear!"

"We've got to down him somehow," said Tommy Dodd. "The fellows are all cackling at us for being done in the eye by those Classical bounders. We've got our prestige to consider."

"Well, 'tain't a bad idea," remarked Cook, "only—only I fancy Jimmy Silver will be rather too fly to be caught napping."

"Oh, it's easy enough to catch those Classical duffers napping," said Tommy Dodd disdainfully.

"We'll try, anyway," said Tommy Doyle. "I'm wid yr, Tommy!"

"Let's go and scout, anyway."

The three Tommies, having decided upon the plan of campaign, left the study.

They received a good many grinning glances from the Modern fellows they passed. Tommy Dodd's adventure was not likely to be forgotten—at least, until he had "downed" the Classics and restored his prestige.

"Well, you look better for your wash," remarked Towle of the Fourth.

"Shut up and come and lend us a hand," said Tommy Dodd. "You, too, Lacy!"

"Looking for some more paint?" asked Lacy.

"Oh, cheese it, you ass! Come on!"

Towle and Lacy grinned, and followed the Co. The five Moderns strolled over to the Classical side with a careless air. Jimmy Silver's friends were all busy in the Form-room, and the cast were in their studies making-up, so the coast was clear. Tommy Dodd & Co. marched into the House as bold as brass.

"Is it a rag?" asked Towle in wonder.

"We're after Jimmy Silver."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If we get him—I mean, when we

get him—we're going to mop him along the upstairs passage to our side. We couldn't rank him across the quad. It would attract too much attention."

"I should jolly well say it would! But——"

"My hat! There he is!" muttered Cook excitedly.

"Good egg!"

Tommy Dodd's eyes glistened.

His idea had been to lie in wait, and collar Jimmy Silver as he came down after making up as Admiral Corker for the performance. There was no mistaking him, as he had seen Jimmy in his character as admiral at the rehearsal in the box-room.

Fate seemed to be playing into Tommy's hands.

For as the five Moderns mounted the stairs they caught sight of a wooden-legged, mahogany-faced, white-whiskered gentleman on the upper landing.

"Is that Jimmy Silver?" ejaculated Towle.

"Yes; he's made up."

"He's Admiral Corker, you know," said Cook. "That's how he was made up in the box-room. It's a fat-headed play about a wooden leg."

"Blessed if he doesn't look as if he'd got a real wooden leg!" said Lacy.

"Yes, he does it rather well," admitted Tommy Dodd. "But that giddy wooden leg won't hop into the Classical play this evening. Collar him and rush him into the passage."

The Moderns advanced upon the wooden-legged admiral.

For once, Jimmy Silver seemed to be caught napping.

There was no one else in the corridor, and they were near the end of the passage which led to the Modern building.

The admiral was looking about him, just like a stranger revisiting early scenes almost forgotten. That struck the Moderns afterwards. At the present moment they thought of nothing but collaring Jimmy Silver, and of their great luck in happening on him like this.

The admiral heard their footsteps, and glanced at them.

At the same moment the Moderns made a rush.

"Nail him!" gasped Cook.

"Collar him intirely. Got you, you spalpeen!"

"Yank him along! Sharp's the word!"

The admiral went over in the grasp of the Moderns, and was whirled off his feet in the grip of five pairs of hands.

He seemed too astounded to speak.

Grasping him firmly, somewhat surprised by his heavy weight, the five Moderns whirled him along into the long corridor that led to the dormitories on the Modern side.

With breathless haste they rushed him along, fearful of a Classical rescue.

"My hat, he's heavy!" gasped Towle.

"That's the padding, I suppose," said Tommy Dodd. "Buck up!"

"Gerrooogh!" came from the prisoner. "Thunder! Holy smoke! You young scoundrels! Huh! Ugh! Gurr!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Dot him on the nose if he yells," said Tommy Dodd. "We don't want the Classical cuds after us. Fancy catching him like this!"

"Hurrah for us!"

"Let me go!" shrieked the admiral. "You impertinent young scoundrels! I'll have you flogged! I'll have you rope-ended! I'll have you keel-hauled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's in the part, I suppose," said Tommy Dodd. "You duffer, what's the good of working off your speeches on us?"

"Release me, you young swabs!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Wha-at! What?"

"Here we are!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, throwing open the door of the Modern Fourth dormitory. "Bundle him in!"

"Hurrah!"

The kidnapped sea-dog was rushed into the dormitory, and bumped on the floor. Tommy slammed the door.

"Fancy catching him like that!" he chortled. "Who says we can't do the Classical duffers brown—what?"

"Easy as falling off a fern, bedad!"

"And the Classics don't even know!" chuckled Cook. "They won't even try to rescue him! Ha, ha!"

"Hurrah!"

And the five Moderns, in their delight, executed a war-dance of triumph round the hapless victim, who sat on the floor staring and gasping.

CHAPTER 2.

In the Hands of the Moderns.

"MAD!" gasped the admiral, passing his hand over his perspiring brow. "Either I'm dreaming, by gad, or I've got into a lunatic asylum!"

"This is where we glow!" chortled Tommy Dodd. "Done you this time, Jimmy Silver."

"Hurrah!"

"Mad—mad!" repeated the admiral. "Quite mad! Dangerous, by the holy poker!"

"Yank his whiskers off," said Cook. "He won't want his whiskers now."

Cook reached at the prisoner's whiskers. But a wooden leg whipped up and caught him on the chest, and Tommy Cook went over backwards, with a roar.

"Yaroo! Jump on the beast! Ow! I'm punctured!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver!" said Tommy Dodd warmly. "Not so handy with that wooden leg, please. This isn't the play, you know, and you're not prodding us."

"Jimmy Silver!" repeated the admiral. "Mad as a hatter! What do you mean by calling me Jimmy Silver? Jimmy Silver's been dead thirty years!"

"Wha-at?"

"Is he dotty?" exclaimed Towle, in wonder.

"Well, he was alive when I saw him in the box-room," grinned Tommy Dodd. "What are you getting at, Jimmy, you ass?"

"Mad!" said the admiral, still sitting dazedly on the floor. "You mad

young villain, my old shipmate Jimmy was dead before you were born!"

"He can't be off his rocker," said Doyle. "He's puttin' this on tairly."

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"Oh! You're speaking of Jimmy's grandson, perhaps!" exclaimed the admiral.

"Are you potty, you ass?"

"But—but if you're not lunatics, what do you mean?" roared the admiral. "Do I look anything like young Silver, a kid of fifteen?"

"You do, without the whiskers and the paint and the wooden leg," chuckled Tommy Dodd. "What are you driving at? We know you're Jimmy Silver. Didn't we see you making-up in the box-room this afternoon?"

"You young swab——"

"Blessed if he isn't denying that he's Jimmy Silver!" said Tommy Dodd in wonder. "He's forgotten that we've seen him made up!"

"By thunder! I'll—I'll——"

The infuriated admiral stamped towards Tommy Dodd, with evidently belligerent intentions.

"Mind, we shall bump you if you cut up rusty," said Tommy. "Yaroooh! Collar him!"

The Co. rushed to the rescue. The admiral was dragged off Tommy Dodd and bumped on the floor again.

He sat there and gasped. Tommy Dodd rubbed his ear.

"You cheeky-ass!" he roared.

"Grooooooh!" gasped the admiral.

"Sit on him if he gets up again!" said Tommy. "Look here, Jimmy Silver, you're done to the wide, and it's no good cutting up rusty. We're going to keep you here. You're not appearing in the play. See?"

"By gad! Grooooooh!"

"You're going to sign a paper acknowledging that the Moderns are top side of Rookwood. We're going to have it framed and hung up in the study."

"Grooh!"

"Or else we'll jolly well keep you here, and tie you to a bed, and paint you pink and blue and red," said Tommy

Dodd victoriously. "You're in the hands of the Moderns, my pipplin, and you may as well make up your mind to toe the line."

"Grooh!"

"Now, are you coming to terms, or not?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"Grooh! I'm dreaming!" said the admiral faintly. "It can't be the grog—I haven't touched it to-day! I'm dreaming!"

"Blessed if I don't think the silly ass is a bit off his chump!" said Cook. "He can't expect us to believe that he ain't Jimmy Silver, when we know he is!"

"We'll jolly soon bring him round!" said Tommy Dodd. "Bump him!"

"Hear, hear!"

The Moderns were very naturally exasperated by Jimmy Silver's extraordinary obstinacy. His denial of his identity took them by surprise, and naturally they weren't inclined to believe him. As for the possibility that a mistake had been made, it did not even occur to them. They had never seen Admiral Topcastle.

The five juniors closed in on the admiral to bump him. The sea-dog was still gasping on the floor. But he had plenty of energy left. His wooden leg caught Tommy Dodd on the chest and hurled him backwards, and then swept round and knocked Cook and Towie off their legs.

There were yells of pain and wrath in the dormitory.

"Collar the baste!" shouted Doyle.

"Hands off!" roared the admiral.

"Bump him!"

"Yank his silly whiskers off!"

"Have that wig off him!"

Many hands were laid on the unfortunate admiral. Cook tugged at his beard, and Lacy at his hair.

The admiral roared with anguish.

"My hat! This beard is jolly well fixed on!" exclaimed Cook, in amazement. "How is it fixed, Silver, you dummy?"

"Yow! Ow, ow! Help!"

"The blessed wig won't come off, either!"

"By gum, he must have glued them on! Take another pull!"

"Yaroo! Help! Murder!"

The dormitory door opened, and Leggett of the Fourth looked in. He stared at the amazing scene.

"Aren't you fellows coming to the play?" he asked. "It's just beginning."

Tommy Dodd looked round.

"Beginning without Jimmy Silver?" he chuckled.

"No; Jimmy Silver's there."

"Eh?"

"He's there," said Leggett in surprise. "I saw him go in, made up as an admiral. That's his part, isn't it?"

Tommy Dodd stared at him.

"What do you mean, you ass? How can Jimmy Silver be there?"

"Why shouldn't he be there?" said Leggett.

"Because he's here, you silly ass!"

"Here?"

"Yes, fathead! We've collared him to keep him out of the play."

Leggett jumped.

"But I saw him only three minutes ago!" he shouted. "Where is he, if he's here?"

"Here he is, you ass!"

"Great pip!"

"You burbling chump——"

"That isn't Jimmy Silver!" yelled Leggett. "I tell you Jimmy Silver's in the Form-room at this blessed minute beginning the play."

The Moderns glared at Leggett. But there was no doubting his earnestness. They let go the unfortunate admiral as if he had become suddenly red-hot.

"Then—then who's this?" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

"Another chap made up as Silver, I suppose," said Cook—"Lovell, or Raby, or Newcome. Blessed if a chap can recognise him!"

Leggett shrieked.

"Oh, you asses! Mr. Bootles asked me a few minutes ago if I'd seen Admiral Topcastle. Oh, you idiots! You've collared the wrong man!"

"Eh? What? Who's Admiral Topcastle?"

"You've got him there!" shrieked Leggett. "Oh, you asses! I tell you Jimmy Silver's in the Form-room, and you've collared the Head's guest!"

CHAPTER 7.

All's Well That Ends Well!

"THE Head's guest!"

Tommy Dodd babbled out the words.

There was a hush of horror in the dormitory.

The awfulness of the mistake flashed upon all the juniors at once.

They blinked helplessly at the admiral as he gasped and floundered on the floor. They had laid violent hands upon a real live admiral—the Head's guest! The horror of the situation was simply overwhelming.

"Oh, how!—Mother av Moses!" groaned Tommy Doyle at last. "Ye've put ye're fut in it this time, Tommy darling, bedad and ye have!"

Tommy Dodd sank limply against a bed.

He was overcome.

The breathless admiral was striving to get on his feet. Towle hurried to him.

"Can I help you, sir?" he asked anxiously, with great politeness. "I—we—yaroo!"

The formidable wooden leg was planted on Towle's waistcoat, and he staggered away, yelling. Apparently the admiral was impervious to politeness. That was not really surprising, after what he had undergone at the hands of the Modern juniors.

"Ruffianly young swabs!" gasped the admiral. "I'll have you flogged! Handling me—me—me—Admiral Topcastle—by gad! Thunder! I'll have you flogged all round! I'll have you keelhaused!"

"We're awfully sorry, sir——"

"Quite a mistake——"

"Oh, dear!"

Stump, stump, stump! The old admiral was on his feet now, stumping

to the door. Tommy Dodd & Co. did not attempt to stop him. Not for untold gold would they have laid hands on the admiral now.

"Oh, crumbs, what a ghastly fix!" groaned Tommy Dodd.

The admiral gave them a withering glare, and opened the door. There was an exclamation in the passage outside.

"Ah, here you are, my dear sir!" It was Mr. Bootles. "I had quite lost sight of you. You have been inspecting the Modern side—what, what? My dear sir, what ever is the matter?"

"I have been kidnapped, sir, and treated with violence, by a gang of young scoundrels, sir, by gad!" roared the admiral.

"Good heavens! Is it possible?"

"Collared, sir—bumped on the floor, sir—at my age, sir—I, sir—by gad!"

"Bless my soul! Dodd! Cook! Is it possible that you have——"

"It was a mistake, sir!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "We—we're awfully sorry. Oh, dear! We—we took the gentleman for somebody else, sir. We hope he will pardon us."

Admiral Topcastle snorted. He did not look much like pardoning anybody at that moment.

"Dodd, you have dared to lay hands on this gentleman—your headmaster's guest! Can I believe my ears?" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"We—we—we—— It was a mistake, sir," groaned Tommy. "We—we—we took him for Jimmy Silver."

Another snort from the admiral.

"Are you insane, boy?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "How can you pretend for one moment that you mistook Admiral Topcastle for a junior schoolboy?"

"Jimmy was made up as an admiral for the play, sir!" gasped Tommy. "We—we thought it was Jimmy got up as an admiral, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

"They're as alike as two peas—wooden leg and all," moaned Cook. "We—we really weren't to blame, sir."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "I accept your explanation, but you can-

not expect Admiral Topcastle to pardon such an outrage. I have no resource but to report you for a flogging, and I must warn you that it will be very severe."

"Oh, dear!"

"Young swabs!" growled the admiral. "They ought to be flogged round the fleet, and keelhaunched into the bargain, by gad! Laying hands on an admiral of his Majesty's Navy, by gad! But—but they say they're sorry——"

"Awfully sorry, sir!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Fearfully sorry, sir!" chorused the hapless Moderns hopefully.

The old admiral burst into a laugh, much to the relief of Tommy Dodd & Co.

"Mr. Bootles, may I beg you to let the young rascals off? There's no harm done, and it seems to have been a mistake."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Mr. Bootles smiled.

"If you really forgive them, sir——"

"Aye, aye! Let the young swabs off!"

"It shall be as you wish, most certainly, sir," said Mr. Bootles. "I trust you will thank the admiral suitably, my boys, for his great clemency."

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

"A real, gift-edged brick, sir!"

"Three cheers for the Navy!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

The cheers rang out with a will, and the dormitory resounded, and the admiral grinned and walked away with Mr. Bootles.

"Oh," gasped Tommy Dodd when they had gone, "what a giddy escape! He's a brick—a double-barrelled brick! Hurrah!"

"Jolly well out of that!" said Cook. "And as for you, you silly ass, we'll teach you to land us in a scrape like that! We'll teach you to lay your silly paws on an admiral of the King's Navy, you howling chump!"

"Here, hands off! Yaroooh! Yooop!"

Bump, bump, bump, bump!

Then the Moderns streamed out of

the dormitory, having done justice upon their unfortunate leader. They left Tommy Dodd sitting on the floor in a dazed state. It was ten minutes before he felt equal to limping after them.

Admiral Topcastle was an honoured visitor to the Form-room to see the play, and Tommy Dodd & Co. came in later—Tommy limping a little.

The play was a great success. Jimmy Silver's part—modified as it was—proved a great success, and the old admiral clapped his horny hands, and cheered in his deep, gruff voice with great heartiness.

Jimmy Silver's comedy evoked much laughter; but not so much as Tommy Dodd's adventure, when it became known afterwards. The Platonic Four shrieked when they heard of it; and it was a long time before the Rookwood fellows ceased to chuckle over Tommy Dodd's mistake.

CHAPTER I.

Scalped!

"UGH!"
"Ugh!"
"Ugh!"

Jimmy Silver jumped as he heard those three remarkable ejaculations from Tommy Dodd's study.

The Classical Junior had come over to Mr. Manders' house to interview Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Side on the subject of football.

He was about to tap at Tommy Dodd's door when those three deep and expressive grunts came from within the study.

Jimmy paused, in astonishment.

Why Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle should be ejaculating "Ugh!" in chorus was a great mystery, unless the three Tommies had suddenly gone off their "rockers."

"Ugh!" came Tommy Dodd's voice again.

"Ugh!" replied Tommy Cook.

"Sure, ye can't hold a whole conversation on 'ugh!'" said Tommy Doyle.

"Don't ye know any more Comanche, Tommy Dodd?"

"Comanche!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Mad as hatters, by Jove!"

"Ugh! I have spoken!" came Tommy Dodd's voice. "The tommyhock of the Comanches is ready to——"

"Tomahawk," said Cook.

"Tommyhock, you ass!"

"Tomahawk, I tell you."

"Tommyhock, more likely," murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, Cook, who's the chief of the giddy Comanches?" demanded Tommy Dodd warmly.

Jimmy Silver thumped at the door and sent it open. He stared into the study, and gave another jump.

He had expected to see three Modern Juniors of Rookwood clothed, if not in their right minds.

What he did see was startling.

Three Red Indians stood in the study, in blankets, war-paint, and feathers complete.

Jimmy Silver stared at them blankly. "What the merry dickens——" he began.

There was a yell from the three Tommies at once.

"Seize the paleface!"

"Scalp him!"

"Tommyhock him!"

Before Jimmy Silver could retreat, the three Redskins had collared him and yanked him into the study. Two Redskins plumped him down in the arm-chair, and the third flourished a tomahawk over his head. Jimmy Silver simply gasped.

"You dotty asses! What's the little game?"

Tommy Dodd chuckled.

"Redskins!" he said proudly. "Something a bit above the weight of you Classical duffers. We're the giddy warriors of the Comanche tribe, and we're on the warpath, and you're the first victim."

"Leggo, you chumps!"

"Scalp him!" said Tommy Doyle. "Where's me carving-knife—I mean scalping-knife? Scalp the giddy paleface!"

"Look here——"

"Silence, prisoner!" said the Comanche chief sternly. "You have ventured into the lodgings of the Comanches—I mean lodges. Tremble!"

"You thumping ass!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Look here, I've come over about the football——"

"Never mind the football now. Hold the paleface while I scalp him!" said Tommy Dodd. "Ugh!"

"Ugh!" said Cook and Doyle together. Apparently their knowledge of the language of the Redskins was limited to that monosyllable.

"What's the little game, you chumps?" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Redskins is the little game," said Tommy Dodd. "We're rehearsing for our Redskin play. Rather an improvement on your piffing play, what? 'The Comanche Scalp-Hunters, or the Lily of the Prairie'——"

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "Who's the giddy Lily of the Prairie?"

"We're going to ask Miss Dolly to play the 'Lily of the Prairie,'" said Tommy Dodd, "and I rather think it will knock anything you Classical duffers have done in the theatrical line."

"Ugh!" said Cook.

"And we're going to scalp you to get our hand in," said Tommy Dodd. "I've never scalped a paleface before. Pin him down while I scalp him."

"Look here—— Oh!"

Jimmy Silver began to struggle. But Cook and Doyle had his arms in a tight grip, and he was pinned down in the chair. Tommy Dodd bent his head forward forcibly, with a grasp on his thick hair.

"How do you scalp a chap?" said Tommy Dodd thoughtfully. "Do you mind where it comes off, Silver?"

"Groogh! Leggo!"

"If you wriggle you may get it in the neck instead of the napper. I wonder if my pocket-knife's sharp enough."

"Thry it," said Tommy Doyle. "You never know till you thry."

"Don't spill his gore over my sleeve," said Cook anxiously.

"That's all right—it will run down the back of his neck," said Tommy Dodd.

"Look here," roared Jimmy Silver "don't play the giddy ox! I know you're spoofing, but you'll do some damage with that knife."

"Your fault, if you wriggle."

"Yaroooh!" yelled the Classical junior, as a sharp edge came into contact with his neck. "Keep off!"

"Keep still, then. I don't want to take your head off by mistake. Of course, it wouldn't really matter—there's nothing in it."

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Jimmy Silver did not cease to wriggle. A sharp edge was sawing at the back of his head; and if it was a Modern joke, it felt as if the joke were going too far. He wriggled desperately in the clutch of the Moderns. But the Redskins of Rookwood held him fast, and Tommy Dodd continued to saw.

"It's coming!" announced Tommy Dodd triumphantly.

"Yaroooh!"

It really felt as if Jimmy's scalp was coming off. He made a tremendous effort, and hurled Cook and Doyle away, and leaped to his feet. He crashed into Tommy Dodd, and Tommy staggered back.

Jimmy's hand went up to his head. He more than half-expected to find it come away covered with blood.

But there was no blood. And the next moment, he observed that the instrument in Tommy Dodd's hand was not a pocket-knife but a paper-knife.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the three Tommies in chorus.

"You silly asses!" gasped Jimmy Silver, growing crimson. "I—I thought——"

"Ha, ha, ha! He thought we were taking his silly scalp off!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Classical funk! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sure we wouldn't muck-up a decent study wid scalping ye," chuckled Doyle.

Jimmy Silver glared at the three merry Moderns. The humorous chief

of the Rookwood Comanches had been pulling his leg. As the three Tommies doubled up in merriment, the incensed Classical made a sudden charge at them. Three merry youths ceased laughing all of a sudden, and roared instead, as they were hurled to the floor. Blankets and feathers and Moderns were mixed up on the hearth-rug.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver in his turn.

Then he tore open the study-door and fled.

CHAPTER 5.

Knocked on the Head!

"AFTER him!"
"Collar him!"
"Slaughter him!"

The three Redskins of Rookwood scrambled to their feet. The tumble had sadly disarranged their warlike headdresses, and Tommy Dodd's wampum belt had burst, and Doyle had sat violently on his tomahawk—fortunately a wooden one.

The enraged Redskins dashed after Jimmy Silver, quite forgetting in the excitement of the moment that their attire was not exactly suitable for appearing in public.

They sped along the passage and rushed down the staircase in hot pursuit of the fleeing Classical.

Meanwhile Jimmy Silver was going down the stairs three at a time. It was sheer ill-luck that Knowles of the Sixth should have been coming up the stairs at the same moment.

The Modern prefect had no time to get out of the way, and Jimmy Silver did not even see him before he crashed into him.

It was a terrific crash.

Jimmy was going at full speed.

Knowles gave a yelp, spun round, clutching at the banisters to save himself. Jimmy sat down hard on the stairs.

"Oh!" he gasped.

But he did not pause. It was not safe to remain near the bully of the

Sixth at that moment. He was on his feet again in a twinkling, and he vanished out of Mr. Manders' House at lightning speed.

Knowles clung to the banisters and grunted.

He had just released his hold to follow the fleeing junior when three rushing Redskins came dashing down the stairs.

Knowles was right in the way.

This time he hadn't time to clutch at the banisters. He was knocked spinning. Down the stairs he rolled, with the three Redskins rolling and sprawling over him. They arrived on the mat in a heap.

There was a chorus of howls and groans.

Tommy Dodd sat up dazedly.

He was sitting on something. He did not notice what for the moment. As a matter of fact, it was Knowles' face.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Wh-what was that? We—we ran into something, I think!"

"Faith, we did!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "And, by the same token, it was that baste Knowles! Yaroo!"

"Gerroff me neck!" mumbled Cook.

"Gerrooogh!" came in stifled accents from the Sixth Form prefect. "Who-ooop! Gerroff! Wow-ow-ow!"

"My hat! What—Oh, great pip! I'm sitting on Knowles!"

Tommy Dodd jumped up as if he had been sitting on a red-hot iron.

The three dishevelled Redskins stared at Knowles in dismay.

Knowles sat up.

"I—I say, we're awfully sorry, Knowles!" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

The prefect gasped for breath. He was winded.

"Sure, we're sorry intirely, Knowles, darling! We didn't see ye coming," said Doyle.

"Your young scoundrels!"

The breathless prefect glared at them.

"Ahem!"

"Grooh! I'll teach you to bump a prefect downstairs!" spluttered the exasperated Knowles. "Oh, my head!

Ow, my leg! Yow, my back! Oh—oh—oh!"

"Are you hurt, Knowles?" asked Tommy Dodd meekly.

It was really a superfluous question. Knowles of the Sixth looked as if he were hurt, and his temper, never good, had suffered more severely than his limbs.

He staggered to his feet, gasping for breath and crimson with rage.

"You young rascals, you did that on purpose!"

"Oh, no, Knowles!"

"Sure, we——"

"What are you got up like that for?" roared Knowles.

"We—we—we're Red Indians," stammered Tommy Dodd. "It's our play, you know—the—the 'Lily of the Prairie.'"

"You silly young idiots! I'll teach you to play Red Indians on the staircase!" hooted Knowles.

"We weren't really——"

"Come to my study!"

Knowles strode away savagely, and the three hapless Comanches followed him, rubbing their hands in gloom anticipation.

In his study the prefect selected a cane.

"Now, you silly young dummies!"

"I—I say, Knowles——"

"Hold out your hand, Dodd!"

Swish! Swish!

"Yarooooh!" roared Tommy Dodd, in really a lifelike manner as a Red Indian.

"Now, Doyle! Now, Cook!"

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

There was a chorus of groans in Knowles' study. The three Comanches were almost doubled up.

"And now," said Knowles savagely. "You can go and take that foolery off! You were going to play a Red Indian play—what?"

"Ow! Yes. Wow!"

"Well, you're forbidden to do anything of the sort! You'll put that rubbish away, and if you ever put it on again I'll warn you!"

"Oh, dear!"

"Now, get out!"

"I—I say, Knowles, yes—we want to do our play, you know," said Tommy Dodd, in dismay. "We—we've spent a good bit of tin on the costumes——"

"Get out!"

"But—but can't we go ahead with the play?" demanded Tommy Dodd. "You've licked us, haven't you? Isn't that enough?"

Knowles did not reply in words. He lashed out with the cane, and the three Red Indians beat a hasty retreat, with the cane stinging behind. The Comanche warriors stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once, and they did not stop till they were safe in their own study.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tommy Dodd dismally as he sank into a chair. "What a go! The play's knocked on the head, after all our trouble!"

"Oh, rotten! All through that Classical taste coming here and getting scalped!"

"I'd like to scalp Knowles!"

"Oh, what rotten luck!"

And the three Tommies rubbed their hands and bemoaned their misfortunes. They knew that there was no appeal from the prefect's sentence. After all their preparations, and after all their rehearsals, the "Lily of the Prairie" was destined never to appear.

CHAPTER 10.

Jimmy, Too!

JIMMY SILVER came rather breathlessly into the end study on the Classical side of Rookwood. Lovell and Raby and Newcome stared at him. Jimmy looked a little untidy, and there were smears of Red Indian war-paint upon him, rubbed off the Comanches in the tussle.

"Hallo! You look a merry picture!" said Lovell. "Have you been rowing with the Moderns instead of fixing up about the football on Saturday?"

"Yes. The asses!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "They're getting up a Red Indian play, the duffers! They're going

to cut out the Classical players, you know."

"Silly chumps!" said Raby. "They can't touch us in that line! Rather a good idea, though—Red Indians."

"Oh, Redskins are out of date," said Jimmy. "But that isn't all. I bumped Knowles over coming away."

"My hat! Didn't he skin you?"

"I didn't give him time," grinned Jimmy Silver, "and I left him mixed up with the Redskins on the floor."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now the worry is, will he be satisfied with taking it out of Tommy Dodd, or will he come over here grousing?" said Jimmy. "You know what a beast Knowles is, and he's down on this study, too."

"Looks to me as if you're in for it," said Newcome comfortingly. "Prefects don't like being bumped over by chaps in the Fourth."

"He'll come over and jaw Bulkeley," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver was of the same opinion.

Even a good-tempered prefect might have been annoyed by being floored on the stairs, and Knowles was not in the least good-tempered. Moreover, he had old scores against the end study. That celebrated study never would be hectored or ragged by a prefect of the Modern side, and when Knowles overstepped his authority in that direction he found the Pistical Four a hard nut to crack. So it was not likely that Knowles would lose this chance.

About a quarter of an hour later, Rawson of the Fourth looked into the end study. He gave Jimmy Silver a sympathetic look.

"Bulkeley's sent me for you, Jimmy," he said.

Jimmy groaned.

"Is Knowles with him, Rawson?"

"Yes; looking like a Hun."

"Go and tell him to eat coke, and tell Bulkeley I'll give him a call another time, old chap."

Rawson grinned. He was not likely to take either of those messages.

"Now I've got to go through

it, all through those howling asses playing silly Red Indians!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Blow them, and blow Knowles, and blow Bulkeley, and blow everybody!"

And with that comprehensive remark, Jimmy Silver left the end study, and took his way dismally to the Sixth Form quarters.

He found Bulkeley, the head prefect of the Classical side, in his study, and Knowles with him.

"Here I am, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

The captain of Rookwood looked at him frowningly.

"Knowles tells me that you bumped him over on the Modern side, Silver."

"Yes; awfully sorry. It was an accident, of course," said Jimmy.

"Knowles thinks you did it on purpose."

"I know he did!" said Knowles savagely.

Jimmy looked steadily at the Modern prefect.

"You don't know anything of the sort, Knowles," he said, "and I don't believe you think so, either. I didn't see you when I rushed into you."

"Silver!" rapped out Bulkeley.

"Well, Knowles is calling me a liar!" said Jimmy resentfully. "I say it was an accident!"

"And I say you are lying!" snapped Knowles.

"Liar!" said Jimmy promptly.

"What!" yelled Knowles.

"Same to you, and many of them!" said Jimmy.

"Hold your tongue, Silver!" said Bulkeley, with a worried look.

Knowles glared at the Classical prefect.

"Is that the way you allow juniors on this side to talk to a prefect?" he shouted. "Look here, Bulkeley—"

"You had no right to call Silver a liar, Knowles. I believe it was an accident."

"It was nothing of the sort, and if that means that you're going to let the young rascal off—"

"Oh, cheese it!" exclaimed Bulke-

ley angrily. "Look here, Silver. I believe it was an accident, as you say so, but you've no business to be racing downstairs on the Modern side, and you know it!"

"All right, Bulkeley!"

