

JIMMY SILVER, RESIGNS!

By OWEN CONQUEST



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JIMMY SILVER RESIGNS!

BY OWEN CONQUEST



When VALENTINE MERRINGTON takes over the junior captaincy of Rookwood from JIMMY SILVER, he does not find his new job all honey!

CHAPTER I.

The Unrepentable Carthew.

"POOR old Jimmy!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome spoke together in tones of deep commiseration.

And Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, replied:

"Wow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver was standing in the end study, wringing his hands.

His face expressed mingled anguish and wrath.

"Carthew is an awful rotter!" said Lovell.

"A regular bounder!" said Raby.

"A first-class brute!" added Newcome.

"Wow-wow!"

"Does it hurt?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell sympathetically, but perhaps not very tactfully.

"Wow! No!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "Not at all! Wow! This is simply a new form of gymnastics. Yow-wow!"

"It's too bad," said Raby. "We've got to make Carthew sit up, somehow!"

"Oh, the rotter!" mumbled Jimmy Silver.

It was really a hard case.

Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, and the most intensely disliked prefect on the Classical side at Rookwood, had come down very heavy.

Jimmy Silver had undertaken to punish Carthew, the prefect having bullied Jimmy's cousin, Algy of the Third, in a way that Uncle James did not approve of.

Possibly Carthew did not care very much about Uncle James' approval.

Jimmy's method had been to arrange

unlocks in Carthew's armchair, and glue in his slippers and gum in his ink-pot.

Unfortunately, Carthew had come into his study unexpectedly while Jimmy was thus engaged.

Though Jimmy was not exactly fearful, his feelings were expressed in emphatic ejaculations.

Carthew had given him six on each hand.

It was a punishment quite out of proportion to the offence—at least, from the point of view of the end study.

"Poor old Jimmy!" repeated the Co.

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Jimmy Silver. "Never mind. Can't be helped. Yow-ow-ow! My blessed hands are on fire—wow! Let's get out!"

"Come on, then, old chap!" said Baby.

The Fistical Four went downstairs.

Jimmy felt that a walk in the pleasant summer sunshine would make him feel better.

But his luck was out.

Mark Carthew of the Sixth was standing in the doorway, chatting with Knowles of the Modern side.

The Classical prefect grinned at the sight of Jimmy's pained face.

"Fug!" he called out.

Apparently Carthew wanted a fag—or more likely he had invented the want on the spot, for the purpose of worrying the captain of the Fourth a little more.

The Fistical Four passed on, affecting not to hear.

"Silver!" rapped out Carthew.

Jimmy had to stop then. A prefect was a prefect, even if he was a bully of the first water in addition.

"Yes, Carthew?" said Jimmy Silver between his teeth.

"Take this fiver to the school shop, and ask Sergeant Kettle if he can change it for me."

Carthew, with rather a flourish, drew the five-pound note out of his pocket-book, and tossed it to the junior with an air of carelessness.

The banknote fluttered to the floor.

Jimmy Silver did not catch it.

Indeed, he was debating in his mind whether he should tell Carthew to go and eat coke, instead of taking his banknote to the tuckshop for him.

"You chummy young ass!" exclaimed Carthew. "Do you want another taste of the cane, Silver? Pick that note up at once!"

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

But Lovell hastily picked up the note and handed it to his chum.

He did not want to see Jimmy given further punishment; and the prefect was quite within his rights in calling on the services of a fag.

"We'll take it, Carthew," said Lovell. "Come on, Jimmy!"

The Fourth Formers went out into the quad.

Jimmy Silver crumpled the banknote in his aching fingers.

"Jolly good mind to chuck it into the fountain," he grunted.

"Tain't much trouble to change it for the beast," said Newcome.

"I don't believe he cares twopenny about having it changed; it's only to give me a job," growled Jimmy.

"Never mind. Come on!"

The Fistical Four walked to the school shop which Sergeant Kettle kept in the ground floor of the old clock-tower.

Jimmy threw the note on the counter.

"Can you change that for Carthew, sergeant?" he asked.

Mr. Kettle shook his head.

"Sorry, Master Silver: change is short," he said.

"Right you are," said Jimmy, taking up the note again.

He was not sorry to have to return it to Carthew unchanged.

The chums of the Fourth returned to the School House.

Knowles was strolling away to Mr. Manders' House, and Carthew had gone to his study.

Jimmy repaired there.

"Well, why haven't you changed it?" demanded Carthew in his most bully-

ing tone, as Jimmy laid the banknote on the table.

"The sergeant's got no change."

"Most likely you've been too lazy to ask him," growled Carthew. "Is that it, you scowling young rascal?"

"I asked him."

"I suppose you're telling lies!" snapped Carthew.

"You shouldn't judge others by yourself, Carthew!" retorted Jimmy Silver. The prefect's eyes glinted.

It had been his intention to provoke the fag into a cheeky retort, and he had succeeded.

"Is that the way to talk to a prefect, Silver?"

"A prefect of your sort—yes," answered Jimmy Silver recklessly.

Carthew snatched up a cane.

"Hold out your hand!" he thundered.

"Don't you think I've had enough of that, Carthew?" said Jimmy Silver, between his teeth.

Carthew did not answer that question.

He caught the junior by the collar, and the cane came down across Jimmy's shoulders.

Jimmy Silver wrenched himself savagely away, and dodged out of the study.

He just escaped another lash as he went.

Carthew tossed the cane on the table and grinned.

"I fancy I shall bring that young cub to heel in the long run!" he murmured. "I'll take the cheek out of him, or I'll know the reason why."

But Jimmy Silver's feelings as he scudded away from the Sixth Form passage could not have been expressed in words.

That afternoon, in the Fourth Form Room, Jimmy Silver was very thoughtful.

He was not thinking, however, of the valuable instruction he was receiving from Mr. Bootles.

He was thinking of Mark Carthew of

the Sixth, and of ways and means of making the bully sorry for himself.

When classes were dismissed Jimmy was looking a good deal more comforted, from which it might have been guessed that he had thought of a scheme of vengeance.

CHAPTER 2.

Jimmy Has an Idea!

"**F**EEL up to cricket, Jimmy?" asked Lovell, as the Fourth Form came out after lessons.

Jimmy shook his head.

"I couldn't hold a bat," he answered. "I've got something else on, too. Like to come for a walk?"

"Where?" asked Raby.

"Coombe. I've got to see a man," answered Jimmy Silver.

"You haven't said so before," said Lovell. "What blessed man have you got to see in the village?"

"Joey Jones, the potato merchant."

"But you don't want any spuds!" exclaimed Lovell. "We've got lots of spuds from our own allotment."

"Quite so. I want him to write a letter for me."

"Well, my hat! Why?"

"Because his handwriting is different from mine."

"Great pip!"

Jimmy Silver's chums stared at him, greatly mystified.

But they followed him as he started for the gates.

"Is it a wheeze?" asked Lovell at last, as they turned out into the road.

"Guessed that at last, old top? You must have been giving your intellect Swedish drill, or something," said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Oh, rats!" answered Lovell. "I don't see what you're at. I could write a letter for you if you wanted it."

"Carthew would know your fist if he went down to the office and inquired after the letter."

"What office?" yelled Lovell.

"The local paper office."

"I say, this is getting serious," said Lovell, with a look of concern. "Does it run in your family, Jimmy? Now I come to think of it, I've seen signs of insanity before."

"How wow!" answered Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four walked down to the village.

Joey Jones was an old acquaintance of the Classical chums.

Having completed a long service with the Army, he had taken up potato-growing at Coombe.

The Fistical Four had sometimes gone down on half-holiday to lend him a hand with the digging.

He lived in a cottage outside the village, and he was resting in his little porch, after working in the fields, when the juniors came along.

Jimmy drew a crumpled sheet of paper from his pocket as he paused outside the garden gate, and glanced at it.

"I think that will do," he murmured. "What on earth is it?" asked Newcome.

"Look and see, old chap." Lovell & Co. looked at the scribbled paper.

It ran:

"FOUND!"

"25 NOTE, No. 00010101. Owner can have same by applying to M. Carthew, Sixth Form, Rockwood School, near Coombe. Apply personally, not by letter."

The three juniors rubbed their eyes. "D-d-d-do you mean to say that Carthew found that banknote and kept it?" ejaculated Lovell.

"Not at all."

"But—but this——"

"That's an advertisement for the 'Coombe Times,'" said Jimmy Silver calmly. "It goes in this week's paper."

"But the note's Carthew's, isn't it?"

"I suppose so. He's a reifer, but I don't suppose he's a thief."

"But—but that advertisement sounds as if the note's been found, and Carthew's keeping it for the owner to call," said Lovell, in bewilderment.

"Exactly!"

"Nobody will call for it if it's Carthew's."

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"My dear man, there are a certain number of dishonest persons in existence," he answered. "It's sad, but true. Take that gang, Frinstance—Hook, the bookie, and his friends at the Bird-in-Hand. There are others. Even in this delightful countryside there are persons who are not above annexing other people's property. You ought to have found that out by the prices you've been charged for things."

"Yes; but——"

"Every chap who sees that advertisement will know that the banknote's to be had by applying personally. Ninety-nine in a hundred won't take any notice of it, of course. The hundredth will. See? This advertisement is enough to bring half the rogues in the county calling on Carthew and demanding his banknote. It will keep Carthew occupied a bit in his spare time, and he won't have so much time to waste on little us."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lovell. "It's a jape!"

"Got that at last?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"My hat! Why, a dozen people may come asking for that banknote!" exclaimed Baby. "I suppose there's a nasty rogue as that around this part."

"Shouldn't wonder. May be more. I think Carthew will be kept busy for a time," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"There'll be a terrific row when it comes out that somebody's shoved the ad in the paper!" gasped Newcome.

"That's why I'm not going to write the letter, Joey Jones' list isn't known to anybody, and it won't hurt him. See? Carthew's a suspicious beast, but even he wouldn't think of suspecting the potato merchant of japing him."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Wait for me," said Jimmy. "I'll only be a few minutes."

Jimmy Silver went up the path to the cottage.

He was sure that Mr. Jones would oblige him by copying out that letter, as there was evidently no harm in it.

Lovell & Co. waited for him.

They were grinning now.

Exactly what results that advertisement in the local paper would have they could not guess, but it was pretty certain that the results would cause Carthew of the Sixth a considerable amount of surprise and disturbance.

Jimmy Silver rejoined them in a few minutes, with an envelope in his hand containing the copy of the advertisement.

"We'll shove this in at the door of the 'Times' office," he said. "Anything in before six to-day comes out in the rag to-morrow. Carthew's not likely to see it; he never reads the local paper, of course. We've got to put in a bob—stamps will do. You can't trace stamps."

"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

A dozen stamps were purchased at the village post office, and slipped into the envelope, which was then closed.

The Pistical Four strolled down the old High Street of Coombe, and the letter was duly dropped into the box at the door of the "Coombe Times" office.

Then the Classical chums walked homeward, smiling.

"That's a bit safer than gumming his inkpot or glueing his slippers," remarked Jimmy Silver, "and I fancy it will worry him a bit more, the beast!" Jimmy rubbed his hands. "The worst is, he won't know I did it. I can't very well tell him that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Better not!"

The Pistical Four were feeling far more cheerful when they reached Rookwood. Jimmy Silver especially was particularly chirpy, for he was anticipating the success of his scheme for getting even with Carthew.

CHAPTER I.

JOEY HOOK LOOKS IN!

"LOOK out, Peele! Look out, Gower!"

Peele and Gower, the black sheep of the Fourth, were chatting in the quadrangle when Tommy Dodd, of the Modern side, called out that warning.

Peele and Gower were discussing "geegons," and something's chance of winning somebody's race; but they left off that interesting discussion to stare at Tommy Dodd.

"What are you burblin' about?" asked Peele.

"Here comes a pal of yours!" grinned Tommy, jerking his thumb towards the school gates.

The two nuts of the Fourth glanced in that direction.

A stout gentleman with a red face and a spotted tie was coming in, looking very warm after his walk.

"By gad!" ejaculated Peele. "It's Hook!"

"Joey Hook!" stammered Gower.

The fat bookmaker was the cynosure of all eyes as he came in, and Peele and Gower looked quite pale.

They had certain surreptitious dealings with the bookmaker at the Bird-in-Hand public-house; but, of course, that was strictly under the rose.

"He—he can't be idiot enough to have come here to see us," muttered Peele, terribly alarmed at the bare possibility.

"Mind, we don't know him!" whispered Gower hastily. "Here comes Bulkeley, too! Oh, my hat!"

The two alarmed nuts scuttled away among the beeches, anxious to avoid the glance of Mr. Hook.

Tommy Dodd chuckled.

On some occasions, with great secrecy, the Nuts sought Mr. Hook's congenial society; but evidently they did not want to see him at Rookwood.

Bulkeley of the Sixth bore down on the bookmaker with a grim brow.

Joey Hook was not the kind of visitor that was wanted at Rookwood, and

George Bulkeley was prepared to see him off the premises if necessary.

Mr. Hook gave him an affable smile.

"Nice evening, sir!" he remarked.

"What do you want here, my man?" asked the captain of Rookwood grindy.

"I've called on a little matter o' business," explained Mr. Hook. "Master Carthew is at 'ome, I 'ope?"

"Carthew!" murmured Jimmy Silver. The Pistical Four had joined the crowd gathering round. "Carthew, you fellows! Guess what he wants!"

Lowell and Ruby and Newcome chuckled softly.

It was easy enough for the Co. to guess what Mr. Hook was after when he mentioned that name.

"You've called to see Carthew?" exclaimed Bulkeley, scarcely crediting his ears.

Bulkeley had his doubts about whether Mark Carthew was quite up to the right Rookwood level of conduct, but to find a bookmaker calling on him at the school was a "fencer."

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Hook calmly. "I've seen the advertisement. Master Carthew's found the banknote I lost t'other day, and I've called for it."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley. "Is that it?"

"Why, what did you think it was?" asked Mr. Hook. "Nothin' in a professional way doin' 'ere, I suppose? He, he!"

"I suppose you can see Carthew, if that's what you want," said Bulkeley, rather perplexed.

"I 'ope so!" said Mr. Hook emphatically. "Praps one of these young gents would be so kind as to show me where 'is quarters is."

"Certainly!" said Jimmy Silver at once. "Shall I take him in, Bulkeley?"

"You may as well," said Bulkeley.

"This way, sir!" said Jimmy.

"Thank you kindly, young man!"

Jimmy Silver led the way, followed by Mr. Joseph Hook and quite an army of juniors.

Mr. Bootles met them in the doorway.

The Fourth Form master knew the disreputable Mr. Hook by sight, and he was surprised, shocked, scandalized, and several other things, to see him in the midst of a Rookwood crowd, in the Rookwood quadrangle.

"What—what does this mean?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, barring the way into the House. "Kindly explain what you are doing here! What—what?"

Joey Hook explained instantly.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Under—under those circumstances, you—you may, I suppose, speak to Carthew. But—but—"

"Will it do the feller any 'arm, me speaking to 'im?" demanded Mr. Hook rather beligerently.

"Ahem!—ah!—ahem! I—I will conduct you to Carthew's study personally," said Mr. Bootles hastily. "You—you juniors need not remain. Please follow me, Mr.—er—Hook!"

Mr. Hook followed him.

The juniors followed Mr. Hook.

They did not intend to be left out of this if they could help it.

Arrived outside Carthew's study, Mr. Bootles knocked at the door, and threw it open.

Mark Carthew was having his tea, and Knowles of the Sixth was at tea with him. Both the seniors jumped up as Mr. Bootles whisked in.

Knowles and Carthew stood almost petrified at the sight of the fat bookmaker behind Mr. Bootles.

"Afternoon, gents!" said Mr. Hook, as affably as ever, fanning himself with his hat. "Warm, ain't it?"

"Carthew, this—this gentleman has called to see you!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "I deem it my duty to remain present at the interview to avoid—ahem!—misunderstandings."

The two prefects stood dumb.

Both of them knew Mr. Hook—both had had dealings with him, as a matter of fact, in the strictest secrecy.

The sight of Old Nick at Rookwood could hardly have dismayed them more than the sight of Mr. Hook.

"I—I don't know the man, sir!"

gasped Carthew. "I—I've never seen him before. I've certainly never had any dealings with him. If he says—"

"I've called about that there banknote, sir," interposed Mr. Hook, anxious not to alarm his young acquaintances. He realised what was passing in Carthew's mind. "Course you've never seen me afore, sir. 'Ow should you? It's simply the matter of the liver, sir."

"The—the liver!" stammered Carthew.

There was a howl from the passage: "Pay up, Carthew! Pay your losses!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Did your geegee come in eleventh, Carthew?"

A yell of merriment followed the question.

Mr. Bootles hastily closed the door. Arthur Edward Lovell squeezed Jimmy Silver's arm ecstatically.

"Did you see Carthew's face? Ha, ha, ha!"

"I did!" gasped Jimmy. "He knows Hook. Ha, ha! He thought Hook had come to give him away. Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Fistical Four roared.

Jimmy Silver's jaws were working out sadder than they had ventured to expect.

CHAPTER 4.

Not Nice for Carthew!

"**J**EST the matter of that liver, sir," said Mr. Joey Hook reassuringly. "If you'll hand it over to me, Master Carthew, I'll thank you 'artily."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Carthew shrilly. "Do you dare to say that I owe you money? Mr. Bootles, it is false!"

"My dear Carthew—"

"I can back up Carthew in that, sir," said Knowles hurriedly. "I am perfectly certain that he has never been guilty—"

"You don't catch on, gents," said Mr. Hook, before the Port-masser

could speak. "I ain't sayin' as Master Carthew owes me any money. Course he don't! 'Ow could he when he don't know me? It's simply the matter of the liver."

"What—what liver?" stammered Carthew, wondering whether he was on his head or his heels.

"The liver you found, sir," said Mr. Hook, also wondering.

"That I—I—I found?"

"Yes, sir! That's what I've called for."

Carthew stared at him dazedly.

"Please give the man his banknote, and let him go, Carthew!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles impatiently.

"I—I—I—" stammered Carthew.

"But—but I haven't a banknote, sir—I—I mean I haven't found one!"

"What—what?"

"I—I assure you, sir, that I have found no banknote," said Carthew drazily. "I have a liver, certainly, but it is my own."