"As Knowles complains, I shall lick you. Hold out your hand!"

Jimmy held out his hand, with a grimace.

Swish!

"Oh, crumts!"

"Now the other!"

"I—I say, Bulkeley, ain't one enough?" ventured Jimmy.

"Hold out your hand!" thundered Bulkeley.

Swish!

"Grooogh!"

"Now you can clear out!" said Bulkeley, throwing the cane on the table.

Jimmy Silver willingly made for the door. He had had quite enough. Cecil Knowles uttered an angry exclamation.

"Is that all he's going to get, Bulkeley?"

"Isn't that enough?" growled Bulkeley.

"No, I don't think so, considering what he's done."

"Well, I do, considering it was an accident!"

"He did it on purpose!"

"I've told you I don't believe anything of the kind. Cut off, Silver! The matter's ended, Knowles!"

Jimmy Silver scuttled out of the study. Knowles strode away with a frowning brow. Jimmy returned to the end study, rubbing his hands dolorously.

"That beast Knowles wants slaughtering," he confided to his chums. "He wants boiling in oil. He wants garotting! Yow-ow-ow!"

"Had it bad?" asked Lovell sympathetically.

"Yow! Yes. And that isn't all. Knowles called me a liar!" said Jimmy Silver sulphurously. "And—and I couldn't very well punch a prefect, could I, with old Bulkeley looking on?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"But I'll make him sit up somehow!"

said Jimmy savagely. "Tom't the licking so much. I did bump the beast over, after all. But for the cad to call me a liar, just because he's in the Sixth, and I can't lick him——"

"Just like Knowles!"

"This study is going to make him sit up!" said Jimmy resolutely.

"Ahem!" said Raby doubtfully. "It's rather—ahem!—risky, bucking up against a prefect—especially Knowles!"

"Especially Knowles," agreed Newcome.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"He's not going to insult this study. I tell you he's going to sit up. He's only a Modern cad, anyway. Yow-ow-ow!"

And as Jimmy Silver was quite determined on that point, the Co. loyally assented, and agreed to back him up. But it was not quite clear how a prefect of the Sixth was to be made to "sit up," and even Jimmy Silver had to confess that, so far, he did not see exactly how it was to be done.

CHAPTER 11.

Equal to the Occasion!

THE three Tommies were looking lugubrious when Jimmy Silver encountered them the next day. He found Tommy Dodd sparring in the air, in the quadrangle, at an imaginary foe. Jimmy had quite forgiven the "scalping" of the previous day, and he asked the Modern trio amicably what was the matter.

"If I could only give him one in the eye!" said Tommy Dodd, with another energetic drive into space.

"Who? Not Booties?"

"No, ass! Knowles!"

"Licked?" asked Jimmy. "The beast came over yesterday, and got me a licking!"

"Oh, we got that, of course," said Tommy Dodd. "But that isn't it. The utter cad has stopped our play!"

"The giddy 'Lily of the Prairie'!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, the rotter! It was a splendid play. We wrote it ourselves——"

"Then it must have been a regular corker!" chuckled Jimmy.

"Oh, don't cackle, you ass! We'd got the costumes all ready," sighed Tommy Dodd. "I was going to ask Miss Dolly to take the part of the 'Lily of the Prairie.' She'd have done it like a shot. Lots of us have been rehearsing. It was coming off next week, and now that awful beast has put his foot down on it!"

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"Dash it all, that's rather thick, even for Knowles!" he said. "He hasn't any right to do that!"

"Of course he hasn't, the rotter! But he's done it."

"You could appeal——"

"Oh, old Manders always backs up Knowles. That's no good."

"Blessed if I wouldn't go to the Head!" said Jimmy.

"What's the good? The Head would only refer us back to Manders."

"H'm! I suppose he would."

"It's knocked on the head," said Tommy Dodd savagely. "All our trouble for nothing, and a ripping play wasted! Costumes and war-paint all wasted, too. Isn't it simply sickening?"

"Horrid!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "I'll tell you what could be done, though. Suppose you hand the play and the costumes over to us——"

"Eh?"

"We'll give the play instead. Knowles can't interfere with Classical chaps. The Classical players, of course, would turn the thing out ever so much better."

"You silly ass!"

"You could form the audience, instead of the actors. See? Then it would be a success, I should say. The acting would be good."

"You thumping idiot!"

"Of course, I should rewrite the play."

"What?"

"It would want improving, of course. But you could leave that to me."

The three Moderns simply glared at

Jimmy Silver. The kind and generous Jimmy was helping them out of a fix, but the Modern trio did not look very grateful for his suggestion.

"Oh, bump him!" said Tommy Dodd. "Collar the silly Classical ass!"

"Hullo! Hands off!" roared Jimmy. "I'm only trying to help you out of a difficulty, you asses—— Oh!"

Bump!

The three Tummies stalked away, leaving the captain of the Fourth sitting on the ground. They were fed-up with Jimmy's kind suggestions.

"Look here," said Tommy Dodd, as the three hapless amateur dramatists halted in Little Quad—"look here, you chaps, we're not going to stand it!"

"Don't see phwat's to be done, intirely," said Doyle. "We can't do the play with Knowles against it."

"We're going to play it all the same."

"Oh, bedad!"

"Without his knowing, of course," said Tommy Dodd hastily. "Of course, we can't exactly back up against Knowles—the beast! Look here, we can do the rehearsals in the wood-shed; Knowles won't know anything about that."

"He's a spying baste," said Doyle doubtfully.

"We shall have to chance that. I suppose you're game!" growled Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, we're game!" said Cook. "But—— but what about the performance. We can't perform the play in the wood-shed and get an audience."

"Nunno! What price making it a pastoral play?"

"What?"

"Perform it in the open air, you know," said Tommy Dodd. "The weather looks like keeping, anyway. The fellows would all come. We could perform it in the field, and use the old barn for a dressing-room. Better than a stuffy Form-room, come to think of it."

"Faith, it's a jewel of an idea!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle enthusiastically. "The Classics have never had a pastoral play."

"It will rather take the wind out of their sails," remarked Tommy Cook thoughtfully. "Of course, we can pile it on a bit about the advantages of a pastoral play—alfresco bizney, and all that—much better than sticking indoors. No need to explain that it's because we can't perform it indoors. Only—only if Knowles gets to know——"

"He won't."

"He's jolly sharp, and the fellows may talk afterwards——"

"Well, if he finds it out afterwards, it can't be helped—it will only mean a licking. If he doesn't find it out before, that's all right."

"Good!"

"Only we can't ask Miss Dolly to take a part, under the circumstances. But young Lacy can do the 'Lily of the Prairie.' He's got a soft-soapy chivvy."

"Right—ho!"

Much comforted by this really ripping scheme, the three Tommies proceeded to inform the rest of the Modern dramatists of the new "wheeze." And that evening there was a full-dress rehearsal of the "Lily of the Prairie," in the wood-shed—quite unknown to Knowles of the Sixth.

CHAPTER 12.

An Interrupted Performance!

"**A**s Shakespeare says——"
"Oh, bother Shakespeare!"
"As Shakespeare says," repeated Jimmy Silver serenely, "to rag or not to rag, that is the question."

"Did Shakespeare say that, you ass?"

"Well, something like it. That's the question, anyway. It's a glorious opportunity of ragging those Modern bounders. But there's a but——"

It was Saturday afternoon. There was no match that afternoon, and Tommy Dodd & Co. had devoted the half-holiday to a matinee performance of that great Red Indian play, the "Lily of the Prairie."

The matter was being kept very dark from Knowles. Rehearsals had been

gone through successfully, and all was ready. The idea of an open-air performance had caught on, and the Comanches of Rookwood were certain of a good audience, both Modern and Classical.

The Pistical Four were going; but then Jimmy Silver propounded the query, in semi-Shakespearian language—to rag or not to rag.

"It's like their cheek, giving a play at all," Raby remarked. "We're really the Rookwood players, ain't we?"

"We are! We is!"

"Well, it wouldn't be a bad idea to rush them, and take some stumps and ink-squirts with us," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"That's the question," he said. "But there's a but——"

"I don't see it. We could make the Modern bounders fairly hop."

"We could!" said Jimmy Silver regretfully. "It's a chance wasted if we don't! But we're not going to."

"Look here——"

"Under the circumstances, as it's up against Knowles, we're bound to back them up," said Jimmy. "That cad Knowles has squashed the play—or thinks he has. So it's up to this study to make it a success if possible."

"Something in that," agreed Lovell, upon reflection.

"It won't be much of a success, anyway, the way those Modern duffers act," objected Newcome.

"Not likely. But we'll help all we can," said Jimmy Silver generously. "We haven't made Knowles sit up yet, you know. This is up against Knowles, so we're backing them up. Follow Uncle James, you know!"

"Oh, all right!"

The Pistical Four started for the rendezvous, therefore, in peaceable mood. They did not take stumps or ink-squirts. The pastoral play was to come off amid thunders of applause, as far as Jimmy Silver & Co. were concerned.

The Classical Fourth followed Jimmy Silver's lead.

Quite a little army arrived in the field where the Modern players were making their preparations.

The "stage" had been chalked off on the greensward, and the cast were in the barn making up. Crowds of juniors sprawled or sat in the grass, and there was a cheer when three Comanche warriors came out of the barn and the play began.

The "Lily of the Prairie" had been specially written by Tommy Dodd, with the aid of his two chums, and they were satisfied that it was a first-rate play. It seemed to consist chiefly of rushing, charging, yelling, and brandishing tomahawks. There was not much dialogue, but there was plenty of action.

"Awful rot, begad!" Townsend of the Fourth remarked to Peele with a yawn. "Rotten!" agreed Peele.

"Bravo!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd was holding the stage, and his voice boomed out in a telling speech.

"Bind the trembling paleface to the torture-stake! Let him dig the death of a dog! Ugh! I have spoken!"

"Bravo!"

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Lovell suddenly, as he glanced round.

"Knowles!"

"What?"

"Look!"

Jimmy Silver looked round.

Knowles of the Sixth, with Catesby, was crossing the field by a footpath in the distance. Jimmy Silver saw the bully of the Sixth glance round towards the crowd gathered about the barn.

"What rotten luck for Tommy!" murmured Jimmy. "The beast has spotted them."

"He's coming!" said Oswald.

Knowles was striding towards the scene. He had a walking-cane under his arm, and he let it slip into his hand. Catesby followed him, grinning.

The Redskins sighted him suddenly, and the ferocious Comanches, who were binding Towle of the Fourth to the

torture-stake, ceased and stared at him in dismay.

"Knowles!" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, crumbs!"

Knowles shoved his way roughly through the audience, and came on the greensward stage, his brows contracted and his eyes glittering.

There was a buzz of indignation from the audience.

"Get off the stage, Knowles!"

"Clear off, you beastly bully."

"Kick him out!"

Knowles took no notice of those remarks. He fixed his eyes upon the dismayed Comanches.

"So you're playing the fool, after what I told you?" he rapped out.

"Look here, Knowles, you've no right to interfere with our play," mumbled the chief of the Comanches.

"Which are you—Dodd, I suppose?" said Knowles.

The juniors were quite unrecognisable in their war-paint and feathers.

"I—I—I'm Thundering Bull, the chief of the Comanches."

"I'll give you Thundering Bull, you young idiot! I distinctly told you you were not to play this nonsense!"

"Mind your own business, Knowles!" yelled Sitting Tiger, otherwise Tommy Cook.

"Turn the bastie out, prefect or no prefect!" howled Black Buffalo, alias Tommy Doyle.

Knowles scowled.

"Stop this at once!" he said. "All of you clear off immediately. I'll help you to start!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Yawoocoh!"

Knowles brought his cane into action.

Lash, lash, lash!

The Redskins dodged wildly. Never had a war-party of Comanches been put to such sudden an ignominious rout.

There were indignant hoots, mingled with yells of laughter, from the audience. Redskins were fleeing in all directions, and Knowles of the Sixth was left master of the field.

"Now, you clear off, you young

rascals!" exclaimed Knowles, waving his cane at the audience.

"We'll suit ourselves about that!" said Jimmy Silver independently. "We're not under your rotten orders, you rascal!"

Knowles gritted his teeth, and looked inclined to begin on the Fistical Four. But he refrained. They were quite ready for trouble. The Modern part of the audience cleared off at his order; they had no choice. The Classics stood their ground to show their independence. There was nothing else to stand their ground for, for the play was at an end.

The "Lily of the Prairie" had come to a sudden and unexpected conclusion. There was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth among the braves of the Comanche tribe.

CHAPTER 11.

Jimmy Silver's Great Wheeze!

ROTTEN!"

"Better luck next time."

"Can't be helped."

Thus said Jimmy Silver & Co. comfortably.

The Fistical Four were entertaining Tommy Dodd & Co. to tea in the end study, after that ignominious conclusion of the great Redskin drama. The three Tommies were in a state of fury and exasperation that could hardly be expressed in words. Their feeling towards Knowles of the Sixth were simply murderous.

"The beast was actually laughing over it!" said Tommy Dodd, with breathless wrath and indignation. "I heard him—laughing over it with Catesby and Frampton! Laughing, the beast!"

"We'll give him something else to laugh about if—if—if we get a chance," mumbled Tommy Cook.

"I feel jolly well inclined to go for him and chance it!" growled Doyle.

Jimmy Silver was thinking deeply. It

was clear that the bully of the Sixth had fairly overstepped the line, and that his latest tyranny was not to be stood. True, it was the Modern juniors who were his victims. But Jimmy was deeply indignant on their account, and he had still his own score against Knowles unpaid. Jimmy was thinking hard.

"What price giving him a jolly good hiding?" he asked at last.

"Nothing I'd like better!" snapped Dodd. "But I don't want to be expelled from Rookwood, thanks all the same."

"Suppose he didn't know who did it?"

"Eh? Hasn't he got eyes, fathead?"

"I've got an idea!"

"Oh, your Classical ideas!" said Tommy Dodd disparagingly.

"Faith, and let's hear it intirely," said Doyle. "Sure, I'd do anything to get even with the bastig. Go ahead, Jimmy darling."

"It came into my head," said Jimmy modestly. "Knowles didn't know which was which when he tackled you to-day in your war-paint and stuff, and if you hadn't spoken he couldn't have told. Well, of course, it wouldn't do for three chaps to go for Knowles and wallop him, as he's a prefect. But suppose Thundering Bull and Sitting Tiger and Black Buffalo dropped into his study——"

"Eh?"

"And larruped him."

"Great Scott!"

"Then he wouldn't know who'd done it, and everything in the garden would be lovely," concluded Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd gave him a withering look.

"You howling ass! You crass Classical duffer! Wouldn't he know it was us at once from the costumes? Do you think he'd fancy that Rookwood had been invaded by real Comanches?"

"That's the idea," said Jimmy Silver.

"Of course, Knowles would know at once that it was you three."

"Well, you howlin' ass," said Doyle, "if he'd know at once it was us three what's the good of puttin' on the war-paint to disguise us?"

"But suppose you three were detained by Mr. Bootles at the same time——"

"Eh?"

"Then you could prove an alibi."

"Wha-a-at?"

"You could prove that you were under detention, doing maths, or some rot. That would see you through."

"You cackling duffer! How could we raid Knowles in his study if we were doing mathematics in the Form-room?" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"Your poor old Modern brain can't work it out," said Jimmy Silver compassionately. "Can't any other chap put on war-paint?"

"Oh."

"That's the wheeze. When three Red Indians collar him in his study and mop him up, Knowles will know it's you three. But if you prove you were under detention at the time, it will be all right for you. And as for the chaps it really was, Knowles won't know them from Adam."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You leave the Redskin rig in your study. Some young rascals sneak in and collar it and put it on. You can't possibly prevent that, if you're under detention in the Form-room at the time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell rubbed his hands.

"What a thumping wheeze! Why, it's as safe as houses! I'm going to be one of the party. I'll take a cricket-stump!"

"Better make it a tomahawk," grinned Tommy Dodd. "You can lick a fellow with a tomahawk."

"Well, what do you think of the idea?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Ripping!"

"Topping!"

"Sure it's a broth av a boy ye are, Jimmy darling!"

There was a howl of merriment in the end study. Oswald and Rawson looked in to inquire what was the matter. They joined in the howl when they were told.

"Better not let it go any farther, though," said Oswald. "You don't want it to leak out. It means a flogging at least."

"Mum's the word," agreed Jimmy Silver.

Amid many chuckles the Juniors proceeded to discuss the plan. And when the three Tommies left the end study after tea they departed in great spirits, and on the best of terms with their old rivals, the Classics.

CHAPTER 12.

On the Warpath!

ON Monday afternoon, in the Fourth Form-room, Tommy Dodd & Co. succeeded in surprising most of the Form. The second lesson that afternoon was French, which the Moderns shared with the Classics. Monsieur Monceau was very popular at Rookwood, but that afternoon the three Tommies amused themselves by pulling his leg in the most exasperating manner.

Mossoo was a patient gentleman, but his patience had limits. When an ink-ball caught him behind the ear, Mossoo's anger boiled over.

"Dodd, Doyle, Cook!" he snapped.

"Yes, Mossoo!"

"You trow zem sings about, ain't it?"

"Ahem! Sorry, sir!"

"I zink zat you säll learn to keep ze ordair in ze class, isn't it?" said Monsieur Monceau. "You are zthree bad boys. You vill stay in for two hours aftair ze class, and write out French verbs viz you."

"Oh, sir!"

"I speaks to your Form-master, and he see zat you säll be detained, n'est-ce-pas. Perhaps zat Jesson will be good for you."

The three Tommies looked, submissively sorrowful.

They were not specially keen on French verbs; but if Mosscoo had only known it, they had been planning to get detained that afternoon.

When the Fourth Form marched out after lessons, the three Tommies remained behind, with lugubrious looks, to grind at French verbs. Mr. Bootles came in and spoke to them severely.

"Monsieur Monceau complains of your conduct very seriously," said Mr. Bootles, with a frown. "I am surprised at you!"

"Oh, sir!" murmured the three.

"You are detained for two hours. I shall expect you to write out the whole of the four conjugations, in every mood and tense."

"Tare an' 'ouns!" murmured Tommy Doyle.

"Don't utter ridiculous ejaculations, Doyle! And if you quit this room before your detention expires, I shall punish you severely."

"Oh, sir, we wouldn't!" said Tommy Dodd meekly. Certainly the three young rascals had no intention of doing that.

"Mind you do not!" said Mr. Bootles severely. "I shall, in fact, keep an eye on the Form-room, and if I find that you have broken detention——"

Mr. Bootles did not finish. He left it to the imagination of the detained juniors what awful things would happen in that case.

The Form-master went out, and closed the door hard; and the three Moderns grinned at one another.

"Not a giddy susph!" said Tommy Dodd. "I wonder what Bootles would think if he knew he's helping us to prove an alibi?"

"Ha, ha! Poor old Mosscoo! It was rather a shame to worry him!" grinned Cook.

"Never mind. We'll please him with the way we do these rotten verbs, and butter him up afterwards," said Tommy Dodd.

And the detained juniors started industriously upon the four conjugations.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. were not idle.

Having seen Knowles of the Sixth on the playing-field, they strolled over to the Modern side, and slipped into Tommy Dodd's study. Knowles was pretty certain to remain half an hour at the punt-about, so they had plenty of time.

The costumes of Thundering Bull, Sitting Tiger, and Black Buffalo were ready in the study, with the necessary grease-paints.

Jimmy Silver locked the door. Then Jimmy, Lovell, and Raby proceeded to don the Redskin costumes.

Newcome helped them to make up.

It was not so necessary to look like Redskins as to conceal every trace of their own identity, and Newcome laid the paint on thick.

With coppery complexions, and darkened eyebrows, and war-paint of red and yellow in bars across their faces, the merry Classics were not likely to be recognised.

When the transformation was complete, they surveyed themselves in the glass with many chuckles.

"My only hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "My only Aunt Sempronia wouldn't know me now, I fancy."

"Knowles won't, that's a cert!" grinned Lovell.

"About time Knowles came in, I should say. Cut off and get an eye on the cad, Newcome!"

Newcome hurried out to scout.

He returned in a few minutes, grinning.

"Knowles is coming in. He'll be in in a couple of ticks."

"Good!"

"We've got to catch him alone," said Raby.

"Keep an eye open, Newcome, and let's have the news."

Newcome stationed himself on the stairs overlooking the senior passage below. Most of the fellows were on

the playing-fields, and the passages were deserted. The avengers had chosen their time well.

Knowles of the Sixth came in, stopped a few minutes chatting with Galesby, in the passage, and then went to his study.

As soon as the door had closed on him, Newcome hurried back to Tommy Dodd's quarters with the news.

"Good egg!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now get down to the lower stairs, and whistle when the coast's quite clear. We're ready."

Jimmy and Lovell and Raby waited anxiously for Newcome's whistle. It was heard in a few minutes.

"Come on!" said Thundering Bull breathlessly.

The three amateur Redskins hurried out of the study, and scuttled down the stairs to the senior passage. In a few seconds they were at Knowles' door.

Jimmy did not pause to knock.

He hurled the door open, and with a rush the three Redskins entered the study, Jimmy slamming the door behind him.

Newcome grinned, and strolled away. He was finished on the Modern side. The rest remained in the hands of Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 13.

In the Hands of the Redskins!

CECIL KNOWLES was seated in his armchair, smoking a cigarette after his footer practice—one of the pleasant little customs of the cad of the Sixth.

He started to his feet as his door was hurled open, hastily concealing the cigarette from view.

He stared blankly as three raging Redskins bundled in, and one of them slammed the door and locked it.

The bully of the Sixth could scarcely believe his eyes.

He had licked Tommy Dodd & Co.

and sternly forbidden any more Red-skin business, and here were the Redskins invading his own study as truculently as real Comanches on the war-path!

"You cheeky young sweeps!" roared Knowles, greatly incensed. "What the thunder do you mean?"

"Ugh!" grunted the three Comanche braves.

"Dodd, you young scoundrel! My hat! Hands off! Are you mad? Why—what—Yah! Oh!" stammered Knowles, as the three Redskins simply hurled themselves upon him.

The astounded prefect went to the floor with a crash.

He gave a wild howl as the cigarette slipped up his sleeve. It was painful. But the Redskins did not even notice it. They sprawled over Knowles, pinning him down on his back on the study carpet.

Knowles was too astounded to struggle for a moment. Then he began to resist violently.

"You young hounds!" he panted. "You'll be flogged for this—sacked, you young villains! Dodd—Doyle—Cook—Groogh! Gerroff! Will you get off, you young demons? I'll report this to the Head! Yaroooh! Gurrurgh!"

Knowles' voice died away, as a rag was shoved into his mouth, choking his utterance.

He struggled furiously, but the three sturdy juniors were too much even for the big Sixth Former—much too much.

Thundering Bull had a knee planted on his chest, Black Buffalo was grasping his wrists and holding them together, and Sitting Tiger was trampling recklessly on his legs.

The three Redskins did not speak.

They did not intend to give the prefect a chance of recognising their voices. But the astounded and enraged Knowles had no doubt at all about their identity. He did not doubt for a moment that the three Tommies were

taking vengeance for the "mucked-up" play in this reckless manner.

"Ugh!" grunted Thundering Bull. And that was all he said. The three Comanches wisely confined their remarks to that guttural ejaculation.

Knowles resisted, striving to spit the gag out of his mouth and yell for help. But a coppery fist drove the gag farther in, and he could only splutter and gurgle.

Thundering Bull jerked a cord from under his blanket, and fastened it round the prefect's wrists as Black Buffalo held them together.

The cord was knotted tightly, and then Knowles was helpless.

His hands secured, Thundering Bull fastened a second cord round his ankles with deft fingers, knotting it very securely.

Then the three Redskins rose, panting a little, and executed a war-dance of triumph round the prefect as he sat gurgling on the floor.

Knowles' face was black with fury.

That any junior should venture to handle a prefect of the Sixth in this outrageous manner was astounding! Knowles could hardly believe that it was not a fearsome nightmare.

But he soon had painful proof that it was real.

The war-dance over, the Redskins collared him and turned him over on his face. Then Sitting Tiger sat on his head, and Black Buffalo on his legs, and Thundering Bull picked up a cane from the table.

Knowles heard the swish of the cane in the air, and thrilled and shuddered with apprehension.

Often enough he had bestowed that cane upon hapless juniors. Knowles was much given to the use of the cane, stretching his authority as a prefect to its utmost limits in that direction. Now his own turn had come, though he could scarcely believe that the juniors would have the audacity to thrash him. But he soon discovered that they had.

The cane rose in the air, and came down with a tremendous cut.

Laah!

Knowles wriggled and gurgled. But he could do nothing more. Gurgling, and wriggling, and writhing were all he had a chance to do.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

Thundering Bull was evidently a vengeful Redskin. He laid on the lashes as if he were beating carpet.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The struggling, wriggling, writhing, gurgling prefect had to take his medicine—and he took it.

Twenty times the cane descended, with all the force of Thundering Bull's strong arm, and by that time Knowles, Sixth Former as he was, was almost reduced to tears.

Then the Redskin broke the cane into halves, and tossed them into the fender. That cane, at all events, was to administer no further castigations to hapless Modern fags. Knowles, white with pain and rage, wriggled over and glared at the avengers. But the Comanches were not finished yet.

Knowles tried to dodge as Thundering Bull picked up the inkpot from the table. But he could not escape. The ink swamped down over his head and face, and ran down inside his collar. Knowles' white, furious face was suddenly transformed into Central African blackness.

Then Thundering Bull opened the study cupboard, and took out a pot of jam and a dish of butter.

Butter and jam were mixed with a merciless hand.

Knowles gurgled faintly under the infliction.

The three Redskins exchanged grins as they looked at the bound Sixth Former, writhing in ink and butter and jam.

Thundering Bull unlocked the door, and opened it a few inches, and peered into the passage. Then he made a sign to his braves, and the three of

then slipped from the study, closing the door behind them.

Knowles remained on the floor of his study, wriggling, unable to speak or call out, and with feelings too deep for utterance, even if he could have spoken.

CHAPTER 16.

Not Guilty!

"GREAT pip!"

Catesby of the Sixth uttered that astounded exclamation as he looked into Knowles' study about twenty minutes later. Catesby had been expecting Knowles to tea; and as he had not come, Catesby had come to look for him. He stared at the wriggling, buttery, inky, and jammy figure on the floor in amazement and consternation.

"M-m-my only hat!" gasped Catesby. "Gerroooh!" came in a faint mumble from the fearsome form.

"Is—is that you, Knowles?"

"Grooh!"

"What's the matter? What's happened? Why don't you speak?"

"Gr-r-r-r!"

Catesby discerned at last that the unhappy prefect was gagged, and he stooped over him, and removed the rag from his mouth. Knowles gasped and choked.

"Cut me loose! Cut me loose! I'll half kill them! I'll—I'll—Don't stand staring there, you dummy! Get me loose!" Knowles' voice rose to a shriek. "Will you get these cords off, you fool?"

"Who did this?" gasped Catesby.

"Dodd and Doyle and Cook. I'll make them pay for it. Get me loose!"

"Oh, great Scott!"

Catesby found a knife, and cut the cords. Knowles staggered to his feet. He made a rush to the door.

"I—I say, are you going out like that?" stuttered Catesby. "I shouldn't."

Knowles paused. He made for his

washstand instead. Certainly he was in no state to appear in public.

With savage haste, he swamped water into the basin, and began to wash away the ink, the butter, and the jam. Catesby watched him with a lurking grin. From his point of view, the matter had its humorous side.

Knowles towelled away savagely, until most of the mixture was off. He did not stay to get it all off. His hair was still very greasy and inky. But he could not wait for vengeance.

"Well, this takes the cake!" said Catesby. "Do you mean to say that three kids in the Fourth handled you like that?"

"I'll make them suffer for it!"

"Blessed if I can understand it! It means a flogging for them, if you go to the Head."

"They may have thought I shouldn't know them, as they were in that Red Indian foolery. But, of course, I knew them."

"Silly young asses! It wasn't hard to guess, as that rubbish belongs to them," said Catesby. "Better go to the Head."

Knowles paused a moment. He was longing to thrash the three delinquents with a cricket-stump. But Catesby's advice was good. A public flogging for the offenders was more severe; indeed, it was possible that Dr. Chisholm would expel them for such an attack on a prefect. He nodded.

"I'll go to the Head!" he said. "I'll take the young scoundrels with me."

He ran out of the study, and up to Tommy Dodd's room. In the armchair in Tommy Dodd's study lay the Red-skin costumes, and a large tin basin showed where the juniors had washed off their complexions. But there was no one in the study. Knowles left it again, and ran downstairs and out of the house. He caught Leggett by the ear in the quad.

"Have you seen Dodd and Cook and Doyle?" he panted.

"Ow! They're detained in the Form-room."

Knowles dashed away into the School House. Evidently the young rascals had broken detention to play that trick on him. He reached the Fourth Form-room, and glared in. The three Tommies were seated at their desks, assiduously writing out French verbs. They looked up at Knowles.

"Come with me!" shouted the prefect.

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"Sorry, Knowles! Can't! We're detained."

"Follow me to the Head at once!"

"Well, if you make a point of it," yawned Tommy Dodd, "you'll have to explain to Mr. Bootles."

Knowles, trembling with rage, led the way. The three Tommies followed him calmly. Knowles tapped at the Head's door, and entered, followed by the trio. Dr. Chisholm glanced with strong disapproval at the prefect's red and excited face.

"What is the matter, Knowles?" he asked icily.

"I have to report these juniors, sir. They attacked me in my study, bound me hand and foot, lashed me with a cane, and smothered me with ink and butter!" panted Knowles.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head. He fixed his eyes on the three juniors. "Have you anything to say?" he demanded sternly.

"Only that we didn't do it, sir," said Tommy Dodd meekly. "We've been detained ever since lessons, sir, and haven't left the Form-room."

"He is lying, sir!" howled Knowles. "They came into my study disguised as Red Indians—"

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"Theatrical costumes, sir, that they have used in a play."

"Oh, I understand!"

"These costumes belong to them. I knew them at once, however. I had occasion to punish them last week, and they have done this out of revenge."

"Whoever has done it, Knowles, shall be severely punished. These

juniors, however, declare that they had been under detention since lessons."

"Certainly, sir!" said the three Tommies in chorus.

"Somebody may have sneaked into my study and borrowed the theatrical costumes, sir," said Tommy Dodd demurely. "Chaps will do such things. Of course, we couldn't be keeping an eye on our property while we were detained."

"Naturally you could not," assented the Head. "I presume you have proof that you were in the Form-room at the time?"

"Mr. Bootles knows, sir."

"Go and request Mr. Bootles to step here, Dodd."

Tommy Dodd left the study, and returned with the Fourth Form-master. Knowles stood quivering with rage.

"Mr. Bootles, Knowles accuses these juniors of assaulting him. When was it, Knowles?"

"A quarter of an hour ago, sir."

"They declare that they were under detention in the Form-room."

"Knowles is making a mistake," said Mr. Bootles dryly. "The boys have not left the Form-room since lessons. I have been keeping them under observation."

"You are sure of that, Mr. Bootles?"

"Absolutely certain, sir."

Dr. Chisholm turned to the prefect.

"That settles the matter, Knowles, as far as these juniors are concerned. You may go, my boys. Apparently, Knowles, some other boys borrowed the theatrical costumes belonging to Dodd. You have made a very hasty accusation, Knowles; and but for the mere accident that those three juniors happened to be under detention, a very serious injustice might have been done. If you discover the real culprits, you may report them to me."

Knowles did not speak; he could not. He always staggered from the study. Even Knowles had to admit that the three Tommies were innocent; and as to who the culprits were, that was a

mystery. It might have been any three juniors at Rockwood; Knowles was not popular. He left the School House with a face white with fury; and three cheery juniors watched him go from the window of the Form-room, and chuckled in merry chorus.

Knowles did not let the matter rest. But he had to drop it at last. The three Comanches who had gone on the warpath so effectively remained unknown. All Knowles knew was that they were not the three Tommies. Knowles had to swallow his wrath the best he could.

CHAPTER II.

Adolphus on His Melts!

"GO it, Smythey!"
It was quite a chorus in Smythe's study.

The nuts of Rockwood were gathered there. The door was locked—an indispensable preliminary—and cigarettes had been lighted. Chief of the elegant band, monarch of all he surveyed, Adolphus Smythe lounged gracefully in the armchair, one leg crossed over another, with the trouser-leg carefully pulled up and several inches of purple sock displayed to the public gaze.

Adolphus was smiling.
He smiled serenely through the blue haze of his cigarette.

The great brain of Adolphus had been at work. His nutty pals were gathered to hear the result. Adolphus had a wheeze. He had announced that he had a toppin', ripplin' wheeze. And as Adolphus was popularly supposed never to have an idea in his head, his friends were naturally interested.

Adolphus had declared—and his nutty friends fully concurred—that Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth wanted putting in their places. It was time—high time—that the Fictical Four were taken down a peg or two, and made to realise who was who and what was what.

Wherefore, the great Adolphus had

set his brain to work, and he had compiled, so to speak, a tremendous wheeze for putting the obnoxious beasts in their places. Jimmy Silver & Co. had pulled Adolphus' leg often enough. Now Adolphus was going to turn the tables. Hence the meeting in Smythe's study, and the admiring chorus of the nuts:

"Go it, Smythey!"

Smythe of the Shell removed his cigarette from his lips, and held it between two elegant fingers.

"I told you I'd got an idea for downin' those cheeky cads," he drawled. "It's rather a nobby idea. Of course, I don't as a rule think of enterin' ino such rot as sag japin', an' all that. But it's time those cheeky bouncers learned that they ain't the only pebbles on the beach. You remember that rum old beggar who came here the other day to see the Head—a rum old sailorman?"

"Rear-Admiral Topcastle?" said Howard.

"Yaa."

"Queer old beggar!" remarked Tracy. "He seemed rather taken with that cad Silver. Blessed if I know why! Rum old johnny!"

"Yaa." Adolphus Smythe paused to pull at his cigarette, and blew out a little cloud of smoke. "He's a fiery old codger. He laid his stick round a kid who cheeked him."

"Cheeky old rotter!" said Townsend.

"But what the dickens has he got to do with japin' Jimmy Silver?" queried Topham.

"That's what I'm comin' to. He lives in a bungalow on the coast, a lonely hole of a place named after his old ship—Spitfire Bungalow. He goes up to London regularly to try an' get a job at the Admiralty—he's about a hundred years old, but he's fed up with being on the retired list. My pater knows him, you know. Now, that rotter Silver made his acquaintance, when he was here last week. Silver wouldn't be very much surprised to get

an invitation from the admiral to go an' spend a week-end at his bungalow."

The nuts stared at Adolphus. They could not guess in the least what he was driving at.

"Blessed if I see——" began Howard.

"That's the idea!" said Adolphus calmly. "Jimmy Silver is goin' to receive an invitation from the admiral. He'll get leave from the Head to go an' spend a week-end at the bungalow. He'll go—with his friends. It will be mentioned in the invitation that the old beggar may be called away suddenly, owin' to the Admiralty, and in that case Jimmy and his friends are to make themselves at home, just as if he was there, and to have a good time."

The nuts looked quite blank. Adolphus was grinning over his cigarette. But his chums could see nothing to grin at.

"That will be rippin' for Silver!" said Tracy. "But as for japin' him——"

"You don't see the point!"

"Blessed if I do!"

"You see, as a matter of absolute fact, the invitation won't come from the admiral at all, but from me."

"You!"

"Yaas."

"But—but—but——"

"Admiral Topcastle won't know anythin' about it. I shall get to know from my father when the admiral's in town. When he's in town the bungalow's shut up. His man goes with him. Jimmy & Co. will arrive and find the place locked up. They'll have to get in somehow. They'll make themselves at home, accordin' to instructions. Admiral Topcastle comes home, an' finds a gang of juniors makin' free with his bungalow—what? He's a fiery old beggar. What do you think he will do?"

"Wallop them, I should imagine," grinned Tracy.

"Report 'em to the Head," remarked Townsend.

"Break his stick over their giddy shoulders," chuckled Topham.

Smythe nodded.

"I don't know exactly what he'll do," he said, "but I rather think it will be somethin' fierce!"

"Ha, ha!"

"But how the thunder are you goin' to work it?" demanded Topham. "You can't write a letter in the admiral's name. That's a bit too jolly serious."

"I couldn't if I wanted to. I don't know his list, and I don't know that I've got any gift for forgin'," said Smythe calmly. "Haven't you ever heard of the telephone?"

"Eh! The telephone?"

"Yaas. Jimmy Silver is called up on Bootles' telephone. Gets an invitation by word of mouth. I suppose I can put on a gruff voice like a bear—good enough to go down on the 'phone, anyway. Jimmy Silver will think the admiral is telephonin' from the bungalow. He won't know that it's me telephonin' from Coombe Post Office."

"Oh, crumbs!"

The nuts simply gasped. How had the brain of Adolphus Smythe schemed out a tremendous scheme like this? It was miraculous!

"Rippin'!" said Howard.

"But suppose the Head don't give 'em leave?" asked Tracy.

"He will. There'll be a telephone-call for the Head, too."

"Great pip! You'll have the nerve——"

"Why not? Even if the Head smelt a rat, he couldn't know who telephoned. There's no risk."

"That's right enough. But——"

"You see, it turned out that Jimmy Silver's grandfather was in the admiral's ship, ages ago. That's why the old boy took rather to Silver. The Head won't be surprised at his askin' for a holiday for him. He mayn't like it, but he won't care to refuse. He's bound to say yes. But when it comes out afterwards that the admiral never asked him at all, he'll suspect that somebody pulled his leg on the 'phone. Whom will he suspect? The chaps who get the holiday, of course. But

that's Jimmy Silver's bizney, not mine."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what do you think of the wheeze?" grinned Adolphus. "Isn't it a corker?"

"Bravo!"

"Toppin'!"

"Rippin'!"

"Top-hole, old chap!"

It was a chorus of admiration. Never had the great Adolphus been so great in the eyes of his loyal followers. And in Smythe's study there wasn't the slightest doubt that Jimmy Silver would be spoofed, diddled, dished, and done, and that, when the irascible old admiral found him making free with his bungalow, Jimmy's experience at the admiral's fiery hands would be simply terrific. And the nuls of Rookwood chortled joyously at the prospect.

CHAPTER II. Great News!

"LOVELL!"

Mr. Bootles looked out of his study. It was a couple of days after the meeting in Smythe's study.

"Yes, sir!"

"Kindly tell Silver to come here at once."

"Yes, sir."

Arthur Edward Lovell hurried away in search of Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy was in the end study, grinding out lines for Monsieur Monceau, when Lovell found him.

"You're wanted, Jimmy!"

Jimmy granted.

"Can't come. I've got fifty lines of the Henriade to do for Mossco. Go and chop chips!"

"It's Bootles," said Lovell. "He wants you in his study at once."

Jimmy Silver groaned dismally.

"What's the row now?"

"Blessed if I know! Better cut along."

"You get on with my lines, then," said Jimmy, rising from the table.

"If I'm going to get scalped by Bootles, you can do the lines for Mossco. That's fair!"

Lovell grinned, and dropped into Jimmy's chair.

"Right-ho! Cut along!"

Jimmy Silver made his way to Mr. Bootles' study, wondering which of his sins was to be answered for now. Not that Jimmy had any very serious sins on his youthful conscience. But he had knocked Smythe's hat off—almost under Mr. Bootles' window—that afternoon; he had ducked Tommy Dodd's head in the fountain in Little Quad; he had "biffed" Mornington's head against the passage wall. All for reasons good enough to Jimmy Silver, but which might not appear good enough in the eyes of his Form-master.

But, to Jimmy's relief, Mr. Bootles was not frowning when he entered the study, neither was the Form-master's cane in evidence.

"Ah, Silver!" said Mr. Bootles. "I sent for you. You may go to the telephone."

"The telephone, sir!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Yes. Admiral Topcastle has requested to be allowed to speak to you on the telephone," explained Mr. Bootles. "I have, of course, acceded to his request. He is now waiting for you to speak."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Jimmy, in great relief.

Jimmy had no objection to a talk on the telephone with Admiral Topcastle while Lovell was doing his lines in the end study.

He crossed to Mr. Bootles' telephone, and took up the receiver, which was off the hooks.

Mr. Bootles left the study.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy, into the transmitter. He could not help wondering what the admiral wanted with him.

"Hallo!" came back on the telephone, in gruff tones. "Are you there?"

"Yes. I'm Jimmy Silver."

"I'm Admiral Topcastle. How do you do, you young rogue—hey?"

"Oh, ripping, sir!" said Jimmy. "I hope you are well, sir!"

"Hey? I'm always well. I haven't forgotten you, Jimmy."

"You're very kind, sir."

"Now, how would you like a holiday, youngster—a bit of a holiday with your grandfather's old shipmate—eh?"

Jimmy jumped.

"First rate, sir!"

"How'd you like to come down to my bungalow at Beachcliffe for a week-end—hey?"

"First rate!"

"Of course, there isn't much doing for a youngster like you—not much excitement. But there's plenty of bathing and swimming, and cliffs to climb, and all that—hey? You like the idea?"

Jimmy's eyes danced.

"Yes, rather, sir! You're very kind!"

"Of course, you'd bring some friends with you. You've got three special messmates, I understand?"

"Yes, sir. Lovell and Raby and Newcome. Could I bring them?"

"Aye, aye!"

"But—but the Head? What about permission?"

"That's all right. I've asked the Head!"

"Oh, sir, you are a brick!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Not at all, my boy—not at all! Ain't you my old shipmate's grandson—hey? Now, come down for the week-end. I've spoken to Dr. Chisholm, and he's going to grant you leave of absence. I shall expect you on Saturday."

"Good!"

"You'll find me rough and ready, but you'll get a sailor's welcome, my hearty!"

"It will be splendid, sir! We shall enjoy it immensely!"

"Aye, aye! Then you're coming on Saturday?"

"Yes, rather!"

"Take the train for Beachcliffe, change at Lantham, and come along soon after your lessons on Saturday. This bungalow I'm telephoning from

is a mile from the station, right on the sea. You'll find it easily enough."

"Oh, we'll find it all right, sir!"

"Then, good-bye! Oh, hold on! It's possible I might be called away. I may have to go up to London to the Admiralty. It's not likely I shall have to leave suddenly, but I might. In case I should be called away, make yourselves at home in the bungalow. You're to look on the place as Liberty Hall, and if you don't make yourselves at home, I shall be offended."

"Rely on us, sir!"

"In that case, you'll have to amuse yourselves. Take the boat out if you like, only don't get yourselves drowned. You won't mind if I should happen to be called off—Admiralty business, you know?"

"Not at all, sir!"

"But it's not likely. You'll find me there all right. Well, good-bye, Jimmy, and I shall expect you and your friends on Saturday afternoon."

"Thank you very much, sir! Hurrah!"

Jimmy put the receiver back on the hooks. His face was very cheery. A week-end by the sea just "jumped" with Jimmy Silver's inclinations. And the possible absence of the admiral did not really detract from the prospect. The free run of the bungalow, and a boat to sail on the Channel, appealed very much to Jimmy Silver.

He left the study, and Mr. Bootles beckoned to him in the passage.

"You are to go to the Head's study, Silver."

"Yes, sir."

Jimmy Silver repaired to Dr. Chisholm's study in great spirits.

The Head gave him a kindly nod.

"I have received a telephone message from Admiral Topcastle, Silver. He wishes me to grant leave of absence to you and three of your friends, to spend a week-end at his bungalow. I see no reason for refusing. You may leave Rookwood after lessons on Saturday. I shall expect you to return by the earliest train in the morning on Monday, so that Monday's lessons may

be as little interfered with as possible. That is all. I hope you will have a pleasant week-end," added the Head graciously.

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy gratefully.

And Jimmy fairly ran back to the end study to communicate the great news to the Co.

CHAPTER 14.

Four in Luck!

"**D**ONE the lot!" said Lovell, as Jimmy Silver came into the end study.

Jimmy had forgotten his lines.

Raby and Newcome were getting tea on one end of the table, while Lovell ground out the "Henriade" at the other. The three juniors stared in surprise at Jimmy's buoyant countenance.

"What did Bootles want?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy executed a war-dance.

"Good news, my infants! Topping news, my children! We've got a giddy holiday!"

"Oh, good!"

"A week-end by the sea, my sons!"

"By Jove!"

"But who—how—what——"

Jimmy Silver explained, and the Co. brightened wonderfully.

"Hurrah!" roared the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Good old Nibs!" said Lovell heartily. "It would have been better to have it in the middle of the week—we should have missed lessons then. But a week-end is ripping, all the same!"

"Topping! Hurrah!"

"Well, the Head mightn't have given us leave, if it had meant cutting lessons," remarked Raby. "Anyway, we shall dodge 'em part of Monday morning."

"Hurrah!"

"I wish we could take some more of the chaps," said Jimmy. "I'd like Flynn, and old Rawson, and Tommy Dodd, and Cook——"

"And half Rookwood!" grinned Lovell.

"Yes," said Jimmy, laughing. "But I couldn't very well put it to the admiral. But he specially asked me to take you three chaps."

"Good for him!"

"He mentioned that he mightn't be there, if he gets a sudden call from the Admiralty. But that won't hurt us."

"No fear! We can look after ourselves."

"There's a boat, too! We can get a sail on the Channel."

"Hurrah!"

The Fistical Four had their tea in great spirits. After tea, they left the study, and marched down the Fourth Form passage in a very cheery mood. Mornington unfortunately got in the way, and the four marched over him, and left him in a state of dust and fury when they had passed. As the exuberant four came out into the quadrangle, they met Smythe of the Shell, who was lounging there with Tracy and Howard.

Smythe stuck his eyeglass into his eye, and glanced at them curiously.

"Hallo, you look joyous!" remarked Smythe amiably.

"We're in luck."

"Geegee got home?" asked Tracy.

Jimmy sniffed.

"Not your kind of luck," he replied.

"We've got a holiday—a week-end at the seaside. We're going on Saturday!"

"Congratulations, dear boy!" said Smythe cordially. "Where may you happen to be going—Brighton or Blackpool?"

"Neither," said Jimmy, laughing. "We're going to see Admiral Topcastle at his bungalow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four stared at Smythe & Co. They could not see any reason why that announcement should cause the three nuts to burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well" said Jimmy, a little nettled, "where does the cackle come in,

Smythey? I don't quite see the joke myself."

"Excuse me," gasped Adolphus, "but—but he's rather a rum old beggar, isn't he?"

"He's one of the best!" said Jimmy warmly.

"Oh, keep your wool on—so he is," said Smythe amiably. "I hope you'll have a good time, Silver—I do really!"

"Same here!" said Tracy heartily. "Best wishes, Silver, old chap!"

"Congrats, I'm sure!" said Howard.

"Thanks!" said Jimmy, mollified.

"I wish I could take some more fellows, but it's limited to us four."

"Well, think of us hangin' about Rookwood, and goin' dismal Sunday walks, while you're disportin' yourselves by the merry sea," said Smythe. "I hope you'll have a rippin' time!"

Smythe & Co. sauntered into the house, to indulge their merriment in the privacy of their own study.

"Smythe's a Billy ass, but he ain't a bad sort, after all!" remarked Raby. "He seems quite pleased at our getting this holiday!"

"I don't quite see what they were cackling at, though," said Lovell.

"Oh, never mind Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're going, and Smythe can cackle as much as he likes! I hope I'll be a fine week-end, that's the important point."

The Pictorial Four received many congratulations on their good luck, and only a few fellows, like Leggett and Muffin, made envious remarks, and hinted at favouritism. But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not care twopence for Leggett and Muffin and their opinion. They rejoiced in the prospect of a week-end by the sea, and looked forward to it with great keenness.

CHAPTER 25.

Extraordinary!

SATURDAY dawned fine and clear—a splendid October day. Jimmy Silver & Co. were relieved of their doubts, induced by the uncertainty

of the British climate. They were going to have glorious weather for their week-end.

After morning lessons on Saturday they made their preparations for departure. Four bags were packed—not very large ones; they did not want much for a week-end. Rawson and Flynn and Oswald helped them pack, and saw them off to the station.

Smythe & Co. were lounging in the gateway when they started, and they turned sweet smiles upon the week-enders.

"Startin' what?" said Adolphus.

"Yes; just off!"

"Good luck, an' a merry time, dear boys!"

And the week-enders started.

They said good-bye to Rawson and Oswald and Flynn at Coombe, and the train bore them away. They changed at Lantham, and found seats in the express for the longer run to Beachcliffe.

It was about five when they stepped out of the train at Beachcliffe.

It was easy enough to obtain direction to Spitfire Bungalow.

It lay about a mile from the town, right on the sea-front, they were told, and they started walking in great spirits, carrying their bags.

The road lay along the coast; and at some distance from the town a lane turned off towards the sea, which they followed.

"There's the bungalow!" exclaimed Jimmy, at last.

"Good egg!"

The building came in sight, outlined against the setting sun.

It was a rambling, one-storey building, with a garage attached. It was surrounded by extensive gardens, and there was an orchard. It was a very pleasant view to the four juniors tramping down the dusty lane. Past the bungalow, the line of the cliffs showed up against the deep blue of the sea.

"Jolly lonely place," remarked Lovell.

"Looks as if nobody's at home, by

George!" said Raby. "There isn't any smoke from the chimney, anyway."

"Well, there mayn't be a fire in this weather."

"The shutters are up!"

"By Jove, so they are!"

Jimmy Silver felt a little puzzled.

As the juniors drew nearer to the bungalow, its air of silence and desertion struck them more forcibly.

Every window was covered with wooden shutters, evidently fastened on the inside. And when they reached the garden gate, it was found to be locked.

The Fistical Four paused at the gate and looked at one another.

"I—I suppose somebody's there!" said Lovell dubiously.

"Well, the admiral said he might be called away."

"But he'd leave a servant or something, as he's expecting us."

"I understand that he keeps only one man, an old sailorman who does everything for him," said Jimmy. "You see, this isn't his real home; he has a place in London, too, and doesn't spend all his time here. I've heard Smythe say he has only an old sailorman at the place. He might have taken him away with him!"

"Jolly odd way to treat visitors," grunted Newcome.

"Well, he's rather a rough-and-ready old chap. But there may be somebody at home all the time. We'll soon see."

"The gate's locked, and there's no bell here."

"Jump over it!"

"Oh, all right!"

The juniors clambered over the gate, with their bags, and advanced up the path to the house. There was a bell-pull at the door, and Jimmy Silver took hold of it and rang a loud peal.

They could hear the bell pealing inside the building as they stood under the porch at the door.

They waited.

But the door did not open, and there was no sound of a movement from within. The chums of Rookwood looked at one another queerly.

"Ring again, Jimmy!"

Clang, clang! Jingle, jingle!

The bell rang and pealed thunderously in the silent house.

The juniors waited, with growing impatience; but there was no response. After five minutes, it was clear enough that the bungalow was untenanted.

"Well, this is a queer bizney," said Lovell. "I suppose the admiral's been called away, as he said; but he might have left somebody here to meet us, I must say!"

"He jolly well might!" growled Raby.

"The man may have gone up to the town for something," suggested Jimmy Silver hopefully. "Of course, he would lock up the place while he was gone. Let's have a look round. Might be a back door open!"

Leaving their bags in the porch, the juniors went round the bungalow. There was a kitchen door at the back, but it was fast, and all the windows were shuttered and secured.

They returned to the porch in a dismayed mood. This was not exactly the holiday they had been anticipating. They were hungry, too, and they were tired.

"Well, this is a go!" growled Lovell. "About the best thing we can do is to get back to Rookwood!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Can't be did!" he replied.

"Why not?"

"Because there isn't a train back to-night."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"We're landed here," said Jimmy.

"We've got to make the best we can of it. The admiral told me to make myself at home, and I suppose we can't be expected to sleep in the open air. We've got to get in somehow."

"Well, that's clear enough," said Raby. "But how?"

"We shall have to burst the door in."

"My hat!"

"There's nothing else for it. The admiral seems to have forgotten that he's asked us here, or he wouldn't go away like this and leave us stranded. He's a pretty old Johnny, you know—

may be a bit queer. But I suppose we can't go without grub, and sleep on the ground?"

"No jolly fear!" said Lovell emphatically.

"It's possible that the man was left here, and that he's gone into the town for something. Suppose we give him an hour, and if he isn't back then bust in the back door with a rock!"

"I suppose that's the best we can do."

In a grim humour the juniors sauntered about the gardens, waiting. They were hungry, and the keen air from the sea made them hungrier. Jimmy and Lovell fetched up a heavy chunk of rock from the shore to be in readiness.

The hour elapsed, and no one had arrived. Not a living being had appeared on the horizon from any direction, as a matter of fact.

"Time!" called out Lovell.

"Good!" said Jimmy.

Tempers were growing a little sharp now, between the influence of hunger and disappointment. The juniors were not wholly sorry to be forced to "bust" in the back door. The admiral would have only himself to thank for the damage.

Jimmy Silver raised the heavy chunk of rock, and it crashed on the lock of the door.

Crash!

The door shook and groaned, but did not yield.

Crash—crash—crash!

Jimmy Silver worked in deadly earnest. The door split at last, and a final crash drove it inwards, one half hanging to the hinges, the other half to the lock and bolts. The rock rolled on the ground.

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

He pushed the fragments of the door aside and entered.

The interior was very dusky. The setting sun had almost disappeared by this time, and darkness was falling.

The juniors found themselves in a kitchen, from which a passage led. They followed the passage. Several rooms opened from it, and they found two

bed-rooms, a dining-room, and a smoking-room. The atmosphere was stuffy, showing that the place had been shut up a considerable time.

"We've got to get some air in first," remarked Jimmy. "Then we'll see about grub. I suppose there's some grub?"

"Great pip! Suppose there isn't!" ejaculated Raby, in dismay.

That dreadful possibility had not occurred to the juniors before.

"Well, we'll soon see!"

The shutters were unfastened, and the windows opened, and the fresh air poured in.

Several lamps were found and lighted. Then the juniors proceeded to the kitchen with a lamp to look for provender.

"Larder's locked, and the key's gone!" snorted Lovell.

"Well, if it's locked, I suppose there's something in it," said Jimmy Silver philosophically.

"My hat! I'm hungry!"

"Bust it open!"

"Nothing else to be done!" said Jimmy.

He looked about the kitchen, and found a chopper.

Crash—crash!

Under Jimmy's doughty blows, the larder lock soon yielded. Jimmy dragged the door open.

"Any grub?" asked Raby anxiously.

"Lots!"

"Hooray!"

CHAPTER 21.

Making Themselves at Home!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were surprised and considerably exasperated by the strange state of affairs at the bungalow.

It was simply extraordinary that Admiral Topcastle, after inviting them there for the week-end, should have departed, and left the place locked up and untenanted. But he had told them to make themselves at home—at least, they believed that he had. And they

meant to do so. There was no getting back to Rookwood that night, neither were they inclined to have had their long journey for nothing.

Jimmy considered that the admiral couldn't object to a little damage, under the peculiar circumstances. But that had to be risked, anyway. The juniors were hungry, and they had to have supper.

Fortunately, there were plenty of supplies. The juniors found a ham and a whole cheese, plenty of things in tins, and several loaves, somewhat stale; but that, as Jimmy cheerfully explained, was all the better for the digestion.

Provisions were conveyed into the dining-room in liberal quantities. Jimmy Silver started the kitchen fire, and coffee was made. Then the week-enders sat down to a well-earned meal.

Darkness had long fallen, and the bungalow was wrapped in gloom.

The shutters were closed to keep in the light.

As they looked out they seemed to be enwrapped in darkness and loneliness, as if the bungalow had been in the heart of a desert. The dark fields were silent, only the murmur of the sea coming to the ears of the Rookwooders.

"Jolly lonely place!" said Lovell. "Nice place to burgle, I should think, if there were any valuables here!"

"Well, we're burgling it!" grinned Jimmy. "It's thumping odd that the admiral should be treating us like this! He must have clean forgotten that he asked us here!"

"Queer old Johnny! Still, we're making ourselves at home, as he said. He may turn up to-night!"

"We might telephone to somebody, and ask about him," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "I know his address in London. We could get a trunk call from here!"

"Is there a telephone?"

"There must be. He telephoned to Rookwood from here when he asked me down."

"Blessed if I can see anything of it, then!"

"We'll soon find it," said Jimmy. "I

think it's a good idea to get through to his London address, and ask him what the little game is!"

Supper being finished, the juniors looked for the telephone. They searched every room in the house for it.

But it was not to be discovered.

After a thorough search, it was evident that the telephone was not installed in the bungalow at all.

Jimmy Silver was more perplexed than ever.

"He must have telephoned from the town," suggested Raby.

"I suppose he must; but he told me distinctly that he was telephoning from the bungalow," said Jimmy. "Jolly queer! However, as there isn't a telephone, we can't ring him up, that's certain!"

"I say, what are we going to do if he doesn't turn up to-morrow?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"Make ourselves at home, as he told us," he replied. "We shan't have a bad time here. There's plenty of grub, luckily. I dare say he'll drop in to-morrow in the car. The garage is locked up, but the car's away, I suppose. It's a jolly queer bizney. Still, as a matter of fact, we can get on quite as well without the admiral as with him!"

"No doubt about that," agreed Lovell.

At bedtime there was no sign of the admiral returning, and the juniors went to bed. There were two beds in the bungalow, apparently belonging to the admiral and his manservant. No preparations in that line, evidently, had been made for the visitors.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. did not mind. They could sleep two to a bed, and they did.

The broken back door was jammed shut and a bench put against it to secure it, and then the juniors turned in.

In spite of the strangeness of their surroundings, the Rookwood juniors slept soundly enough.

Jimmy Silver was the first to wake in the morning.

The sun was stealing in through the

closed shutters when Jimmy sat up in bed. He looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock.

"My hat! Turn out, you slackers!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Lovell yawned.

"We're not at Rookwood now, Jimmy! Take it easy!"

Jimmy's reply was to project his foot into Lovell's back, and hurl him out on the floor. Lovell landed with a yell.

"Yaroo! You silly ass!"

"No slacking!" said Jimmy severely. "We haven't come down here to spend a week-end slacking, have we?"

"Yow!"

Jimmy jumped out after Lovell.

"Raby! Newcome! Turn out!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!" came from the other room.

Jimmy stepped in, and Raby and Newcome were soon out. Under Jimmy's energetic hands they landed on the floor in a tangled heap of bedclothes, roaring.

"You silly ass!"

"You dangerous lunatic!"

Jimmy threw open the door. Bright sunshine streamed upon him; in the distance the sea was blue as sapphire, smiling under the sunny sky.

"Oh, ripping!" exclaimed Jimmy. "Who's for a bathe?"

"Well, that looks all right!" said Lovell, joining him at the door in his pyjamas. "It's going to be a gorgeous day. No sign of the giddy admiral."

"Oh, blow the admiral! Let's get down to the sea before brekker."

"No need to dress," said Raby. "We can put our coats on to go down. We've got the place all to ourselves, too!"

"Better take some towels," said Jimmy. "This is ripping! We shall be able to tell his ribs that we had a good time when he comes home—if he does come home!"

"My hat!" said Lovell. "Suppose he doesn't turn up before we have to go? He will be surprised to find the place busted open."

"Ha, ha!"

"That's his look out," said Jimmy.

"He shouldn't ask four nice boys here and forget all about it. Come on!"

The Fistical Four were soon in the sea. All four were good swimmers, and they thoroughly enjoyed disporting in the sunny waves.

The beach was solitary; not a soul came in sight. Out at sea some fishing-craft appeared, and at a great distance the smoke of a steamer could be seen.

They came out of the water with very keen appetites for breakfast.

In the bungalow they towelled themselves down and dressed in great spirits. They were accustomed to the queerness of the situation by this time, and, in fact, felt rather obliged to the old admiral for taking himself off in that exceedingly odd way. Roughing it and looking after themselves appealed to them strongly.

Jimmy Silver constituted himself cook, and he soon had a savoury breakfast ready. The larder was well stocked. The Rookwood juniors enjoyed their breakfast; and after it, Jimmy commanded a general washing up and clearing away.

"We didn't come down here to wash up teacups, you know," demurred Raby.

"Dash it all, we can't let the admiral come home and find the place swimming in dirty crocks," said Jimmy severely. "We'll wash up, and—and sweep out the place. There's a broom somewhere. And make the beds, too. I believe beds ought to be made in the morning."

"It's jolly ripping out of doors," remarked Newcome.

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver had his way, and the washing-up, and tidying, and bed-making were duly done before the juniors turned out.

They had almost given up thinking of the admiral now, and whether he would return. That matter had to be left to settle itself.

Duty done, the juniors left the bungalow and proceeded to the little cove under the cliff, where the admiral's boat was moored. The boat was secured by a padlock, but the juniors had

already learned not to stand on ceremony with a padlock. Jimmy Silver found a crowbar, and soon dealt with the padlock.