"Oh, come," said Mr. Hook impatiently. "If you haven't found a five-pound note, for which the owner is to apply personally, what for did you say so, Master Carthew? Answer a man that!"

"I've never said so," gasped Carthew; "I certainly haven't!"

"There appears to be some mistake," said Mr. Bootles.

"There ain't any mistake," said Mr. Hook obstinately. "I know I've walked 'ere in a 'ot sun for that banknote what I lost, and what Master Carthew found. I'll be obliged to Master Carthew for 'anding it over."

"Carthew, have you found a banknote, or not?"

"Certainly not!" gasped Carthew.

"It is most extraordinary! This man declares that you have advertised the banknote in the local paper, for the owner to call for it here."

Carthew almost tottered.

"Is that the fact, Carthew?"

"No!" howled Carthew. "Certainly not! I've done nothing of the kind."

"Why should I, when I haven't found a banknote at all?"

Mr. Joey Hook began to look ugly.

"If you haven't found a banknote, what did you advertise that there banknote for?" he demanded.

"I didn't!" yelled Carthew.

"You did!" roared Mr. Hook.

"I tell you I didn't!"

"And I tell you I read the advertisement with my hown heyes!" shouted Mr. Hook, sprinkling his aspires freely as he grew more excited. "And that there paper is in the bar of the Bird-in-And at this 'ere moment. Name and address given—Carthew, Rookwood School. If you've changed your mind, sir, and want to keep that there note, it's too late. You 'and it hoyer!"

"I didn't!" shrieked Carthew.

"This—this is most extraordinary!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "If you did not insert such an advertisement, Carthew—"

"I did not!"

"I saw it!" roared Hook. "Read it with my hown heyes. I says to the potman, says I 'I'm on this!' says I. I—I means, I say to the potman, 'This must be the note I lost the huther day,' says I. And I comes 'ere, a long walk in 'ot weather, for that there note."

Mr. Hook's bull voice could be heard the length of the Sixth Form corridor.

Seniors as well as juniors were gathering there, in wonder.

Carthew panted for breath.

He could only suppose that Joey Hook was intoxicated, and had mixed up the address given in some advertisement with his.

"It's a mistake, Mr. Hook," he stammered. "Quite a mistake! I certainly never put any advertisement in the paper. I have not found any banknote."

"You—you see, there is some mistake, Mr. Hook," urged the Fourth Form master. "Pray retire now."

"Ave I come here for nothing, then?" roared Mr. Hook. "I tell you, sir, I ain't going to be diddled!"

"Bless my soul! Pray——"

"Hain't I read that hadvertisement with my hown heyes?" bellowed Mr. Hook. "Now Master Carthew says as 'ow he never put it in. He's going to keep that there banknote what he's found, hey? Not on 'is life!"

"Mr. Bootles," muttered Carthew, "the man's drunk! He's mixed up my name with some other in the paper. You see——"

"I see. It is clear. I——"

"'Wot are you mafferin' about?" demanded Mr. Hook. "I tell you I ain't going to be diddled! I don't want a row. I'm a respectable man. But I've 'ad a long walk 'ere in 'ot weather. And I says, says I——"

The door opened, and Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in, with Neville behind him.

"Can we be of use, Mr. Bootles?" asked the captain of Rookwood quietly.

"H—if you can persuade that—that man to go quietly, Bulkeley!" gasped the flustered Form-master.

"I think I can, sir."

Bulkeley gripped one of Mr. Hook's arms, and Neville gripped the other.

"This way!" said Bulkeley.

"I says, says I——"

"This way!"

Between the two big prefects, Mr. Hook was walked out of the study, helpless as a baby.

He wriggled furiously, but the iron grasp on his arms did not relax.

His feet hardly touched the floor as he was borne along.

Mr. Bootles mopped his perspiring brow.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

"What a—what a very distressing occurrence! Oh, dear! Bless my soul!"

"Let a man alone!" came Mr. Hook's booming voice from without. "Let a man alone, and be blowed to yer! Hain't I 'ad a long walk in 'ot weather? Don't you say I'm drunk, young man! I'll 'ave you up ter hbel! As for that young twindlin' 'ound, Carthew, I could say some things about 'im if I liked!"

Carthew trembled.

Knowles looked quite sickly.

The two unhappy blades of the Sixth would have given a great deal for Mr. Hook to be stricken dumb at that moment.

"Let a man go!" roared Mr. Hook, as he was propelled out of doors. "Let Carthew stand up to a man and face 'im! That's wot I say. He's got my liver! He's made bets with me, he 'as!"

Carthew set his pale lips hard.

"Take no notice of the man's wicked falsehoods, Carthew," said Mr. Bootles. "No one will heed such libellous statements."

Carthew was not so sure of that.

There were fellows at Rookwood who knew that Mr. Hook's enraged statements were not libellous, at least.

"Let a man alone!" Joey Hook's bull-voice was growing fainter in the distance now, as the two prefects propelled him to the gates, followed by a cheering mob of Juniors. "I want to see the 'Ead! I want to tell 'im some things about that there Carthew! He's been at the Bird-in-Ar'd, he has, playing billiards with the boys, betting on pargees, too! That's the kind of 'ound he is! I'm goin' to see your 'eadmaster, I says!"

"Not this time, dear boy," grinned Neville.

Bulkeley's face was dark and grim.

He had a suspicion that Mr. Hook's furious accusations had some truth in them, but that did not make him any the more merciful to the bookmaker.

They reached the gates, and Mr. Hook went spinning into the road.

He sat down there with a bump and a yell.

"You-woop! Oh, you young villains! I'm a-comin' in! I'm goin' to see the 'Ead! I'm goin' to tell 'im about the young rip!"

"I give you one minute to clear," said Bulkeley quietly. "After that I shall begin using my boots."

He drew back his foot.

Mr. Hook scrambled up. The minute was enough for him.

He gave up all desire of seeing the 'Ead, and bolted like a rabbit.

Bulkeley watched him out of sight, frowning.

The captain of Rookwood strode back to the School House with Neville, without a glance at the chattering Juniors.

Jimmy Silver's face was happy and serene.

"Carthew licked me yesterday, dear old boys," he remarked. "I think we've licked Carthew to-day—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put your money on the end study!" chuckled Lovell.

And they roared.

CHAPTER 6.

The Successful Cheatsman!

"HALLO, who's that merchant. I wonder?" remarked Algy Silver of the Third Form.

"Looks a bit of a corker—what?"

Morning lessons were over on Saturday.

The fellows were coming out of the Form-rooms when the "merchant" was seen at the gates, engaged in a warm argument with old Mack, the porter.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stopped to look.

Carthew of the Sixth was on the steps, looking pale and worried.

Carthew had quite forgotten to bully anybody since Mr. Hook's visit; he had other matters to occupy his mind.

He glanced carelessly towards the "merchant" in the distance.

The merchant was a burly, square-jawed man, roughly dressed, with a stick under his arm.

He wore a bowler hat on one side of his head and had a dog at his heels.

He looked like one of the roughest class of frequenters of racecourses, no doubtless he was.

His argument with Mack was growing warm.

Finally he pushed the old porter aside, and strode in.

"Hallo, it's another merry visitor!" said Jimmy Silver.

Lovell burst into a chuckle.

"My hat! I wonder if it's another man to see Carthew?" he exclaimed.

Smack!

Lovell staggered and yelled as Carthew smote him.

Carthew's temper was not good that day.

"You—you—you——" stammered Lovell. "You—you rotten bully, Carthew! What did you do that for?"

Carthew only replied with a glare.

He had done it because he was ill-tempered, and wanted to wreak his wrath on somebody.

It really was unnecessary for him to explain.

Lovell clenched his fists, but Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

Hammering a prefect was too risky an enterprise.

"Go easy, old chap!" whispered Jimmy.

"I—I—I'll——" spluttered Lovell furiously.

"Keep smiling! There's trouble coming along for Carthew," murmured Jimmy. "Listen to that merchant."

The man with the stick under his arm was striding towards the House.

The juniors heard him speak to Smythe of the Shell.

"You Master Carthew?"

Evidently it was Carthew he wanted. Carthew had heard him, too, and he hurriedly retired to his study.

What the man could want he could not imagine, but he knew he did not want to see the rough customer.

"Nunno!" stammered Adolphus Smythe, backing away from the stranger. "Not at all, I assure you."

"Well, I've called to see Master Carthew," said the rough-looking merchant testily. "Where is he? Take me to him. I got no time to waste. Tell 'im that Bill Tichens wants to see 'im."

"Oh, gad!" gasped Adolphus.

Jimmy Silver ran up.

"This way, sir!" he called out joyfully.

Jimmy was quite prepared to show anybody to Carthew's study.

"Thank you, sir," said Mr. Tichens. "I've called for my banknote what Master Carthew's found."

"I thought so," grinned Jimmy. "Follow me—this way! Oh, crumbs! The—the Head!"

Jimmy Silver was piloting Bill Tichens into the House when Dr. Chisholm loomed up in the doorway.

The Head had seen the sporting-looking gentleman from his study window.

"Who is this?" demanded the Head, with a grim look at Mr. Tichens.

The man touched his hat civilly.

"Master Carthew 'ere has found a banknote belonging to me, sir," he said. "I've called for it. Advertisement in this 'ere paper, Number 00010101. Fifteen note, sir!"

"Oh!" said the Head. "You may take this gentleman to Carthew's study."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

Jimmy led the way, and tapped at Carthew's door and opened it, as there was no reply.

Carthew gave him a savage look.

"This gentleman to see you, Carthew," said Jimmy serenely. And he stood aside politely for Mr. Tichens to enter.

The racy-looking man tramped heavily in.

Carthew kept the table between him and his visitor; he did not like his looks.

The Head was hovering in the corridor, frowning, and Jimmy Silver had left the study door open.

"Master Carthew, hey?" said Mr. Tichens.

"That's my name. What do you want here?"

"I've called for the banknote."

Carthew breathed hard.

"Are you mad?" he exclaimed shrilly. "What banknote? Has everybody gone mad?"

The man stared at him.

"The banknote you found, sir," he

said. "I'm speakin' plain enough, ain't I? The fipon note wet you advertised in the 'Coombe Times.' Lookin' at that there paper hoyer my breakfast this morning, sir, I saw your advertisement, so I comes along."

"I have not advertised any note. You must be mad or drunk!" shouted Carthew, exasperated. "Great Scott! How many silly idiots are coming here talking about a banknote, I wonder?"

Mr. Hichens looked ugly.

"I don't foller you," he said. "Ere's the paper, and 'ere's the advertisement, and I'm the man wet that banknote belongs to."

He extracted a copy of the "Coombe Times" from his pocket, considerably stained with fragments of Mr. Hichens' last meal.

"I tell you I did not put any advertisement in that paper!" raved Carthew. "It's a mistake, or else you are drunk. Get out of my study!"

"Carthew!" The Head was looking in at the door with a severe frown. "Kindly control your voice, Carthew! What does this mean? Yesterday, I understand there was an unseemly disturbance over this matter. If you have a banknote belonging to this man, hand it to him at once, and let him go."

"I—I haven't, sir," stammered Carthew. "I don't understand it at all; it simply beats me hollow."

"Look at that there, sir," said Hichens, handing the paper to the Head.

His dirty thumb pointed out the advertisement.

Dr. Chisholm, with a deepening frown, read:

"FOUND!—£5 note, No. 00010101. Owner can have same by applying to M. Carthew, Sixth Form, Rookwood School, near Coombe. Apply personally, not by letter."

"That seems perfectly clear. Carthew," said the Head, handing the

paper to the prefect in turn. "Your conduct appears to me inexplicable, Carthew."

Carthew's eyes almost started from his head as he read the advertisement. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

The paragraph danced before his astounded gaze.

"That there's my banknote," said Mr. Hichens. "No. 00010101. I got the number 'ere on a bit of paper, sir."

"Have you a banknote with that number, Carthew?"

"I—I have a banknote, sir," articulated Carthew. "I—I have not noted the number."

"Show it to me!" snapped the Head.

Carthew, wondering whether he was awake or dreaming, extracted the fiver from his pocket-book and handed it to Dr. Chisholm.

"The number is that given in the advertisement," said the Head, glancing at it. "This—this gentleman has the number, too. The banknote is evidently his property, Carthew."

Carthew jumped.

"It's not, sir. It's mine! It's my own banknote, sir!"

"Then why did you advertise it as found by you?"

"I did not, sir!" gasped Carthew. "I—I can't understand how that got into the paper. I never put it there."

"Carthew!"

"It—it's true, sir!" groaned Carthew, realising how very "thin" that story sounded, even while he told it, and even though it happened to be true. "I—I've never seen that advertisement before, sir! I know nothing about it!"

"Do you mean to say, Carthew, that someone has inserted this advertisement in your name, without your knowledge or permission?" said the Head coldly.

"I—I suppose so, sir."

There was a snort from Mr. Hichens.

"A most extraordinary thing," said the Head. "The unknown person must have known the number of your banknote, Carthew, since it is given here. Carthew, I am sorry to say that it

appears to me that the note is not yours."

"Sir!"

"Having found it, you advertised it for the owner to claim," said the Head sternly. "A proper proceeding. Is it possible, Carthew, that since then you have entertained the dishonest project of keeping the note for yourself?"

Carthew stuttered.

"I—I—I—"

"Changed 'is mind, -str," said Mr. Hichens, with a nod. "Thought of keepin' it for 'imself. Dishonest, I call it! Not wot a man would expect of a young gentleman at a school like this ere, I do say!"

The Head winced.

"Carthew, I am shocked, disgusted! I—"

"Believe me, sir!" stuttered Carthew, "I—I never found the note, I never advertised it, I never—"

"I cannot believe any such nonsense, Carthew! Give the gentleman his bank-note at once!" commanded the Head.

"Wha-a-at!"

"Give it to him immediately!" thundered the Head.

"But I—I—I— It's mine!" shrieked Carthew.

"You will obey me, Carthew, or you will leave Rookwood School by the next train!" thundered the Head.

Carthew, with a face that was simply extraordinary in expression, handed the five-pound note to Mr. Hichens.

That gentleman slipped it into his pocket, with great satisfaction.

"Thank you, sir!" he said. "Stuck obligeed! 'Mornin' to you, sir! Hi, Tesser!"

And Mr. Hichens, with the terror still at his heels, withdrew.

He lost no time in getting clear of Rookwood.

Probably he was anxious to get to a safe distance, having a stolen bank-note in his possession.

"I shall have to consider what action to take in this matter, Carthew," said the Head sternly. "I doubt whether

I can let you remain at Rookwood after this."

"I—I swear, sir——"

"Nonsense!"

The Head swept from the study.

Carthew of the Sixth collapsed into a chair, gasping. He felt completely overcome.

He was under suspicion of having attempted to steal his own liver. And he had lost the liver!

The bully of the Sixth was paying for his many sins, with interest.

A dozen fellows had heard what passed in Carthew's study, and there was a buzz of excitement on the subject at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. executed a war-dance of triumph in the end study.

That celebrated study had certainly "got its own back" on the bully of the Sixth.

As Lovell remarked, Carthew had been fined five pounds for assault and battery; that was what it amounted to.

And the Pistical Four agreed that it was just.

Carthew, of course, was able to prove his ownership of the note. A letter home brought a reply, with the number of the note in it, which he showed to the Head. Dr. Chisholm, very fairly, had to admit that the bank-note was Carthew's, and it followed that the advertisement had been put in the "Coombe Times" by some practical joker.

The Head advised Carthew to give the police a description of Mr. Hichens, and he did so; but the racing gentleman and his terrier and the bank-note had vanished together, and were not to be found.

Three or four more applicants for the bank-note, who dropped in during the next few days, were turned away from the gates.

Carthew paid a special visit to the "Coombe Times" to learn who had inserted that advertisement, but he came bootless home.

And that week, unfortunately, his temper was very bad, and Jimmy Silver

& Co. had the benefit of a good deal of it.

But they did not mind, for there was no doubt that they had got even with Curfew!

CHAPTER 5.

The Tribulations of a Cricket Captain.

VALENTINE MORNINGTON of the Classical Fourth looked into the end study with a grin on his face. "You're in for it, Silver!" he announced.

Jimmy Silver glanced up from the cricket-list he was counting over. Jimmy had been pondering over that list for some time. It was rather an important matter; for it was the list of the Rockwood junior team for the match with Greyfriars School.

Jimmy had compiled that list with great care—not wholly to the satisfaction of the end study. Arthur Edward Lovell figured in it, and was satisfied that, upon the whole, Jimmy had made the selections fairly well. But Raby and Newcome were not so sure of it. Their names did not appear. Jimmy had explained to them that cricket came before friendship, and Raby and Newcome agreed that it did, and ought; but still, they could not quite agree that Jimmy had exercised his usual judgment.

"In for it, Morny?" repeated Jimmy Silver. "I know that, old scout! I've been jawed in this study till my hair's turning grey. Just as if it wasn't bad enough for me to have to leave out my own pals, anyway!"

"Well, you must admit, Jimmy, that you're showing up as a bit of an ass this time," remarked Raby.

"More than a bit," said Newcome. "Too many Moderns in the eleven, in my opinion!"

"Tommy Dodd thinks there's too few!" said Jimmy.

"Tommy Dodd's an ass!"

"And Jimmy's another!" said Raby.

"Go it!" said the junior captain of

Rockwood resignedly. "Rub it in! I'm going to have it from a lot of others. Tubby Mullin will come along soon, wanting to know why he's not in the eleven. And here's Morny——"

"Have you left me out?" ejaculated Mornington.

"I'm happy to say no——"

"Oh, good! I was going to say——them!"

"Oh, I know what you were going to say if you were left out," answered Jimmy. "As you're in, I dare say you think I'm a fairly good judge of a fellow's form at cricket?"

Mornington laughed.

"Exactly!" he replied. "I suppose Erroll's in?"

"Yes, Erroll's in."

"Good man! I don't see anything to grumble at——"

"Same here," said Lovell. "Give a man a chance. A cricket captain is bound to use his judgment——"

"If he's got any!" agreed Raby.

"I've looked in to give you the tip," said Mornington. "There's some more of the merry outsiders who want your scalp, Jimmy. How have you dealt with the Shell?"

"Selwyn's in."

"What about Smythe?"