The mast and sails were found in a shed, which was also locked up, and again the crowbar came in useful.

The juniors were undoubtedly making themselves at home. But there was, as Jimmy remarked, nothing else to be done. They couldn't spend the week-end doing nothing—that wasn't to be thought of for a moment.

The boat was run out, and the mast stepped, and the sails hoisted. Jimmy Silver knew how to handle a boat.

With great glee the juniors ran out to sea before the breeze. Sunny waves curled round the boat as it glided away from land.

"This is ripping!" declared Lovell. "I suppose the admiral won't mind us taking his boat out, Jimmy?"

"He specially mentioned the boat," said Jimmy. "He told me to have it out, even if he wasn't here. He said we weren't to get ourselves drowned."

"Then you'd better let me be skipper."

"Bow-wow!"

It was not till inward warnings of dinner-time that the juniors turned the boat for the shore again. Land had sunk low behind the sea, but the big cliff was a landmark. The amateur sailors discovered that it was not so easy to return as to run out to sea, however. It was fortunate for them that Jimmy Silver had had some experience in handling a boat, or they might have spent the rest of the day, and the night, on the Channel, and found themselves on the French coast the next morning. It was fortunate, too, that the weather remained calm.

"We've rather overdone it," remarked Jimmy Silver, as they backed for the shore. "I'm afraid it will take an hour or two to get back."

It took three hours, as a matter of fact, and the juniors were in a famished state when they ran the boat into the cove at last. Lovell and Raby and New-

comer, but they were too hungry to waste time on him, and they jumped ashore and ran for the bungalow. And well stocked as the admiral's larder was, the juniors made a raid upon it, which left, as Jimmy carefully calculated, just about enough for supper and breakfast the next morning.

CHAPTER 22.

A Narrow Escape!

"RIPPING, isn't it?" yawned Lovell. After that very late dinner, the Rookwood chairs lay on the sands, looking at the sea, in a cheery and contented mood. The sun was sloping down in the west. Odd as was their experience as the admiral's guests, Jimmy Silver & Co. had enjoyed their day immensely.

Jimmy sat up in the soft sand.

"Better have another swim before the sun goes," he said.

"Too lazy!" yawned Lovell. "Let's rest."

"Rats! We haven't come here to slack! Get a move on!"

"Oh, all right, you efficient beast."

The juniors stripped under the cliff, and plunged into the water. They were well out from the shore when Jimmy, looking landward, uttered a sudden exclamation.

"Hallo!"

"The giddy old admiral?" asked Lovell.

"Some rotter after our clobber!"

"My hat!"

The juniors stared towards the shore. They made out the figure of a man bending over the heap of clothes they had left near the cliff.

"Come on!" exclaimed Jimmy.

He started swimming for the shore with powerful strokes.

The stranger was evidently examining the clothes, picking them up and turning them over. The bare idea of having their clothes stolen was dismaying. Certainly they could not have

returned to Rookwood in swimming costumes.

Jimmy scrambled out of the water. The man on shore was a rough-looking customer. He had not seen the swimmers, and Jimmy could see that he was calmly extracting the watches from the waistcoats left on the sand. Jimmy dashed towards him.

"Hands off, you rotter!"

The man jumped up and spun round. "You thieving scoundrel!" yelled Lovell.

The man doubled up his fists. He was a powerful fellow, with a bulldog face, and evidently a tough customer. His nose had been broken in some pugilistic encounter, which did not add to his personal beauty.

"Let those clothes alone," rapped out Jimmy, "and hand over what you've stolen, you rascal!"

The gentleman with the broken nose did not reply. He scowled, and backed away, with the evident intention of clearing off with his plunder. Jimmy dashed after him, his fists clenched.

"Ands off, young shaver!" growled the ruffian, turning on him. "I'd knock you silly as soon as look at yer!"

"You'll hand back our stuff, or I'll give you an eye to match your nose!" said Jimmy wrathfully.

"Keep off, I tell yer! Ow—ow!"

Jimmy was upon him.

The ruffian hit out savagely, apparently under the impression that he was quite capable of dealing with four schoolboys. But his impression was a mistaken one. Jimmy Silver knocked aside his drive, and struck out, and the broken-nosed gentleman went down on the sand with a bump and a yell.

Jimmy's knee was planted on his chest the next moment.

"Now, you rotter—"

"Yow-ow! Gerroff!"

"Take hold of his ears, Lovell!"

"You bet!"

"Now bang his head till he gives in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bang, bang, bang!

"Ow, ow, ow!" roared the victim. "Old on! I'll 'and 'em over! Yow! Ow! Woop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Better go through his pockets!" said Raby.

"Yes; search the cad!"

Jimmy Silver and Newcome and Lovell held the ruffian down, while Raby went through his pockets, turning out the stolen goods.

"The beast ought to be locked up," said Lovell.

"Too much fag to march him a mile," said Jimmy Silver. "Give him a jolly good bumping!"

"What-ho!"

The ruffian struggled fiercely, but he had no chance in the grasp of the Fistical Four of Rookwood. He was swung off the ground, and bumped down—hard!

Bump, bump, bump!

"Yow! Ow, ow! I'll spifficate yer! Ow, ow, ow! Yow!" roared the ruffian.

"Lemme go! Yaroo! Oh, crumbs!"

"Now cut off!" said Jimmy Silver. "If you're not gone in two seconds, we'll duck you in the sea!"

The two seconds were enough for the gentleman with the broken nose. He disappeared along the lane at record speed.

"Jolly narrow escape of losing our clobber," said Jimmy, panting. "This spot isn't quite so lonely as we supposed."

"Never mind! A miss is as good as a mile. Let's get in to supper!"

The juniors dressed and returned to the bungalow. Shadows were lengthening on the shore now.

Supper was a merry meal, and sufficient provisions were left for next morning's breakfast—just sufficient.

"We'll see that the back door's a bit safer to-night," Jimmy Silver remarked. "That sneaking rotter might come prowling round again!"

And Jimmy's suggestion was acted upon. The damaged door was blocked

up with a bench and a table and a heavy box.

Then, feeling quite secure, the juniors turned in for the second night of their week-end as the guests of the absent admiral.

CHAPTER 23.

An Adventure in the Night!

JIMMY SILVER started and awoke. It was very dark in the bed-room with the shutters closed, though outside the moonlight streamed down on land and sea.

Jimmy was a sound sleeper, as a rule, and as he lay awake in the darkness he wondered what had awakened him. Lovell was sleeping soundly by his side. Jimmy sat up in bed and listened.

Creak!

He started, and his heart thumped.

It was a sound from the back of the house—from the kitchen, where the broken door was barricaded. He knew now what had awakened him.

Creak! Cre-e-ek!

Jimmy Silver stepped softly from the bed.

Groping his way silently with his bare feet, the junior stole down the passage to the kitchen.

Through the shattered door several streaks of moonlight penetrated into the room from without. From the silence came a murmur of voices.

"It's givin', Ikey!"

Jimmy Silver's face set grimly. He recognised the voice of the man with the broken nose.

"It's jammed some'ow, Lurcher!" said another voice. "It's jammed up with furniture or something! Blessed if I ketch on to it! 'There ain't anybody in the 'ouse—I know that!"

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"It beats me!" said the broken-nosed man's voice. "They can't 'ave left the place like this 'ere! And they ain't come back—I knows that! Old Topcastle is away till Monday morning. I found that out at Beachcliffe!"

"We should 'ave seed the car if they'd

come back. And we know the place is locked up hampy when the admiral's away. It's all serene, Lurcher!"

"The busted door won't open, though!"

"I'll try the winder! It won't take me long to get through them shutters with this 'ere!"

"This 'ere" was evidently a house-breaker's implement. There was a shuffling of feet at the door, and then a creaking at the window.

Jimmy Silver had heard enough. He stole back softly to the bed-room, and awakened Lovell with a shake.

"Quiet!" he whispered.

"Mum-my hat! Wharrer warrer? Who—What—"

"Shut up, old chap! Burglars!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

Lovell sat up in bed, blinking at Jimmy in the darkness.

"Get your clobber on, while I wake the others! They're not inside yet—they won't be for a bit!"

"Oh, jiminy!" murmured Lovell.

Jimmy crept into the other bed-room. Raby and Newcome were quickly awakened, and they gasped at Jimmy's news.

"Not a word!" whispered Jimmy. "We can't keep the beasts out—there are two of them—but we can make them sorry they got in. Quiet!"

"Oh, my hat! What a go!" murmured Raby.

The juniors dressed themselves quickly in the darkness. From the direction of the kitchen came a sound of creaking continuously.

"We've got to get something to tackle the rotters with!" whispered Lovell.

"Poker and tongs!" said Jimmy. "But mum's the word!"

Jimmy found a poker, Lovell the tongs, Raby a heavy ruler, and Newcome a hammer. Thus equipped, the Pistical Four of Rockwood felt equal to dealing with Lurcher and Ikey.

They crept softly down the passage to the kitchen.

The shutter had swung open, and Ikey was at work on the glass itself. His

frame showed up clearly against the moonlight.

The window opened.

"Go for him as soon as he gets in!" whispered Jimmy. "Down him, anyhow!"

The juniors breathed hard.

"All serene, Lurcher!" said Ikey, putting his head in at the window and peering round him.

The juniors were invisible in the darkness.

"In you go, Ikey!" came Lurcher's voice. "I'll give you a 'and! There'll be enough in the place to pay us for our trouble!"

Ikey clambered in at the window.

He dropped lightly into the kitchen, and the next moment he uttered a howl as a shower of blows fell upon him, and he rolled on the floor.

Jimmy Silver leaped on the fallen ruffian.

"Keep still, you hound, or I'll brain you!"

"Elp!" shrieked the housebreaker.

"Look out for the other!" yelled Jimmy Silver, struggling with Ikey.

Lurcher was bundling in at the window. He was already half-way in when Ikey went down. The moonlight streamed in at the open window, and he could see his foes now.

"Them kids again!" yelled Lurcher. "Pitch into 'em, Ikey! There ain't no one near to 'elp! We'll out 'em!"

Ikey was struggling furiously with Jimmy Silver. Lurcher, gripping a thick cudgel, was leaping to his aid. It was no time to stand on ceremony. Serious injury, if not worse, awaited the juniors if the ruffians gained the upper hand. They were not likely to stick at much rather than be baffled in their attempt to rob the bungalow.

Jimmy Silver struck downwards with the poker, and Ikey's struggles suddenly ceased. He gave a groan and lay still.

There was a terrific clatter as Lurcher's cudgel crashed on the juniors' weapons. Jimmy Silver sprang up. Baby and Lovell and Newcome had receded a little from the broken-nosed man's savage onslaught.

Jimmy was behind him as he advanced on the other three.

The next moment the poker crashed on the back of Lurcher's head, and he staggered forward.

Before he could recover himself the juniors fastened on him like cats, and he was dragged down.

He struggled desperately, but once he was down the juniors were too much for him, and Ikey could render no assistance.

Jimmy's knee was planted on the ruffian, and the poker whirled over his head.

"Keep still, or I'll brain you!"

Lurcher cowered under the threatening poker.

"Old on! I gives in!" he panted.

"You'd better!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Get a rope from somewhere. Newcome: you others keep hold of this beast and the other beast. Smash 'em if they lift a finger!"

"What ho!"

Newcome lighted a lamp. It did not take long to find a rope. Ikey, blinking dazedly and quite subdued, was bound hand and foot.

Then came Lurcher's turn. Under the threatening poker, the ruffian did not venture to resist. He ground his teeth and muttered curses while the rope was knotted round his limbs.

Jimmy Silver removed his knee from the ruffian's chest when he was secure, and rose, panting.

"Rookwood wins!" he gasped.

"Hurrah!"

CHAPTER 22.

All's Well That Ends Well!

"ZIP! Zip!"

"Hallo, there's a car!"

The Fiscal Four were at breakfast in the bungalow. They ran to the window.

"It's the admiral!" exclaimed Jimmy.

A wooden-legged man, with a ruddy face fringed with white whiskers, was stumping up the path to the house. He paused in astonishment as he found the front door wide open.

"Ben!" he roared.

The chauffeur, who was also the admiral's man of all work, hurried up the path.

"Sir!"

"You swab! You hubber!" roared the admiral. "You left the door open!"

"Blow my stunsails!" ejaculated Ben. "I left that there door fast and sound, sir. I did that."

"Why—what—thunder!" ejaculated the admiral, as Jimmy Silver & Co. appeared on the threshold. "What the dickens are you doing here?"

"Looking after your house, and capturing burglars for you," said Jimmy Silver coolly, while his chums chuckled.

"Burglars!" gasped the admiral.

"Yes, two of them, safe and sound—all O.K., you know!" grinned Jimmy.

The astounded admiral stumped into the house. His eyes almost started from his purple face at the sight of the two housebreakers bound to the kitchen-table.

Lurcher and Ike turned savage looks upon him.

"Pirates aboard, blow my timbers!" ejaculated Ben, in amazement.

"Well done, my lads!" exclaimed Admiral Topcastle. "But how the thunder did you come here?"

"We came by train, sir."

"I mean, what are you doing here? I'm glad you're here, as it turns out, but what the dickens are you doing in my house in my absence?"

The juniors stared, as well they might.

"Why, you asked us to come!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"I—I asked you!"

"Yes, when you telephoned to Rookwood on Thursday."

"I—I telephoned to Rookwood on Thursday!" gasped Admiral Topcastle. "You young swab, are you joking with me, hey?"

"Blessed if he hasn't forgotten!" exclaimed Baby.

"Forgotten!" roared the admiral. "I haven't forgotten! I did not telephone to Rookwood on Thursday, or any other day."

"You didn't?" yelled Jimmy.

"Certainly not!"

"But—somebody telephoned to me—in your name—and asked me to come down with my friends for a week-end," stammered Jimmy, in bewilderment. "You—he—whoever it was—telephoned to the Head, too, and got us leave to come."

"By gad!"

"And it's jolly lucky we came!" said Lovell warmly. "The place would have been burgled if we hadn't been here."

"By gad!" said the admiral. "Well, I didn't invite you here, and I never telephoned; but you're welcome! I'm glad to see my old shipmate's son any time. As for these rascals, these piratical swabs, you can run them to the police-station in the car, Ben."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

"Better run us up in the car at the same time," said Jimmy. "We've got to get back to Rookwood this morning."

The admiral shook his head.

"You're not going back this morning. I'll telegraph to the Head. You'll stay with me a few days, now I'm here. Not a word—I don't allow argument! Ben, shift those handsharks into the car, and make sail!"

"Aye, aye, sir!"

The juniors grinned. They were by no means averse to an extension of the week-end—the responsibility resting on the admiral. Admiral Topcastle and his old sailorman conveyed the "landsharks" to the car. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"So we weren't invited, after all!" chuckled Lovell. "You are an ass, Jimmy—a howling, asinine ass. I must say!"

"Well, it wasn't my fault! Somebody invited us, if it wasn't the admiral. Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy suddenly. "That's what Smythe was chuckling about!"

"Smythe?"

"Yes, the giddy Adolphus. It's a jape, you duffer! We've been spoofed!"

"Spoofed—by Smythe," ejaculated Lovell. "My only pyjama hat! Fancy

Smythe having the brains to spoof anybody!"

"All right, as it turns out!" chuckled Raby. "Smythe will be pleased when he knows his jape got us an extra holiday! Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was four days later when the Fiscal Four returned to Rosewood. Admiral Topcastle had prevailed upon the Head. And the Fiscal Four, after a merry holiday, turned up at the school with sunburnt faces in great spirits. And Jimmy Silver sought out Adolphus Smythe of the Shell at once.

"We've had a ripping time, Smythe," he said. "It turns out that it was some japing jackass who invited us, and not the admiral at all; but the admiral's a brick, and he's got ripping good taste—he likes us no end. We've had a topping time, and we're awfully obliged to the silly idiot who telephoned! And, if you happen to know that howling idiot, Adolphus, will you mention to him that we're awfully obliged, and that we're grateful to him for giving us the time of our lives?"

And Jimmy Silver walked away before Adolphus could reply, leaving the great Adolphus with an expression on his face that simply could not be described in words.

CHAPTER 14.

The Raiders!

"WAKE up, you slackers!"

"Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Out you get!"

"Yaw-aw!"

"Slackers!" rapped out Jimmy Silver. Slackers really was not the word, for it was past eleven o'clock, and at that hour all Rosewood was supposed to be fast asleep.

Jimmy Silver had jumped actively out of bed in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth.

There was quite a portentous chorus of yawns.

"I—I say—yaw-aw!" yawned Arthur Edward Lovell. "On second thoughts, Jimmy, it's rather a rotten idea to raid the Modern cads to night."

"Just what I was thinking," said Raby. "I think very likely another night we should—ahem!—be more likely to catch them napping."

"Yes; let's chuck it!" said Newcome.

"Good idea," said Oswald. "Tumble in, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver did not tumble in.

He went to his washstand, and dipped a sponge in the water-jug.

That evening, in the end study, a raid had been planned, and at the time it had seemed a ripping idea. The Classics were quite keen on the scheme of raiding the dormitory of the Modern Fourth, and "mopping-up" Tommy Dodd & Co. with pillows.

Somehow or other the scheme seemed less enticing at a quarter-past eleven.

With singular unanimity, the Classical Juniors were prepared to leave Tommy Dodd & Co. to sleep the sleep of the just, and to do the same themselves.

But for the energy of Jimmy Silver the raid would certainly have been postponed indefinitely.

But Jimmy was already out of bed, and Jimmy was full of energy.

Instead of arguing the matter, he squeezed the wet sponge over Arthur Edward Lovell's face, just as Arthur Edward was closing his eyes again for another nap.

There was a loud yell from Lovell.

"Yah! Oh! Groogh! You silly ass!"

"Turn out!" said Jimmy Silver severely. "The end study never sleeps! Out you get!"

"Look here—"

"Do you want some more? Remember, you're making me waste cold water," said Jimmy. "Still, if you're keen on it, here goes!"

Lovell rolled hastily out of the other side of the bed.

"You silly ass, gerroff!"

"Raby, old man—"



"Back up! Give 'em sacks!" yelled Tommy Dodd, grasping his pillow firmly as Jimmy Silver & Co. burst into their rivals' dormitory. But the midnight raid had taken the Moderns completely by surprise. In a few seconds they were being swiped right and left!

"Keep that sponge away!" said Raby in sulphurous tones. "I'll dot you in the eye— Gerroop! I'm getting out, ain't I, you silly fathead? Gerroff!"

"Are you getting up, Newcome?"

"Yes, you chump!" gasped Newcome.

"Any more slackers want some cold water?" asked Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "There's lots here."

The slackers decided to turn out. The Pistal Four were already out, and Oswald and Rawson and Flynn and Hooker followed their example. Once out, they joined cheerily in turning the others out. Naturally, they were indignant at fellows slacking in bed when it was time to go on the war-path.

"Look here, I ain't in this!" snapped Townsend, the champion slacker of the Fourth, eyeing Jimmy Silver apprehensively. "I don't believe in this rot!"

"Same here!" said Topham. "You can leave me out, Jimmy Silver."

"And me!" growled Peele and Gower together.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"Rotten funks! Are you afraid of Manders dropping on you? Turn out!"

"We won't!"

"And I won't either!" exclaimed Mornington, sitting up in bed. "You can leave us out!"

"Roll him out!"

Mornington grasped his pillow as several fellows started for his bed.

"Keep off, you rotters!"

"Are you turning out?" demanded Raby.

"No, I'm not!"

"You want to slack in bed while we're raiding the Moderns?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Have him out!"

Mornington swiped out with the pillow, and Raby staggered back. But Newcome and Rawson grasped him, and the dandy of the Fourth bumped on the floor, tangled in his bedclothes.

He struggled furiously to his feet, and hit out with clenched fists.

"Yoop!" yelled Rawson, as he caught Mornington's knuckles with his nose. "Why, you rotter—"

"Yow-ow!" yelled Newcome.

"Back me up, Towny, and the rest of you!" shouted Mornington.

Townsend & Co. did not move. They were not looking for a scrap with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Three or four Classics rushed on Mornington, and the dandy of the Fourth went down again with a bump.

"Bump him!" gasped Rawson.

"Squash him!"

Bump, bump!

"Yow! Help! Yah!" yelled Mornington.

"Shut up, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Do you want the prefects here? Shurrup!"

"Let me alone!" yelled Mornington. "I'll wake the whole house!"

Jimmy set his teeth.

"Let the cad alone!" he said. "We don't want the slacking rotter, anyway. Let him skulk here if he wants to!"

"He's jolly well punched my nose!" howled Newcome. "I'm jolly well going to punch his!"

"Shush!"

Newcome refused to "shush." He was hurt, and he was angry. He rushed at Mornington again, and by a moment they were fighting hammer and tongs. Jimmy Silver and Lovell dragged them apart.

"Will you be quiet?" panted Jimmy. "We shall have Bootles here with a cane soon!"

"Let me get at him!" shrieked Mornington.

"Shove that cad on his bed!"

Bump!

Mornington landed on his bed, and lay there, gasping.

"Look here! Are those rotten slackers going to stay here?" demanded Newcome.

"Well, we don't want slackers; they're no good in a raid!" said Jimmy.

"We're better without the rotten funks. Let 'em slack!"

"Br-r-r!"

Townsend & Co. were glad enough to be allowed to slack. It was quite possible that the raid on the Modern dormitory would lead to a "row," and that masters or prefects might be awakened. The nuts of the Fourth preferred to give Mr. Manders, the Modern master, a wide berth. Jimmy Silver & Co. pulled on socks and took their pillows.

Townsend and Topham, Gower and Peele and, Mornington, remained in bed. Mornington, as a matter of fact, had plenty of pluck, and did not shrink from the risk; but nothing would have induced him to follow Jimmy Silver's lead. Mornington's idea was that he ought to be monarch of all he surveyed, and that his right there should be none to dispute. He was not likely, however, to get the captain of the Fourth to agree with that view.

Tubby Muffin remained in bed, too, snoring loudly. His snore was so loud that it might have been suspected that Tubby was putting it on. But the raiders did not want Tubby in their ranks. The fat Classical was not much use in a scrap with the Moderns.

"Kin on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Follow your uncle!"

He opened the dormitory door quietly.

The raiders filed out into the passage, their socked feet making no sound. Jimmy closed the door, and they headed for the Modern quarters.

CHAPTER 26.

The Pillow-Fight!

ALL was silent in the great building of Rookwood.

The long passages were dark and shadowed.

Jimmy Silver led the way, his followers pressing on behind him.

There was no sound in the house: the voices in the Classical dormitory had not been heard.

There were several passages to traverse to reach the Modern quarters, but the raiders arrived at last.

Jimmy Silver turned the handle of the door of the Modern Fourth dormitory.

All was dark and silent within, save for the steady breathing of the Modern juniors, and the snore of Leggett of the Fourth.

"Caught napping, by gum!" grinned Lovell.

As their eyes were used to the dimness, the Classics could make out the beds in the dim starlight from the high windows.

They crowded, grinning, into the dormitory.

Jimmy closed the door.

Then he jerked the bedclothes from Tommy Dodd's bed, and Tommy sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"What the thunder——"

"Good-evening, dear boy!" said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd jumped.

"Classical cad, by gum! Wake up you fellows!"

"Give 'em socks!" shouted Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Modern dormitory had awakened at Tommy Dodd's voice, and the Moderns were turning out of bed on all sides, realising that it was a Classical raid.

But in a few seconds the Classics were among them with swiping pillows.

Swish, swish, swish! Swipe!

Loud yells and howls rose among the Moderns as they were swiped right and left.

"Back up!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Give 'em socks!"

"Go for the cads!"

Swipe, swipe! Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd seized his pillow and

rushed into the fray. The Moderns followed his example as well as they could.

But they had been taken by surprise, and the advantage was with the raiders.

The Moderns were swiped right and left. They rolled on the floor, or retreated into corners. Leggett dived under a bed. Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle put up a great fight, till they were overwhelmed by Classical pillows, and went down yelling and gasping.

The triumphant Classics paraded the dormitory, swiping at the Moderns when they jumped up, and pilloving them down again.

Some of them yanked the mattresses off the beds and hurled the bedclothes far and wide among the sprawling Moderns.

In a few minutes the Modern dormitory looked as if a cyclone had looked in.

Tommy Dodd struggled to his feet and strove to rally the Moderns, but he went down again under half a dozen Classical pillows, with a bump that shook the floor.

"Better clear, I think," gasped Lovell. "We shall be heard if there's much more of this. We don't want Manders here!"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Retreat!" ordered Jimmy Silver.

The chuckling Classics headed for the door. The Moderns had been defeated, the dormitory was a wreck, and they were satisfied.

They swarmed out into the passage to retreat to their own quarters. Jimmy Silver shut the door just in time to stop a bolster hurled after him by Tommy Dodd.

"Home!" chuckled Jimmy. "I think we've made the Moderns sit up this time!"

"Ha, ha!"

The victorious Classics marched to their own quarters.

Suddenly there was a loud cry in

the darkness; it came from the direction of Mr. Manders' room.

Jimmy Silver halted, startled.

"What the thunder! Did you hear that?"

"Oh, help! Good heavens!" It was the voice of Mr. Manders, the senior master. "Who—who is it? What—?"

"Some silly idiot japing old Manders!" panted Lovell. "What thumping ass—"

"Cut off!" gasped Jimmy. "We shall have to prove a jolly strong alibi if somebody has been japing Manders."

There was a patter of soft footfalls in the darkness of the passage from the direction of Mr. Manders' room.

Somebody was fleeing.

"Who's that?" called out Jimmy Silver in a suppressed voice. "Who's been silly idiot enough to—"

"Come on!" muttered Lovell.

"Manders will be out in a minute!"

"There's a light!" said Oswald.

"Buck up!"

The Classics fairly ran for their dormitory. Being caught by Mr. Manders, the most severe and unpopular master at Rookwood, would have been an unfortunate ending to the raid.

They bolted into the Classical dormitory like rabbits into a burrow, and Jimmy Silver closed the door.

"Hallo!" came a drawing voice, that of Mornington. "Had a good time?"

"We've licked the Moderns," said Jimmy Silver. "No thanks to you, you slacker!"

"And some silly ass went for Manders and woke him up!" gasped Rawson. "Which of you thumping duffers was it?"

But there was no answer to that. Not a member of the raiding party seemed eager to own up to having "gone for" Manders.

"Look here, it was one of you!" said Jimmy Silver. "Which was it?"

"The silly idiot had better own up!" growled Lovell.

"Better turn in!" said Oswald. "Old Manders may come along here."

"By Jove, yes!"

The Classics bolted into bed.

CHAPTER 27.

A Mystery!

MR. MANDERS swept out of his room in dressing-gown and slippers with a lamp in his hand.

His hard, severe face was pale with anger.

The Modern master had had a most unpleasant shock, and it was enough to make a better-tempered man angry. It was no joke for a gentleman of middle age to be awakened from his sleep by a pillow descending upon him from the darkness. It was, indeed, a dangerous trick, and might have had serious results if Mr. Manders had been troubled with a weak heart. As a matter of fact, however, Mr. Manders' heart was a very hard one, and no damage had been done save to his temper. But his temper was in a shocking state as he swept out of his room in search of the culprit.

There were sounds in the Modern Fourth Form dormitory, where Tommy Dodd & Co. were putting their beds to rights. Mr. Manders strode to that room and hurled open the door.

The lamplight streamed in upon a dismayed crowd.

Every fellow there was out of bed, and they all spun round and blinked at the Modern master in the sudden light.

Mr. Manders' eyes swept over them, glittering.

"Ha! What does this mean?" he thundered.

The juniors blinked at him without replying. There was really no need to explain what it meant—the meaning was plain enough. Anybody would

have seen at half a glance that the dormitory had been raided.

"So you are out of bed!" said Mr. Manders.

The juniors still blinked in silence. Really, Mr. Manders seemed to have a perfect genius for asking superfluous questions.

"Dodd!"

"Yessir!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Which of you came to my room?"

Tommy Dodd started.

"To—to your room, sir?" he stammered.

"Yes. Was it you?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"I order the boy to stand forth at once!"

"But—but we haven't, sir!" gasped Tommy Cook. "Nobody here has been outside the dormitory, sir!"

"Sure we haven't been a step outside, sorr!" said Tommy Doyle. "We've had a bit of a scrap here, sorr, that's all!"

"Do not tell me falsehoods!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Oh!"

"Someone entered my room and struck me with a pillow!" exclaimed the Modern master. "I find you all out of bed. Doubtless you are all in the plot!"

"Oh, by gum!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

The three Tommies blinked at one another in consternation. Evidently one of the Classical raiders had been guilty of that astounding act of folly. But the Modern heroes did not feel inclined to say so.

"We haven't been out, sir!" howled Leggett. "It must have been one of the Classics, sir!"

"Shut up, you sneakin' cad!" whispered Doyle fiercely.

"I'm not going to shut up! They're not going to put it on us!"

A light seemed to dawn upon Mr. Manders.

"So Classical juniors have been here, is that it?" he exclaimed.

The Moderns were silent.

"I understand," said Mr. Manders. "This is what, I presume, you call a dormitory raid."

"Ye-es, sir," mumbled Tommy Dodd.

"You have been pillow-fighting with Classical boys."

"Ye-es, sir."

"Then doubtless the young reprobate that attacked me is not here," said Mr. Manders. "I was not aware that Classical boys had been out of their beds. Dodd, you assure me that no boy here has left the dormitory?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you all say the same?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. You may go to bed, and I shall speak to you about this matter in the morning. I shall look elsewhere for the reprobate!" said Mr. Manders majestically.

The master strode away to the dormitory of the Classical Fourth. He was not in any doubt as to where to look for the raiders.

He opened the door, and the light streamed in upon quiet beds and peacefully sleeping juniors. At all events, they looked as if they were sleeping peacefully. That peaceful slumber did not make much impression upon him.

"Boys!" he snapped.

Silence.

"I am quite aware that you are awake," said Mr. Manders, his voice trembling with anger. "Silver, I command you to answer me!"

Jimmy Silver yawned and rubbed his eyes.

He sat up in bed and blinked at the Modern master.

"Hallo! Ahem! I mean, is it you, sir?"

"Yes, it is I," said Mr. Manders. "There has been an outrageous disturbance in the Modern Fourth Form dormitory. You have shared in it."

"Ahem!"

"Do you deny it, Silver?"

"Hm! No, sir."

"Some boy here entered my room and struck me down with a pillow," said Mr. Manders. "So far as the pillow-fighting is concerned, I shall report the matter to your Form-master, and leave it in his hands. But I demand to know the name at once of the boy who attacked me."