"We're going to play cricket at Greyfriars," said Jimmy Silver, "not marbles. When we meet them at marbles, I shall put Smythe into the team."

"My dear man, there is wrath in the Shell," said Mornington. "It seems that before your time Smythe was junior captain——"

"And a precious mess he made of affairs!" grunted Lovell.

"No doubt—but he's waxing wroth," said Mornington. "Smythe and his pals are coming here to see you, Jimmy."

"Let 'em all come!"

"And here they are!" added Morny, with a glance along the passage. "Do you mind if I witness the merry interview? It ought to be interesting."

"You can have a front seat—no charge."

Murray sat on the corner of the table. The Physical Four all turned their glances on the doorway, as the elegant figure of Adolphus Smythe, the nut of the Shell, dashed there.

Adolphus Smythe walked into the study, followed by Tracy and Howard. The three Shell fellows looked very lofty and very serious.

"Hallo, old bean!" said Jimmy Silver. "I'll give you a couple of minutes, Smythe! Ring on!"

Adolphus placed his eyeglass very carefully in his eye, and surveyed the grinning Fourth-Formers.

"I'm goin' to have it out with you, Silver!" he announced.

"Go it!"

"How many of the Shell are you putting into the eleven for Greyfriars?"

"One."

"Little me, I suppose?"

"No; Selwyn. He can play cricket."

"Can't I play cricket?" demanded Adolphus, his aristocratic calm giving way for a moment to some signs of excitement.

"Blessed if I know," answered Jimmy Silver. "You may be able to. If so,—you've kept it dark. You've never shown any signs of it on the cricket-ground."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I might have expected this dashed impudence from a dashed fag!" said Smythe.

"You might!" agreed Jimmy. "And if you're not a little less cheeky, Smythe, you can expect a booting, too!"

"I haven't come here for a row. I simply want to know how I stand!"

"Like a tailor's dummy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How I stand in the cricket!" roared Smythe. "I'm left out, with my friends—and, without braggin', I mean to say that we're the cricketers of the Lower School. It was a silly mistake electin' a Fourth-Former junior captain. Bulkeley, as captain of the school, an'

head of the games, ought to have interfered. Still, even you ought to see, Silver, that the Shell will have to get a show in the cricket!"

"A good show!" said Tracy.

"Oh, yaas!" assented Howard.

"Then, I'll tell you what," said Jimmy Silver. "Learn the game. Begin with some practice. Take a little instruction, and profit by it. Some of the fags in the Second Form would give you some tips. In about ten years' time you may know the difference between a wicket and a wicket-keeper. I don't say you will; but you may."

The eye of Adolphus Smythe gleamed through his eyeglass at the captain of the Fourth. There was wrath in the brow of the great Adolphus.

"So it comes to this," he said.

"We're left out!"

"You've got it!"

"Then I'll speak out straight!" said Smythe. "We demand a show in the junior eleven, and we mean to get it!"

"Go ahead! I've given you my advice. Young 'Erbert of the Second will teach you the beginnings of the game—"

"You silly ass!" roared Smythe. "Don't give me any more of your cheek! If my friends and I are not given a show in the cricket this season, there will be trouble!"

"Lots of trouble!" said Tracy.

"Oh, yaas!" concurred Howard.

"The fact is, we're not willin' to leave cricket in your hands, Jimmy Silver. I've little doubt that Wharton and his lot at Greyfriars will walk all over you. We've got the school record to think of, and we're not goin' to stand it!"

Jimmy Silver looked attentively at the great Adolphus.

"It's your lower jaw that moves— isn't it?" he asked, as if he had just made a discovery.

"En?"

"But you move it too much," said Jimmy.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Give it a rest, old trump!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That was too much for Adolphus Smythe. He made a stride towards Jimmy Silver, with his fists clenched. Before he reached the captain of the Fourth, however, wisdom prevailed, and he halted.

"You're not worth lickin'!" he said scornfully.

"How lucky—for you, old bean!"

"There'll be trouble!" said Smythe.

"Look out! That's all!"

"Enough, too!"

"Come on, you fellows!" said Adolphus.

And the nuts of the Shell, in great wrath and indignation, shook the dust of the end study from their feet.

Mornington slipped off the table.

"Quite an entertainment!" he remarked. "Smythe is no end of a funny man, though he doesn't know it. Ta-tal!"

Mornington strolled out of the end study. Jimmy Silver returned to his cricket-list, and dismissed Adolphus Smythe from his mind. Adolphus' threats of "trouble" did not worry the captain of the Fourth. Adolphus was rather too much given to "gas" for that.

But on this occasion, if Jimmy Silver had only known it, the great Adolphus was in deadly earnest, and there was trouble to come.

CHAPTER 7.

Adolphus Comes Out Strong!

"**A**MBLE in, old bean!"

It was, of course, Smythe of the Shell who gave that invitation. Smythe was never content to talk in common or garden English.

Adolphus rose gracefully from his armchair as a number of visitors appeared in the doorway after tea that evening. Tracy and Howard, his study-mates, were with him.

The visitors all belonged to Adolphus' exclusive and elegant "set." They were the "knots" of the Lower School

of Rookwood. They were all Classics. Nattyism did not flourish on the Modern side.

There was quite a little crowd of them—Chessney, Seaton, Glibby and Waugh, of the Shell; Townsend, Topham, Peele and Gower, of the Fourth. And all of them were of the nuts nutty, so to speak.

They "ambled" in at Adolphus' genial invitation.

"Shut the door, old chappie!" said Smythe. "We don't want fags to hear anything that's said. It's rather a secret."

Gower closed the door.

"By gad, what a meetin'!" said Townsend. "Eleven of us altogether. Are you makin' up a team, Smythe?"

"Yass!"

"What?" ejaculated half a dozen of the nuts in chorus.

Towny's question had been asked in jest. The reply in the affirmative astonished the nuts of Rookwood.

"Makin' up a team?" repeated Topham.

"Exactly!"

"Oh, gad!" yawned Chessney of the Shell.

"I thought it was bridge!" said Peele, in rather an aggrieved tone.

"We'll have bridge afterwards if you like. Never mind that now. This is a council of war!" said Smythe impressively.

"Oh, go it!" said Townsend.

"Sit down, dear boys, an' I'll go it."

The "dear boys" sat down.

Adolphus Smythe's study was commodious, and elegantly furnished; but there was rather a shortage of chairs for so numerous a gathering. Townsend and Topham sat in the window-seat, and Chessney and Glibby accommodated themselves on the table. Gower captured Adolphus' armchair as the great man rose to address the meeting.

There was some caricacy among the nuts of Rookwood as to what the meeting was about. They gave Adolphus their attention.

"Gentlemen," said Smythe, surveying his comrades through his eyeglasses. "I've called this meetin' for a rather important purpose. You fellows know that the junior captaincy is in the hands of a Fourth-Former—a dashed cheeky fella whom no fellow can pull with."

"Yeah."

"We know that."

"You know how we've been left out of the footer," said Smythe. "Durin' the winter not a fellow new in this study was given a chance in any of the junior school matches."

"Shame!"

"If Silver ever condescended to play a Shell fellow, it was never one of our crowd."

"Never!"

"Nor one of our pals in the Fourth?" added Smythe, with a condescending glance at Towns & Co. "Only his own crowd—a pretty low crowd; in fact, a gang of young ruffians!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The question arises, are we goin' to stand the same kind of thing durin' the summer?" said Adolphus. "Hitherto we haven't figured in any cricket matches. There's a big match due on Wednesday—a whole holiday—an' some of us would be willin' to go over to Greyfriars."

"Oh, yass!" said Howard.

"I've spoken to Silver, and he's answered me with low cheek—just what I might have expected, and, in fact, did expect. But I've thought it out, and we're not goin' to stand it."

The meeting looked surprised.

"Silver's junior cricket captain," remarked Townsend. "We can't shove into the eleven without his permission."

"I'm not regardin' Silver in the matter at all."

"Oh!"

"The fact is," said Adolphus impressively. "I'm evenin' down heavy."

"Go it!" said Chesney.

Several cigarettes were lighted by this time. Adolphus caught a whiff of

sneak, and coughed. He cleared his throat, and went on:

"I'm passin' Silver's gang by as if they didn't exist. I was junior captain till that cheeky young rascal bagged it. I'm goin' to be cricket captain on this occasion."

"Oh, gad!"

"How the thump—" began Townsend.

"That's what I'm comin' to. My idea is to make up a team, and take it over to Greyfriars, and play the match there."

"Eh?"

"Rather surprises you—what?" grinned Adolphus.

"I should say so!" gasped Townsend.

"Rather a surprise for Wharton if two Rookwood teams arrive there at the same time."

"I'm won't! Jimmy Silver and his lot won't arrive, of course. When we get there we shall be taken for the Rookwood team, as a matter of course."

"But—"

"How—"

"The question is, disposin' of Jimmy Silver's crowd for the day," said Smythe. "Once get that lot out of the way, all will be plain sailin', won't it?"

"Oh, my hat!"

The nuts of Rookwood simply blinked at Adolphus.

That great man was not famous for original ideas, but certainly this idea was distinctly original; in fact, unheard of.

Smythe seemed pleased by the impression he had made. He beamed round on the astonished assembly.

"There'll be a fearful row!" said Gubby at last.

"Who cares?" answered Adolphus negligently. "After we've won the Greyfriars match we can snap our fingers at 'em. Nothin' succeeds like success, you know."

"But—but suppose we don't win it?"

"My dear man, I take a win as a foregone conclusion. But let that be as it may—anyhow, we bag the match."

"What a facer for Jimmy Silver!" grinned Tracy.

"Oh, yes!"

"But how are you going to work it?" howled Townsend. "Jimmy Silver won't sit at home in his study if you ask him to."

"I've thought that out," answered Adolphus placidly. "I've been puttin' in quite a lot of thinkin' on this subject. I've got a wheeze for strandin' the whole gang a hundred miles from Greyfriars."

"Blessed if I see how you'll manage it!" said Topham. "They're goin' over by train in the mornin'. You can't stop them."

"I think I can, an' I'm goin' to. We're goin' by train, an' they're goin' wanderin'. Leave it to me. What I want to ask you fellows is this: Will you play in the Greyfriars match?"

"Great Scott!"

"I guarantee that Jimmy Silver & Co. don't come within a hundred miles of Greyfriars!" said Adolphus. "Never mind now. I've thought out the stunt. We represent Rookwood on this occasion, as we ought on all occasions. Are you fellows goin' to back me up?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If you're sure——" began Glibbey.

"Oh, quise!"

"Then we're backin' you up!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Mum's the word!" said Adolphus, when the applause died away. "Not a word outside this study—not even to Selwyn. He's playin' for Silver, an' he might give us away. Not a merry whisper!"

"You bet!"

"Bravo, Smythe!"

Adolphus Smythe bowed to the applause as it burst out again. At that moment, Adolphus was truly a great man, and he realised it. He lighted a cigarette, and beamed on the enthusiastic assembly through puffs of smoke.

"We score this time," he said. "Jimmy Silver won't be even an 'also ran'—he will be simply nowhere."

"Bravo, Smythe!"

"An' now, dear boys, we'll have some bridge," yawned Adolphus.

And the "dear boys" had some bridge.

CHAPTER 2.

A Very Kind Offer!

JIMMY SILVER did not give another thought to Adolphus, after the interview in the end study, though Adolphus was giving a good deal of thought to him. Jimmy had far more important matters to think about.

The Greyfriars match was close at hand now, and Jimmy, having decided upon his team, was busy keeping his selected men up to the mark. The junior eleven of Rookwood was a really good team, and though everybody was not satisfied, everybody admitted that it was a good team—excepting the honourable company of nits.

Most of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s spare time was put in on Little Side, keeping up their form for the coming match. Baileley, the captain of Rookwood, kindly kept a fatherly eye upon them, and gave the junior champions some coaching.

To Jimmy's surprise, he noted that Smythe & Co. were taking up cricket practice in a rather more serious way than was their wont. But cricket, as played by the great Adolphus, was not a very serious matter. What Smythe of the Shell did not know about the game would have filled volumes.

Still, the nits did turn up to practice as if they had some object in view—as, indeed, they had.

Even the egregious Adolphus had some doubts, perhaps, as to whether he could defeat Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars without any practice at all.

And it was fixed in Adolphus' mind that he was going to play the Greyfriars match with a nutty eleven—in

the place of Jimmy Silver and his team.

If Jimmy had suspected the existence of that little scheme he would have been astonished, and probably amused. But such a scheme was not likely to be suspected—it was too unheard-of for that.

When the juniors went down to practice after lessons on Tuesday, Smythe strolled down, too. Not for years had he taken so much interest in the junior cricket!

Smythe lounged elegantly on Little Side while the cricketers were at practice. When the Fiskal Four came off, and headed for the School House, the dandy of the Shell joined them.

"You kids seem in great form," he remarked agreeably.

"Not so much of your kids!" grunted Lovell.

"Ahem! You look like beatin' Greyfriars all round the town," said Adolphus, determined to be agreeable.

"We hope to beat them, Smythe," answered Jimmy Silver cheerily.

He could not quite understand Smythe's friendliness; but he was a good-natured fellow, and always ready to accept the olive-branch.

"Startin' pretty early to-morrow. I suppose?" pursued Smythe.

"Yes; as it's a whole holiday, we can catch an early train," said Jimmy. "We have a rather long way to go, you know."

"Yaas, that's so. Rather a rotten train service, I believe—several changes, and all that."

"Can't be helped."

"Of course, we might ask them to build us a new railway," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, apparently in a sarcastic vein.

Adolphus did not seem to hear that remark.

"I was going to make an offer, Silver," he observed.

"My dear man, the eleven's full up."

"I don't mean that. I've already offered your services as a cricketer, an' you've refused," said Adolphus, with

dignity. "That's ended. I'm not offerin' to play in your team, Silver."

"Oh! What is it, then?"

"I was goin' to offer you a car for the run to Greyfriars."

"Wha-a-at?"

The Fiskal Four stopped, and stared at Adolphus. His remark had quite taken their breath away.

"A car!" repeated Ruby.

"Yaas."

"Are you joking?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Not at all."

"But—but—"

"You see, this is how the matter stands," said Adolphus, smiling agreeably at the astonished chums of the Fourth. "My uncle's offered me his car for to-morrow—thumpin' big car, capable of holdin' fifteen or sixteen chaps—a regular bus, you know. He uses it as a shootin'-brake. As it's a whole holiday to-morrow he kindly offered it to me to take my friends for a run in the country."

"What a ripping old gent!" exclaimed Newcome.

"Yaas, he's rather a good sort. Big car, with chauffeur complete, you know—just the thing. As it happens, I've decided to go off for the day with Tracy, instead of takin' a party out, as I'd intended. I don't want to throw the car back at nunky, as it were. I shan't want it; but the present arrangement is that it arrives at Rockwood at ten in the morning."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"That's now it is. If you'd care to use it, it's at your service," said Adolphus. "The car will take the lot of you, and it will land you at Greyfriars in half the time it takes by train. It will wait there, and bring you back. You might give the chauffeur a tip. That won't hurt you—you'll save a good bit on railway fares, of course."

"My only hat!" said Lovell.

The Fiskal Four simply blinked at Smythe.

The offer was a good-natured one—wonderfully good-natured! The idea of

making a rapid run across country in a big car, instead of a longer journey crammed into a crowded train, was, of course, very attractive. The Physical Four felt that they had misjudged Adolphus Smythe.

"Well, I must say that's jolly good-natured of you, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Not at all, dear boy."

"But don't you want the car yourself?"

"No, as it happens, I'm going off with Tracy by train—a little stunt we've got for the holiday. But after uncle's sendin' me the car, I'd rather not send it back unused. It would look rather ungrateful. So long as my friends use it it's all right. I'm regardin' you fellows as my friends for this occasion," smiled Smythe.

"Well, if you mean it, Smythe, we'll accept the offer, and we're very much obliged," said Jimmy.

"Yes, rather!"

Adolphus waved his hand.

"Don't mench!" he said. "The car's yours. Tip the chauffeur half-a-quid. If you don't mind. That's all."

"Willingly!" said Jimmy, with a laugh. "We shall save the junior club some quids on railway-fares."

"Yeas, that's all to the good, isn't it?"

"Not so much as will be spent on petrol for the car, though, I should think," remarked Raby.

Smythe laughed.

"That's all right. Nunky provides the petrol with the car," he said. "I'm glad you're acceptin' my offer, Silver. I look on it as friendly."

Jimmy hesitated. He half expected this munificent offer from Adolphus to be followed by a request to be played in the match. If Smythe had attached any such condition to the offer, the offer would have been refused on the spot.

But Smythe didn't.

"It's settled, then?" he asked.

"Yes, old scout, certainly, and many thanks!"

"I hope you'll have a good time," said Smythe genially; and he nodded to the Physical Four, and walked away to join his friends.

CHAPTER 2.

"Times Dampest."

"WELL, my hat!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell, as the chums of the Fourth went into the School House.

"Smythe is an awful ass, but he's not a bad sort," remarked Raby.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I'm blessed if I quite understand him," he said. "The other day he was fairly on the war-path because he wasn't in the eleven. Now he's all smiles. I don't think we've quite done Smythe justice, you chaps. A fellow can be a silly ass, and a good chap all the same."

"It will be ripping to run across in a car!" said Newcome. "If there's room for sixteen, as Smythe says, Raby and I can come with the team."

"Yes, rather! And another fellow or two," said Jimmy.

"Better than stuffy trains, and dashed changing at junctions, and things!" said Lovell. "I must say that Smythe has turned up trumps and no mistake!"

The Physical Four were feeling extremely cordial towards Smythe of the Shell. True, he was offering them the car because he did not want it himself; but it was very good-natured, all the same. There were plenty of fellows at Rockwood who would have jumped at such an offer. A big car and a chauffeur for a whole day's holiday was not an offer that grew on every bush, as Lovell sapiently remarked.

Mornington was in the Fourth Form passage as the Co. came along from the staircase, and he noted their smiling faces.

"Come into a fortune splotch!" he asked.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Not quite," he answered. "But we've had some luck. What do you think of making the run to Greyfriars to-morrow in a big car, instead of crawling round in stuffy trains?"

Morny's face brightened. In his palmy days big cars had been quite in his line, and he missed the expensive luxuries he had once been accustomed to.

"Toppin'!" he exclaimed heartily.

"That's what we think!"

"But will the funds run to a big car for a whole day put?" asked Morny. "It will cost no end of money for petrol alone."

"It's offered to us."

"Oh, gad! Not the Head—"

"Ha, ha! No! The Head's car wouldn't hold our crowd, either. It's Smythe's uncle's car."

"Eh?"

Jimmy Silver explained the handsome offer made by Smythe of the Shell.

Valentine Mornington's face was very peculiar in expression as he listened.

"You're acceptin' the offer?" he inquired, when Jimmy Silver had finished.

"I've accepted it."

"What conditions has Smythe made?"

"None!"

"He hasn't asked to be played in the match?"

"No. He's going off for the day with Tracy, and he doesn't want the car himself. It's jolly decent of him to offer it to us, all the same. There's some of the Sixth would be jolly glad to have it."

"Queer that he doesn't offer it to them, then, if he doesn't want it himself. He likes keepin' in with the Sixth."

"Well, he's offered it to us."

"Blessed if I catch on!"

"Well, it's rather surprising," admitted Jimmy Silver. "But it's a jolly good thing. We shall save time on the journey; and it will be an enjoyable run across country, instead of a pain-

ful infliction—and that's what a long railway journey is in these days. Doubt it all, Morny, you ought to feel as pleased as we do!"

Morny shook his head.

"Do you know what I'd do in your place, Silver?" he asked.

"Well, what?" demanded Jimmy rather restively.

"I'd refuse."

"And why?"

"You remember what that old Johnny said—we've had it in class," said Mornington. "Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes—"

"Construe!" grinned Lovell.

"I fear the Greeks and the gifts they bring," said Mornington. "That Johnny knew somethin'. It's awfully good-natured of Smythe—terrifically; but I fear the Greeks when they bring gifts in their hands, old bean."

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"I suppose you mean by that that Smythe has something up his sleeve?" he said.

"Exactly!"

"Well, what?"

"I don't know; but I fear the Greeks—"

"Oh, bless you and your silly old Virgil tags!" granted Jimmy Silver crossly. "It's jolly decent of Smythe, and I'm feeling no end obliged to him, and I'm dashed if I like to see a fellow suspicious of another simply because he's done something good-natured!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't trust Smythe!" he said.

"I don't know that I do specially; but I shouldn't like to suspect a fellow of having some rotten motive for making a jolly good-natured offer!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver warmly. "What object could he have? He's offered the car to the whole team."

"I don't know. But—"

"But what?" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth testily.

"Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!" answered Mornington.

"Oh, rats!"

With that emphatic reply, Jimmy Silver walked on to the end study.

Mornington gave another shrug. He had his own opinion; but it was not his business to decide the matter; Jimmy Silver was junior captain, and he had accepted Smythe's offer, and that settled it.

Morny remained alone in his distrustful view, too. As soon as Smythe's offer was generally known there was great satisfaction among the junior cricketers; and all of them agreed that Adolphus had acted very well indeed, considering that he was left out of the team. Even Morny's own chum, Kit Erroll, shook his head over Morny's distrust. Indeed the fellows who heard that Morny was suspicious on the subject put it down to the fact that Morny was of a suspicious nature, and one or two rather pointed remarks were made to that effect.

Mornington let the matter drop, though he kept to his opinion. But even to himself he could not adduce much reason for his distrust; and perhaps he wondered a little whether he was over-suspicious. Whether that was the case was to be seen on the morrow.

CHAPTER 12. Smythe's Game!

"STUNNING!"

That was the general comment at ten the following morning.

Outside the School House at Rookwood a gigantic car was baited on the drive, with Smythe's uncle's chauffeur in attendance.

Adolphus Smythe had had a conversation with the chauffeur, unheard by the other fellows. Rookwooders came from near and far to look at the Smythe motor-car. It really was stunning.

It was a giant car—almost a "bus," as Smythe had remarked. There was plenty of accommodation for from fourteen to sixteen schoolboys, and it

was decided that the car should take as many as it would hold. The members of the team were feeling greatly satisfied. The weather was fine and sunny, and they looked forward to the run across country with delight. And five fellows, who were going with the eleven, were equally joyful.

The Rookwood junior eleven consisted of Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Conroy, Van Ryn, Erroll, Mornington, Selward, Chasemore, and Tommy Dodd, Doyle, Cook, and Towle, Moderns, Raby, Newcome, Grace, Oswald, and Pons were accompanying them to Greyfriars. Tubby Mullins' offer to go was declined with thanks, Lovell explaining that the car would hardly stand his weight.

The cricketers came up with their bags, and crowded into the car in great spirits. Most of them took the trouble to tell Adolphus Smythe that it was really ripping of him.

"Don't munch!" was Smythe's reply to such remarks.

The great Adolphus was beaming with smiles. The chauffeur was smiling, too, for some reason best known to himself.

"All in?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking over the crowded car.

"All but me!" squeaked Tubby Mullins.

"No room for wairuses, old chap," said Jimmy Silver. "Once more, Smythe, I must say that this is really ripping of you."

"Don't munch, old bean!" said Adolphus negligently. "It's a real pleasure to me, Silver, to lend you the car—quite!"

Sixteen cheery faces smiled at Adolphus from the car, and Adolphus smiled back.

"I'll give the man his directions, if you're ready, old trumps," said Smythe. "Go it!"

Adolphus spoke to the chauffeur, and that gentleman took his place, and "looked" the huge car down the drive to the gates.

It turned out of the gateway and disappeared.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were en route. "They're off!" smiled Adolphus to his friends.

"I hope they'll enjoy their journey," grinned Tracy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus smiled.

"About time we were off, too," he yawned. "Silver was goin' to snitch the ten-twenty-five, if he'd gone by train. I rather think we'd better catch the ten-twenty-five, dear boys."

"Oh, yass!" grinned Howard.

A few minutes later Adolphus & Co. might have been seen, as a novelist would say, walking down to the gates with their cricket-bags. Bulkeley of the Sixth met them near the gates, and stopped to speak, in some surprise.

"You kids going out for cricket?" he asked.

Adolphus nodded.

"Yass, Bulkeley. We fixed up a match for to-day."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the captain of Rockwood, rather puzzled. "Best of luck."

"Thanks, awfully!"

Adolphus & Co. walked on, and ambled, as Adolphus expressed it, cheerily down the lane to the station. The big car was glimpsed for a moment, climbing a hill in the distance.

"There they go!" grinned Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where are they goin'?" asked Chesney.

"I've fixed that with the chauffeur," said Smythe. "They don't know yet; but they'll know later. They think they're goin' east. My belief is that they're goin' west."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They'll land somewhere in Devon or Somerset presently——"

The nuts yelled.

"While we're playin' cricket in Kent!" Adolphus smiled. "They're really such unpleasant fellows that I'd rather not be in the same county with them. I really hope they'll enjoy the

trip. How lucky my uncle offered me the car for to-day—what?"

"Yes, rather!"

"I'd have liked to run across to Greyfriars in the car myself," said Smythe regretfully. "But we had to part with the car to get rid of that gang. We bag the match, anyway."

It was quite an enjoyable journey to them, under the circumstances, and they arrived at Courfield in great spirits.

By that time, Adolphus opined, Jimmy Silver & Co. were probably finding their outing far from enjoyable.

But that was not Adolphus' business.

The merry nuts streamed out of the station at Courfield, and found a bus standing outside; and Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove, came to meet them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" was Bob Cherry's greeting. "From Rookwood?"

"Oh, yass!"

"But——" said Wharton puzzled.

It was evident enough that the cricketers were from Rookwood; but Harry Wharton was perplexed. He had expected to see his old acquaintances, Jimmy Silver & Co. He knew Smythe and most of his comrades, but he had not expected to see them turn up as the eleven from Rookwood.

"Oh, perhaps you were expectin' to see Silver?" remarked Adolphus.

"Yes. We understood——"

"There's been some changes in cricket matters at Rookwood," Smythe explained. "General dissatisfaction with Silver and his crowd, you know. Their cricket was—well, rather feeble, you know—not quite the thing we require at Rookwood. So they've been dropped out of the junior eleven."

"Oh!" said Wharton blankly.

"You'll find us rather a harder mouthful to chew, dear boys!" said Adolphus. "You'll have to pull up your socks, you know."

"Well, do our best," said Wharton, with a smile.

He was rather disappointed at not seeing Jimmy Silver; but it was, of

course, no business of his what team Rockwood chose to put into the field. He was perplexed, but there was nothing more to be said. Smythe & Co. disposed themselves elegantly in the 'bus, and they rolled away to Greyfriars.

Other fellows there, as well as Wharton and Bob Cherry, were surprised to see Adolphus & Co. arrive as the champions of Rockwood. They were still more surprised when the Rockwood nits appeared in the field, and the match started. And as the game progressed their surprise intensified. Why any institution that was not a home for idiots should send out such cricketers, was a mystery to Harry Wharton & Co.

But Adolphus & Co. seemed quite satisfied and pleased, and a really remarkable score of duck's eggs did not seem to have the effect of dashing their self-satisfaction in any way.

CHAPTER II.

A Day Out.

JIMMY SILVER & Co. settled down in the big car for an enjoyable run in great spirits. Not a suspicion crossed their minds of the facts of the case so far. Even Mornington, under the influence of the fresh air and sunshine, forgot his distrust.

The big car raced on, eating up the miles at a great rate, while the crowd of Rockwood juniors cheered, and enjoyed the air and the scenery.

"What about 'Timco Darnes' now, old trump?" asked Lovell, clapping Mornington on the shoulder, when the car had been speeding along for half an hour. Morny was regarding the landscape with an expression of growing thoughtfulness.

He glanced up.

"Enjoyin' your run?" he asked.

"Yes, rather."

"You, too, Silver?"

Jimmy glanced round.

"Certainly," he answered. "Aren't you, Morny?"

"Oh, yes; but I'd rather play cricket."

"Well, you're going to play cricket, when we get to Greyfriars," said Jimmy Silver, rather puzzled by the remark. "What do you mean, Morny?"

"When we get to Greyfriars?" repeated Mornington with a curious grin. "And when shall we get to Greyfriars, at this rate?"

"Half an hour or so more, I should say, if we keep this up."

"That will be exceedin' the speed limit no end, considerin' that we have nearly twenty-five thousand miles to go."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Somethin' under twenty-five thousand miles," conceded Morny calmly. "But the difference is hardly worth mentionin'. What boat do we take?"

"Boat!" repeated Jimmy, wondering whether the dandy of the Fourth was wandering in his mind.

"Yass; we shall want a boat."

"What for?"

"To cross the Atlantic, of course."

"The Atlantic!" yelled Lovell.

"My dear man, you can't go round the world without crossin' the Atlantic. If we light at New York, I suppose we can take the American railways

—"

"The—the American railways—" "Yes; as far as San Francisco," said Mornington, while the cricketers stared at him in blank silence. "From Frisco, we shall want another steamer."

"Are you joking, Morny?" asked Erroll.

"Not at all."

"Then what do you mean?" demanded Jimmy Silver testily.

"I mean that if we keep on with our backs to Greyfriars, we shall have to go right round the world to get there."

"Our backs to Greyfriars!"

"Yass!"

Jimmy Silver gave Mornington a startled look. He rose in the car, and looked round him. The big car was keeping on fast, well up to the speed

limit, and, in fact, beyond it. The chauffeur was staring directly ahead over the wheel.

"I don't know this part of the country, of course," said Jimmy, "but I suppose we're in Kent by this time."

"Look at the sun," said Mornington caustically.

Jimmy looked at the sun and at his watch. Then he jumped. Now that his attention was drawn to the matter, he did not need telling that the car was speeding almost due west of Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver dropped back into his seat, astounded.

"Taking a short cut, perhaps!" said Lovell.

"Going round something, or something or other," suggested Selwyn of the Shell. "Road up, or something, you know."

"We've been goin' west ever since we started," said Mornington quietly. "I didn't spot it at first, though I was rather surprised that we didn't go through Latcham. I've been using my eyes. We've had our backs to Greyfriars all the time, and we're somewhere in Dorsetshire now, I believe."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Is the chauffeur mad?" exclaimed Erroll, aghast.

"Smythe gave him his directions," said Jimmy Silver helplessly.

Mornington grinned.

"*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," he remarked.

Jimmy Silver started. For the first time, it came into his mind that Morny's suspicions were not groundless, and that he had been tricked.

"You—you think—that Smythe has—"

he stammered.

"I think Smythe's dishin' us, because he's left out of the eleven," answered Mornington coolly. "I shouldn't have accepted his offer. You did! And we shan't see Greyfriars to-day!"

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy Silver's eyes glittered. There

was little doubt that Mornington was right, the great car was taking the Rookwood cricketers farther and farther away from Greyfriars School.

Jimmy tapped on the glass between the passengers and the chauffeur. The man certainly heard the tap, but he gave no sign.

"Tap, tap, tap!"

The speed of the car increased a little, but that was all.

"Pretty plain now!" yawned Mornington.

It was plain enough.

Jimmy Silver was pale with anger. He could hardly blame himself for having been tricked in such a way; how could he, or anybody else, possibly have suspected such a device? Morny had been suspicious, but even he had not fathomed Smythe's duplicity.

The cricketers looked at one another in silent dismay. All the enjoyment of the motor drive was gone now.

The car rushed on. Lovell rapped savagely on the glass, but the chauffeur gave no heed. It was clear that he was in the scheme—that Smythe of the Shell had arranged with him to carry the cricketers off in this astounding way—doubtless standing him a handsome tip for his trouble. Probably the chauffeur knew nothing about the cricket match, and looked on the affair simply as a schoolboy practical joke.

"We've got to stop him!" exclaimed Baby, at last.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't!" he answered.

"We must!"

"He won't stop! He's got his instructions from Smythe."

"Oh, the rotter!" Jimmy Silver gritted his teeth. "The awful rotter! Wharton will be waiting for us, and—"

"The Greyfriars chaps will be hung up all day, waiting, if we don't get there!" exclaimed Lovell.

"What on earth will they think of us?" murmured Canroly.

Mornington grinned, rather maliciously.

"Perhaps they won't miss us," he remarked. "I fancy Smythe hasn't simply planned to keep us away from the match. Haven't you fellows noticed that Smythe and his gang have been turnin' up at cricket practice lately?"

"What about it?" growled Lovell.

"I wondered what they were doin' it for. Now, I know. Adolphus has got a cricket match on to-day, unless I'm mistaken."

"A cricket match!" yelled Lovell. "Where?"

"Greyfriars, I fancy."

"Oh!"

"Our match!" shrieked Tommy Dodd.

"Of course, I may be wrong. But I don't think Smythe would take all this trouble simply to keep us from playin'. He's dished us out of the match, and my belief is that he's gone over to Greyfriars with his crowd to play it," said Mornington coolly.

"But Wharton wouldn't —"

"How would Wharton know?"

"I—I suppose he wouldn't know—he would think there had been changes in the team!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"I—I suppose you're right, Morny—"

"Oh, you ass, Jimmy!" exclaimed Lovell.

"What?"

"You've landed us!"

"I have?" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"You wanted to go in the car as much as I did."

"I'm not captain," remarked Lovell casually.

"Oh, rats!"

Jimmy Silver took his bat and crashed it through the glass that separated him from the chauffeur. The man started for a moment, but did not turn his head. The car swept on.

"Stop!"

"He won't!" said Mornington.

"Oh, shut up! Stop! Do you hear me? Stop!"

"Stop!" chorused the hapless cricketers.

The chauffeur did not heed. The giant car rushed on. Jimmy drew back his hat, half-inclined to crack the chauffeur on the head with it. Errol caught his arm. If one thing was more certain than another, it was that any attack upon the chauffeur, while the car was rushing on, would lead to a terrible catastrophe.

"Don't play the goat!" muttered Ruby. "Don't touch him. Do you want to pile up the car?"

"Stop! Stop! Stop!"

The car rushed on.

Late that afternoon, sixteen tired and dusty juniors were tramping up to the gates of Rookwood School. The sun was setting over Rookwood; a glorious summer's day was drawing to its close. But the sixteen dusty youths did not look as if they had enjoyed that summer's day. Their expressions, in fact, indicated quite the reverse of that.

The car had stopped at last—a hundred miles from Rookwood—in the wrong direction. When it stopped, Jimmy Silver & Co. had collared the chauffeur, and heedless of his expostulations, had given him such a thrashing as the circumstances seemed to call for. That was some satisfaction—to the Rookwooders, not to the chauffeur—but it did not mend matters. By cross-country trains, with many changes and long waits, the hapless cricketers got back to Coombe, whence they walked to Rookwood. It was useless, of course, to head for Greyfriars; it was dusk by the time Rookwood was reached.

Dusty and tired and savage, the hapless sixteen tramped up the road to the school in the sunset. Their feelings were too deep for words. The question that worried Jimmy Silver most was, what had happened at Greyfriars? But even that worrying question fell into the background now, and the Rookwooders were thinking chiefly of

their fatigue, as they dragged their tired limbs along to the gates of the school. There was only one consolation in prospect—the hour of reckoning for Smythe & Co.!

CHAPTER 12.

Done to the Widen!

"ROOKWOOD at last!"
 "Thank goodness!"
 "Oh, dear!"
 "What a day!"

It was almost a chorus of groans.

Never had Jimmy & Co. felt so glad to see the gates of Rookwood School, and never had they returned there so tired in body and troubled in spirit as on the present occasion.

The junior cricketers had left that morning in the cheeriest spirits. They had returned in the depths of doleful dumps, as the dusk of evening closed in over the old red roofs of Rookwood.

They were tired, they were wrathful, and they were, perhaps, a little snappy and ratty.

It was not to be wondered at, considering what had happened to them that day.

Old Mack, the porter, blinked at them as they trailed in, and grinned a little. Several fellows in the quad stared at them, and grinned a good deal. Tubby Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, came rolling up to greet them.

"Beaten Greyfriars?" he asked.

"No!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, my hat!" said Tubby. "Well, I must say you don't look like a winning crowd. But you shouldn't have let Greyfriars beat you, Jimmy. You could have had me in the team if you'd liked—"

"Fathead!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Well, it might have made a difference," said Tubby. "In fact, I'm sure it would. How many innings did they beat you by, Jimmy?"