"I don't know, sir," said Jimmy Silver frankly. "If I'd known who it was I'd have punched his silly head."

"I am glad to see, Silver, that you realise the enormity of the offence," said Mr. Manders satirically. "It was not, then, yourself?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Very well. The boy is here, and I must know who it was. You were all concerned in this lawless raid, I presume."

"Not all, sir," said Mornington. "Some of us stayed in bed. I did, for one."

"And I, sir," chimed in Towny and Toppy and Peele and Gower.

"Me, too, sir," squeaked Tubby Muffin in great alarm.

"Is that statement correct, Silver?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy quietly. "Muffin was asleep, or pretending, and he others faked it."

"Then the culprit is among the rest. I call upon him to give his name."

Silence.

"You refuse to answer?"

The Classical juniors looked at Mr. Manders, and at one another, but no one spoke.

"Very well," said Mr. Manders, in a grinding voice. "I shall report the matter to the Head in the morning, and there will be a searching inquiry."

And he left the dormitory.

"My hat! There's a pretty kettle of fish!" said Lovell. "It's up to the silly idiot to own up!"

"But who was it?" exclaimed Higgs. "I know I wasn't the chap."

"Doesn't anybody know?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

Apparently no one did, and the cul-

prised himself was discreetly silent. It was impossible to guess, for in the darkness any member of the party might have stolen away to Mr. Manders' room without being seen by the others.

"The chap ought to be seragged, whoever he was," growled Lovell. "It was a silly trick. But who the dickens was it?"

"Own up, you roller, whoever you are!"

But no one owned up, and the Classical Juniors settled down to sleep at last, with very painful anticipations of the morning.

CHAPTER 22.

Down on Their Luck!

THERE were gloomy faces among the Classical Fourth on the following morning.

After breakfast orders were given for them to march into Hall, where they were to see the Head.

Mr. Manders had laid his complaint before Dr. Chisholm, and the Head himself was to inquire into the matter.

The Fourth marched into Hall at the appointed time with glum faces. The matter was a serious one, and they knew that the Head would take a stern view of it. To pillow a master could scarcely be regarded as a joke. And the young rascal who had done it was evidently depending upon the fact that he could not be discovered, and had no intention of taking the blame on his own shoulders.

"Blessed if I see what we're called in for," Mornington remarked to his chums as the nuts sauntered towards Hall. "We've nothin' to do with it."

"Ahem! Nothin'," said Townsend.

"Nothin' at all," grinned Peele.

"I don't see what you're grinnin' at," growled Mornington. "If the Head comes down on the lot of us I shall protest."

"You?" ejaculated Topham.

"Yes, certainly. I'm not standin' it."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You, by gum!" chimed in Tubby Muffin. "Oh, Morny!"

Mornington gave the fat Classical a supercilious stare.

"What the dickens do you mean by callin' me Morny, you fat boulder?" he demanded. "Do you want your ear pulled?"

"Better not," said Tubby, with a fat chuckle. "I might tell the fellows that I wasn't asleep last night when they left the dorm."

Mornington started.

"You—you—" he began.

"Better keep civil—what?" grinned Muffin.

Mornington gave him a dark look, and went into Hall with his chums. Tubby Muffin grinned as he rolled in after them.

The Classical Fourth waited there for the Head to arrive.

Dr. Chisholm came in by the upper door, with Mr. Manders and Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

The Head was looking very stern.

His eyes swept over the Juniors, and they waited uneasily for him to speak.

"Boys"—the Head's voice was very deep—"last night there was an unseemly disturbance. Of the foolish scuffling between you and the Modern Juniors I should take no notice, leaving it to your Form-master to deal with. But a much more serious thing has occurred. Mr. Manders was attacked in his room by some reckless boy with a pillow. That boy will be severely flogged—indeed, I may consider it my duty to expel him from Rookwood. I order that boy to come forward."

There was no movement.

The prospect of being flogged, and perhaps expelled, did not, somehow, seem to entice the unknown culprit.

The doctor's brow grew stern as he waited in vain.

"You have heard me," he said. "If

the boy does not come forward, I call upon the others to give his name."

The Classics looked grim at that.

If they had known who the culprit was, they would not have been inclined to give his name. But, as a matter of fact, they did not know.

Stern and sterner grew the Head's brow.

"Silver, as head boy in the Form, I ask you—who was the boy who attacked Mr. Manders in his room?"

"I don't know, sir," said Jimmy.

"He left the dormitory with you?"

"Yes, sir, I suppose he did."

"You did not see him leave the rest of the party to go to Mr. Manders' room?"

"No, sir. It was very dark. We had no light."

"Does anyone else know who it was?"

Silence.

"I give the boy in question one more opportunity to come forward."

No reply.

"Very well," said the Head, compressing his lips. "The delinquent is somewhere in the Classical Fourth Form. It is scarcely possible that his identity is totally unknown to the others. Unless he is immediately given up, punishment will fall upon the whole Form."

The Classical juniors were grimly silent. They had expected as much. The pillowing of Mr. Manders could not possibly be passed over unpunished.

"No one has anything to say?" rapped out the Head.

Mornington stood forward.

"May I speak, sir?"

"You have information to give me?" asked Dr. Chisholm.

"No, sir. But I protest against the whole Form being punished."

"What!" thundered the Head.

"Mr. Manders knows that some of us never left the dormitory at all, sir," said Mornington calmly. "It was one of those who went out who pillowed Mr. Manders."

"Indeed!"

"Mr. Manders will tell you so, sir."

Dr. Chisholm glanced at the Modern master.

"That is so, sir," said Mr. Manders. "It appears that half a dozen boys did not leave the dormitory."

"They may stand aside," said the Head.

Mornington & Co. walked out of the ranks of the Classical Fourth, followed by Tubby Muffin.

A hiss from the rest of the fellows followed them.

It was true that they had not taken part in the raid, but it would have been only playing the game to stand by the Fourth Form at this pinch.

"Silence!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm, frowning. "Silence, I say! Those boys who were not concerned in this lawless affair will not be punished. That is only just. The rest will be severely punished, unless Mr. Manders' assailant immediately comes forward."

The Classics looked at one another. But no one came forward.

"Very well," said the Head quietly. "All holidays are stopped until the culprit is discovered. Dismiss!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell.

The Head rustled away.

With gloomy looks, the Classical Fourth filed out of Hall.

They went into the Form-room that morning in the lowest of spirits.

All holidays stopped meant havoc with the games. It meant lines in the Form-room while the rest of Rookwood enjoyed Wednesday and Saturday afternoons in freedom.

It was a crushing sentence.

The juniors did not blame the Head much; he was bound to take severe measures in the case of an assault upon a master.

But they were bitterly angry with the unknown raider who had been duffer enough to pillow Mr. Manders, and rotter enough to keep silent and allow the whole Form to be punished.

And they could not even guess who it was.

As it happened, that day was a half-

holiday, and that afternoon Jimmy Silver & Co. sat in the Form-room and wrote out Virgil.

It was a heavy infliction.

The Classics jawed Jimmy Silver for ever thinking of a pillow raid on the Moderns; that was one of the pleasures of being leader.

But, above all, they promised terrific things to the unknown cad who refused to own up and save the whole Form from detention.

Mornington & Co. enjoyed themselves that afternoon. The detention of Jimmy Silver & Co. added zest to their own freedom.

CHAPTER 19.

Tubby Muffin Stands Treat!

"MORNY!"
Mornington & Co. were coming in to tea when Tubby Muffin met them in the passage.

Mornington gave the fat Classical a haughty glance.

"Get aside!" he snapped.

"Roll away, sausage!" said Townsend.

"I want to speak to Morry," said Tubby obstinately.

"Well, the want's all on your side," said Mornington. "I don't want to speak to you. Are you waiting to be kicked?"

"You'd better not kick me, Morry," said Tubby significantly. "I dare say Jimmy Silver would kick you if he knew what I could tell him."

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"You fat scoundrel!" he muttered.

Townsend & Co. exchanged glances, and went on to No. 4 Study. Mornington remained with Tubby Muffin.

"Now, what do you want?" asked the dandy of the Fourth, between his teeth, his eyes glittering at the fat Classical.

"Well, I'd like to come in to tea, if you want to be friendly," said Tubby calmly. "I'm quite willing to be friendly."

"You were awake last night?" muttered Mornington.

Muffin grinned and nodded.

"I thought you were sound asleep, you fat rotter!"

"Well, I didn't want to go raiding the Moderns," grinned Tubby.

"Taint in my line, you know. I wasn't asleep, only snoring. And after Jimmy Silver went, I saw somebody else follow. He, he, he!"

"Suppose you did?" muttered Mornington. "Suppose I went out to see how they were getting on?"

"Suppose anything you like," said Tubby affably. "Jimmy Silver might suppose something, too, if he knew you'd left the dormitory after him."

"I was there when he came back."

"Yes, you'd been in bed about two seconds when they came back," chuckled Tubby. "If they knew you'd been outside the dorm while they were away, they'd rather smell a mouse—what?"

Mornington clenched his hands. He looked as if he would hurl himself upon the fat Classical.

Tubby backed away in alarm.

"No larks," he said.

"Tell me what you want, you fat oyster!" snarled Mornington.

"Well, if you like to ask me to tea, I'll come. Bless you, I don't bear any malice."

"If you put your foot inside my study, I'll throw you out on your fat neck!" said Mornington savagely.

"If you're not going to be civil, Morry—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"All right!" said Muffin. "I'll speak to Jimmy Silver. He'll be out of the Form-room soon. I dare say he'll be glad to hear what I have to say."

"I'll give you five shillings to hold your sneaking tongue," muttered Mornington at last.

"Make it half a quid—"

"You greedy little scoundrel—"

"If you call me names, Mornington, I shall refuse to have anything to do

with you," said Muffin calmly. "As it is, I don't know whether I ought to keep your shady secret. Jimmy Silver says a chap shouldn't sneak, and so I can't give you away; but I don't know whether I ought to tell the fellows——"

Mornington slid his hand into his pocket, and a ten-shilling note was placed in Tubby's fat fingers.

"Now hold your tongue, you fat brute!" he snapped.

And the dandy of the Fourth walked away to his study with contracted brows.

His secret was not very safe in the hands of the chatterbox of Rookwood, and he realised that very clearly.

Tubby Muffin chuckled, and ambled away, and met the detained juniors as they came pouring out of the Fourth-Form-room.

"Had a rotten time, you chaps?" asked Tubby sympathetically.

"Oh, no; first rate!" groaned Lovell.

"Faith, we've been enjoying ourselves," grunted Flynn. "Sure, I wish I knew the taste of the worruld who pillowed old Mauders! The ould baste deserved it, but it's nothing to what I'd give the silly spalpeen if I could find him intirely!"

"Seems to be no chance of that," said Jimmy Silver. "But how long is this blessed detention going on, I wonder?"

Tubby Muffin trotted after the Fiscal Pair as they walked away.

"Come to the tuckshop, you fellows," he said.

"Eh! What for?"

"My treat, you know."

"Your treat!" growled Lovell.

"Gammon! You mean you want us to pay for a feed for you. I've had some! On and eat coke!"

"Look here!" said Tubby loftily; and he held up a ten-shilling note for inspection.

"My hat! Been robbing a bank?" exclaimed Raby.

"Come and have a feed," said Tubby. "It's my treat."

"Shouldn't wonder if he's boned that note somewhere," said Higgs.

The sight of the impecunious Tubby in funds was surprising enough. But his hospitable offer was accepted. Tubby was generally hard up, and seeking loans; but when he happened to have any money he spent it royally. He liked seeing other fellows eat almost as much as he liked eating himself—though not quite.

Mornington's ten-shilling note passed over the counter, and old Sergeant Kettle handed out tuck to the exact value; it would not have been like Tubby to put by even a threepenny-piece for a rainy day.

Besides, Tubby knew where he could get a further supply.

If anybody had known of Tubby's little game, and had called him a black-mailer, Tubby would have been very much surprised and pained. Tubby was not blessed with very keen perceptions.

His idea was that Mornington ought to be punished for the trick he had played. And how could he punish him better than by making him shell out? It was, as it were, a system of imposing fines upon him. That was how the worthy Tubby looked at it.

Jimmy Silver had said that he wouldn't give the culprit away, even if he knew him; so Tubby considered it useless to tell Jimmy who the culprit was.

As for owing up, Mornington was too much of a cad to own up, in any case, whatever pressure was brought to bear on him, so as far as that went, there was no use in acquainting the Form with the facts.

And Tubby, in the generosity of his heart, intended to stand a series of whacking feeds to his Form-fellows as a compensation for detention.

Therefore, everything in the garden, really, was lovely from Tubby Muffin's peculiar point of view. Tubby would have submitted to detention cheerfully

at any time for the sake of a feed to follow. As for the football matches that had to be postponed, Tubby did not think of them at all. Games were not much in his line.

After the feed in the tuckshop, Tubby Muffin rolled away, feeling very satisfied with himself and things generally.

CHAPTER 36.

On the Track!

"I'VE got it!"

Jimmy Silver uttered that exclamation suddenly.

It was after lessons on the following day, and the Fistical Four were sauntering in the quadrangle.

They were discussing the mysterious affair of the attack on Mr. Manders, and surmising whom the unknown assailant could possibly be.

"Well, if you've got it, trot it out," said Lovell. "It beats me hollow."

"Blessed duffers we all were!" exclaimed Jimmy. "We took it for granted that it was one of our party who mizzled off and pillowed Manders."

"Well, so it was, wasn't it?"

"How do you know it was?" demanded Jimmy excitedly. "The cads of the Form were all behind in the dorm. I can't think of any chap in our party who'd be mean enough to let us all be detained to get off a licking. But there were plenty of fellows left in the dorm who are mean enough for that or anything else."

"My hat!" said Raby. "I never thought of that."

"But they stayed in the dorm," said Lovell. "They couldn't have pillowed Manders if they stayed in the dorm, you know."

Jimmy Silver looked at his chum admiringly.

"Did you work that out in your head?" he asked. "My hat. What a brain!"

"Look here, you silly chump——"

"My idea is that they didn't all stay in the dorm," said Jimmy.

"Oh, I see!"

"Time you did," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Suppose one of those cads speaked out after us, and pillowed Manders, just to get us into a row?"

"Phew!"

"They wouldn't have had the nerve," said Newcome, with a shake of the head.

"Well, that's true, of most of 'em," admitted Jimmy. "Towny and Toppy and Feele and Gower wouldn't have pillowed Manders at any price. But that rotter Mornington has nerve enough for anything."

"Well, that's so."

"And he was wild, because we were down on him for slacking," said Jimmy. "It's just one of his dirty tricks: killing two birds with one stone, you know. He pillowed Manders, and got us all into a frightful row."

"Yes, I know he doesn't like Manders. Manders reported him to Bootles for smoking the other day."

"And he doesn't like us!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I've got rather an impression that he doesn't."

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"The cad! Very likely it was Mornington. Just one of his tricks. But if he went out of the dorm, the others must know—Towny and the rest."

"They'd keep it dark, of course."

"And Muffin——"

"Oh, Muffin was sleeping like a fat pig! But Towny & Co. know all about it, and they're keeping it dark."

"If—if it's the case!" said Raby doubtfully.

"Let's go and hammer 'em and make 'em own up," suggested Lovell.

"But perhaps they didn't do it."

"Well, they're cads, anyway; hammering will do them good."

"Something in that," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Anyway, we'll go and ask them some questions. No harm in that."

The Fistical Four proceeded in search of Mornington.

The nuts of the Fourth were found in No. 4 Study. There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the study when the Co. came in. Mornington & Co. were amusing themselves in their own peculiar fashion.

Mornington gave the visitors an insolent look.

"I don't remember askin' you to call," he remarked.

"You'll excuse me," observed Townsend. "But your room's preferable to your company, dear boys; absolutely, you know."

"We've come to ask you a question, Mornington," said Jimmy Silver.

"You can save your breath. I'm not answerin' any of your questions."

"Did you leave the dorm on Tuesday night?"

"Nice weather we're havin', ain't we?" said Mornington calmly.

"I've an idea that you sneaked out quietly after us, and pillowed old Manders, to get us into a row," said Jimmy Silver.

Townsend & Co. exchanged startled glances. But the dandy of the Fourth did not turn a hair.

"Is that the yarn you're goin' to spread in the Fourth?" he asked, with a sneer. "I don't think you'll get anybody to believe it."

"Then you didn't leave the dorm?"

"Find out!"

"That's what I'm trying to do," said Jimmy calmly; "and if I have much more of your cheek, Mornington, you'll get a thick ear! I'm pretty well fed-up with you as it is. Do you deny leaving the dorm after we went out?"

"Yes, I do!" snarled Mornington.

"You fellows were awake," said Jimmy, turning to Townsend & Co. "You know whether Mornington went out or not."

"Can't you take Morry's word?" demanded Townsend.

"No fear!"

"He was in the dorm when you got back," said Peele.

"He could easily have got back before us," said Jimmy. "I want to know

whether you fellows know he went out."

"Nothin' of the sort," said Townsend.

"He was stickin' in bed, like the rest of us," said Topham.

"You'll have to make up a better yarn than that, you know," sniggered Peele.

"As a matter of fact, it's pretty clear to my mind who did it," remarked Mornington coolly.

"Who, then?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"You!"

The captain of the Fourth started.

"I!" he exclaimed.

"Yaas, you! An' I think you ought to own up, and get the Form off detention," said Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the nuts, in chorus. The expression on Jimmy Silver's face tickled them immensely.

"As it happens," said Jimmy very quietly, "I can prove I wasn't the chap. Some of the fellows were quite close to me all the time."

"You mean your pals stick to whatever yarn you tell?" sneered Mornington.

"It looks to me as if you did it," said Jimmy, "and your precious pals are lying about it to screen you."

"Go hon!" yawned Townsend.

"But I'll jolly well find out somehow!" said Jimmy savagely.

"Oh, make up a better yarn!" urged Mornington. "Make out that it was Snaythe of the Shell, or Beaumont of the Sixth, or any fellow you don't like, you know."

Jimmy clenched his hands hard. At that moment the study door opened, and Tubby Muffin came in.

"I say, Marny, old chap, can you lend me five bob?" he asked, before he noticed that the Fistical Four were in the study.

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"Yes, you fat rotter?" he snapped.

"Oh, I—I didn't see you fellows!" stammered Tubby. "I—I say, will you come to the tuckshop with me?"

"Not with Mornington's money,"

growled Jimmy Silver; and the Flakical Pour left the study, Tubby Muffin following a minute later with five shillings in his podgy hand.

The fat Classical was making for the stairs, en route for the tuckshop, when Jimmy Silver's hand fell on his shoulder.

"Come into my study, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "I've got something to say to you."

"I—I'm rather in a hurry."

"What is Mornington giving you money for?"

"Only—only making me a little loan because—because we're pals, you know," stammered Tubby.

Jimmy looked at him searchingly.

"Were you awake on Tuesday night, Tubby?" he asked.

"Oh, no; sleeping like a top."

"You don't know whether Mornington left the dorm after we did?"

"How could I when I was asleep, you know?" protested Tubby, in great alarm. His source of funds was in danger.

"I can't understand Mornington giving you money."

"It's only a loan, you know," said Tubby feebly.

"You never repay, and Mornington knows it."

"Oh, I say, you know——"

Tubby Muffin twisted himself away, and ran down the stairs. Jimmy Silver looked at his chums.

"It looks to me as if Mornington did the trick, and Muffin knows it," he said. "But there's no getting the truth out of that fat bounder. But we'll find out somehow."

CHAPTER 11.

Brought to Book!

"WHAT do you want?"

Mornington of the Fourth snapped out that question savagely.

It was the next day, and Mornington was alone in his study after les-

sons, with a wrinkled brow and a savage expression. He was counting over a little book which contained the records of Morny's sporting transactions. Luck had been going against the dandy of the Fourth, and, umple as his funds were, he had been cleaned out in his latest speculation.

The geegee that Morny fancied had had the bad taste to come in seventh instead of first, and Morny's cash had taken unto itself wings and flown away.

The dandy of the Fourth was in a savage temper. It was not the loss of the money—that meant only a couple of days' inconvenience till he obtained a fresh supply. But he had a sense of defeat and bitter irritation, and he was in no mood to be worried by Tubby Muffin and his incessant demands.

The look he turned on the fat Classical alarmed Tubby a little. But he stuck to his guns.

"If you're not going to be civil, Morny——" he began.

"Get out of my study!"

"Ahem! Can you lend me ten bob?"

"No, I can't!"

"Well, I'll make it five," said Tubby generously. "I'll make five do until to-morrow. There!"

"I'm stony!" growled Mornington.

"I've had bad luck. Get out!"

Tubby grinned.

"Oh, don't be funny, you know," he remarked. "I wondered how long it would be before you started that yarn. It won't do for me, I can tell you."

"It's the truth, you fat cad!"

Tubby chuckled.

"You've started telling the truth?" he grinned. "My hat! Who was it said the age of miracles was past?"

"Will you get out of my study?" said Mornington, with a dangerous glitter in his eyes. "I tell you I've got no money for you!"

"Upon the whole, Mornington, I'm afraid I can't keep your shady secret any longer," said Tubby. "The fellows are all going to be detained again to-morrow afternoon, and it's really too

bad! I really think I'd better speak to Jimmy Silver."

"I shall have some more money on Monday," muttered Mornington.

"Oh, don't gammon, you know! Can you lend me ten bob, or can't you lend me ten bob?" said Muffin peevishly.

"And how long is this going on?" said Mornington through his set teeth. "You've had about three pounds out of me so far."

"If you put it like that, Morny, I shan't accept another loan from you!" said Tubby, with an assumption of dignity. "I'm willing to treat you as a pal, but I don't want any caddish remarks, I can tell you!"

"You blackmailing young hound!" hissed Mornington. "I won't give you another penny! But I'll tell you what I will give you—I'll give you a thumping hiding, and if you say a word about me, I'll give you another!"

"Here, I say—yah!—hands off!" yelled Tubby, in alarm.

Mornington was upon him with the spring of a tiger.

He grasped the fat Classical, and hurled him on the rug. Then he snatched up a walking-cane.

Whack! Whack Whack!

The cane came down on Tubby Muffin's plump person with all the force of Mornington's arm. Morny appeared to be under the impression that he was beating a carpet.

Tubby Muffin roared and yelled.

Lash! Lash! Lash! Lash!

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Tubby. "Help! Yooop! Rescue! Jimmy Silver. Help! Yooop!"

Lash! Lash! Lash!

Mornington's savage, uncontrolled temper had full rein now. He lashed at the wriggling, writhing fat junior with savage energy.

A fogging by the Head would have been mild to that terrific thrashing.

Tubby's yells rang the length of the Fourth Form passage as he writhed under the savage lashes of the cane.

The door opened, and Townsend came in hurriedly.

"What the thunder!" he ex-

claimed. "Morny! Stop it! Are you mad?"

Lash! Lash! Lash!

"The cad's come here to blackmail me again!" hissed Mornington. "I'll teach him (that it doesn't pay)!"

"Yaroooh! Help! Yah! Rescue!" screamed Tubby.

"You brute!" roared Jimmy Silver, rushing into the study. "What are you doing? Let Muffin alone—at once!"

"Keep off!" shouted Mornington savagely. "You'll get some if you chip in here, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy rushed at him, without replying.

Mornington lashed at him with the cane, and Jimmy caught the blow on his left arm. The next moment Mornington was in his grasp.

"Now, you cad—"

Jimmy pommelled and punched, and punched and pommelled with hearty good will.

Mornington's yells were almost as loud as Tubby's.

"Go to, Jimmy!" sang out Lovell, in great delight.

"Give the cad beans!"

"Cave!" yelled Rawson from the passage. "Here comes Bootles!"

"Look out, Jimmy!"

But Jimmy Silver and Mornington were fighting fiercely, and neither of them heeded the warning.

Mr. Bootles came whisking along the passage with rustling gown and frowning brows. He stared into Study No. 4 in majestic wrath.

"What—what!" he ejaculated. "Silver! Mornington! Cease this at once!"

The combatants separated, flushed and panting.

"What does this mean?" thundered Mr. Bootles.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Help! Ow! Yow! I'm killed! Look at me! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"What is the matter with you, Muffin? Has anyone been ill-using you?"

"Yow-ow-ow! That beast Mornington!" wailed Tubby. "He was harrying me with a stick, and Silver stopped him! Yow-ow! Woop!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Mornington, I have spoken to you several times about your temper. You have been ill-using a smaller boy. I could hear Muffin's cries from my study——"

"Because I knew he pillowed Manders," yelled Tubby Muffin. "I told him I'd tell Jimmy Silver, and so I will!"

"What—what?"

"Oh, by gad!" murmured Townsend.

Mornington looked savage and sullen. It was out now, but the hardened young rascal of Rookwood was prepared to face the music.

"Mornington! Is it possible——"

"He sneaked out of the dorm and pillowed Manders!" yelled Tubby Muffin. "Townsend knew. They were cackling over it when Morny came back. Towny knows, and Topham and Peele—they all know! Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Mornington, is this true?"

Mornington gritted his teeth instead of replying.

"Townsend! Answer me at once! Were you aware that Mornington was guilty of that outrage, as Muffin states?"

Townsend stammered.

"I—I couldn't give a chap away, sir," he mumbled.

"Possibly so. But I demand to know the truth now. Answer me!"

Townsend looked at Mornington.

"It's all up, Morny!" he muttered. "It's your own fault! Why couldn't you let Muffin alone, you fool?"

Mornington burst into a savage laugh.

"It's true!" he said. "Those weak-kneed cads would give me away now that Muffin has told tales! Bah! I don't care!"

"I think you will be made to care, Mornington," said Mr. Bootles dryly.

"You will follow me to the Head now! You also, Townsend, and Muffin."

And Mr. Bootles marched away majestically, with the three juniors at his heels.

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"Well, the game's up now," he remarked. "That fat rascal knew all the time, and he was getting money out of the other cad."

"Rather a dangerous game to play with a fellow like Mornington," grinned Lovell. "Tubby don't seem to have made it pay, in the long run."

"He's got a little more than he bargained for!" chuckled Raby. "Serve him jolly well right!"

The juniors agreed that Tubby Muffin had got very little more than he deserved. Mornington was also getting what he deserved now. The culprit having been discovered, the Head proceeded to administer severe justice.

The flogging Mornington received in the Head's study was a record. Even the tough and hardened Mornington was squirming painfully as he crawled away after it, and that evening his temper was so savage that his study-mates were driven from the study.

But, with the exception of Mornington, the Classical Fourth rejoiced. The sentence of detention was withdrawn, and on Saturday afternoon Rookwood juniors played football again. So all was well that ended well.

CHAPTER 32.

Uncle James to the Rescue!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL, of the Classical Fourth, came into the end study rubbing his hands, and with a gleam in his eyes.

The expression on Lovell's usually good-natured face at that moment would have done credit to a cannibal.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked at him inquiringly. It

was evident that something was very wrong with Arthur Edward.

His first remark was expressive, but not explanatory. It was:

"Yow-wow-wow-wow!"

"Hallo! Been up against it?" asked Raby!

"Yow-wow!"

"Never mind; keep smiling," advised Jimmy Silver.

"You silly ass!" was Lovell's grateful acknowledgment of that good advice.

"But what's the row?"

"Yow-wow! My hands! Ow! Manders! Wow!"

"Manders?"

"That Modern beast!" growled Lovell. "Like his cheek to cane a Classical! Why can't he cane the Moderns if he wants to cane somebody? Yow-wow! The more they're caned the better—wow! I've a jolly good mind to complain to the Head. Wow-wow!"

"Do you mean to say that a Modern master has caned you for nothing?" exclaimed Newcome indignantly.

"Wow-wow! Yes! Three on each hand. Ooooh! Practically for nothing. That ass Tommy Dodd brought his footer out, and I kicked it away from him—wow!—and it happened to catch old Manders on the chest—ow! How was I to know he was sneaking round Little Quad just at that minute? Oh, my hands!"

"Quite an accident, of course?" grinned Raby.

"Yes, you ass!" roared Lovell. "I'd like to buff him with a steam-hammer, let alone a footer, but I wouldn't be ass enough to do it, only it couldn't be helped. I told him it was an accident, and he told me not to tell falsehoods. Me! Falsehoods, you know! That means lies! The old hunks!"

"Like his cheek!" said Jimmy Silver. "Old Manders ought to know that the end study never tells lies."

"I'm going for him!" growled Lovell. "Three on each paw for an accident; and he's no right to cane a Classical at all! I'm going to get even somehow. I've a good mind to lay for him in the

quad with a cricket-stump. Wow-wow!"

"Better let him rip," said Raby. "Old Manders is dangerous."

"He called me a liar!"

"That's only his bad manners. What can you expect of a rotten Modern?" said Raby disparagingly. "Better let him rip."

"I'm not going to let him rip!" howled Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy Silver, if you're head of this study, you can think of something. Manders is going to be made to sit up!"

Jimmy Silver looked deeply reflective. "He ought to have reported you to Bootles," he said. "Like his cheek to lay Modern paws on a Classical. And calling you a liar was the limit—quite the limit! Suppose you call him one?"

"Eh?"

"What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, you know," said Jimmy Silver. "Don't call him a liar; on second thoughts that's no class. Call him a rotter and a Modern worm."

"You thumping ass!" bellowed Lovell. "Do you think I can march up to a master and call him a rotter and a worm?"

Jimmy Silver gave him a pitying smile.

"You can call him that, and a lot more, without marching up to him," he said.

"How! It across the quad—what?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"Not at all. Haven't you ever heard of a useful modern invention called the telephone?"

"The telephone?"

"Yes. There's a 'phone in Manders' study on the Modern side. There's a 'phone in Bootles' study on our side. We've used it sometimes—when Bootles was out. He's out now. I saw him trotting down to Coombe. Call Manders up on the 'phone, and tell him what you think of him. Better disguise your voice a bit, though. If he recognised it, he would jib."

"My hat!" said Lovell.

"You can slang him to any extent

for a penny on the 'phone," said Jimmy, "and the penny goes down to Bootles' bill, too. Still, you can leave a penny in Bootles' study, and he'll find it and think he dropped it. That'll pay for the 'phone."

Lovell burst into a chuckle.

"My word! What a ripping joke to slang old Manders, without letting him know who slanged him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby and Newcome, greatly tickled by the idea.

"I'll jolly well do it!" said Lovell. "I'll call him some names, too! I'll pile it on till he rings off! Ha, ha!"