This question was intended to convey deep sarcasm.

"We haven't played the match, you silly ass!" was Jimmy Silver's reply.

Tubby stared.

"Haven't you been to Greyfriars?"

"No!"

"Well, my word!" ejaculated the fat Classical. "You started for Greyfriars in Smythe's motor-car. Did you lose the way?"

"Oh, rats!"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Tubby.

"What are you chuckling at, you fat duffer?" snorted Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell did not see anything humorous in that day's disastrous happenings.

"You haven't been to Greyfriars!" chuckled Tubby. "He, he, he! Well, that takes the cake! You look a happy lot, too! He, he, he!"

"Oh, squash him!" growled Mornington.

Jimmy caught the fat Classical by the shoulder.

"Where's Smythe of the Shell?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know," answered Tubby Muffin. "He went out with a crowd of his pals soon after you started in the motor-car. They haven't come in yet. I suppose they're making a day of it."

"Did they take cricketing things?"

"I noticed that some of them had cricket bags—"

"That settles it," said Valentine Mornington. "Smythe & Co. went to Greyfriars in our place, all right, after spoofing us to get into that dashed motor-car. Or, to speak more correctly, after spoofing you, Jimmy Silver."

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"We were all spoofed!" he said angrily. "How was I to suspect that Smythe had tipped the chauffeur to take us wandering across country, and keep us away from Greyfriars?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I warned you that Smythe was up to some trick," he answered.

"You said he was!" snapped Jimmy. "But you're always suspecting some-

body of something. Mornington. You couldn't give a hint as to what trick he was up to, anyhow."

"I guessed he had something up his sleeve!"

"A pity you couldn't guess what it was, then."

"Look here——"

"Oh, rats! We're all as wise as you are, after it's happened!" said Jimmy Silver irritably.

"I told you——"

"Oh, rats!"

"Order!" murmured Tommy Dodd.

"No good ragging!" said Kit Enroll, interposing. Jimmy Silver and Mornington were looking at one another very grimly. "We've all been taken in. Jimmy couldn't be expected to guess that Smythe intended to get us carried off by that cheeky ass of a chauffeur, and landed a hundred miles away. If never crossed my mind, I admit."

"Nor mine," said Rahy.

"I knew there was something on when Smythe offered us the car, and I said so!" answered Valentine Mornington obstinately. "I advised Silver not to accept the offer, and he can't deny that."

"I don't deny it!" growled Jimmy. "And if you weren't a suspicious ass, always distrusting people for nothing, I might have paid some attention. But you are."

"Something in that!" remarked Newcome.

"Oh, any excuse is better than none!" said Mornington angrily. "The fact remains that Smythe trapped us, and spoofed us out of going to Greyfriars, and that he's gone over there with his crowd of fumblin' idiots to play the match instead of us."

"We're not sure of that yet," said Enroll.

"I'm sure of it!" growled Mornington. "Smythe wouldn't have played such a trick on us for nothing!"

"We'll soon see," said Jimmy Silver. "As the rosters haven't come in yet, I— I suppose they're gone to Greyfriars.

But I'll ring up Greyfriars and ask Wharton."

"That's a good idea," said Lovell.

The tired and troubled cricketers tramped on into the schoolhouse.

They were all feeling sore and sorry.

Jimmy Silver was exasperated by the trick played on him by Adolphus Smythe of the Shell; but he could not see that he was to blame in the matter. But it was natural, perhaps, that Mornington should plume himself a little on the fact that he had suspected the dandy of the Shell of trickery.

And as Jimmy was junior captain, it certainly was up to him to see that his team reached Greyfriars to play the appointed match. Instead of which, they had spent half the day whizzing westward in a motor-car, and the other half in weary railway journeying to get home.

They trailed into the House, and fellows surrounded them on all sides with questions as to how the match had gone.

The answers of the cricketers astounded the questioners. Such a trick as Adolphus Smythe had played on Jimmy Silver & Co. was simply unheard of.

But it was clear that most of the Rookwood fellows looked on the affair with a humorous eye. It was cheeky of Adolphus Smythe to play such a trick; but it was decidedly soft of the Rookwood cricketers to fall victims to it. That was how the juniors looked at it.

Jimmy Silver hurried to Mr. Bootles' study to request permission to use the telephone. Mr. Bootles was out, as it happened, and Jimmy started on the telephone without asking permission. Greyfriars was a trunk call from Rookwood, and he had to wait for his number.

He rested in Mr. Bootles' armchair while he waited, hoping that the Fourth Form master would not come in. Fortunately, Mr. Bootles did not

come in, and Jimmy's number came through at last.

"Is that Greyfriars?" he asked into the transmitter.

"Yes; Mr. Quelch is speaking."

Jimmy knew that Mr. Quelch was master of the Remove at Greyfriars.

"Jimmy Silver speaking, from Rookwood School," he said. "I hope you will excuse me, sir. I want to speak to Harry Wharton very particularly."

"Hum!"

"I wouldn't have troubled you, sir, but it's very important. I hope you will allow Wharton to come to the telephone."

"Hum! Oh! Very well! I will send for Wharton."

"Thank you, sir."

Jimmy Silver waited. A minute later there was a voice he knew well in the wires.

"Hallo! That Jimmy Silver?"

"Yes, Wharton. I suppose you can guess why I've rung you up? We started for Greyfriars to-day, and were tricked and kept away. Has anybody turned up from Rookwood?"

"Oh, my hat! Yes, rather!"

"Smythe?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes; Smythe and Howard, Tracy, and that lot," came Wharton's reply.

"We were rather surprised to see a wholly new team from Rookwood. We were expecting you, of course. But they explained——"

"Have you played the match?"

"Naturally?"

Jimmy set his teeth.

"I couldn't ask how it went," he said bitterly.

"Well, we won, you know."

"What was the margin?"

"Ahem! We won by an innings and some runs—ahem!—a good many runs!"

"I could guess that. All serene. It can't be helped. You understand that we were prevented from coming over by a trick, and Smythe & Co. had no right whatever to play in the name of Rookwood."

"I understand now you've told me, Silver. But, of course, we never guessed anything of the kind at the time."

"Have they gone?"

"Oh, yes! They've been gone a good time now. Must be nearly home to Rookwood by this time, I should think."

"Thanks!"

"I'm sorry, Silver. You seem to have been badly dished."

"No mistake about that," said Jimmy. "Well, it can't be helped."

Jimmy Silver put up the receiver and left Mr. Booth's study. The worst that he had feared had happened. And the only satisfaction that remained was the prospect of making Adolphus Smythe & Co. suffer for the trick they had played.

CHAPTER 12.

Murphy's Game!

JIMMY SILVER came up to the end study in the Fourth with a knitted brow.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were busy there, getting a very late tea.

"The Pictorial Four were hungry."

"Well?" asked the Co. with one voice, as Jimmy came into the study.

"I've spoken to Wharton," said Jimmy. "It's as Murry suspected. Smythe & Co. have been over here, in the name of Rookwood Juniors, to play the match."

"And they've played it?"

"Yes."

"And lost it, of course?"

"By an innings and goodness knows how many runs!" said Jimmy. "I dare say that consoled idiot, Smythe, expected to win. The silly chump thinks he can play cricket; and his idea is that he's being kept out of the game. Now he's made us look a lot of asses. I don't suppose it will make any difference to him. He will still think he ought to be played in the next match."

Lovell clenched his hands.

"He's going through it when he

comes in!" he said. "He can't play a trick like this without smothering for it."

"Yes; but that won't alter the fact that this match has been chucked away. Of course, under the cires, it could be called off, I suppose, and we could ask Wharton to fix another date to play the real match. But—but—"

"But we look fools enough already, without adding to it!" growled Rahy.

"Least said soonest mended," remarked Newcome. "The match is thrown away, and it can't be helped. The sooner it's forgotten at Greyfriars the better."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"But Smythe is going to smart for it!" exclaimed Lovell. "He's got to be warned off playing a trick like that again."

"I don't think he could trick us again like that; but he's got to have a warning that's certain," said Jimmy. "The silly asses haven't come in yet, so we may as well have tea. We'll deal with them afterwards."

And the Fictical Four sat down to tea.

Meanwhile, Erroll and Mornington had gone to their study for tea. Both of them were looking very thoughtful, and there was an expression in Morny's eyes that made Erroll glance at him several times. The friendship between the two was deep and sincere; but they were very unlike in character, and Erroll did not always understand his chum. He could see now that Morny was in one of his wicked moods, and it troubled him a little.

"It's been a muck-up to-day, hasn't it, Kit?" Mornington remarked, as he poured out the coffee.

"Rotten!" agreed Erroll. "It's hard on Jimmy especially."

"I don't see that."

"Well, as Jimmy's skipper, some of the fellows are inclined to lay the blame on him."

"Quite right, too."

Erroll shook his head.

"Jimmy wasn't to blame, Morny. He couldn't possibly suspect Smythe of such rotten trickery."

"I suspected him."

Erroll did not answer that. The quality he least admired in his chum was the sharpness which had made him suspicious of Smythe when Jimmy Silver had accepted the Shell fellow's offer with frank cordiality. Morny had been right, and Jimmy had been wrong, undoubtedly; but, to a certain extent, there was more credit in being wrong than in being right in the matter.

Morny frowned a little, probably guessing Erroll's thoughts.

"You think I'm too jolly keen," he said, with a slight sneer. "You admire Jimmy for his unsuspecting innocence—what?"

"I think it's a good quality in him," answered Erroll. "Hardly anybody would have suspected Smythe of treachery."

"But I did. And you don't like me for it."

"That's not quite fair, Morny. After all, you didn't suspect what Smythe was at; you simply distrusted him."

"If I'd been skipper we shouldn't have fallen into the trap."

"I suppose that's true."

"Wouldn't that have been better all round?" demanded Mornington.

"No doubt about that."

"The fact is, Jimmy Silver has let us down," said Mornington. "There's a cricket-match thrown away, and it counts in the record. They'll be laughing at us at Greyfriars when they know the facts. Rookwood doesn't want to be laughed at. Now, I like Jimmy Silver personally. I used to be up against him at one time, but that was more misunderstanding than anything else. I really like him, Kit."

"I'm glad of that."

"But personal friendship is one matter and cricket is another. I think I should make a good junior skipper."

"I'm sure you would, Morny."

"Good!"

"But Jimmy's skipper, so it's not a very important question just now," remarked Erroll, with a rather uneasy look at his chum.

"Junior skipper isn't appointed on the system of the Medes and Persians," said Mornington. "He can be changed, you know."

"Morny!"

"Look here, Erroll, I'm not up against Silver personally, but I don't see why I shouldn't stand up for the captaincy, when I think I should make a better skipper!" exclaimed Mornington impatiently. "I've thought so for a long time, and what's happened to-day is the last straw. The captaincy isn't a personal possession of Jimmy Silver's, is it?"

"No. But——"

"But you don't think I ought to oppose Silver?" exclaimed Mornington bravely.

"I'd rather you didn't."

"Why?"

Erroll paused.

"Well, I think Jimmy Silver's all right as captain," he said. "What's happened to-day is rotten enough; but it's nothing against Jimmy. Some of the fellows are dissatisfied, certainly. But——"

"I'm dissatisfied for one," said Mornington. "I think new blood is required. And I think I've got a good chance. Dash it all, why shouldn't there be a new election, and let the best man win?"

"That is all right, I suppose," said Erroll reluctantly.

"You'd back me up?"

"Yes."

"And a lot of the Shell would vote for me," said Mornington, his eyes glistening. "Smythe & Co., for instance. They'll be feeling pretty sore with Jimmy Silver, after they've been ragged for their trickery. They'd vote for anybody against him."

"They'll be feeling sore with us, too,

I suppose. We shall take a hand in punishing them."

Mornington laughed.

"Kit, old man, you don't know much about electioneering, if you're thinking of ragging the voters," he said.

Erroll compressed his lips.

"So you're going to leave that to Jimmy Silver?" he asked.

"Isn't he captain?" grinned Mornington. "So long as he's captain he can take captain's responsibility. When I'm skipper I shan't shrink from it."

"I don't like this, Morny. I don't like to say, but this looks to me like taking a mean advantage of Jimmy Silver."

"Preaching again, old chap?"

"Look here, Morny——"

Erroll was interrupted by a thump on the door. It flew open, and Arthur Edward Lovell put a rather excited face into the study.

"Come on, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

Mornington glanced round coolly.

"Anythin' on?" he drawled.

"Those rotters have come back, and we're going to scalp them!" said Lovell. "Come on, if you want to take a hand!"

And he disappeared.

Erroll rose to his feet at once.

"Sit down!" said Mornington.

"I'm going. You're coming, surely, Morny?"

"No jolly fear! I shall shortly be appealin' for their giddy suffrages, and I'm not goin' to begin by raggin' them."

"Look here——"

"You can take a hand if you like. I shan't!" said Mornington obstinately. "Please yourself, if you don't want to please me!"

"I wish you'd come."

"Well, I won't!"

Erroll said no more, but quitted the study with a troubled brow. Morny was evidently in one of his wilful and obstinate moods. Kit Erroll was to be the only representative of Study No. 4

in the ragging of Smythe & Co. and Errol, though he wanted to think well of his chum, could not quite think that this was "cricket."

CHAPTER IX.
ROUGH JUSTICE!

"O H, gnd!" Adolphus Smythe, the ornament of the Shell, uttered that ejaculation in a weary tone, as he sank into his luxurious armchair.

Adolphus was tired.

He was also uneasy.

In his sublime conceit, Smythe of the Shell firmly believed himself to be a better cricketer than Jimmy Silver of the Fourth, and he persisted in regarding it as sheer "cheek" of Jimmy to take the lead in junior games as he did. The fact that Jimmy had been elected to the position by a good majority of the Juniors did not make any difference to Adolphus. He hadn't voted for Jimmy—and he never would vote for him—and Adolphus seemed to think that his own sweet voice ought to outweigh the voices of a dozen other fellows.

So Adolphus had tricked the junior eleven with a clear conscience, and he had pictured himself returning victorious to Rockwood, to point out to the school generally that he—Adolphus Smythe—was the fellow who could win matches.

If he had returned victorious he could have pleaded his success as an excuse for the trick he had played. That was what he had anticipated.

Unfortunately, Adolphus' prowess as a cricketer existed only in the concerted imagination of the lofty Adolphus himself.

He had not won the match at Greyfriars with his nutty team. He had not even lost it by a narrow margin after a good game. He had gathered up the most crushing defeat in the annals of Rockwood. He had left Grey-

friars shuffling, and he had come home with very serious apprehensions in his nutty breast.

Howard and Tracy, his study-mates, shared his gloom.

Victory on the cricket-field might have seen them through. But defeat, crushing and ridiculous defeat, left them bare to the storm, so to speak.

It was not exactly gratifying to be licked with ease, with such a margin on the side of the victors as made the match farcical. Still less gratifying was the prospect of what Rockwood would say about it, and what Jimmy Silver & Co. would do.

Smythe & Co. were unhappy and apprehensive.

"We're in for it," said Howard gloomily. "The fellows are bound to cut up rough. Who'd have thought those Greyfriars kids would walk over us like that? They're a younger team, too."

"We had bad luck!" sighed Adolphus.

"We did, and no mistake," said Tracy. "I was fairly set, you know. I was good for fifty, that black bounder—Inky they called him—spotted my wicket over. I could have sworn it was a wide."

"I was feelin' in great form," said Adolphus sadly. "If the first ball hadn't cleaned me out I feel certain I should have knocked up enough to see us through. I wasn't really ready, you know; that was it. If only I'd escaped that first ball I should have been all right."

"We should all have been all right if we hadn't been all wrong," remarked Howard, with a touch of sarcasm. "The fact is we've been beaten to the wide, and it counts as a match for Rockwood, and the fellows will be as mad as hatters about it!"

"They will!" murmured Smythe.

"It was a peffy idea, baggin' the match! I can see that now."

"You couldn't see it this mornin',"

"Well, it was too thick. You remember I said at the time it was too thick!"

"I don't remember anythin' of the sort!" snapped Adolphus.

"Fellers don't do such things," said Howard. "I don't deny that we had a good reason. Still, such things aren't done."

"You might have mentioned that yesterday."

"If you'd kept your wicket up, too."

"Why didn't you keep yours up?"

"Well, I took two runs," said Howard. "You got a duck's-egg in each innings!"

"I wasn't really ready. If I'd got through that first ball—"

"But you didn't!"

"Well, your two runs didn't win the match, Howard, so you needn't swank about your thumpin' two runs."

"There's goin' to be a row!" said Tracy uneasily. "They know we've come in, I fancy they'll come along to this study."

"Suppose we lock the door?"

"Fat lot of good that would be!" sneered Tracy. "Are you suggestin' stayin' in this study for the rest of our lives?"

"Tramp, tramp!"

There was a sound of many footsteps in the passage.

The door was thrown open, and Olbey of the Shell ran in.

"They're comin'!" he panted.

"Oh gad!"

"Oh dear!"

"Lock the door!" howled Adolphus.

"They'd only blast it in!" growled Tracy. "Leave the door alone!"

It was too late to lock the door, however. If that desperate expedient would have been of any use. Jimmy Silver & Co. had arrived.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth tramped into the study, and after them came the Colonial Co., and the three Tommies of the Modern side. A dozen other fellows crowded the doorway and the passage outside.

Adolphus and his nutty pals were on their feet now, with alarm in their faces. They had cause for disquiet. The looks of their unwelcome visitors were very grim, indeed.

"So you've got back!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Yass, deah boy," said Snythe feebly.

"You bagged our match!" roared Lovell.

"You—you see—"

"And how did you get on at Greyfriars?" demanded Erroll.

"Licked to the wide, of course!" growled Conroy.

Adolphus drew a deep breath.

He knew that the facts must come out, but he was only thinking just then of postponing the evil hour, and escaping immediate punishment.

"The—the fact is, we beat them!" he gasped.

"What?" howled Jimmy Silver.

Howard and Tracy stared at their leader. They had not thought of this amazing master-stroke.

"You beat them?" shouted Conroy.

"Yass; beat 'em hollow, by so innings and fifty runs!" said Adolphus recklessly.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Gammion!"

"You spoofing ass!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "They beat you by an innings and more runs than they troubled to count!"

"Look here, Silver—"

"I've telephoned to Greyfriars, and Wharton has told me!"

"Oh, gad!" gasped Adolphus.

He hadn't thought of that. His master-stroke had missed fire, after all! He sank into his armchair again feebly.

"I—I was jokin', you know!" he stuttered.

"And joking when you fooled us into taking your car, and joking when you fixed it up with the chauffeur to land us a hundred miles from everywhere!" Jimmy Silver exclaimed savagely.

"Ya-as. Only a-a-a joke, you know."

"It won't seem much of a joke to you when we're finished with you!" said Correy.

"I-I say—you know——"

"You've played a rotten trick on us, and had a match for Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver. "I suppose you know you're going through it?"

"If—if you play the goat, I'll yell for a perfect!" gasped Adolphus desperately.

"You'll yell right enough, I dare say," said Jimmy. "If you bring the perfects here, it's your own look-out. I don't think you'd care to explain to Bulkeley the trick you've played on us. The captain of the school wouldn't be as likely to look on it as a joke."

"Collar them!" exclaimed Lovell impatiently.

"Hold on!" yelled Tracy. "We hadn't anything to do with it! We—we simply backed up Smythe——"

"Nothin' but that!" gasped Howard.

"We—we were really against it, you know," stammered Gilbey.

"Collar them!"

Smythe & Co. were collared—the expositions of the Co. passing quite unheeded.

What followed was painful.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in deadly earnest. They intended to give the nuts of Rookwood a lesson they would be certain to remember if they were ever tempted to play tricks with the school matches again.

And the lesson Adolphus and his fellow-nuts received was one they were likely to remember for a very long time to come.

Never had so thorough a ragging been administered within the walls of Rookwood School.

It did not last long, but the innocent cricketers put plenty of work into the time.

After ten minutes Jimmy Silver &

Co. streamed out of the study, feeling that they had done enough.

They left four unhappy wrecks behind them, who thought that they had done a great deal too much.

Adolphus Smythe dragged his head wearily out of the ashes, sat up in a sea of ink, and blinked dully at his fellow-sufferers.

"Oh, gad!" he groaned.

"Wow-wow!" mumbled Tracy.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, dear! Oh, crumbs! Owl!"

"Grough!"

It was quite a chorus in Smythe's study. There was no doubt that the nuts of Rookwood would remember that lesson—no doubt whatever.

While they gasped and groaned, Jimmy Silver & Co. were in quest of other victims. All the members of the nutty eleven had to go through it, and through it they went.

That evening Smythe & Co. felt that life was not worth living. They had learned once more the truth of the ancient text, that the way of the transgressor is hard.

CHAPTER 11.

Putting it Right.

JIMMY SILVER did not look so sunny-tempered as usual the next day.

The affair of the Greyfriars match—utterly "mucked up" as it had been—naturally worried him, and as cricket captain he felt that most of the responsibility was on his shoulders. Worse than that was the fact that most of the fellows seemed to think the same, only more so.

It was not forgotten that Valentine Mornington had distrusted Smythe and his offer, and had remarked, in his sarcastic way, "Timeo Danaos," etc. Morny would not have been taken in as Jimmy Silver had been. Why couldn't Jimmy have taken Morny's tip, as Morny seemed to have more sense? was a question asked by a good many of the juniors.

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, was strongly of opinion that the whole disaster was due to the fact that the junior captain of Rockwood belonged to the Classical side. Tommy Dodd found general agreement with his opinion—among the Moderns. The Classics scoffed at it.

But the Classics weren't satisfied, either. Shell fellows had never been contented with a Fourth Form captain. Smythe & Co., naturally, were "up against" Jimmy Silver all the way. They didn't count much, except in an election, where every vote counted. But even in the Classical Fourth there was dissatisfaction, and when it leaked out that Mornington was thinking of "putting in" for the junior captaincy, it looked as if he would receive a good deal of support in his own Form as well as outside it.

Jimmy had not heard as yet of Morn's ambition: his old disputes with Morn were dead and buried, and it had not occurred to him that the rivalry would be revived. His first intimation of the new state of affairs came from Mornington himself, who dropped in at the end study after tea, to apprise the junior captain of his intentions.

Having thought it over and decided upon his course of action, Mornington thought it was only the "game" to let Jimmy Silver know what to expect. He did not want to be underhanded.

The Fistical Four were finishing tea when Morn came in, with a smile on his face. Jimmy gave him a rather curt nod.

Jimmy had heard too much lately about Morn's cleverness in having spotted Smythe's little game, and he was tired of the subject, and of Morn, too. He did not admire that sharpness of Morn's, though he was sorry he had not taken his advice on the occasion.

"Not interruptin' you, I hope?" said Mornington blandly, as he lounged into the end study.

"We can eat sardines while you wag your chin," answered Jimmy Silver. "Don't mind us. But, for goodness' sake, Morn, don't sing it all over again about your dashed brightness in spotting Smythe's game! It's possible to have too much of a good thing."

"Morn was right, you know," remarked Lovell, apparently in the role of candid friend.

Jimmy granted.

"I know he was, and I've admitted it. There ought to be an end to everything, even to Morn's swank."

"I don't know that I've been swankin' on the subject," said Mornington. "But certainly if I'd been skipper—"

"Well, you weren't!"

"But if I had been—"

"If the skies fell, there would be catching of larks," remarked Jimmy Silver sarcastically. "Bother your ifs."

"If I'd been skipper—" persisted Morn.

"Give us a rest!"

"Well, I've come here to speak out in plain English," said Mornington rather tartly. "You mucked up the Greyfriars match, Jimmy Silver—you and Smythe between you."

"Rot!"

"Most of the fellows say so."

"Hush!"

"And I think so myself."

"Rats!"

Jimmy's replies could not be called polite; but he was "fed up," as he had said several times.

"To come to the point—" went on Morn, unmoved.

"Oh, you are coming to the point?" asked Jimmy.

"Certainly!"

"Come to it, then, and get off the subject!"

"The point is this," said Mornington curtly. "I think I should make a better junior captain than you, Jimmy Silver, considering the way the Greyfriars match has been chucked away!"

Jimmy's lip curled.

"If you can get the other fellows to think so, the job's open to you," he answered. "It's not my personal property. I'm not specially keen on captaining a crowd of grizzling asses, if you come to that."

"You don't object, then, to my buttin' in?" asked Mornington.

"I've no right to object, have I? Any fellow who likes can put up."

Morny nodded.

"That's so. But I shouldn't like you to think that I'm cuttin' the ground from under your feet, you know. I don't want to do anythin' mean. I think I should make a pretty good junior captain, and I'd like to bag the job."

"Jimmy's job!" growled Lovell.

Lovell was rather given to playing the part of "candid friend," but at the idea of anybody else rounding on Jimmy Silver, Arthur Edward was up in arms at once. He fixed a look of deep disfavour upon Valentine Mornington.

"Jimmy says it isn't his job," said Morny. "It's open to anybody in the Lower School."

"It's my job at present," growled Jimmy. "But if a good many of the fellows put it to me, I would resign, and stand in a fresh election. At any rate, I would resign and leave the field again."

"Of course you'd stand again!" exclaimed Ruby.

"We'd jolly well make you!" said Newcome.

Mornington looked very keenly at the captain of the Fourth.

"You think it would be fair play for me to put up against you, Silver?" he asked.

"Of course it would—if you want to!"

"And you wouldn't owe me a grudge for it?"

"Certainly not!"

"And if I got in——"

"I should try to keep smiling!" said

Jimmy sarcastically. "It wouldn't exactly break my heart, Morny."

"I'd like to try it on; but on friendly and sportin' terms," said Mornington. "I'm not up against you in any way; what I'm thinkin' of is a fair contest—the best man to win. You can't object to that."

"I don't!"

"Then you don't mind if I go ahead?"

"Not at all!"

"But I jolly well mind!" broke out Lovell warmly. "I think you're shoving your oar in where it's not wanted, Morny."

"Sorry!" said Morny politely.

"Well, I'll be getting along. It's understood, Silver, that if a certain number of fellows ask you, you'll resign and let a fresh election take place."

"Yes!" snapped Jimmy.

"How many?"

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" said Jimmy. "If it looks like the barest chance of the majority not wanting me for skipper, I'll drop it. I'd do that, anyhow, whether you were buttin' in or not."

"Done then! Mind, I'm not buttin' in as Form captain; you can keep that. It's the junior captaincy of the school I'm after."

"Go ahead!"

Morny strolled out of the study, and the Fistical Four exchanged glances when he was gone. Jimmy Silver's brow was knitted.

"I don't like this!" growled Lovell.

"Oh, let him rip!" said Jimmy carelessly.

"It's mean," said Arthur Edward warmly. "I can see now that Morny has been up to his tricks. I wondered why he didn't turn up at ragging Smythe yesterday. He had this in his mind then, and was thinking of the votes."

"I—I shouldn't think that of him, Lovell."

"I believe it's so. And it's mean!"

"Give him the benefit of the doubt,"

said Jimmy Silver. "I'm pretty well fed up with the grousing I've heard to-day, and I don't care much if Morny bags the job. If he can do better than I can I wish him luck. Pass the jam, Raby!"

And Jimmy Silver finished his tea, dismissing Mornington and his ambitions from his mind.

CHAPTER 15.

"The Revolt!"

"O H, good!"

Thus the great Adolphus.

It was the day after Morny's visit to the end study, and all the Lower School at Rookwood knew how matters stood now.

Jimmy Silver's supremacy was challenged; there was another Richmond in the field, as Oswald put it in Shakespearian language.

Jimmy Silver took the new state of affairs smilingly; but perhaps he was a little wounded at the discovery of the unstable foundation upon which his leadership had rested.

He had plenty of friends to back him up certainly. But there was no doubt that Valentine Mornington had a good following.

Morny was a first-class cricketer, and splendid at games; and since he had given up slacking he had become a tower of strength to the junior eleven. He had often received recommendation from Bulkeley of the Sixth, who was captain of the school and head of the games. There was no doubt that Mornington would make a good skipper—not quite so easy-going as Jimmy Silver, but perhaps none the worse for that.

And the affair of the Greyfriars match helped. It was quite certain that Morny would never have been spoofed by the egregious Smythe as Jimmy Silver had been.

Morny had a good many backers in the Classical Fourth; possibly, to

anise extent, simply from a desire of change, and because some of the fellows considered that the end study had had it all their own way too long.

Of the best fellows in the Lower School, it was likely enough that Jimmy would have a majority; but it was not only the best fellows who voted in an election. Every fellow who was against Jimmy Silver, from whatever reason, was certain to rally round his rival, in order to give the junior captain a fall.

Adolphus Smythe & Co. heard the news with delight. They would have backed up Morny, or anybody else, against Jimmy Silver. Lattrey and his friends, the black sheep of Rookwood, took precisely the same view.

There was no doubt that on Morny's side would be ranged all the nuts, and the slackers, and the shady black sheep.

That was not exactly gratifying to Mornington. But, as he told Erroll, it was no use being too particular in an election. Every vote counted, and a shady rascal like Lattrey or Gower was as valuable as a fellow like Lovell or Tommy Dodd, when it came to an election.

Erroll shook his head, but he did not argue with his chum. He was loyal to Mornington, though he had his doubts about the wisdom of Morny's new course.

Erroll, naturally, backed up his own chain; and the grave, quiet junior had a good deal of influence.

On the Modern side there was jubilation.

"This is good—real good!" Tommy Dodd said. "When rogues fall out, you know—not that they're rogues; but when Classics fall out, it's a chance for the Moderns. They outnumber us too much for a Modern to get in unless they're divided. Now they're divided."

"Sure they are!" said Tommy Doyle. "And if they split their vote

between Jimmy Silver and Mornington, boded you must get in on the Modern vote, Tommy!"

"It's a jolly good chance!" said Tommy Cook, rubbing his hands. "And what Rockwood really wants is a Modern junior skipper!"

"That's it!" said Dodd.

So the three Tommies rejoined.

And there was not likely to be any split in the Modern vote. Tommy Dodd had a chance in a three-cornered contest for the captaincy. And Tommy set to work at once at the business of electioneering.

Mornington, on the same business, dropped in at Tommy Dodd's study, and found the three Tommies engaged in comparing notes and lists of names.

"Gettin' ready for an election?" asked Morny, with a smile.

"What's up?" answered Tommy Dodd.

"You'll be voting for me?"

"Box-wow!"

"Sticking to Jimmy Silver?"

"Sticking to myself!" grinned Dodd. "Is there an election, my pippin? There's going to be a Modern candidate, and I'm the man—see?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mornington.

"With three candidates, I think we shall get our man in," said Cook. "What do you think, Morny?"

"I think you're a set of cheeky asses!" was Morny's reply. And he retired from the study rather discomfited, leaving the Modern trio chuckling.

On Saturday afternoon there was a notice on the board, calling a meeting of the electors of the Lower School in the Common-room. That meeting was to decide the question whether an election was to be held. If a good number of the juniors demanded it, it was understood that Jimmy Silver was to resign, and the matter was to be settled by a new election. Morny had high hopes that there would be a sufficient show of hands.

The meeting was a crowded one.

Nearly all the Fourth and Shell

were there, and a good contingent of the Third and Second.

The Physical Four came in together; three of them frowning, and only Jimmy Silver wearing a smiling and placid expression. Jimmy's chums were a good deal more annoyed than Jimmy himself. The captain of the Fourth did not seem much troubled.

It was soon seen that the meeting was generally in favour of a new election—Smythe & Co. were vociferously in favour of it.

Jimmy Silver took it smilingly.

He did not remain many minutes at the meeting; but when he left the Common-room with his chums he was no longer junior captain of Rockwood, but only a candidate for the election, which was to take place on Monday.

His chums had insisted on that, and Jimmy had yielded to them; though he was more inclined personally to stand out altogether.

The notice of the election duly appeared on the board, with the names of three candidates—Jimmy Silver, Valentine Mornington, and Thomas Dodd.

"Cheek! Modern ass!" was Arthur Edward Loyell's comment. "Just like a Modern to butt in like that!"

"Tommy Dodd has as much right as anybody else!" remarked Jimmy Silver mildly. "He would make a good skipper, too!"

"A blessed Modern!" growled Lovell. "I'd rather have Morny than a Modern! It's got to be a Classical, of course."

"Oh, rather!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I agree to that!" he assented. "We want a Classical skipper. But it looks to me as if a Modern may get in with the Classical vote split."

"Morny ought to stand down, in that case!" growled Newcome.

"He's not likely to, as he's started the whole affair."

"Well, he ought; and I'll jolly well tell him so!" exclaimed Loyell.

"Pretty state of affairs, if his shoving in like this should land us with a Modern skipper!"

And Lovell called on Morny in Study No. 4, and stated his opinion with great emphasis, but without the slightest effect.

"I'm gain' ahead!" was Morny's reply.

"And suppose a Modern gets in?" snorted Lovell.

"I hope he won't."

"One of the Classical candidates ought to stand down to prevent it, and you know that, Morny!" exclaimed Arthur Edward hotly.

"I've no objection," answered Mornington blandly. "Put it to Jimmy Silver."

"What?"

"Ask him to stand down——"

"Eh?"

"And leave a straight fight between the Modern candidate and me. How does that strike you, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward Lovell did not answer for a moment. Morny's cool suggestion took his breath away. Finally he ejaculated:

"Idiot!"

Then he tramped out of Morny's study, leaving the dandy of the Fourth grinning.

CHAPTER 17.

The Election!

THERE was a good deal of excitement in the Lower School at Rockwood on Monday. The election was fixed for six o'clock in the Common-room, and Bulkeley, the captain of the school, had consented to be present to count the votes. There had been keen electioneering on all sides. It was pretty certain that the Modern junior vote would be solid for Tommy Dodd; but the Moderns were so outnumbered by the Classics that Dodd's chances depended wholly on how the Classical vote was split. If it was split about evenly between the two

Classical candidates, Tommy Dodd would squeeze in. But a big Classical majority for either Jimmy Silver or Mornington would send Tommy Dodd back home, so to speak.

Tommy Dodd hoped for the best; and as six o'clock drew near the three Tommies were very busy whipping up their voters. Not a Modern was to be allowed to miss the election, and the three Tommies had announced that any Modern who didn't turn up would be thumped till he was properly sorry for himself. Long before six the Moderns were crowding the Common-room.

Mornington was early on the scene, with Erroll and his friends. Among his friends, for that occasion at least, counted Smythe & Co. and Tommy and his molly pals of the Fourth, and Lattin and Steele and Gower, the black sheep. His cousin, Mornington II, of the Second Form, brought in a crowd of tags to vote for him. They were counter-balanced, however, by an army of the Third, led by Jimmy Silver's cousin, Algy, of that Form.

Cenuroy and Van Ryn and Pons, the Colonials, were there to back up Jimmy Silver. Tubby Muffin was there, undecided how he was going to vote. He had offered his valuable vote to Jimmy Silver for sixpence—an offer that was declined without thanks. Tubby had consequently offered it to Mornington at the reduced price of fourpence; but Morny—perhaps because Erroll was present—had refused to help his cause by bribery and corruption. So the fat Classical was still undecided.

But as Mornington spotted the fat Tubby in the crowd he gave him a genial smile.

"Catch!" he called out.

Tubby Muffin caught the packet of toffee Morny tossed to him, and his fat face beamed. There was no longer any doubt about Tubby's vote.

"Morny!" murmured Erroll.

"My dear chap, why shouldn't I give

"the fat boulder toffee? He likes toffee!" said Mornington.

"He's going to vote for you now."

"Why shouldn't he vote for the best man?" grinned Mornington.

Stroll said no more.

There was a cheer from some of the juniors as Jimmy Silver came in with his chum. Jimmy had done no electioneering, but Lovell and Raby and Newcome had done a great deal for him.

The Common room was pretty well crowded now. Not more than a dozen fellows who were entitled to vote were absent.

The crowd had split into three groups.

Jimmy Silver glanced over them with a keen eye. Mornington was surrounded by quite an enthusiastic army of backers, and his crowd looked as if it outnumbered Jimmy's supporters, though slightly. Tommy Dodd's crowd — all Moderns — outnumbered each of the other two. Jimmy knitted his brows as he noted it.

Judging by appearances, the Classical vote was nearly evenly split, and if the voting went accordingly the election was safe for Tommy Dodd.