"Always come to your Uncle James for advice," said Jimmy Silver complacently. "You can rely on Uncle James."

"Jolly good wheeze! Sure Bootles is out?"

"Yes; I spotted him ambling."

"Then come on! You fellows can keep watch in the passage."

"Any old thing," said Jimmy Silver. The Fistical Four quitted the end study. Lovell seemed almost to have forgotten the sport in his hands, in the happy anticipation of making the obnoxious Modern master "sit up"—by telephone. It was just one of Jimmy Silver's bright ideas, and so far as the juniors could see, there was no risk attached. To "slang" the awe-inspiring Mr. Manders would be a unique experience.

The Classical chums scouted along the passage cautiously. Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, was out, and his telephone was at the mercy of the enterprising juniors.

Lovell entered the Form-master's study, and Raby and Newcome remained on the watch at the end of the passage, and Jimmy Silver just inside the study doorway.

Lovell drew a deep breath, and took the receiver off the hook.

"What's the beast's number?" he asked.

"Rookham double-two," said Jimmy. "Mind you don't speak in your own voice. Manders is awfully sharp."

"You bet!"

"Number, please?" came over the wires.

"Rookham double-two," said Lovell, in a deep, bass voice.

And he waited, grinning.

CHAPTER 32.

A TALK ON THE TELEPHONE!

"HALLO!"

It was a thin, sharp voice on the telephone—the well-known voice of Mr. Manders, the senior Modern master of Rookwood School. Everything about Mr. Manders was thin and sharp and acid. He was not an agreeable gentleman.

"Are you there?" said Lovell, in the deep, bass voice.

"Yes, yes! What is it?"

"Is that Rookham double two?"

"Yes, yes! Mr. Manders is speaking."

"Old Manders?"

"Eh?"

"Skinny old Manders?"

"What?"

"That dashed old rascal, Manders?" pursued Lovell, with great enjoyment. "Yah! Where did you dig up your face, old duffer?"

Jimmy Silver chuckled. Lovell was not erring on the side of over-politeness.

"What?" came Mr. Manders' voice on the wires, in tones of fury. "Who is speaking? What insolent rascal is addressing me?"

"Insolent rascal yourself! Go and eat, coke!"

"What!"

"He's rung off," grinned Lovell, looking round from the telephone. "Ha, ha!"

"Ring him up again," grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha!"

Lovell rang up again. It was another "call" to go down on Mr. Bootles' bill, but that could not be helped. Jimmy Silver considerably dropped a

second penny on the study carpet, for Mr. Bootles to "field" later.

"Hallo!" came an acid voice on the wires again.

"Is that Mr. Manders?" asked Lovell, adopting a high treble voice this time.

"Yes."

"Have you paid the washerwoman yet?"

"What?"

"Unless you pay the washerwoman without further delay, legal proceedings will be instituted," said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver chortled. Lovell was really exhibiting a brilliance of imagination his chum had never suspected him of.

"What? I do not understand. Probably you have the wrong number!" rasped Mr. Manders.

"I don't think so. You're Manders?"

"I am Mr. Manders."

"You're the old sneak who teaches 'stinks' in the lab at Rookwood?"

"I am the science-master at Rookwood School. How dare you! Who are you?"

"Well, cocky——"

"What?"

"If you make any further attempt to balk your washerwoman, you'll find yourself in Queer Street."

"Who is speaking?" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"And I advise you to give up being such a mean old sneak," went on Lovell.

"You're a disgrace to Rookwood, you know."

"He's rung off again," said Lovell.

"He doesn't seem to enjoy this conversation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver shed another penny on the carpet, and it rolled under the table.

"Have another penn'orth," he said.

Lovell chortled, and rang up again. For some minutes there was no answer, but Mr. Manders came to the telephone at last.

"What is wanted? Who is it?" came his bitter tones.

"Is that old Manders? This is the

police-station. You have forgotten to report yourself."

"What?"

"Unless you report at once, your ticket-of-leave will be rescinded."

"T-I-ticket-of-leave!" stuttered Mr. Manders.

"Yes. Then you'll go back to choky."

Lovell put the receiver on the books.

"Old Manders don't seem to like being taken for a ticket-of-leave man," he remarked. "I fancy he won't come to the 'phone again. Still, we've had three penn'orth."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!" chortled Jimmy Silver. "I can just picture him now, camping round his study."

There was a cautious whistle from the passage.

It was a warning from the juniors on the watch.

"Buz off!" said Jimmy hurriedly.

"That must be Bootles!"

The two juniors bolted out of the study.

They disappeared by one end of the passage as the master of the Fourth appeared at the other.

Mr. Bootles went into his study quite unsuspecting.

The Fistical Four gathered in the end study again in great spirits. They roared with laughter. It was easy to imagine the fury of Mr. Manders wasting itself on the desert air.

"It's the first time he's had any plain English like that!" chuckled Lovell. "I say, we'll play this game again when he cuts up rusty. We'll make him dance!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums of the Fourth roared again.

Rawson of the Fourth looked into the study.

"Hallo! You seem to be enjoying yourselves," he remarked.

"We are—we is!" grinned Jimmy Silver; and he explained the tremendous joke on the Modern master.

Rawson chuckled.

"Ripping!" he said. "I hope there won't be trouble——"

"Oh, that's all right!" said Lovell

confidently. "I disguised my voice, you know. Manders couldn't smell a rat."

"I hope so. I suppose it isn't about you that old Manders has come over."

The Fistical Four sat up suddenly.

"Has Manders come over?"

"Yes; he's in Bootles' study now."

"Oh, my hat!"

"And Bootles has just sent me for you, Lovell. That's what I came for. He wants you in his study."

"He—wants—me?" said Lovell faintly.

"Yes. You're to go to his study at once."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Must be something else," said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "Manders simply can't have spotted you."

"Better go," said Raby.

"I—I suppose I must."

Arthur Edward Lovell was not laughing now. His face was very, very serious as he made his way to his Form-master's study.

CHAPTER 34.

Called Over the Coals!

MR. BOOTLES was changing his boots for his slippers when there was a loud rap at his door, and it flew open, and Mr. Manders of the Modern side stalked in.

The Fourth Form master rose, with one boot on and one slipper.

Mr. Manders' excited look surprised him.

"Bless my soul! Is anything the matter?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, sir!" Mr. Manders' voice was thunderous. "I have been insulted, sir!"

"Bless my soul!"

"It was not you, I presume, who rang me up on this telephone and applied insulting and obnoxious expressions to me, Mr. Bootles?"

"Sir!"

"It was therefore some boy on the Classical side who used your telephone, Mr. Bootles?"

"I—I—I do not quite grasp——"

"I should imagine, sir, that I had made myself clear. I have been rung up on the telephone, and opprobrious expressions have been applied to me."

"Dear me!"

"I was rung up three separate times and insulted, sir!" roared Mr. Manders. "I was surprised—I may say astounded. But I am not a man, sir, who can be insulted with impunity! It occurred to me, sir, to ring up the exchange and ask them to give me the number—the number, sir, of my interlocutor! Imagine my astonishment, sir, when I was informed that the number was Rookham two-three—the number, sir, of your telephone here!"

"Bless my soul!"

"It was upon this instrument, sir"—Mr. Manders waved a skinny hand at the telephone in the corner of the study—"upon this instrument—your instrument, sir—that I was rung up three times in succession not a quarter of an hour ago! You, I presume, were not in the room?"

"I have but just returned from a walk," said Mr. Bootles, greatly flurried. "There was certainly no one here when I came in. I can hardly believe that any person has had the audacity to use my telephone!"

"I repeat, sir, that the number I obtained from the exchange was two-three Rookham. Is not that your number?"

"Yes, yes—certainly. But——"

"During your absence, sir, some boy here has used your telephone for the especial purpose of hurling insults at me. I think I can guess the young rascal's name also. It was Lovell of the Fourth Form."

"But——"

"A short time since that boy had the insolence to hurl a football at me, and I caned him. I demand that Lovell be questioned!"

"There is no need to demand, sir," said Mr. Bootles, nettled. "If a boy in my Form has been guilty of impertinence to a master, I shall naturally look into the matter. I will send for Lovell."

The Form-master stepped to the door and called to Rawson, and sent the Junior on his errand.

Then he sat down again, and proceeded to put on his other slipper.

Mr. Manders fumed while he waited.

"The boy is not coming!" he snorted.

"A guilty conscience, sir, is keeping him away!"

"He will come," said Mr. Bootles—"indeed, he is here!"

Lovell entered the study.

"Lovell," said the master of the Fourth, "Mr. Manders makes a very serious complaint concerning you."

"Yes, sir," said Lovell, his heart sinking.

"During my absence someone used my telephone and spoke rudely to Mr. Manders. The exchange have given him this number."

Lovell's face fell. He had not thought of that possibility.

"Mr. Manders thinks you were the person who used the telephone," said Mr. Bootles. "Is that correct, Lovell?"

Lovell hesitated.

There was nothing for it now but an admission or the lie direct. Mr. Manders had called him a liar, and the remembrance of it tempted Lovell strongly to justify the word. There was no proof against him, but he put the temptation aside.

"Yes, sir," he said at last.

Mr. Manders snorted.

"I knew it!"

"You used my telephone, Lovell?" said Mr. Bootles mildly.

"Yes, sir."

"You insulted Mr. Manders?" exclaimed the Form-master, greatly shocked.

The Junior looked sullen.

"Mr. Manders called me a liar, sir," he replied. "He had no right to do that. I told him what I thought of him, because of that."

"Ahem!"

"I ordered the boy not to tell falsehoods," said Mr. Manders between his teeth. "He was lying."

"I was not lying!" said Lovell, with

spirit. "If I were a liar, I could tell lies now to Mr. Bootles, and say I never used the telephone."

"That is true," said Mr. Bootles. "I am sorry, Mr. Manders, that you applied such an expression to a lad whom I know to be truthful and honourable."

"Thank you, sir!" said Lovell.

Mr. Manders fumed.

"I presume that does not mean, sir, that this boy is to be allowed to go unpunished for his insolence?" he exclaimed. "I warn you that, in that case, I shall carry the matter before the Head."

Mr. Bootles' eyes gleamed. He was a mild little gentleman, but was not to be bullied in his own study.

"I shall be obliged to you if you will moderate your tone!" he said snappishly. "I am quite aware of my duty, and have no desire to be instructed."

"That boy has insulted me—he has applied outrageous epithets to me!"

"Lovell, you must be aware that you did very wrong. I sympathise with you in your indignation at having your word doubted by Mr. Manders. At the same time, nothing can excuse impertinence to one in authority. I shall punish you severely, Lovell."

"Very well, sir," said Lovell quietly.

He expected it; in fact, he knew that Mr. Bootles had no choice in the matter, now that the facts were known.

The Fourth Form master picked up his cane.

"Hold out your hand, Lovell!"

Swish, swish!

"Again!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Mr. Manders has already caned me, only half an hour ago, sir," said Lovell. "He gave me six cuts."

Mr. Bootles laid down the cane.

"You may go!" he said.

"Mr. Bootles, I protest against this!" exclaimed the Modern master. "The boy has not been sufficiently punished!"

"Eight strokes of the cane within an hour are quite sufficient, in my opinion," said Mr. Bootles dryly. "You may go, Lovell."

Lovell left the study.

"Now the boy is gone," added Mr. Bootles, "I must point out that in causing him, you were exceeding your authority, Mr. Manders."

"What?"

"Your duty was to report his conduct to me. I object to your taking the law into your own hands in this manner. I can make allowance for your annoyance, but I cannot have my own authority disregarded!"

Mr. Manders spluttered.

"It was also very injudicious to cast doubt upon the boy's word," said Mr. Bootles calmly. "Nothing is more likely to make a lad untruthful. Yet that he is truthful you have seen for yourself. He could have denied the whole transaction, and he could not have been punished on suspicion. I trust, Mr. Manders, that you will, upon a future occasion, act with more circumspection."

Mr. Manders left the study without replying; he could not trust himself to speak.

Lovell was rubbing his hands at the end of the passage, and the angry master, as he passed him, gave him a box on the ear.

Lovell staggered to the wall, with a howl of surprise and wrath, and Mr. Manders rustled on.

"My hat!" gasped Lovell.

He rubbed his ear.

"Rotter!" said Oswald, who was in the passage. "Bootles wouldn't let him do that. Serve him right to tell Bootles!"

Lovell shook his head, and made his way to the end study.

"Bowled out?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Look at my hands!" growled Lovell. "Manders got the number of the 'phone from the exchange."

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" Never thought of that."

"Of course you didn't!" snorted Lovell. "That's what comes of relying on Uncle James—what? You silly ass! I've had two from Bootles and a punch from Manders as he went out. Punched my ear."

"The cheeky rotter!" said Raby warily.

"And now we're going to bump Uncle James for his wonderful wheeze!" said Lovell wrathfully.

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Here, hold on, you ungrateful boulder! It was a jolly good wheeze—"

"Collar him!"

"It's only fair," said Newcome. "When Uncle James plays the giddy ox, Uncle James wants bumping."

"Gerroff, you silly asses! Look here, I'll think of another wheeze—"

"Blow your wheezes!" growled Lovell. "My hands are raw, and I'm fed-up with your wheezes."

"We'll make Manders sit up—"

"Manders has made me sit up; that's how your blessed wheezes turn out. You're going to be bumped!"

Jimmy Silver picked up the poker.

"Cheese it, you duffers! Look here, I'm going to have a big think—"

"What with?" granted Lovell.

"Fathead! I'm going to have a big think, and if I don't make Manders sit up before the end of the week, you can bump me as hard as you like."

And the Co. agreed to that, on reflection—especially as the poker looked dangerous.

CHAPTER 36.

Uncle James' Brain-Wave!

JIMMY SILVER'S "big think" was not a rapid process. The next day he was still thinking.

For the honour of the Classical side Mr. Manders had to be made to feel sorry for himself.

The Classical chums agreed on that, and they agreed that it was up to Uncle James.

Classical ears could not be boxed with impunity, especially by a Modern hand. The insult had to be wiped out.

And unless Jimmy Silver thought of a scheme for putting salt on the tail of the Manders-bird, as Lovell elegantly expressed it, Jimmy Silver was going

through a study ragging, administered by his faithful chums. If Uncle James was going to be leader, Uncle James had to learn not to land his devoted followers into scrapes; the Co. agreed on that most heartily.

The difficulty was, that the Mandersbird was a very wary old bird, and was not to be caught with chaff. Japing Mr. Manders was a very risky undertaking—as the affair of the telephone had proved. As Jimmy indignantly remarked, nobody but Manders would have thought of spying out a telephone number in that way. It really wasn't playing the game. And Lovell and Raby and Newcome were of opinion that the wheeze, when Jimmy Silver propounded it, would end in a "muck-up," in just the same way—in which case they were prepared to bump Uncle James for his own good.

Another day came, but the wheeze, apparently, had not come; at all events, Jimmy Silver had said nothing on the subject. It was a half-holiday that day, and the Pistical Four had intended to visit the cinema at Rookham, with Oswald and Flynn and some more of the juniors. But after dinner that Wednesday afternoon, when the fellows started for Rookham, Jimmy Silver announced that they were not going with the rest.

"Look here, we're going to Rookham!" exclaimed Lovell.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Your uncle wants you, my boy," he replied. "We're going on the war-path this afternoon."

"Oh! Manders?"

"Yes, Manders."

"What's the game?" asked Raby.

"The game is to follow your uncle without asking questions," said the captain of the Fourth calmly.

Lovell sniffed.

"Well, we'll give you your head," he remarked. "But if you muck it up, and there's a row, remember what you're going to get."

"Oh, scat!"

"What's the marching orders?" asked Raby, with a yawn.

"We're going down to Coombe."

"What on earth for?"

"For about an hour."

"I don't mean that, fathead! I mean what are we going to do there?"

"You're going to follow your leader."

Whereat the Co. grunted in chorus; but they followed their leader, and the four juniors sauntered down the leafy lane to the village.

It pleased Jimmy Silver to adopt a lofty attitude, which was justified by the circumstances that a study ragging awaited him in the event of failure.

Jimmy's first call in the village was at the newsagent's, where he purchased the latest number of the "Coombe Recorder." His chums viewed this proceeding with amazement, and they were still more amazed when Jimmy sat down on the bench outside Mrs. Wicks' and began to peruse the advertisement columns. They comforted themselves with legs while they waited.

"Got it!" said Jimmy at last.

"What have you got, fathead? Sudden insanity?"

"No. Listen!"

Jimmy read out an advertisement.

"Typing, copying, etc. Authors' manuscripts, etc. Miss Peekes, Willow Cottage, Coombe."

Lovell and Raby and Newcome blinked at him.

"What the thunder does that mean?" demanded Lovell.

"That means that Miss Peekes does typing for a living."

"I know it does, ass! But you don't want any typing done. Are you starting as an author?" hooted Lovell.

"No; but I want some typing done. Come on!"

"Where are we going now?"

"Willow Cottage."

"What for?"

"To see Miss Peekes."

"What the merry thunder——"

"You talk too much, Lovell, old chap. Come on!"

Jimmy Silver led the way, and the Pistical Four arrived at Willow Cottage. They were received very politely by Miss

Peekes, who rose from a typewriter in her little parlour.

"Good-afternoon!" said Jimmy Silver, while his astonished chums stood, cap in hand. "I want something typed, please."

"Certainly! I charge one shilling per thousand words," said Miss Peekes.

"Oh, my hat! I—I mean, this won't be more than a dozen words or so; but I suppose I needn't have the full thousand for the bob?"

"No," said the typist, smiling.

"Well, here it is."

Jimmy Silver laid a paper on the table. Miss Peekes glanced at it.

"Can I have it now?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes; it will not take me two or three minutes."

"Thank you very much. We'll wait."

Click, click, click! went the typewriter under Miss Peekes' fair hands.

In a few minutes she handed the typed sheets to Jimmy Silver. Jimmy laid down a shilling, and Miss Peekes insisted upon giving him sixpence change, and the juniors left the cottage.

"Now, what the dickens does that mean?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy calmly.

"Where are we going now?" howled Lovell.

Jimmy looked at the "Coombe Recorder" again.

"P. Haines, 6, Long Lane," he said.

"Who the thump is P. Haines?"

"A chap who does typewriting."

"Haven't you finished?"

"No."

"Why couldn't you let Miss Peekes do the lot, then?"

"Because I'm blessed with rather more brains than they handed out to you, Lovell, old chap."

And Jimmy walked on cheerily, and his mystified chums followed him to 6, Long Lane, where a bald old gentleman received them and typed an envelope from a paper handed him by Jimmy Silver for a small charge of twopenny.

Jimmy was smiling with satisfaction as he left Long Lane.

The Co. were in a state of considerable exasperation by this time.

"You howling ass!" said Lovell, in measured tones. "We might have been at Rookham this afternoon at the movies, and you're mooching about a dashed village getting typewriting done on the installment system. What do you call this game?"

"I call it covering up our tracks."

"Our—our tracks?"

"Yes; I suppose you don't want Manders to bowl us out again, do you?" said Jimmy severely. "Suppose he makes inquiries—you know what an inquisitive old bird he is. Well, he can't track us out by the handwriting when a letter's typed, and two different typists make it all safe. Miss Peekes doesn't know where the letter's going, and Mr. Haines doesn't know what's in the letter. See?"

"But what's it all about?" shrieked Lovell.

"It's about time we posted the letter," said Jimmy thoughtfully.

"You funny ass!"

"Still, I'll let you chaps see the letter," said Jimmy considerably. "You don't deserve it, but I will. We're going to worry Manders."

"How?"

"Think a minute," urged Jimmy.

"Now, is old Manders a generous, warm-hearted sort of chap—the kind of old bird to help a lame dog over a stile, and to feel a deep sympathy for people down on their luck?"

"You know he isn't, fathead!"

"Exactly. Suppose a lot of people got the impression that he was that kind of old bird, and came to him for money and assistance—lots of them?"

"Eh?"

"There's a lot of distress in these hard times," argued Jimmy. "Lots of people are down on their uppers. Suppose everybody in this neighbourhood who's down on his luck gets an impression that Manders is anxious and awfully keen to help them?"

Lovell blinked at him.

"Why should they?" he asked. "Any-

body who's seen Manders knows he's as mean as mud."

"But most people haven't seen him. Rookwood isn't the only place in the country, you know, though, of course, the most important place. Everybody who hasn't seen him will believe he's a kind, benevolent old gent, and if they're hard up, they'll ring him up and call on him—dozens of 'em—and how do you think Manders will like it?"

"But—but they won't!" ejaculated Baby. "Why should they?"

"Are you quite off your rocker?" asked Newcome, in wonder.

"Look at this!" said Jimmy. His chums looked.

The typed envelope was addressed: "'Coombe Recorder,' Market Street, Coombe."

"You're sending that to the local rag?" asked Newcome.

"Exactly. With the letter in it. Look at the letter."

The three juniors read the typed letter, and stared blankly. It ran:

Sir,—Please insert the enclosed advert. in this week's "Recorder." P.O. two shillings enclosed.—Yours truly,

A. Kidd.

Advertisement:

Wealthy gentleman is anxious to relieve distress. Ring up Rookwood 22.

Lovell & Co. read that precious advertisement, and blinked at it, and blinked at Jimmy Silver.

"You're sending that to the local paper?" ejaculated Lovell.

"Certainly!"

"That's Manders' telephone number."

"Of course it is!"

"But—but—"

"I've signed the letter 'A Kidd,'" said Jimmy Silver complacently. "I think that's rather good. I couldn't very well put my own name, and I had to put some name. And I am a kid, ain't I?"

"Ha, ha!"

"Manders is a wealthy gentleman,

and if he isn't anxious to relieve distress, he ought to be. We ought to do him the justice of believing that he's anxious to relieve distress, as he's got plenty of cash."

"Catch him!" said Newcome. "More likely to give a beggar in charge than to hand him a tanner."

"But—but—but if that comes out in the local paper," gasped Lovell, "every cadger for ten miles round will pile on Manders."

"That's what I want."

"And if he won't answer 'em on the 'phone, they'll look out his address in the telephone directory," said Lovell, chuckling.

"Naturally."

"And they'll call!"

"Of course they will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Fancy a procession of seedy cadgers calling on old Manders for financial assistance!"

The juniors yelled at the bare thought. Mr. Manders was supposed to have a good deal of money, but he was never supposed to be willing to part with any of it. For a crowd of hard-up cadgers to visit the meanest man in the country in search of financial assistance was a screaming joke—from the junior point of view. Mr. Manders was not likely to see the humour of it. But that was only a detail that did not matter.

"They'll get him on the telephone first," said Jimmy cheerfully. "He'll be rung up by everybody who can get to a call-office. When he's fed-up with that, and stops answering the 'phone, they'll look his address out in the directory, and call. I shouldn't wonder if he has hundreds of them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now to get the postal-order," said Jimmy. "This letter's got to be posted this afternoon, and it will come out in the 'Recorder' this week."

The Fistical Four hurried to the village post-office, where the postal-order was duly purchased, placed in the letter, and the letter posted.

There was no doubt that that ad-

vertisement would appear in the "Recorder" on Thursday afternoon.

On Friday, probably, the results would begin to appear.

Exactly what the results would be, the juniors could not say; but it appeared certain that Mr. Manders would have a very exciting time.

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled back to Rookwood in great spirits.

The precautions Jimmy had taken covered up the tracks of the practical joker. Even if Mr. Manders made stringent inquiries at the office of the local paper, he would learn nothing. The printer could only tell him that the advertisement came by post in the usual way. The letter itself, being typed, would betray nothing.

The Fistical Four felt that they were about to score at last, and Jimmy's chums agreed that Uncle James had deserved well of the study.

CHAPTER 26.

Financial Assistance Required!

BUZZ!

Mr. Manders gayed an irritable grunt.

He was seated in his study after lessons on Friday, engaged in the perusal of a ponderous volume on chemistry, when the telephone bell rang.

He laid down his book, and took up the receiver.

"Hallo!"

"That Rookham double-two?"

"Yes."

"Very good. My name is Jacob Jawkins."

"I do not know anyone of that name!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Will you kindly state your business with me?"

"Certainly, my dear sir. I am in need of financial assistance."

"What?"

"Having been for some time confined in prison, owing to a misunderstanding on the part of the police, I am now in acute distress. Your wealth, my dear

sir, will enable you to relieve a very genuine case. If you could advance me twenty pounds——"

Mr. Manders almost dropped the receiver.

"Do you take this for a charitable institution?" he gasped.

"Certainly!"

"Then you are mistaken—entirely mistaken. Good-afternoon!"

"But, my dear sir——"

Mr. Manders rang off.

He returned to his book with a grunt of annoyance. The conduct of the unknown Mr. Jawkins, in ringing him up to ask for financial assistance, was inexplicable. Mr. Manders was about the last man in the country to render anybody financial assistance.

But the telephone bell buzzed again at once, and he growled, and took up the receiver again.

"What is it?"

"There appears to be a misunderstanding." It was the voice of Mr. Jawkins. "I am in distress owing to want of money——"

"And I tell you, sir, that I do not care two pence whether you are in distress or not!" snapped Mr. Manders. "You have probably heard of the workhouse. Go to it!"

He jammed the receiver on the hooks.

"Extraordinary!" muttered the Modern master. "Amazing! That a perfect stranger should have the effrontery to apply to me for financial aid—extraordinary!"

As a matter of fact, a perfect stranger was more likely to apply to Mr. Manders for aid than anybody who knew him.

Mr. Manders enjoyed a short rest; Mr. Jawkins was apparently done with. But a quarter of an hour later the telephone bell rang again.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Manders into the transmitter.

"Rookham double-two?"

"Yes, yes!"

"My dear, kind friend——"

"What?"

"Although a stranger to you, I venture to address you as a dear, kind

friend. Truly, your kindness and generosity are unparalleled. My dear, kind, though unknown benefactor——"

"Some lunatic!" murmured Mr. Manders.

"My admired and esteemed benefactor, I am in pressing need of some monetary assistance. My name is——"

Mr. Manders did not wait for the name. He jammed the receiver down.

"This is some trick!" he muttered. "Bless my soul! I—— Confound it! There is the telephone again! Hallo, hallo!"

"We seem to have been cut off," went on the voice on the wires. "I was about to tell you that the sum of fifteen pounds would be a great blessing——"

The unknown interlocutor was cut off again, quite sharply. Mr. Manders jammed down the receiver with a force that nearly knocked over the instrument.

The telephone bell rang again and again, but the Modern master did not heed it. He sat tight, frowning, and the bell ceased to ring at last.

About half an hour later, when Mr. Manders had recovered his equanimity a little, there was a fresh buzz. He took up the receiver wearily.

"Yes! Hallo!"

"Is that Rookham double-two?" It was a fresh voice this time, and the surprised master recognised feminine tones.

"Yes. Who is speaking?"

"Sempronia Squigg. You are the good, kind gentleman who is anxious to relieve distress?"

"En?"

"Noble, generous man! How can I thank you?"

"Madam——"

"Will you call upon me, or would you prefer me to call and explain? I am in urgent need of the sum of seventy-five pounds——"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Seventy-five pounds."

"Madam, are you insane?" Mr. Manders shrieked into the transmitter.

"Do you imagine, for one moment, that I intend to give a large sum of money to a stranger—indeed, to anybody? What do you mean?"

"But if you are anxious to relieve distress——"

"I am not in the least anxious to relieve distress. Nonsense!"

"Then why, sir, have you announced that you are anxious to do so? Are you some swindler and charlatan?"

"Good heavens!"

Mr. Manders rang off hastily.

He wiped his perspiring forehead. Those repeated calls on the telephone, all for financial assistance, astounded him. Had every hard-up individual in the country gone suddenly mad?

But a sudden, illuminating suspicion darted into Mr. Manders' mind. He remembered Lovell's trick on Mr. Bootles' telephone.

"Fool that I am!" he exclaimed savagely. "Of course, it is that boy again! I did not know his voice; but he disguised his voice last time. I will wait till the bell rings again, and then rush across and catch the young scoundrel in the act."

Buzzzz!

The bell rang again as he was speaking. He rushed from the study with a grim face. The bell was still buzzing as he rushed down the passage.

Fellows in the quadrangle stared as they beheld Mr. Manders fairly sprinting across, with his gown flying in the breeze.

"My hai!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "What's the matter with Manders? Looks as if he's on the warpath."

Mr. Manders was indeed on the warpath. He rushed into the School House, and dashed on without a pause to Mr. Bootles' study. He had not the slightest doubt that he would catch the impertinent junior at the telephone. He hurled the door wide open without stopping to knock.

"Bless my soul!"

There were two persons in the study—Mr. Bootles and Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, who had dropped in for a

chat with the Form-master. They gazed blankly at Mr. Manders as he came flying in.

The Head rose majestically.

"Really, Mr. Manders—"

Mr. Manders stopped, as if struck by a bullet. Suspicious as he was, he could not suspect the revered Head of Rookwood of playing tricks on the telephone. The culprit, evidently, was not there.

"I—I—I— Excuse me!" stuttered Mr. Manders.

"Really—"

"I—I beg your pardon, sir. I—I am somewhat flurried."

"Yes, sir, so I should judge," said the Head majestically. "So I should judge, Mr. Manders."

"I—I—I really beg your pardon," gasped Mr. Manders, and he retreated incontinently from the study.

He went down the passage like a man in a dream. It was clear that he had not been rung up, after all, from Mr. Bootles' study. Had the young rascal he suspected rung him up from the call-office in the village? But even as the thought came into his mind he observed Jimmy Silver & Co. in the passage. They were smiling.

Mr. Manders halted and glared at them.

"Lovell!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir."

"Someone has telephoned to me—some insolent practical joker—"

"Indeed, sir?"

"Was it you, Lovell?"

"Not at all, sir."

Mr. Manders glared at him. But the juniors had no access to any telephone but Mr. Bootles', and the Head was in Mr. Bootles' study. He had to admit that he was on the wrong track. He turned away with a snort, and hurried across the quad.

The Fistical Four grinned at one another ecstatically.

"It's working!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Working like a charm!" chorried Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Classical chums roared.

Mr. Manders reached his house, and Knowles of the Sixth met him as he came in.

"The telephone bell's ringing in your study, sir."

"Confound the telephone!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Knowles.

"Hang the telephone!"

Mr. Manders whisked on, leaving Knowles of the Sixth rooted to the floor with astonishment.

CHAPTER 32.

Nice for Manders!

MR. MANDERS did not spend an enjoyable afternoon.

Every quarter of an hour or so the telephone bell rang.