Arthur Edward Lovell noted it, too, as the bulldog expression on his eloquent countenance testified.

"There isn't twice as many Classics as Moderns," he remarked, with a stunt. "If there were, it wouldn't matter. But there isn't. And if we're split into halves Tommy Dodd will beat both halves."

"Looks like it!" said Jimmy.

"May be different when the fellows vote," said Raby hopefully. "All those chaps round Morny mayn't mean to vote for him."

"I think they do," said Jimmy.

"Then we shall get a Modern skipper!" said Lovell in deep disgust. "That's going to be the outcome of Morny butting in."

Jimmy Silver was silent and very thoughtful. He liked Tommy Dodd

personally, more than he liked Mornington; but he was a Classical, and he felt like the rest of the Classics. The Junior captaincy was not to go to the rival side of Hookwood, if he could help it.

So Jimmy had plenty of food for thought.

There was a buzz as Bulkeley of the Sixth came in. It was time for the serious business of the election to be proceeded with.

"Well, are you kids ready?" asked the captain of Hookwood, with a good-humoured smile.

"Waitin' for you, Bulkeley," answered Mornington.

"Well, here I am! I understand that there are three candidates," said Bulkeley. "Let them come forward."

Mornington and Tommy Dodd came forward promptly. Arthur Edward Lovell nudged his chum.

"Get a move on, Jimmy! Can't you hear Bulkeley?"

Jimmy hesitated.

"Move on, you ass!" said Newcome.

Lovell gave Jimmy Silver a shove, and Jimmy joined the other candidates. Tommy Dodd gave him a cheery grin. Tommy had been using his eyes, and he was assured of success now. His compact body of voters outnumbered either of the rival Classical crowds, and he looked on the election now as a walk-over for himself.

Mornington read Tommy's expression, and his own look was less cheery. He had intended to make a bid for the captaincy himself; but he had certainly not intended to squeeze Jimmy Silver out for the purpose of allowing a Modern to squeeze in. But it was rather too late to consider that now. As for standing down, Morny did not even think of it.

"Mornington, Dodd and Silver," said Bulkeley, looking at them.

"That's right!" said Morny.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Count me out!" he said quietly.

"I understood that you were standing," said Bulkeley.

"I've changed my mind."

"Jimmy!" roared Lovell.

"I'm not standing for election," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Two Classical candidates are one too many. I'm standing down."

And he walked back to where his chums were standing.

Tommy Dodd's face fell.

"Oh, crumbs!" he murmured.

That absolute certainty of success vanished from Tommy Dodd's breast now. The retirement of one Classical candidate settled the matter for him. There was no doubt that Jimmy Silver's supporters would rally round Mornington now, rather than allow a Modern to get in.

Lovell grasped Jimmy by the shoulder, and fairly shook him in his wrath and indignation.

"Jimmy, you ass!" he gasped.

"All serene, old scout!" answered Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "The fellows want a change, but they don't want a Modern skipper. Let Moray go in and win."

"You—you ass, I—I—I'll——" scattered Arthur Edward.

"You'll vote for Marny, old chap!"

"I won't!" roared Lovell.

"Yes, you will," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Classicals have got to back up the Classical candidate. Go ahead—Bulkeley's calling for hands."

Lovell's face was a study.

But he put his hand up for Mornington. Jimmy Silver was out of the election, and anything was better than a Modern skipper, from the Classical point of view. And most of the other Classicals followed Lovell's example. There was a forest of hands for Mornington.

"Do you ask for a count, Dodd?" asked Bulkeley, with a smile.

Tommy Dodd granted and shook his head. The show of hands was more than sufficient.

"N. G.," he answered. "It's all right!"

And Bulkeley of the Sixth announced that Valentine Mornington was duly

elected junior captain of Rookwood. There was a burst of cheering for the victor. Mornington came over towards Jimmy Silver as the late junior captain was leaving the Common-room.

"I didn't ask you to stand out, Silver," he said; "but I fancy I shouldn't have got in if you'd stood against me. It would have been the Modern."

"That's why I stood out."

Mornington looked rather remorseful.

"I—I don't feel so pleased as I thought I should," he confessed. "Look here, Silver, if you think you've been badly treated I—I'm willing to chuck in my resignation on the spot, and leave things as they were before."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"You couldn't very well do that," he said. "And I don't want you to. You're captain now, and that settles it. Go ahead and do your best, and you can depend on me to back you up."

Mornington of the Fourth was junior captain of Rookwood, and there was gloom in the end study. Jimmy Silver had fallen from his high estate. But he did not seem to mind. His chums groused to their hearts' content; but Jimmy Silver did not seem to find it difficult to live up to his own cheery maxim and "keep smiling."

CHAPTER IX.

Dined!

JIMMY SILVER came along the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood, with a letter in his hand, and stopped at Mornington's study.

The door of Study No. 4 was open, and there was a sound of voices within; rather excited voices.

Jimmy glanced in.

Valentine Mornington was seated on a corner of the table, his hands in his pockets, and a smile on his face—a rather mocking smile. His chum, Kit Erroll, was standing by the win-

dow looking into the quadrangle with a very thoughtful brow.

Three Shell fellows were in the study—Smythe and Tracy and Howard. They were talking to Mornington—all at once; and their remarks were emphatic. Morny seemed quite unmoved by their excitement.

"Playin' it low down on us, I call it!" Adolphus Smythe declared, pointing an accusing forefinger at Morny's mocking face.

"Dishin' us!" said Tracy.

"Mean, I call it!" said Howard.

Jimmy Silver waited in the doorway. He had come there to speak to Mornington, the new junior captain of Rockwood; but he politely let Smythe & Co finish first. Not that they showed any signs of finishing, for that matter. They seemed well set for a good innings, so to speak.

"Do you call it the fair thing, Mornington?" demanded Smythe.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, yes!" he answered.

"You agreed——"

"I'm keepin' my agreement."

"In words—not in spirit," said Tracy. "We understood——"

"My dear man, there's no tellin' what you might or might not have understood," yawned Mornington. "It surprises me that a fellow of your intellectual calibre understands anything. Anyhow, I've told you how the matter stands. Take it or leave it!"

"I call it a swindle!" bawled Adolphus Smythe.

"Call it what you like, old top."

"I put it to Errol," exclaimed Smythe, looking at the silent junior by the window. "Errol, do you call this a fair deal?"

Errol glanced round for a moment.

"Don't appeal to me!" he said curtly. "I've nothing to do with the matter, and want nothing to do with it!"

"Which means that you know that Morny is swindlin' us!" howled Smythe.

"Hallo, here's Jimmy Silver! Listen to this, Silver——"

"My dear ass, leave me bull!" said Jimmy. "I don't know what the row's about, but it isn't my business. Morny is junior captain now, and he seems to be getting some of the pleasures of the job."

"He promised us——" began Tracy.

"Oh, yess! Solemn promise!" said Howard.

"Word of honour!" howled Smythe. "It was quid pro quo. We voted for him in the election, didn't we?"

"You did!" agreed Jimmy. "What about it?"

"And he agreed——"

"Oh, give us a rest!" exclaimed Mornington. "Smythe, old man, you use your chin too much. Go and bleat in your own quarters, if you must keep on bleatin'!"

"He agreed to play us in the next school match if he got in as skipper!" roared Smythe.

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Mornington coloured a little, and did not meet the eyes of the late junior captain. Errol stared out of the window.

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"Dash it all, Morny——" he began.

"Oh, don't give me an Uncle James' sermon!" exclaimed Mornington irritably. "It was just an electioneering dodge—I was makin' a bid for the support of the Shell and most of the Shell fellow that idiot Smythe's lead. I don't see any harm in it."

Jimmy compressed his lips a little. He liked Morny for his good qualities, but Morny had other qualities that were not so good, and he was not so scrupulous in all matters as his friends would have liked to see him. He had made a bid for the junior captaincy, and "begged" it from Jimmy Silver, and Jimmy was prepared to accept the new situation good-temperedly, and give his skipper loyal support. But this discovery of Morny's electioneering methods was rather a shock.

"No harm in it, if you keep your word!" sniffed Adolphus Smythe.

"Plenty of harm in it, I think," exclaimed Jimmy Silver warmly. "You've promised to play three hopeless duds in junior matches. Whether you keep your word or break it, you're acting badly."

"Nothin' of the kind! I'm playin' Smythe & Co. in a match where they can't do any harm," said Mornington coolly. "I had that in mind when I made the agreement with the silly asses. They may have fancied they'd figure in a match with St. Jim's. That's their look-out. I promised them a show in the next cricket-match. I've fixed one up for Wednesday—on purpose. See?"

"And I called it a swindle!" howled Smythe. "We understood that it was to be the next regular match on the list."

"I can't help what you understood, old top. Nothin' was said about the next regular match on the list. The next match was what I said; and the next match takes place on Wednesday, with the Second Form!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Smythe wouldn't do any harm in a match with Second Form fags!" said Morny. "Even Smythe can keep his end up against young 'Erbert, and Grant, and those kids. At least, I hope so!"

That remark seemed to deprive Adolphus of the power of speech. He expressed his feelings by shaking his fist in Morny's mocking face.

Erroll, with his back to the fellows in the study, stared silently from the window. He did not speak; but his silence was a clue to his thoughts. He certainly shared Jimmy Silver's opinion of Morny's methods, though he did not care to say so. As a matter of fact, Morny's little game was perilously near the verge of sharp practice, and it was not surprising that Smythe & Co. were furious.

"So that's how the matter stands!"

yawned Morny, apparently unconscious of the fist Adolphus was shaking at him. "And if you've done wasting your chin, Smythe, you may as well amble along. You're not entertainin', old fellow."

"You've spoofed us!" snorted Tracy.

"Yes, perhaps it amounts to that!" assented Mornington thoughtfully. "At least, I was pullin' your leg. But you were really born to have your leg pulled, Tracy! That's your vocation in life, old scout!"

"Oh, you rotter!" gasped Smythe at last.

Morny glanced at Jimmy Silver. "Did you come along for somethin'?" he asked.

"Yes; I want to show you this letter—from Wharton at Greyfriars."

"Right-ho! Good-bye, Smythe!"

"You're a swindlin' ass, Mornington!" howled Smythe.

"Thanks! Good-bye!"

"Yah!"

That was not an elegant rejoinder, but it was all that Adolphus could think of at that moment. He tramped out of the study with his friends, and Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"By gad, I began to think they were never goin'!" he yawned. "Smythe's under the impression that his conversation is worth listenin' to—quite a mistaken impression. What's the letter about, Silver?"

"Better read it!" said Jimmy, rather dryly.

He handed Harry Wharton's letter to Mornington, who glanced over it carelessly. But the carelessness left him the next moment, and his brows knitted as he ejaculated:

"Oh, gad!"

CHAPTER 12.

Morny's Difficulty!

"GAD!" Mornington's tone was full of surprise and dismay. Kit Erroll turned quickly from the window,

"Anything wrong, Morny?" he exclaimed.

"Yes; thumpin' wrong!" growled Mornington.

"It's a letter from Greyfriars," explained Jimmy Silver. "Wharton's written to me. We're rather friendly, you know, and he doesn't know that I'm not junior skipper now. You remember how our match at Greyfriars was mucked up. Smythe sending us off in his dashed motor-car and taking a nutty team of duds to Greyfriars to play the match as the Rockwood eleven. Wharton's lot walked over them with an innings to spare. And now they know the facts the Greyfriars fellows are not satisfied with the matter. And the long and the short of it is that Wharton's consulted the others, and they've come to the conclusion to offer us to scratch that silly match off and play it over again with a real Rockwood team."

"That's sporting of them!" said Erroll, with a nod of approval. "I rather expected something of the sort from Wharton."

"Well, he says that they've got a date open on Wednesday, and if we care to accept the offer, they'll fix it up for that day," said Jimmy Silver. "I should accept, of course, but it rests with Morny now, and that's why I've brought the letter along to him."

"Why, of course, the offer must be accepted," said Erroll, as Mornington did not speak. "It's sporting of Wharton to make it. The match wasn't a real match, as it was played by a spec team without any right to represent Rockwood at all!"

"That's so!"

Mornington was crumpling the letter in his hand, a dark expression on his handsome face.

Jimmy Silver regarded him rather curiously.

Wharton's offer was a sporting one, for the Greyfriars fellows had played the match in good faith, and were en-

titled to count it as a win. They were not responsible for the trick Adolphus Smythe had played in sending the Rockwood junior eleven on a wild-goose chase, while he took their place on the cricket-ground with his nutty followers.

The offer to replay the match was eminently acceptable, from Jimmy Silver's point of view, and from that of his chums, Lovell and Baby and Newcome. Erroll evidently concurred. But Morny's face was developing a dark and obstinate expression.

"It can't be done!" said Mornington, breaking the silence at last.

"Morny!" exclaimed Erroll.

"Can't be helped! If Wednesday is their only day, it can't be done!"

"Wharton says Wednesday is open, and doesn't mention any other day," said Jimmy Silver dryly. "It's a case of take it or leave it, I should say!"

"We shall have to leave it, then."

Jimmy set his lips.

"The fellows will want an explanation, Morny, if you refuse an offer like that," he said quietly.

"Wednesday's booked up already," answered Mornington.

"There's no fixture for Wednesday!"

"I've fixed one up—a match with the Second Form."

Jimmy uttered an angry exclamation.

"What the thump does that matter? A fog match can be fixed up for any half-holiday. There's half a dozen dates open for playing the Second Form—if you want to play the Second Form at all! Either the Second!"

"It's fixed now."

"It can be unfixed, then."

"It can't!"

"Morny!" murmured Erroll.

Mornington looked obstinate.

"I've fixed it with the Second," he said. "I'm not going to let them down. Wharton's offer will have to be declined with thanks!"

"I think I see the point," said Jimmy Silver. "You've fixed up this

match with the fags to dish Smythe & Co., and squeeze out of the pledge you gave them for their votes. If we play Greyfriars instead on Wednesday, they'll claim to play in that match. It will be 'next match,' and they'll pin you down on it."

"Are you advisin' me to break my word?" sneered Mornington.

"You'd no right to give such a promise! It was a mean trick to catch votes!" exclaimed Jimmy hotly.

"I've given the silly fools my word, and my word is my bond!" said Mornington. "I'm bound to play them in the next match, and there's no half-holiday before Wednesday. If we play Greyfriars on Wednesday I've got to play Smythe an' Tracy an' Howard there. That's chuckin' the game away, and I'm not goin' to do it!"

"You can settle with Smythe & Co. the best way you can; but you ought to accept Wharton's offer, and you know it. Every member of the club will expect it."

"You seem to forget that you're not skipper now, Jimmy Silver!"

"It doesn't wholly rest with the skipper. The club and the committee will have something to say about it," Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"So you're goin' to begin opposition in the committee?" he asked. "That's your answer to my gettin' hold of the captaincy, is it?"

"You know it isn't!" explained Jimmy averily.

"I know what it looks like!" said Mornington with a shrug. "I never really expected you to take it smilin'. You're goin' to take the first chance that offers of upsettin' my apple-cart. I see the game!"

"You know that's not true!"

"You're goin' to work up the committee, and put it to me to accept Wharton's offer or resign—I see!" exclaimed Mornington savagely. "Well, go ahead! I shall make a fight for it! You won't get the captaincy back so easily as all that, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

Before he could reply there were footsteps in the passage, and Lovell and Baby and Newcome looked in.

"Told Morny?" asked Lovell.

"Yes," muttered Jimmy.

"How many of us are you playin' against Greyfriars, Morny?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, with a grin. "I don't want to shove good advice on a skipper at the beginning of his merry career, but I really think I ought to mention that you can't leave the end study out. You'll want Jimmy to bowl against Greyfriars, and you'll want me to bat, what?"

"And little me?" asked Baby.

"Don't forget yours truly!" said Newcome.

"We're not goin' to replay the match with Greyfriars!" snapped Mornington.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"My hat!"

The Co. blinked at Mornington.

"And why not?" demanded Lovell warmly.

"I've decided not!"

"You've decided not!" gasped Lovell.

"Well, you're skipper, but you're not quite everybody and everything rolled together. Junior skipper doesn't mean that you're Dictator of the Lower School, Morny! You can't run Rockwood off your own bat—not quite!"

"I've decided!" said Mornington arrogantly.

"Then we'll see what the other fellows have to say about it! If that's the way you're beginnin' as skipper it won't last long. I can promise you."

"I know I should have you fellows up against me, and I'm ready for you!" said Mornington disdainfully. "Go ahead and do your worst! I've said all I'm goin' to say!"

Jimmy Silver opened his lips, but closed them again. It was not much use arguing with Mornington. The Fistical Four quitted the study with knitted brows.

CHAPTER 26.

Trouble!

"ROT!"

That was the general opinion very candidly expressed—when the Rockwood Juniors learned that Valentine Mornington had determined not to accept the offer from Wharton of Greyfriars.

The offer was a good one, and every fellow who took an interest in junior cricket concluded that, as a matter of course, it would be jumped at.

So far from jumping at it, Morny intended to refuse it; and his decision had an exasperating effect on the Juniors.

It soon became pretty clear that the new junior captain was not going to have it all his own way.

When Jimmy Silver had filled the place, his decisions had been criticised sometimes, but seldom or never seriously questioned; but then Jimmy had displayed plenty of tact and common-sense.

Mornington, apparently, was beginning his reign by setting himself obstinately and inexplicably against every other fellow connected with the summer game at Rockwood.

It was not to be stood, as a dozen fellows declared wrathfully.

Certainly, it did not seem quite the thing to ask a skipper to resign a few days after electing him; but fellows were soon speaking of it.

Morny's motive was not generally known. Had it been known, the Juniors would have been angrier still.

But Smythe & Co. kept their own counsel, and Jimmy Silver did not feel at liberty to mention what he had heard in Morny's study. If Mornington chose to explain, he could; but he did not choose, and naturally Errell said nothing. Smythe & Co. were quite prepared to talk, at the top of their voices for that matter, if Morny broke faith with them; but otherwise they realised that the less said the better. Their compact with Morny over the voting at the election did not

reflect much credit upon either party.

"It will be all right for us, dear boys," Adolphus Smythe told his sultry pals, with great satisfaction. "Morny will have to replay Greyfriars. He can't get out of it. And that's our match. No Second-Form tag-match for us! We shall play Greyfriars!"