He was tempted to cut off permanently, but that would not have done. Any message might have been one of importance, especially as Mr. Manders dabbled in stocks and shares, and was accustomed to being rung up by his stockbroker at odd times to be apprised of the state of the "market."

There were, in fact, a couple of business calls for Mr. Manders to attend to. But a dozen other calls, dealing with the question of financial assistance which he was supposed to be prepared to render to perfect strangers.

Mr. Manders was astonished as well as enraged.

When he left his study he met smiling faces among the juniors, though he did not guess the cause of the smiles.

Jimmy Silver had cycled down to Coombe for a copy of the local paper, and that copy had passed from hand to hand in the school.

Jimmy did not relate how the advertisement came to be in the paper; but most of the fellows guessed easily enough that Mr. Manders had not inserted it.

It was a joke of some "person or persons unknown," and the juniors chorried over it joyously. And whenever the telephone bell was heard to

ring in Mr. Manders' study there was an outburst of chortling among the Modern juniors.

The Pistical Four, sauntering lazily in the quad—within easy distance of Mr. Manders' study window—heard the incessant buzzing of the bell, and caught glimpses of the Modern master whisking across to the telephone.

But towards evening there was a blessed silence.

Mr. Manders had disconnected the bell.

He had to risk anyone who really had business with him calling him up and failing to get through. He simply could not stand the buzzing bell and the demands for financial assistance any longer.

That evening Mr. Manders was in a temper which made him really dangerous to approach.

"Seems to be fed up," Jimmy Silver remarked when the bell had not been heard for some time. "The show's over for to-night. But to-morrow—"

"If they can't get through on the 'phone, they'll begin calling," grinned Baby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors looked forward to the morrow with keen anticipation. They only regretted the necessity of lessons in the morning. Lessons were really a worry on such an occasion.

Indeed, morning lessons had never seemed so long to the Pistical Four as they did that Saturday morning. When Mr. Bootles dismissed his class at last, Jimmy Silver & Co. hurried out, and sought Tommy Dodd. The Modern juniors were chuckling.

"Manders had any callers?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, rather," chortled Tommy Dodd. "He was called out to see a seedy chap who waited in the passage, and there was quite a row. Seedy chap was fair shouting."

"Ha, ha! What did he want?"

"Cash."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly queer about that advertise-

ment in the local rag," said Tommy Dodd, eyeing the Classical chums. "Manders couldn't have put it in."

"Hardly," agreed Jimmy Silver gravely. "Yet it's his telephone-number that's given. Queer, isn't it?"

"Jolly queer!" said Tommy. "And the chap who did it will find himself in Queer Street if Manders gets on his track."

"You think it was a practical joke of somebody?" asked Jimmy innocently, while his chums gurgled.

"I rather fancy it was," grinned Tommy Dodd, "and when Mandy sees it he will hustle down to the newspaper office, and if the printer remembers who handed it in—"

"Might have been sent in by the post?" suggested Jimmy.

"Ha, ha! It might! But if the printer's kept the letter and Manders sees it and recognises the handwriting—"

"The practical joker—if there was one—might have got the letter typed by somebody on a machine," said Jimmy thoughtfully.

Tommy Dodd yelled.

"Oh, you deep boulder! Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver looked surprised.

"Of course, I'm only suggesting that," he remarked.

"Of course," assented Tommy Dodd. "You don't know anything about it—that isn't why you didn't come over to Rookham on Wednesday! Hallo, who the dickens is this?"

A thin gentleman in a very seedy coat came in at the gates. He stopped to speak to the juniors.

"Can you tell me where to find Mr. Manders?" he asked.

"Certainly, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "He's a master here."

The stranger followed him in.

He looked like an actor who had had bad luck, and he also looked as if he had been refreshing himself during his walk to Rookwood with something more potent than water from the pump.

The juniors grinned at one another.

"We must see this!" murmured Lovell.

And they cautiously "stalked" the stranger.

Mr. Manders was going in to lunch when the seedy gentleman entered the house. He glanced at him sourly. The sight of anyone who was down on his luck was an offence to Mr. Manders' uncharitable eyes.

"Do you wish to see anyone here?" he asked brusquely.

"Sir, you have hit it," said the seedy gentleman, in a rich, rolling voice. "I have called to see that benefactor of his species, Mr. Manders."

"I am Mr. Manders."

"Sir, it does me proud to behold you," said the visitor. "My name is Curll—Horatio Curll. At one time, sir, I trod the historic boards—"

"Kindly state your business."

"But misfortune dogged my steps, sir," said Mr. Curll sadly. "Like the raven's unhappy master, I found unmerciful disaster follow fast and follow faster—"

"Sir—"

"Until, sir, I came down to the halls," said Mr. Curll mournfully. "I, who sang Tannhauser and Lohengrin and Alfredo in the grand old days of the Roser-Moser Company, sir—I came down to the halls! And even the halls, sir, have ungratefully declined my further services."

"I am not in the slightest degree interested—"

"Until, at last, sir, I am reduced to asking financial assistance of a generous benefactor who has made known the noble impulses of his heart through the medium of an advertisement," said Mr. Curll. "Sir, I blush to say that I am in immediate need of the ridiculous sum of five pounds—"

"You will get no money from me, sir," shouted Mr. Manders angrily. "Kindly leave this building at once!"

"Do my ears deceive me?" exclaimed Mr. Curll in surprise. "Are you not the generous gent—the noble benefactor of the poor and down-

trodden, who is anxious to relieve distress?"

"No, sir, I am nothing of the kind," thundered Mr. Manders, crimson with anger, as a crowd of fellows began to gather. "Kindly take your departure at once!"

"Excuse me," said Mr. Curll, politely but firmly. "I have business here with the generous gent I have mentioned. Having failed to get through on the telephone, I examined the directory, sir, at the post-office, and found that this was the address of Number 22, Rookham, and that the name was Manders. I have called to see Mr. Manders, and wild horses, sir, shall not drag me from this spot until I have unfolded my tale of trouble to his sympathetic ears."

"I am Mr. Manders! I have not business with you. Go!"

"If you are the gentleman I have called to see, may I state—"

"You may not."

"That the small sum of five pounds—"

"Leave this house!"

"In case, sir, there have already been heavy drafts on your generosity, I could contrive to rub along with the more moderate sum of one quid—"

"Will you go?" roared Mr. Manders.

"Five shillings even would be a boon," sighed Mr. Curll. "After raising my hopes as you have done, sir, you cannot refuse me so small a sum."

"I will have you thrown from the door if you do not instantly depart!" shouted Mr. Manders. "How dare you come here, you beggar!"

Mr. Curll's manner changed.

"I came as an artist in distress, in reply to what I regarded as the invitation of a generous gent!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I find a prevaricator—a hard-hearted hunk—a skinfint!"

"Go!" shrieked Mr. Manders.

"I will shake the dust of these inhospitable halls from my feet," said Mr. Curll disdainfully. "I spit upon you, sir! I loathe you! You are a reptile, sir! Away!"

And Mr. Curll turned majestically on his heel and strode out. He left the Rockwood master rooted to the floor.

"How dare you laugh!" he shrieked, as a geyfe fell upon his ears. "Silence! Disperse at once! Go in to dinner! How dare you!"

And Mr. Manders stamped into the dining-room in a boiling fury.

Jimmy Silver & Co., on the point of suffocation, followed the indignant Mr. Curll down to the gates. Jimmy tapped him on the arm.

"Five bob really any good?" he asked.

Mr. Curll's clouded brow cleared at once.

"Young sir, you are a nobleman," he said enthusiastically. "You would hardly believe that Horatio Curll, once the shining light of the Roser-Moser Company, is down on his uppers. Yet such is the ghastly fact. Once, sir, the delight of the brave and the fair—once the spoiled darling of the fashionable crowd. Behold me now!"

Jimmy Silver slipped five shillings into the somewhat grubby hand of the gentleman who dreamt that he had dwelt in marble halls. And Mr. Curll walked away quite jauntily; and it is much to be feared that the five shillings were soon afterwards expended in support of the drink traffic.

The Pistical Four went in to dinner in great spirits. After dinner they walked in the quad, waiting. The advertisement in the "Coombe Recorder" was panning out remarkably well, and they were keen to see fresh developments. Early in the afternoon a black and sooty figure came in at the open gates, and blinked round the quadrangle. Jimmy hurried up to him. The man looked like a chimney-sweep out of a job, and he had evidently been drowning his troubles at the Red Cow or the Bird-in-Hand. He rolled in his gait as he came in.

"Called to see somebody?" asked Jimmy politely.

"That I 'ave," said the sooty gentleman. "Mister Manders 'ere—wot?"

That the name, I reckon. My missus looked out the number in the dreck-tory, and she said it was Manders—wot? Where is that kind gent?"

"Just coming out of his house," said Jimmy. "There he is."

"Thanky kindly."

The sooty gentleman started across the quad. Mr. Manders had just come out, to sit under the beeches to read. He halted as the visitor bore down on him.

"Mr. Manders?" asked the sooty gentleman.

"Yes. If you have come about the chimneys, kindly go to the back door!" snapped Mr. Manders.

"I ain't come about no chimneys. I'm Bol 'Arris. I got the push."

"What?"

"I got the push," explained the sooty gentleman. "The push, you know, for 'aving a drop too much. My missus, she saw your advert, and I kinder reckoned I'd come erlong, not being 'andy with the telephone like."

"I fail to understand you!" snapped Mr. Manders. "Have you anything to say to me?"

"Yes. I'm 'ard up!"

"That is no business of mine!" shouted Mr. Manders, realising that this was another of the mysterious demands of financial assistance.

"But you're the wealthy gent—"

"I do not waste my wealth on vagrants."

"I got the push!" reiterated Mr. Harris. "I'm 'ard up! You advertise that you wants to relieve distress—that means 'elping a bloke wot's 'ard up, in English. Well, I'm 'ard up, and 'ere I am."

"Silver!" shouted Mr. Manders. "Call Mack here, and tell him he is to eject this person!"

Mr. Harris glared.

"Eject me!" he ejaculated. "Don't I keep on tellin' you I'm 'ard up? Ain't you goin' to 'elp a bloke wot's 'ard up?"

"No, I am not!" roared Mr. Manders. "Not a penny, you drunken rascal!"

"My heyl! You talk to me, arter

fetchin' me 'ere!" exclaimed Mr. Harris indignantly. "By gosh, I ain't the man to be treated like that there—you ask any feller at the Bird-in-And if I am! Why, for two pins I'd knock yer face through the back of your head, you old bag o' bones!"

"Ruffian! Silver, send Mack here

"I'm going!" roared Mr. Harris. "I don't want no puttin' hout. But afore I goes, I'll teach yer to call an honest man names!"

"Help!" shrieked Mr. Manders wildly, as the indignant sweep rushed on him.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it!"

The juniors yelled. They were not inclined to chip in. Mr. Harris had apparently not cleaned off the stairs of his last job, since he had got the push, and nobody wanted to touch him. Justly indignant at being played with, as he supposed, Mr. Harris was after vengeance, and the angular Rookwood master fairly crumpled up in his powerful grasp.

Mr. Manders' head was in chancery, and Mr. Harris was pounding at his features, and the yells of the unhappy Modern master rang across the quadrangle.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help! Police! Help! Oh, oh, oh! Oooooop! Help!"

"There!" roared Mr. Harris, hurling the battered Modern master to the ground, where he sprawled, gasping and smothered with soot. "That'll teach yer! Yah!"

And Mr. Harris strode indignantly away, and old Mack came cautiously out of his lodge and fastened the gates after him.

Mr. Manders sat up.

"Groogh!" he gasped. "Has—has that ruffian gone? Good heavens! The—the man must be mad! I—I am considerably hurt! Ow, wow! I—I am dirty—dreadfully dirty! Groogh! Tell Mack to lock the gates at once—ow!—and tell him to refuse to admit anyone who calls to see me—yow!—no matter who 'tis! Grooogh!"

Mr. Manders limped away to his house, badly in need of a wash. Jimmy Silver & Co. limped away, too, quite overcome. They retreated into Little Quad, where they threw themselves in the grass, and kicked up their heels and roared.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Jimmy, almost weeping. "They won't let in any more, but that one was worth a guinea a box! Oh, dear! Manders will have a coloured eye—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you fatheads, what do you think of your Uncle James now?"

"Topping!" roared Lovell. "We'll let you off that ragging! Ha, ha, ha! He had Mandy's head in chancery! Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Flatcap Four went off into a fresh explosion.

When Mr. Manders was seen in public again, he had a dark shade round one eye, and his nose was considerably enlarged. He wore those adornments for quite a long time, much to the hilarity of the Rookwood juniors. And although later on the notice in the "Recorder" was brought to his attention, he never knew who had inserted it. But a great part of Rookwood knew, or guessed, and it was agreed on all hands that Jimmy Silver had deserved well of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 32.

Tubby Comes to Grief!

"COME on!"

Jimmy Silver called in at the door of No. 3 Study.

There were three juniors in the study—Van Ryn, the South African, Higgs and Tubby Muffin.

Van Ryn and Higgs were working at their prep; Tubby Muffin was sprawled gracefully in the armchair, reading a newspaper.

Tubby blinked up at Jimmy Silver looked in.

"I say, this is jolly interesting!" he exclaimed.

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy Silver. "Come on, you chaps! Banister race!"

Van Ryn and Higgs jumped up at once. Prep could wait when a banister race was on.

"I say, just listen to this," said Tubby.

"Eh! What is it?" asked Jimmy, pausing.

"About a chap who got shell shock," said the fat Classical. "He was an Englishman who got mixed up in the Spanish civil war, and a shell burst just near him. He lost his speech from the shock, and couldn't speak—dumb, you know."

"Poor chap!"

"My hat! I wish you could get shell shock, Tubby!" remarked Higgs. "It would be a blessing in this study."

"Hard lines on the chap," said Jimmy. "I dare say he'll recover, though. They often do."

"I don't know about its being hard lines," said Tubby Muffin. "Suppose it happened to a chap at school? No lessons, and a jolly time, you know, while it lasted—they couldn't make a chap work in that state. Seems to me that some fellows have all the luck."

"You fat duffer!" said Jimmy Silver. "Come on, you chaps. Booties has gone to see the Head, and the prefects have a meeting in their august quarters, and the coast is quite clear."

"Ripping!" said Van Ryn.

Tubby Muffin followed the juniors from the study. There was a peculiar gleam in Tubby's eyes. If Jimmy Silver had paid any attention to the fat Classical, he might have guessed that deep thoughts were working in Tubby's fat brain. But the captain of the Fourth did not even look at Tubby.

A crowd of Classical juniors had gathered on the middle landing. There were some Modern fellows, too, from Mr. Manders' House. It was a glorious opportunity for a banister race—an

opportunity that did not often occur. From the middle landing the old massive banisters ran curling down to the lower passage—great banisters of ancient polished oak, which had been one of the sights of Rookwood for hundreds of years.

To sit on the broad top, and slide down round the curve, and shoot off into the lower passage, was a delightful feat—a little risky for fellows who hadn't a good nerve, perhaps. That amusement, naturally, was frowned upon by masters and prefects, who did not see any great amusement in the risk of a reckless junior breaking a leg. But just now masters and prefects were off the scene, and the opportunity was not to be missed.

The Fourth Formers had gathered from near and far.

"Ready, Jimmy?" called out Lovell.

"Ready!" said Jimmy. "Now, then, Tommy Dodd, keep back! Moderns don't go first!"

"Rats!" said Tommy Dodd. "Better let me show you Classical duffers how to do it!"

"Fathead!"

"Shove that Modern ass back!"

"And mind how you go," said Jimmy Silver. "It's rather a tricky turn at the bottom. Booties will be rattly if any chap breaks his neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Form up and take your turns. Get out of the way, Tubby."

"I'm going, too," said Tubby Muffin.

"Fathead! Buzz off!"

"I'm going, I tell you!" said the fat Classical indignantly.

Jimmy shook his head decidedly.

"You can't, you fat duffer! It's too risky for you!"

"What the dickens is the matter with you, Tubby?" exclaimed Raby. "You don't like sliding banisters."

"I'm going!"

"You've always faked it before," said Flynn.

"I tell you I'm going!"

"You can't!" said Jimmy Silver.

"It's not safe for a clumsy fat duffer. Keep back, Tubby. Now, then, you chaps, follow your leader!"

Jimmy Silver threw his leg over the broad banister.

In a sitting position, he shot down the slope, sailing away in great style. He turned the lower curve, reached the bottom, and shot off into the hall, landing on his feet with the activity of a cat. Lovell came next, and then Raby, and then Newcome. Then Tommy Dodd had his turn, and Flynn and Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle and Oswald, and Higgs and Van Ryn.

The broad banister had half a dozen juniors on it at once, sailing down at whizzing speed. If any fellow had lost his nerve, and tumbled off, there was a deep fall beside the staircase, which would certainly have resulted in broken bones. But the Rookwood juniors had plenty of nerve, though it assuredly was not safe for a fat and unwieldy fellow like Tubby Muffin, whose nerve was decidedly not good.

But Tubby, for reasons best known to himself, was bent upon taking his turn.

He waited till the rest of the crowd had gone, and then rushed to the banister. Jimmy Silver, who was coming upstairs for another flight, shouted to him in alarm.

"Get off, you young ass!"

But he was too far away to intervene.

Tubby Muffin did not sit on the banister as the rest had done, however. He rested his fat chest on it, and clutched at it with his fat hands, and went whizzing down with his legs flying over the stairs.

Jimmy Silver burst into a chuckle. Sliding down in that way obviated the danger of a fall, and Tubby Muffin was safe enough.

The juniors in the lower hall howled with laughter as he came sprawling down, with his fat legs flying wildly.

But the laughter ceased suddenly as Tubby reached the end of the banister.

It ended with a curl, in a heavy oaken pillar, with a height of six feet from the floor. For an active junior to slide off and land on his feet was easy. But Tubby was not active, and he was not in a position to slide off freely. He plumped off, and landed on the floor with a bump.

"You silly ass!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Crawl away, you duffer, or you'll have somebody land on you," said Tommy Dodd.

Tubby Muffin did not reply.

He did not move.

He lay stretched on the floor, and his eyes were closed.

Lovell ran towards him.

"Tubby, you fathead——"

"What's the matter with him?"

"Oh, the duffer! He's hurt!"

The banister race was at an end. Jimmy Silver hurried down the stairs again. The juniors gathered round Tubby Muffin with looks of alarm. In the midst of the startled crowd the fat Classical lay sprawled on the floor, his eyes closed, his lips tight shut, voiceless and motionless.

CHAPTER 25.

A Startling Catastrophe!

"WHAT is this? What——"

It was the voice of Mr.

Bootles, the master of the Fourth.

The Form-master had come into the House, and he came quite suddenly upon the crowd of alarmed juniors.

The Rookwood fellows exchanged looks of dismay.

Mr. Bootles was not to have known anything about the banister race; but it was pretty clear that he would have to know about it now.

The master pushed his way through the juniors, and blinked over his glasses at the still form of Tubby Muffin.

Mr. Bootles' ruddy face grew quite pale.

"What is the matter with Muffin?" he exclaimed.

"He—he's had a fall, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"A fall! From where?"

"The—banister, sir."

Mr. Bootles frowned grimly.

"Then you have been sliding down the banisters?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"A very foolish and reckless proceeding," exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Surely, Silver, as head boy of your Form, you should have known better than to allow a clumsy lad like Muffin to participate in such a perilous game?"

"I—I tried to stop him, sir."

"Jimmy told the young ass to keep out of it, sir," said Lovell.

"None of you should have done anything of the sort, as you know very well," snapped Mr. Bootles. "I have spoken to you before on this subject. Now Muffin is hurt, perhaps seriously. I trust this will be a lesson to you."

The juniors looked very sheepish. They were concerned for the unfortunate Tubby, but they were angry with him, too. Why couldn't the duffer keep out of a game he was not fit for? And now there was going to be trouble.

Mr. Bootles knelt beside Tubby Muffin. Tubby's eyes opened, and he blinked at the Form-master.

"Are you hurt, Muffin?" asked Mr. Bootles.

Tubby's lips moved, but he did not reply.

"Muffin!"

No answer.

"Do you hear me, Muffin?"

Tubby seemed to make an effort to speak, but no words came.

"Bless my soul, what is the matter with the boy?" exclaimed the surprised Form-master. "He does not seem to be bruised or hurt?"

"It wasn't much of a fall, sir," said

Jimmy Silver. "He's only tumbled off the end of the banisters."

"Enough to give him a shock!" snapped Mr. Bootles. "You should have prevented him from taking part in such a reckless game, Silver. I am very angry with you. Every boy present will take a hundred lines; and you, Silver, will take five hundred, as I regard you as responsible."

"Oh!"

"Muffin, if you are hurt, please tell me so," added Mr. Bootles irritably.

Muffin did not speak.

"What on earth's the matter with him?" muttered Lovell. "Has the fat ass gone off his rocker? Why don't he answer?"

"Tubby!" said Jimmy.

Mr. Bootles raised Tubby from the floor. His expression was very anxious now. There seemed to be something very wrong with the fat Classical, though it was difficult to tell what it was.

"Muffin, cannot you speak? Tell me what is the matter with you," said Mr. Bootles.

Tubby Muffin gave a queer gurgle.

Then he put his hand to his mouth.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the alarmed Form-master. "Do you mean to say that you cannot speak?"

Tubby Muffin certainly did not mean to say so, but he intimated as much. He dabbed his mouth with his fat hand, and blinked and gurgled.

The juniors regarded him with horror and dismay.

"He—he can't speak!" mumbled Raby. "Oh, my hat! The shock, I suppose."

"Dumb! Good heavens!"

"Dumb!" repeated Mr. Bootles. "It cannot be possible! The shock cannot have been sufficient to cause such a catastrophe. Muffin, I command you to speak to me at once!"

Gurgle!

"Muffin! My dear boy——"

Gurgle!

"Goodness gracious! This is terribly serious!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "Silver, you see what you are responsible for, you utterly reckless boy!"

Jimmy Silver was crimson. It was rather hard on Jimmy, who certainly had done his best to keep Tubby Muffin out of the banister race. But the Fourth Form master had evidently decided that Jimmy was to blame.

"Jimmy was not to blame, sir," said Lovell loyally. "Tubby would do it, after Jimmy had warned him——"

"Silence, Lovell! I regard Silver as responsible for this dreadful catastrophe, and I hope he will take it as a warning. Lovell, Raby, take Muffin to the dormitory and put him in his bed, while I telephone for the doctor."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Bootles hurried into his study, in a very perturbed frame of mind, while the juniors conveyed Tubby Muffin to the dormitory.

The crowd broke up with alarmed and worried faces.

There was no great harm in a banister race, though it was a little risky, and somewhat against the orderly rules of the House. The accident to Tubby could not have been foreseen, and it would have been difficult to prevent him from sharing in the race if he had made up his mind. But the Rookwood fellows sincerely wished that they had not taken advantage of that glorious opportunity, after all.

"It's only because the fat bouncer's so rotten unfit," said Newcome. "He gorges too much pastry, and never takes any exercise if he can help it. It wouldn't have happened to anybody else."

"And it wasn't much of a fall," said Higgs. "Anyway, we shan't have so much of his blessed jaw in the study."

"Oh, shut up, Higgs!" said several voices, in disgust.

"Poor old Tubby!"

"I wish I hadn't punched him now for pinching my cake, bedad!" said Flynn, with great feeling.

And the juniors dispersed to their studies, to get on with their neglected prep in quite a troubled frame of mind.

CHAPTER 45.

The Sufferer!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. had taken Tubby Muffin to the Fourth Form dormitory.

The fat Classical had not uttered a sound.

They helped him to undress and put him to bed, and the fat junior looked at them very pathetically from the pillow.

"I say, Tubby, I'm sorry for this," said Jimmy Silver. "You ought to have kept out of it, you know. I told you to."

Tubby nodded.

"All your own fault, you know," said Lovell.

Tubby nodded again. He was prepared, apparently, to acknowledge that the catastrophe was his own fault.

"Blessed if I see what Bootles wanted to go for you for, Jimmy," said Newcome. "You couldn't help it."

"I suppose somebody's got to be blamed," said Jimmy philosophically. "It is rather rotten, though. And who on earth would have thought of a thing like this happening? Blessed if I should!"

"Tubby, old man," said Raby, "make an effort! See if you can't speak."

Tubby shook his head mournfully.

"Can't you get just a word out?" said Raby encouragingly.

Another shake of the head.

Mr. Bootles came bustling into the dormitory.

"Do not worry Muffin with talk," he said sharply. "You should really be more judicious. You may go. I will

remain with Muffin till the doctor comes."

The Flistical Four left the dormitory. About half an hour later the buzz of the medical gentleman's car was heard in the quadrangle.

Mr. Bootles met Dr. Twist, and took him up to the Fourth Form dormitory. Many glances followed them.

Some of the juniors waited in the passage outside to hear the doctor's verdict when he came out.

Dr. Twist was a considerable time in the dormitory.

When he came out his fat face was very grave in expression.

"Excuse me, sir," Jimmy Silver came forward. "May we know about Tubby—I mean Muffin?"

"Certainly my little man," said the doctor affably. Jimmy Silver writhed inwardly at being called a little man. Really, the medico did not seem to understand that chaps in the Fourth were practically grown-up chaps. "I am afraid Muffin's state is somewhat serious. Doubtless he may recover his speech in time; in fact, I can almost say he will do so. A very remarkable and interesting case; not at all uncommon in these days, as it happens. Sudden shock may produce deafness, or loss of memory, or loss of speech. There were many such cases in the Great War."

"But this wasn't much of a shock, sir; only a tumble off the banisters."

Dr. Twist nodded.

"Quite so; that makes it more extraordinary. The unfortunate boy is very much out of condition physically, which may have had something to do with it. At present he cannot utter a syllable. But I have hopes—every hope—that he will recover, my little man."

"Is he going into sanatorium, sir?"

"That will not be necessary. Apart from the loss of speech, he does not seem to be injured in any way. It is not at all necessary to isolate him. In fact, the company of his school-

fellows may assist his recovery. Of course, it must be understood that there is no rough horseplay, and so on."

"Oh, yes; of course, sir! We'll look after him."

The medical gentleman returned to his car and buzzed away.

The Classical Fourth did not see Tubby Muffin again till they went up to bed. They found him fast asleep and snoring. Townsend remarked that he had not lost his snore as well as his speech, which was a pity. But Townsend was frowned down. It was not a subject for jokes.

The Fourth Form dormitory was unusually quiet that evening. Even Higgs, the bully of the Fourth, was careful not to disturb Tubby.

Some of the fellows discussed him in whispers. Suppose he never recovered his speech—what a prospect for poor old Tubby! More especially, as Townsend observed, because he was a terrific talker, and generally ran on inexhaustibly so long as he could get a victim to listen to him.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, and the Fourth Form turned out, Tubby remained in bed.

Lessons, in his present state, were out of the question.

Although not removed to the school sanatorium, Tubby had all the privileges of an invalid.

His breakfast was to be brought up to the dormitory, and he was to remain in bed if he chose. Tubby was very fond of his bed, and the rising-bell was the one thing at Rookwood he hated with a perfect hate. In spite of his dumbness, he looked very cheerful as he lay in bed and watched the other fellows dressing. It was a cold, sharp morning, and some of the Classics envied Tubby, warmly tucked up in blankets.

"Feel better this morning, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Tubby nodded.

"Can't you speak yet?"

A shake of the head.

"Haden't you better get up and get some fresh air in the quad? It might do you good."

A very emphatic shake of the head.

"Have you lost your appetite?" asked Higgs.

A still more emphatic shake.

"Well, you're a lucky bargee," remarked Townsend. "You're stayin' in bed, and you're goin' to cut lessons, an' have a good time. Blessed if I don't wish I could change with you!"

Tubby grinned.

"How does it feel to be dumb intirely?" asked Flynn.

No answer.

"Bedad, and can't you tell a fellow what it's like, you spalpeen?" demanded Flynn indignantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How can he tell you when he's dumb, you ass?" roared Lovell.

"Bedad, I never thought of that, intirely!"

"I'll tell you what," said Rawson. "Chaps who lose their speech owing to a shock often recover through getting another shock. It's quite common. Suppose we give Tubby a shock?"

The dumb junior looked alarmed. His fat lips opened, and for a moment it seemed that he was going to speak. But he did not.

"Not a bad idea," said Higgs. "Suppose we pitch the bed over, with Tubby in it? That would give him a shock."

"What do you think, Tubby?"

Tubby shook his head vigorously.

"Let him alone, you asses!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You might send him into a fit, or he might lose his hearing with the next shock. We don't want him deaf as well as dumb."

"Might do him good," said Higgs obstinately.

"Faithead!"

"Well, I think it might do him good, and it ought to be tried," said Higgs. "He might yell out, you know, if he

landed on his napper, and—and there you are."

Tubby Muffin looked dreadfully alarmed. The prospect of landing on the dormitory floor on his "napper" did not seem to appeal to him in the least.

Jimmy Silver dragged Higgs away. Such drastic measures might have had a beneficial result; but there was no telling what other result they might have had.

Tubby Muffin was still warm and comfortable in bed when the rest of the Classical Fourth went down. Some of the juniors saw his breakfast being taken up, and they noted that it was a more savoury breakfast than fell to the rest of the Rookwood juniors. Tubby was a privileged person now.

The fat Classical was absent from his place in the Form-room. There were no lessons for Tubby that day.

As Tubby was a champion slacker and the biggest dunce in the Fourth, he detested lessons almost as much as he detested the rising-bell. Upon the whole, Tubby was not much in need of sympathy. His catastrophe did not cause him any suffering, save the painful ordeal of silence, and he was getting out of everything he did not like. After lessons, the juniors found him sunning himself on an oaken bench in the quadrangle.

They surrounded the sufferer at once. "Talking yet, Tubby?" asked Tommy Dodd.

Tubby shook his head.

"Had a pleasant morning?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Tubby nodded.

"Better than lessons?" grinned Rawson.

Nod.

"Think you'll recover soon?"

Shake.

"Appetite still good?"

Nod.

"Come and have a snack at the tuckshop before dinner?"

Tubby jumped up with placidity.

In the tuckshop Tubby Muffin distinguished himself, as usual. The catastrophe had evidently not affected his appetite in the least. The juniors were glad to see that he was quite his old self, with that one queer exception that he could not speak. But they were puzzled, too.

The "snack" did not in any way detract from Tubby's prowess at the dinner-table a little later. And when the bell rang for afternoon classes, and the Fourth went to their Form-room, Tubby Muffin rolled out equably into the sunny quad with the latest number of "The Gem" in his podgy hand. And some of the Fourth Form began to wish that they'd had a shock and gone dumb, too.

CHAPTER II.

A Pig in Clover!

"COME in, Tubby!"

The Fistical Four were at tea in the end study, when the fat Classical appeared in the doorway.

Tubby Muffin was not always a very welcome visitor at tea-time. But, in view of his affliction, there was a hearty welcome for him now.

"Trot in!" said Lovell cordially.

The fat junior trotted in.

Jimmy Silver handed him a chair. Raby selected a clean tea-cup, Lovell handed him the ham and tongue, and Newcome strolled out of the study to visit the tuckshop. When Tubby came to tea extra supplies were needed.

Tubby's fat face beamed over the festive board.

He could not speak. And that, no doubt, was a serious deprivation to a fellow who had a remarkable fondness for the sound of his own voice. But in everything else, Tubby was certainly in clover.

A fellow who was suffering under such a misfortune was deserving of any kind of consolation that could be

offered. The juniors agreed on that. And the most welcome consolation to Tubby was something in the eatable line.

Fortunately the study was in funds, and Newcome's addition to the festive board made Tubby's little round eyes glimmer with satisfaction.

He sat and ate with the voracity of a lion, and the Fistical Four kept him well supplied, until even Tubby had to call halt.

Then he slipped a cake and a handful of biscuits and a couple of oranges into his pockets, a proceeding which the chums of the Fourth politely affected not to see.

Tubby gave a grunt of satisfaction as he rolled out of the study.

"He's bearing it jolly well," remarked Raby. "Some fellows would be awfully down in the mouth over a thing like that."

"And it's specially hard on a champion jawbones like Tubby," said Lovell. "He's standing it splendidly."

"Queer that the shock didn't affect his health in any other way," remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "Just dumbed him, and nothing more."

"Yes, it's queer."

The Fistical Four left the study. They met Van Ryn in the passage. He was talking to Flynn.

"It's jolly odd about Tubby," said Van Ryn. "His appetite seems not to have been affected in the least. Flynn says he's had him to tea."

"Has he?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Yes; and he had tea in our study," said Van Ryn. "He did himself pretty well. And then he seems to have gone and had tea with Flynn. I wouldn't grudge poor old Tubby anything, but I hope he won't make himself ill with it."

"But he's had tea with us, too!" exclaimed Lovell.

"My hat!"

"Sure, ne'll burst a boiler if he goes on loike this," grinned Flynn.

"It's marvellous where he puts it," said Jimmy Silver. "It looks as if Tubby is booked for a good time. I suppose he'll be welcome in any study so long as his affliction lasts."

A little later Jimmy had occasion to look into Rawson's study. To his astonishment he found Tubby Muffin at tea with Rawson and Topham and Townsend. Jimmy stared at the fat Classical.

"Tubby, old man," he, exclaimed anxiously, "don't overdo it! That's your fourth tea, isn't it?"

Tubby grinned; but did not reply.

After tea with Rawson, Tubby strolled out of the School House with somewhat slow and heavy motions.

But it did not take him long to recover from a feed.

Later in the evening he strolled into Mr. Manders' House, and presented himself at Tommy Dodd's study.

The three Tommies had finished their prep, and were having supper in the study. There was a fragrant scent of fried sausages and chips.

"Come in, Tubby!" said the three Tommies together, with great hospitality.

Tubby Muffin sat down to sausages and chips.

His previous exertions had apparently not told upon him. He disposed of the Hon's share of the sausages and chips, his fat face beaming over the table. The Modern chums pressed the good things upon him, and Tubby Muffin never said nay.

When he returned to the Classical side Tubby found baked chestnuts going in the end study. The Fistical Four cordially invited him to share, and a considerable quantity of baked chestnuts followed the sausages and chips.

In the dormitory that night Tubby Muffin was looking a little queer, which was not surprising under the circumstances.

His motions were slow and heavy,

and his complexion had assumed a peculiar greenish tint.

Perhaps the sausages and chips did not agree with the ham and tongue or the baked chestnuts, or perhaps the oranges were on bad terms with the bananas and tomatoes.

At all events, Tubby certainly was queer.

He groaned as he crawled into bed. Bulkeley of the Sixth was seeing lights out for the Fourth, and he heard Tubby's groan, and came to his bedside.

"Anything wrong, Tubby?" asked the captain of Rookwood very kindly.

Groat!

"He seems to be worse," said Bulkeley. "Have you got a pain, Muffin?"

Tubby nodded dismally.

"Where?"

Tubby tapped the place where his lowest waistcoat button would have been if he had had his waistcoat on.

Bulkeley looked perplexed.

"That's jolly odd," he remarked. "It seems to be affecting his stomach. The doctor had better come."

There was a chuckle from some of the Classical Fourth, and the Sixth Former looked round sharply.

"This isn't a laughing matter," he said. "It's no joke to be struck dumb. You might feel a little sympathy."

"So we do," said Jimmy Silver at once. "We're awfully sympathetic. But it isn't that shock that's the matter with Tubby now."

"What is it, then?"

"Ahem! I think Tubby has made rather too good a supper."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley.

"Sure, I warned him that the potted rabbit mightn't agree with the tomatoes and cheese," said Flynn.

"And lemonade and ginger-pop and currant wine might disagree with any of them," suggested Townsend.

"Not to mention the bloater-paste and the sausages," said Topham.

"And the figs and bananas," said Jones minor.

"And the tomatoes——"

"And the ham——"

"And the tongue——"

"And the sugary biscuits——"

"And the toffee——"

"And the dough-nuts——"

"And the cream-cheese——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby groaned dismally.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"You young asses, you'd better show Tubby your sympathy in some other way. If he's got all those things inside him, the wonder is that he isn't seriously ill. Muffin, you young duffer, I shall speak to the doctor about this, and he will give you some instructions about diet."

Whereat Tubby Muffin groaned more deeply than before.

Tubby's groans were heard for some time before the Classical Fourth went to sleep. His dumbness did not seem to have affected his groaning powers. But when Higgs threatened to throw a pillow at him if he didn't shut up, there was a howl of wrath directed against Higgs, and the bully of the Fourth did not throw the pillow. Tubby was a privileged person, and he was at liberty to groan as much as he liked.

The next morning Dr. Twist saw Tubby again, and he looked very serious. He left written instructions as to Tubby's diet, and Mr. Bootles spoke to the sympathetic juniors on the subject.

That day Tubby was still free from lessons; but he did not look so cheerful as before.

Open-handed fellows were quite ready to stand treat at the tuckshop, but the doctor's instructions had to be obeyed.

And Tubby's glorious feeds had come to a sudden end.

Even the pleasure of slacking about the quadrangle while the other fellows were at work did not quite compensate Tubby for that, and during the day he looked dismal and mournful.

At last it was in vain that he pre-

sented himself at study after study with appealing looks.

"It won't do, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver kindly. "You know what the doctor says. It may be serious if you touch pastry while you're ill."

Tubby's lips opened—and closed again. Then he shook his head vigorously to intimate that he wasn't ill.

But Jimmy was firm.

"Can't be helped, Tubby. Dr. Twist says you're to have your tea in hall, where Bootles can keep an eye on you. Feeding in the studies is strictly forbidden."

"You must stand it, old chap," said Lovell sympathetically.

Tubby grunted dismally. He took a chunk of chalk from his pocket, and scrawled on the table:

"I'm starving!"

"But you've had tea in hall," said Raby.

Tubby snorted. Tea in hall wasn't much to Tubby.

"Well, there's nothing doing," said Jimmy firmly. "Can't disobey medical orders."

Tubby snorted again, and rolled out of the end study. He tried study after study in vain. The Classical Fourth were sympathetic, but the doctor's instructions could not be disregarded. The pig was no longer in clover.

CHAPTER 25.

Jimmy Silver Smells a Rat!

"WHO'S been in my study?"

Jones minor asked that question in the Fourth Form passage at the top of his voice.

Jones of the Fourth was looking wrathful.

"Hallo? What's biting you?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking out of the end study.

"Who's been at my cupboard?" roared Jones.

"Ha, ha!"

"You cackling ass!" shouted Jones indignantly. "Somebody's cleared out

my cupboard! My cake's gone—and the coffee—and the ginger-beer."

Townsend came out of his study with a fiery look.

"Who's been raiding my cupboard?"

"You, too!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"I'll scalp him!" roared Townsend.

"Who was it, eh? I'd got a little supper laid in for five—and it's all gone!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Where's Tubby?"

"Tubby!"

"Oh, the fat rotter!" exclaimed Jones minor.

"Tubby, of course!"

"Where is he?" roared Townsend.

"I'll slaughter him!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"No, you won't. You'd better keep your cupboard locked."

"It was locked!" howled Townsend.

"The lock's been busted!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"So was mine!" snorted Jones minor.

"And mine, too!" yelled Peele, coming out of his study. "Somebody's raided me and taken my cake—the cake my aunt sent me to-day!"

"Where's Tubby Muffin?"

"Where is that fat oyster?"

Lovell came out of the end study with a peculiar expression on his face.

"There won't be any supper to-night, Jimmy," he remarked.

"Eh! Why not?"

"The sausages and baked potatoes are gone."

"Gone!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Clean gone!"

Townsend burst into a laugh.

"You, too!" he exclaimed. "Muffin's cleared you out, too. Serve you jolly well right."

"Dash it all, it's rather too thick!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "There's the doctor's orders, too."

"Oh, blow the doctor's orders!" growled Jones minor. "It's my grub I'm thinking about. Where's that fat villain?"

There was a rush of indignant juniors in search of Tubby.

The fat Classical was not found in his study. His study-mates had seen nothing of him.

A yell from the box-room announced that Jones minor had discovered Tubby there, and there was a rush of excited juniors to the spot.

Tubby Muffin was seated upon the end of an empty trunk, which was littered with the remains of the food.

Only the remains, unfortunately. The juniors had arrived too late!

"You fat rotter!" roared Peele, clutching the fat junior by the collar.

"Where's my cake?"

"Where's my coffee?"

"Where's my ginger-pop?"

"Where's my sosses?"

"Bump him!"

"Scrag him!"

Jimmy Silver pushed through the excited crowd, and dragged Tubby Muffin out of the hands of his persecutors.

"Cheese it!" said Jimmy.

"Look here, Silver——"

"My cake——"

"Let Tubby alone!" said Jimmy decidedly. "He's a fat beast, but you can't rag a chap who's gone dumb!"

"I suppose he's not going to wolf everything in the passage because he can't jaw?" yelled Jones minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump him!"

"Stop it, I tell you!" said Jimmy. "He's scooped my tuck as well as yours. I tell you he's not going to be handled!"

Tubby Muffin, with great alarm in his looks, wriggled behind the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy held the angry juniors back, the Co. backing him up.

"Keep smiling," urged Jimmy.

"You silly ass——"

"You frabjous duffer——"

"Remember poor old Tubby's affliction——"

"Oh, blow his affliction!" snapped Peele. "I'm fed up with his affliction! He ought to be sent to a dumb asylum!"

"Don't be an unfeeling beast, Peele——"

"Oh, rats!"

Peele stalked indignantly away. The

other victims howled threats at Tubby, and followed him.

Tubby Muffin gasped with relief.

He had raided the junior studies regardless of consequences, and he had fully expected to have to suffer for his sins.

Jimmy Silver fixed a stern look on him.

"Look here, Tubby, this has got to stop," he said. "I've stopped them this time, but next time you'll get scragged!"

Tubby looked very pathetic.

"Yes, I know you're dumb," said Jimmy, relenting. "But you've got to draw it mild, you know. You'll wear out the fellows' sympathy in time."

Tubby sniffled.

"Oh, don't turn the tap on, for goodness' sake!" exclaimed Jimmy, in alarm. "You're welcome to my sosses and potatoes, for that matter. But there's the doctor's orders to be considered. I suppose you want to recover your speech, don't you?"

Snuffle!

The Fistical Four left the box-room. It was evidently not much use talking to Tubby.

When they were gone Tubby Muffin closed the box-room door and grunted.

Then he opened the trunk, and drew out several articles which had been hidden from sight. And Tubby's plump jaws were quickly busy upon Peele's cake. It had not occurred to Peele to look in the trunk.

In the dormitory that night there were some emphatic remarks made to Tubby Muffin, but he only replied with pathetic looks.

Even Peele relented at last, and dropped the subject.

The next morning, when the Fourth came down, Mr. Bootles met them in the hall, and stopped the fat Classical.

"How do you feel this morning, Muffin?" he asked.

Tubby shook his head to indicate that he was no better.

"You do not find your speech returning?"

Another shake.

"Do not lose hope, my dear lad," said Mr. Bootles kindly. "Dr. Twist is very much perplexed by the case and he suggests consulting a specialist. Before long you will be seen by a very famous specialist, who will tell us exactly what is the matter with you."

Tubby Muffin's jaw dropped.

He blinked at Mr. Bootles with an expression which could not be supposed to indicate anything but consternation.

Even Mr. Bootles, who was not very observant, could not help seeing that his good news was not very welcome to Tubby Muffin.

"My dear Muffin," he said gently. "you need have no misgivings. It is not proposed to have an operation, or anything of that kind. You will simply be given a thorough examination by a gentleman whose knowledge of such matters is world-famous, and who will undoubtedly discover exactly what is the matter. You may take comfort from that, my poor boy."

Tubby Muffin nodded.

But the dismay in his face was too evident to be concealed as he went out into the quad.

In the quadrangle Jimmy Silver tapped him on the shoulder, and the fat Classical blinked round at him.

There was a new expression on Jimmy Silver's face—a very peculiar expression. His eyes were fixed on Tubby's puggy face with great keenness.

"That's jolly good news, Tubby," said Jimmy. "Isn't it?"

Tubby nodded dismally.

"Ripping to have a big specialist to see exactly what's wrong with your jaws, Tubby—what?"

Tubby grunted.

"He will see exactly how the matter stands," continued Jimmy. "I shouldn't wonder if he quite cures you, Tubby."

Tubby sniffed.

He rolled away, looking very discontented, and Jimmy Silver remained, looking very thoughtful. Strange

thoughts, which had not come into Jimmy Silver's mind before, were working there now. And the outcome of Jimmy's deep reflections was the ejaculation:

"Spoofed!"

CHAPTER 43.

Dr. J. Silver.

"IT'S up to us!"

"Us!" repeated Lovell.

"Us!" said Jimmy Silver firmly.

"What's up to us, fathead?" asked Raby.

"Poor old Tubby's been in a shocking state for days," said Jimmy. "He must feel it deeply. He must miss his usual chinwag. Don't you think so?"

"Jimmy!"

"Well, he must," argued Silver. "Tubby's a great hand at chinwag—as good as pretty nearly any Cabinet Minister in England. Think of what it means to him not to be able to wag his chin for days on end!"

"Jimmy!"

The Co. were shocked. This wouldn't have surprised them from Higgs or Peele, but it was amazing to hear Jimmy Silver referring to Tubby's dreadful affliction in this unfeeling way.

"Just imagine some of our great statesmen struck dumb!" said Jimmy. "Deprived of the pleasure of wagging their chins for whole days! Imagine how they would suffer if they couldn't turn on the regular epoch-making speeches every two or three hours! It hardly bears thinking of, does it? Well, Tubby feels it just as much. I shouldn't wonder if he becomes a Cabinet Minister when he grows up; he's simply terrific at chinwag already! And for days he's had to hold his jaw. Doesn't it touch your hearts, you heartless bounders?"

"Look here, being dumb isn't a joking matter, Jimmy!" said Lovell, frowning. "Tubby's kind of dumbness is!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

"What do you mean, ass?"

"That's right," said Jimmy, with a

nod. "I'm an ass, and you're an ass, and we're all asses—you and I and all of us, as Shakespeare remarks. Was it Shakespeare? The fact is, I'm so touched by Tubby's terrible sufferings at being deprived of the pleasures of chinwag that I'm going to cure him."

"Cure him?" said Newcome.

"Yes. It's time he was cured, and we're going to cure him."

"How can we cure him, fathead?"

"By giving him a shock."

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell.

"What are you driving at?"

"I smell a mouse," explained Jimmy Silver. "For the past few days Tubby has been dumb, and living in clover, while I've been grinding through five hundred lines on the instalment system. Bootles says it's my fault that Tubby went dumb, so I'm going to cure him and set the matter right. Chaps who go dumb from a shock often start jawing again when they get another shock."

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"Why, you told Higgs yourself it was dangerous!"

"So it is—if a chap's really dumb."

"Wha-a-ah?"

"Only Tubby isn't any dumber than we are," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "The merry Tubby has been spoofing us."

"My hat!"

"You can kick me if you like," said Jimmy. "I deserve it for not smelling a rat sooner."

"But—but— Don't be an ass, Jimmy!" said Raby.

"I don't mean to be! I've been ass enough to let Tubby pull my leg, and that's enough. I was watching his chivvy when Bootles told him about the specialist this morning. Tubby was fairly knocked into a cocked hat."

"I noticed that," agreed Lovell. "He doesn't seem to take to the idea—blessed if I know why!"

"Well, I know why. It's because he's afraid he won't be able to spoof a London specialist as he does a village doctor."

"Oh!"

"I ought to have thought of it before!" growled Jimmy Silver. "I'd forgotten! But that evening we had the banister race Tubby had been reading about a man who went dumb from shell shock. He even said it wouldn't be a bad thing for a chap, who'd be able to get out of lessons, and all that. Then he insisted on joining in the banister race. What for—eh?"

"Because he was a silly ass!"

"He's never been ass enough to tackle those banisters before. And he took care not to have a bad fall, either."

"You—you mean to say he was spoofing us all the time?" ejaculated Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I know he was. He got the idea from the newspaper, and he went in for the banister slide as an excuse for getting a shock."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He got the shock, and made out

that it turned him dumb," said Jimmy. "It's as plain as your face, Lovell, and that's saying a lot!"

"Look here, you dummy——"

"The fat rotter's got out of lessons, slacks in bed as long as he likes, and takes things easy," said Jimmy. "He's got me five hundred lines, too, and doesn't care a rap. He's stuck us all for foods, and when the doctor stopped that he began raiding the studies, and depending on his merry affliction to see him clear. He's been borrowing money left and right since we stopped his raiding, and spending it at the tuckshop. Fellows don't like to say 'No' to him, as he's so awfully afflicted. Tubby's a deep card!"

"He's a silly idiot!" said Newcome.

"Silly Idiots are deep in some ways sometimes," said Jimmy Silver. "Tubby got the idea from the paper, and saw a glorious chance of slacking and getting things out of the fellows by way of their sympathy. And at this blessed minute, I'll bet you he's thinking out whether he'll be able to spoof the specialist, or whether he'd better recover before the old Johnny comes down from London."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"His people have been told about it," resumed Jimmy. "They don't seem to be worrying much, but it must upset them a bit. And I suppose his pater will have to pay for the specialist—that's five or six guineas, at least. Specialists stick you pretty deep, you know. It's a rotten shame on his pater, and Tubby doesn't care so long as he goes on slacking and gorging. I don't know Mr. Muffin, but I think it would be only decent to save him that expense by curing Tubby ourselves."

"Blessed if it don't look like it!" said Lovell. "But—but you might be making a mistake, Jimmy——"

"The end study never makes mistakes!" said Jimmy serenely. "But I am not going to run any risk. I don't propose pitching him neck and crop over the banisters or chucking him in the river. That would give him a shock, of course——"

"Ha, ha! It would!"

"But without giving him any shock that would hurt him if it's genuine, I think we can induce him to find his voice, if he's got one left. Let's go and see the chaps in his study; they will have to help."

"I say, if he's been spoofing us, he ought to be jolly well slaughtered," said Raby indignantly. "The fat beast had two bob off me to-day!"

"And a bob from me!" growled Newton.

"Well, we'll slaughter him!" said Jimmy cheerfully. "Come on! Follow Uncle James!"

The Fistical Four proceeded to No. 3 Study. It was evening, and the Classical Fourth were mostly at prep. Van Ryn and Higgs were working, but Tubby Muffin reposed more or less gracefully in the armchair. Prep was over for Tubby—till lessons started again.

Jimmy Silver entered the study, and as he stood within it he put his hand behind him and extracted the key from the lock on the door.

"You two chaps are wanted," he said. "Come on! It's rather important! You'll be interested!"

Van Ryn and Higgs, somewhat puzzled, followed Jimmy from the study. They were still more surprised when Jimmy silently inserted the key in the outside of the lock, and turned it.

"What the thunder are you up to?" demanded Higgs.

"Carrying out your idea, Higgs," said Jimmy Silver affably. "We've good reason to feel sure that Tubby can be cured of his dumbness by getting a bit of a shock."

"Well, that was my idea all along," said Higgs, more amicably. "All the fellows were down on it, though. You were!"

"But we've tumbled to something since," explained Jimmy. "Tubby's kind of dumbness can be cured quite easily, as it happens."

"How do you know?" asked Dick Van R.

"Because it's spoof!"

"Wh-a-at!"

"Don't yell! Tubby isn't to know yet. But I rather think that in about five minutes Tubby will be yelling to be let out of that study."

"But—but he's dumb!"

"If he's dumb he won't yell, that's a dead cert," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But if he isn't dumb, he will yell like billy-o!"

"What are you going to do?"

"Watch your uncle!" said Jimmy.

The juniors watched him with keen interest. More fellows gathered in the passage to look on.

Jimmy Silver fetched the ashpan out of the end study, and proceeded to tear up an old exercise-book into it. Then he struck a match, and lighted the fragments of paper, and there was a flare and a smell of smoke.

"What the dickens—" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver did not reply. He placed the ashpan close to the door of No. 3 Study, and blew the smoke through the keyhole. And then he roared, in stentorian tones:

"Fire!"

CHAPTER 44.

A Wonderful Cure!

"**FIRE!**" Tubby Muffin generally extracted himself from an armchair with slow and leisurely motions and a deep grunt.

On this occasion, however, Tubby rose from the armchair in a way that was a close imitation of the motion of a jack-in-the-box.

He fairly bounded up with a gasp.

"Fire!"

Tubby's podgy face turned pale, and he made a wild rush at the door. Smoke was pouring through the keyhole in thin spirals.

"Fire!"

Tubby Muffin grasped the handle of the door, and dragged at it.

To his surprise and horror the door did not open.

He dragged and dragged, gasping and grunting, and the door did not budge. It was fast.

"Help! Help! Help!"

Tubby Muffin's voice rang through the study and the whole length of the Fourth Form passage.

There was a gasp from the juniors outside.

"Speaking, by gum!"

"The spoofer!"

"It's the shock, bedad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! Help!" yelled Tubby from within. "Let me out! Open the door! Yaroor! Help! Yah! Oh! Lemme out! Help!"

Jimmy Silver grinned and laid down the ashpan, and Lovell, chuckling, took it back to the end study.

Jimmy tapped on the door.

"Hallo! Is that you, Tubby?"

"Yes. Let me out!"

"Why can't you come out?"

"The door's jammed!" shrieked Tubby. "Don't go away, Silver! Help!"

"No danger, dear boy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let me out!" yelled Tubby.

"But what's the matter?"

"Matter!" Tubby bellowed. "The school's on fire, you silly ass! Lemme out! Smash in the door! Yaroor!"

"All serene!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Keep smiling! The school isn't on fire, and there's nothing the matter!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Only some old papers being burned, Tubby! Nothing to be alarmed about."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"But I'll let you out, you fat fraud, and jolly well bump you, too!" said Jimmy Silver, inserting the key in the lock and turning it back.

The study door opened, and Tubby Muffin rolled out into the corridor, gasping.

"I—I thought the school was on fire!" he spluttered. "There—there was smoke, and—and somebody was yelling 'Fire!'"

"Yes, I was yelling 'Fire!'"

"You silly ass!" hooted Tubby.

"What were you yelling 'Fire!' for if there wasn't any fire?"

"To cure you of your giddy dumbness, dear boy!"

Tubby's jaw dropped. The expression on his fat face made the Classical juniors shriek.

In his alarm and funk, the fat Classical had forgotten all about his dumbness. He remembered it now, rather too late.

"Oh!" gasped Tubby. "Oh, dear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here comes Bootles!" gasped Rawson. "Look out, Tubby! It's time to be dumb again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Bootles came hurrying up the passage.

He had heard Tubby's wild yells from afar, and, in utter amazement, had recognized the voice of the dumb junior.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Has Muffin recovered?"

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy Silver demurely. "He can talk as easily as anything now, sir!"

"Ripping, ain't it?" grinned Lovell.

"Muffin! My dear boy——"

"Oh, lor!" groaned Tubby.

Tubby Muffin was not a bright youth, but he could see that the game was up now.

All the Classical Fourth knew that he had been spoofing, and certainly he would not be allowed to keep on his trickery. If he had attempted to deceive his Form-master further, Jimmy Silver & Co. would have undeceived him promptly enough, though they had no intention of betraying Tubby otherwise. The fat rascal deserved to be punished, but they did not want to "give him away."

Tubby's fat face was dismayed. He was "bowled out" with a vengeance and he realized that deception had come to an end.

"You can speak, Muffin?" asked Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir," mumbled Tubby.

"Extraordinary!"

"Amazing, by gad!" murmured Lovell, with a chuckle.

"A most extraordinary and interesting case!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "How did you first feel your speech returning, Muffin?"

"I—I—I—" stammered Tubby.

"Dear me, what a smell of smoke!" said Mr. Bootles, sniffing. "Is anything on fire anywhere?"

"I think not, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "I've been burning some old papers, but it's out now!"

"You should be more careful, Silver. The passage is quite smoky!" said Mr. Bootles. "I thought I heard someone calling 'Fire!'."

"Only a false alarm, sir."

"You are a very careless boy, Silver!"

"Ahem! Yes, sir."

"I should certainly give you an imposition for your carelessness, Silver; but in this happy moment I will not inflict a punishment," said Mr. Bootles.

"Thank you, sir!"

"Muffin, I am delighted to see that you have recovered your speech. It will not be necessary to have the specialist down now. I will inform Dr. Twist at once. Did your speech return suddenly, Muffin?"

"Quite suddenly, sir."

"Had you received a shock of any kind?" asked Mr. Bootles, with great interest.

"I—I—I—"

"I think Muffin fancied the school was on fire, sir," said Jimmy Silver, with great calmness.

"Ah, I understand! Silver, your carelessness has, after all, served a good purpose," said Mr. Bootles. "It was due to your carelessness in the first place, Silver, that Muffin became dumb. Your carelessness has been the cause of his recovery. It is a very remarkable coincidence!"

"Extraordinary, sir, isn't it?" said Jimmy Silver, with the gravity of a Chinese mandarin, while Lovell gurgled helplessly.

"Very extraordinary! And you feel that you can speak quite freely now, Muffin?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"Excellent—excellent! I will inform Dr. Twist at once, and ask him to come. You feel quite well, Muffin!"

"Yes, sir. Only—only—"

"Only what, Muffin?"

"Only hungry, sir," said Tubby.

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

Mr. Bootles smiled.

"I see that you are quite your old self, Muffin. I will go and telephone to Dr. Twist at once."

Mr. Bootles rustled away.

Tubby, not quite liking the looks of the Classical Juniors, retreated into his study. The Juniors followed him in.

"You spoofing oyster!" said Lovell.

"You thafe of the worruld!"

"You fat rotter!"

Tubby Muffin grinned feebly.

"I—I say, I—I was dumb, you know," he stammered.

"Bump him!"

"Own up, you fat rotter!"

"Leggo!" howled Tubby as the Classics grasped him. Certainly there was no sign of dumbness about Tubby now; his voice was in full vigour. "Yaroo!"

Bump—bump—bump!

"Yow-ow-woop! I—I say, don't be beasts, you know! It was only a lark," howled Tubby. "Only a game, you know! Yow-ow! I—I wanted to cut lessons, you know! Yarooop!"

Bump—bump—bump!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The Juniors streamed out of the study, leaving Tubby Muffin gasping on the floor. And the wild howls that followed them bore testimony to the fact that Tubby Muffin was no longer dumb.

THE END.

ODD JOBS!

WHO is the man with the world's strangest job? Is it the Arab who runs the one-man petrol station on the Imperial Airways emergency landing-ground in the middle of the Sahara Desert, or the Japanese egg expert who tells, merely by looking at chickens' eggs, which are going to turn out hen chicks and which cockerels, or the London man who all day long strips the outer skin off discoloured pearls, so as to reveal the glossy, untarnished surface beneath? But there are all kinds of other jobs, equally unique—so take your pick!

250 Years' Job.

In India, there is a Hindu family which, for the past seven generations, has been working on an intricate marble carving. The carving is on a disc of stone about seven feet in diameter by eight inches thick. It was started over two hundred years ago by a man who spent his whole life working on it. Then, when he died, his eldest son took over, handing it on in turn to his son, and so on for seven men's lifetimes. The carving is still unfinished. It is calculated that another fifty years' work will be required!

The Forth Bridge, in Scotland, provides an unusual job for a gang of workmen. All the year round they are engaged on painting the bridge. They start at one end and work along to the other. By that time the enormous structure wants repainting at the original starting-point, so they start all over again!

The private pilot of an American millionaire who owns a castle in the Balkans is another with the claim to the world's strangest job. He was hired over five years ago, but a few days after he began his duties his employer was

recalled to New York by an urgent business matter. Since then the pilot has had no work to do; he merely keeps his 'plane in readiness in case his master decides to return. Meanwhile, he draws a good salary—for doing nothing!

The Water-Taster's Task.

You have probably heard of tea-tasters—the men and women whose job it is to sip cups of tea all day to decide how the various kinds of tea shall be blended for sale to the public—but have you ever heard of water-tasters? There's only one in the whole of Great Britain. He is paid to taste the water of wells and reservoirs, because he can immediately detect any impurities in it, and suggest ways of removing them. That job's worth £1,000 a year!

A jewel expert in America has just finished another kind of strange job—the seven months' task of plucking up courage to cut up the famous Yonker diamond! This diamond, one of the biggest ever found, was picked up by a farmer in South Africa a few years ago, and was sold for £70,000 to a New York syndicate. An expert diamond-cutter was called in to cut the rough stone into shape, but so delicate was his task, and so disastrous would any accident to the diamond be, that it took him seven months of planning and experimenting before he dared start operations!

And here's another strange job—that of a man named Pope Saxton, who goes all over the world hunting wild beasts with bow and arrow! He has killed practically every kind of wild animal, barring elephants and rhinos, with his longbow!

Well, there they are—strange jobs all! Which is the strangest?

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