"We played 'em the other day!" murmured Tracy. "The result wasn't what you could call glorious!"

"We had bad luck."

"We did, an' no mistake!" countered Howard.

"Besides, I took a rather feeble team to Greyfriars," said Adolphus fatuously.

"Under the cirs, I had to make it up from my own pals, and they're not all cricketin' chaps. But I'm all right, personally, on the cricket-field——"

"Oh!"

"So are you two?"

"Oh, yass!"

"And, with the usual junior team to back us up, we shall do well—very well. Anyway, I'm goin' to hold Morny to his word, an' make him play us, if only to worry Jimmy Silver!"

To which Smythe's pals replied heartily:

"Hear, hear!"

"And he can't get out of the match," said Adolphus confidently. "You'll see. The fellows are all wild about his refusin' Wharton's offer. They'll make him accept it. And as it's the next match he can't get out of his pledge to us."

"Good egg!"

Smythe & Co. felt that they had cause to be satisfied.

Adolphus was not at all discouraged by the inglorious show he had made at Greyfriars, on the occasion when he had "bagged" the junior match by trickery. He was quite prepared to entertain the Greyfriars fellows with another exhibition.

Jimmy Silver was not feeling satisfied, however. He was in a worried and troubled mood.

He had taken Wharton's letter along

to Morny, in great spirits, prepared to back up the new skipper in a great game, to retrieve the disgrace Smythe & Co. had brought upon the Rookwood colours.

Owing to Morny's miserable trick over the electioneering, and the pledge to Smythe & Co., that attempt was not to be made.

Jimmy felt that it was his duty, as a patriotic Rookwooder, to oppose Morny tooth and nail in committee, and make him agree either to play Greyfriars, or to get out of the captaincy.

But that course was extremely distasteful.

It would look, as it already looked to Morny, as if the former captain was seizing the first opportunity of "rounding" on the new skipper and "downing" him.

Jimmy Silver naturally shrank from that.

He had determined to support Mornington in his new position, and had, in fact, told him that he would do so, never foreseeing such a state of affairs as the present. What to do now was a puzzle to him.

His chums had no doubts about the matter. Over tea in the end study that evening they tackled Jimmy.

"Morny's got to be made to see sense, or to drop a job he ought never to have taken up!" announced Lovell. "You see that, Jimmy?"

"Um!" said Jimmy.

"Why doesn't he want to play Greyfriars, I'd like to know!" exclaimed Raby.

"There's a fog match fixed for Wednesday. I hear," Newcome remarked. "But that could be scratched easily enough."

"Of course it could."

"The silly ass seems to have made up his mind to refuse Wharton's offer, without consulting a soul, and for no reason whatever!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell. "He'll jolly soon find that the club won't stand it. Blessed cheek!"

"Swank!" said Raby.

"Nerve!" growled Newcome.

"Do you know, Jimmy, why he doesn't want to replay the match on Wednesday?" demanded Lovell.

"Well, ye-e-es," said Jimmy Silver slowly.

"And what's the reason?"

"I heard it by accident in his study, and I don't think I ought to say," answered Jimmy. "You can ask Morny."

"Is there a blessed secret about it?" asked Lovell, with a stare.

Jimmy shifted uneasily in his seat. He could not very well explain, and moreover, he did not want to bring upon Morny's head the burst of wrath which would inevitably have followed if Morny's real reason was known.

"Not exactly a secret, I suppose," he said.

"Then why can't you tell us?"

"I'd rather you ask Morny!"

Lovell started from his seat.

"I'll jolly soon ask him if he has a reason at all!" he exclaimed.

Arthur Edward Lovell strode out of the end study.

Jimmy walked rather uneasily for his return.

Lovell came back in a few minutes, his face crimson with anger.

"Well?" asked Newcome and Raby together. Jimmy Silver looked at Lovell's angry face in silence.

"The cheeky cad!" breathed Lovell.

"He told me he's got a reason, but he doesn't choose to tell me. He says Jimmy knows, but he's heard it in confidence."

"It amounts to that!" said Jimmy. "Besides, it wouldn't do any good if I told you."

"Rot!" snorted Lovell. "Does the cheeky, swanky cad think we're going to be treated like this? I've told him I won't play in his team next match or any other match!"

"What did he say to that?" asked Raby.

"He said I could stand out, and if

would be all the better for the team!" roared Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Well, we're backing up Lovell!" said Newcome. "I'm not a regular member of the eleven, certainly, but I shan't play at all if Lovell doesn't."

"Same here!" said Raby.

Arthur Edward Lovell fixed his eyes upon Jimmy Silver. Mornington's action was so high-handed that Arthur Edward felt that he did well to be angry, and he expected support in his own study.

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"Well, Jimmy?" said Lovell grimly. "Are you going to play for that cheeky cad, when he's turned your pal down?"

"We want Rockwood to win matches," said Jimmy.

"Let Morny resign, then, and let's have our own captain back. You were a fool to stand aside for him, as I told you."

"Perhaps I was!" admitted Jimmy.

"No perhaps about it—you were! He's starting as a tinpot Tsar, monarch of all he surveys. Oughtn't we to replay Greyfriars?"

"We certainly ought."

"And he won't, and he won't even give a reason. I'm on the committee, and I shall go for him bald-headed, and I fancy I shall get backed up, too. But you can't support him, Jimmy. I know what you're thinking. It will look like jealousy if you round on him. But you've got to."

Jimmy Silver was silent and troubled.

"Well, if you play for him after the way he's treated your pals——" began Lovell hotly.

"I can't!" said Jimmy. "He's not doing his duty as skipper, and I can't back him up. But I can't oppose him. It would look too rotten, and—and I want to give him his chance. Let him go ahead his own way, and do his best. After all, if he does play Greyfriars, he mayn't want us. There will be other claimants. I shall stand out, I suppose."

"The whole study stands out!" said Lovell. "That's settled!"

And it was settled. But it was not a settlement that could bring any satisfaction to Jimmy Silver.

CHAPTER XI.

Morny Gives In!

THERE was a meeting of the junior cricket committee that evening.

It was clear, before the meeting was held, that there was a stormy time before the new skipper. Unless he could give an adequate explanation of his decision not to accept Wharton's offer, trouble was certain; and assuredly he could not give the explanation. Jimmy Silver knew that.

His real reason, if it had been known, would have been enough to get him booted out of the captaincy; the fact that he had promised to play three hopeless duffers in the first match after the election, in return for their support against the other candidates.

Morny might declare that it was only an electioneering "dodge," but he knew very well what the Rockwooders would think of it, and he certainly would never dare to give such an explanation.

If he agreed to play Greyfriars, he had to play Smythe & Co. or break his pledged word; and Morny, unscrupulous in some matters, was a slave of his word. The penalty of breaking it, too, was to be considered, for Smythe & Co. would certainly publish the matter to all Rockwood if he failed to keep the compact.

The end study did not attend the meeting. Conroy called for Jimmy Silver, but Jimmy simply said he was staying out.

"I think I catch on," assented Conroy. "You don't approve of Morny's remarkable attitude, I suppose?"

"Naturally."

"And you don't want to oppose the new skipper at the very beginning. I understand," said the Australian junior. "But I'm going to oppose him,

and if he doesn't give in he won't be captain long, I think."

And Conroy went his way.

The Musical Four sat down to their project.

About half an hour later they were interrupted by a tap at the door, and the cool, smiling face of Mornington looked in.

Crin looks greeted him.

"You fellows busy?" asked Mornington cheerily.

"Yes."

"Sorry! I'm makin' up my list for the Greyfriars match, and I want to know what merry recruits I'm gettin' from this study."

The four juniors jumped.

"Greyfriars match!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Yass."

"Then you're replaying the match on Wednesday, after all?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yass."

"Good!" said Jimmy.

"There's was quite a shindy kicked up at the committee meeting," drawled Mornington. "You really ought to have been there, Silver. You'd have found it quite entertainin'. Conroy and Tommy Dodd were the most eloquent. Yieldin' to the majority, I agreed to replay Greyfriars on Wednesday. There was really nothin' else to be done."

"I thought you'd be made to see reason!" granted Lovell.

"Your thoughts on the subject, dear boy, display your usual perspicacity," said Mornington imperturbably. "I shall have to scratch the match with the Second Form on Wednesday, much to my regret."

"Blow the Second Form!"

"Certainly! Blow 'em if you like."

Jimmy Silver looked very curiously at the dandy of the Fourth.

Mornington had astutely bowed before the storm, finding that he could not have his own unreasonable way. But now he was "landed" with Smythe & Co. as recruits for Wednesday's match.

There was likely to be another storm when that fact was known. On this point, however, Morny could claim to be acting within his rights, though he could hardly declare that he had selected the nuts of the Shell on their merits as cricketers.

He would probably be judged by the result of the match. But the result was not much in doubt, with a team loaded down by three helpless passengers, against a keen set of cricketers like Wharion's eleven.

"I'm puttin' your name down, Silver," went on Mornington.

"Hold on!" said Jimmy. "I suppose you've got some names on your list already?"

"Certainly!"

"May we know what they are?"

"What-ho! I'll read out the merry list, as far as I've got." Mornington took a paper from his pocket. "My honourable self at the head of the list, and then Errol—"

"Good!"

"Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle from the Modern side, must give Moderns a show, as they're all good men."

"That's all right!"

"Conroy—" continued Morny.

"He's a good man!"

"Smythe, Tracy, and Howard—"

"What!" yelled Lovell.

"That's three of the Shell," said Mornington calmly.

"Those three fumbling chumps!" howled Lovell. "You've got the nerve to play those three dashed fools against Greyfriars!"

"Is it a joke?" asked Raby, in wonder.

"Not at all; I'm playin' them. That makes nine," said Mornington calmly. "I want two from this study—Silver and Lovell, say."

"I told you I wouldn't play for you," said Lovell.

"That was only your little joke, dear boy. You'll play, of course?"

"I'll play, as you've agreed to do the right thing," said Lovell—"that is, if you make up a real team to meet Grey-



"Better take it quietly, Smithy!" said Jimmy Silver, as he tied Adolphus' wrists together securely, and then ran the cord round the tree-trunk and tied it there. Tracy and Howard watched the proceeding with dire apprehensions, aware that their own turn was coming.

frars. I'm not going over there asking for a licking. You can't be in earnest about playing Smythe?"

"Oh, quite!"

"Then you can leave me out!"

"All serene! I'll ask Van Ryn; he's quite as good a man as you are, old bean. Can I count on you, Silver?"

"Don't play the goat, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver. "You know you won't have a look-in at Greyfriars with those three rotters in the team. You can't expect a chap to back you up in such foolery."

"I'm not askin' you to pick the team; only to play in it," said Mornington blandly. "Besides you know how I'm fixed, and these fellows don't."

"You've no right to be so fixed."

"Possibly; but the fact remains. Will you play?"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"No," he answered: "I'd play willingly if you selected a team according to your judgment, even if I thought it a bad one. But I won't go over to Greyfriars and ask for a licking for nothing! Leave me out!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Plenty more!" he said.

"Then you won't miss me!" said Jimmy Silver dryly.

"Not at all!"

Mornington quitted the study.

"Well, we're out of it," said Lovell.

"No great loss in being out of a match that will be a thumping licking. We simply couldn't win against a team like Wharton's, playing those three fechs. What's Morny's object in doing it?"

"They must have got a hold over him somehow," said Ruby sagely. "Anyway, this study is well out of it. What are you scoffing about, Jimmy?"

"It's not a pleasant prospect for Rockwood," answered Jimmy.

"Well, it isn't our fault."

"Not a pleasant prospect, all the same."

And Jimmy Silver bent over his work again, with a wrinkled brow.

CHAPTER II.

Not to be tried!

"SMYTHE!"

"My hat!"

"And Tracy—and Howard!"

"Is it a joke?"

Surprise and wrath were the chief feelings with which Morny's first cricket list was greeted when it was posted up on Tuesday.

Morny's surrender on the subject of the match had given satisfaction; and the Rockwood juniors had taken it for granted that he would play a good team. They could see no reason for playing a bad one, when there were plenty of good cricketers to choose from.

The inclusion of Smythe & Co. astonished them. It was Smythe who had "mucked up" the Greyfriars match and rendered the replay necessary. Smythe was the very last fellow whose name it was expected to see in the list, especially as he was well known as a "swanking" and rotten cricketer. If he could keep his end up in a match with the Third Form fags, it was about all that Adolphus Smythe could do.

"And Jimmy Silver's not in it!" said Conroy. "What the thump does Morny mean by it? That's what I want to know."

"Lovell's out of it, too," remarked Oswald, "not to speak of myself. My hat, I ask you fellows whether I can't play better cricket than Smythe."

"You couldn't play worse, anyhow."

"There isn't any worse cricket than Smythe's," observed Van Ryn, the South African, "unless it's Tracy's."

"Or Howard's," remarked Pons.

"It must be a joke," exclaimed Conroy. "We'd better see Morny about it. This really isn't a subject for his funny jokes."

"Let's find him and see."

"And if he means it, we'll jolly well talk plainly to him," said Rawson. "I don't push my claims; but leaving me out and putting Smythe in, is a little too thick."

"They used to be pals," remarked

Oswald. "Morny was in Smythe's set at one time. That was before Erroll came, though. Morny hasn't had much to do with Smythe this term. I don't see his object in playing the goat like this."

"Might as well play Tubby Muffin as Smythe!" growled Conroy.

"Much better, I think," said Reginald Muffin warily. "If I couldn't play Smythe's head off, I'd swallow my cricket-bat!"

"Which is as good as anything else you could do with it," observed Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's go and see Morny!" exclaimed Conroy. "We'd better have this out at once, as the match is to-morrow."

"Come on, all of you!" said Van Ryn.

Quite an army of amazed and indignant juniors marched off to see Mornington. Erroll was met at the foot of the staircase.

"Where's Morny?" demanded Conroy.

"In the quad, I think," said Erroll. "Anything wrong?"

"Yes, lots! Smythe's name is in the list!"

"Oh!" said Erroll.

"Do you know why?"

Erroll coloured a little. He knew why well enough; but it was not for him to expose the tortuous ways of his chum.

"Better ask Morny," he said.

"We'll ask him fast enough!" said the Australian junior. "Come on, you fellows!"

The juniors poured out into the quadrangle in search of Mornington.

The new junior captain was discovered under the beeches, sauntering there in the sunset with his hands in his pockets.

His eyes gleamed for a moment, as he observed the army of Classical juniors bearing down on him, but his handsome face retained its cool and nonchalant expression.

"Oh, here you are!" exclaimed Conroy.

"Yaas! Lookin' for me?"

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed half a dozen voices.

"Well, now you've found me," said Mornington placidly.

"What's this rot about Smythe of the Shell playing for Rookwood against Greyfriars?" demanded Conroy.

"It isn't rot, dear boy; it's a fact!"

"You're actually playing him?"

"Yaas!"

"And why?"

"Because I've selected him to play, of course!"

"Don't beat about the bush, Morny! Why have you selected him to play then?"

"Because I decided to put him in the team," answered Mornington, with provoking coolness.

Conroy's brow darkened.

"Will you speak out plainly?" he asked, controlling his temper.

"I think I'm speakin' plainly. I decided to play Smythe of the Shell in the match to-morrow. I don't recognise your right to criticise my selection. Is that plain enough?"

"Oh, yes! And have you the nerve to say that you're playing Smythe on his merits as a cricketer?" exclaimed Conroy hotly.

"I'm playin' him for reasons that seem to me good," replied Mornington coolly. "That's enough, I think!"

"Is isn't merely one of your queer jokes?" asked Oswald.

"I wasn't aware that I was given to queer jokes; but, anyhow, this isn't one of them. I'm playin' Smythe to-morrow."

"And Howard and Tracy?"

"Certainly!"

"Three hopeless duds—three duck's-eggs for Rookwood!" shouted Conroy.

"Will you tell us what the game is?"

"Cricket."

"You funny ass, will you tell us what you mean by it?"

"I've told you enough, dear boy."

"Well," said Conroy, setting his lips, "the fellows elected you captain in Jimmy Silver's place. I was solid for

Jimmy, if the ace hadn't stood aside! I thought it was a change for the worse, and I still think so. Play Smythe if you like——"

"I intend to!"

"But you won't play me in the same team. If Rookwood is going to be walked over a second time at Greyfriars, I don't choose to be there to see it. Cut me out!" said Conroy.

Mornington took a list from his pocket and drew a pencil through Conroy's name.

"Dollo!" he answered.

"And me!" said Van Ryn quickly.

"Just as you like!"

"And two!" added Pons. The three Colonials were acting together, as they always did.

Mornington made a wry face for a moment. He had put in Pons and Van Ryn, after the refusal of Jimmy and Lovell. Evidently the places would want filling again, as well as Conroy's.

"So you're all desertin' the team?" he asked, with a sneer, as he crossed out the Canadian junior's name.

"We're not going to have a hand in playing the fool at Greyfriars. There was enough of that when Smythe went over last time."

"Please yourselves. Looking for a place in the team, Oswald?"

"Not if Smythe plays," answered Dick Oswald quietly.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Go on! eat coke, then—the lot of you!" he exclaimed angrily. "I'll make up a team without your help!"

The Colonial Co. turned their backs on him and walked away. The other fellows followed. Mornay caught Rawson's eyes; but Rawson walked away with the rest. He did not want a place in a team adorned by Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

Mornington was left alone under the beeches, with a very peculiar expression on his face. He was not left alone for long. Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle, of the Modern Fourth, bore down on him.

"I hear that Smythe of the Shell is

in the eleven for Greyfriars!" Tommy Dodd announced abruptly.

"Yes!" snapped Mornington.

"Is it a scheme for a second licking there, or what?"

"Find out!"

"I won't take the trouble," answered Tommy Dodd. "I only want you to take three names off the list, if Smythe's name stays in it. I'm not going to have a hand in any such foolery; and my friends say the same!"

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle nodded assent. The three Tommies of the Modern Fourth were evidently of one mind.

"Look here——" began Mornington, dismayed, in spite of his coolness.

"Smythe or us!" said Tommy Dodd.

"You can choose!"

"Smythe, then, and be hanged to you!" exclaimed Mornington angrily. And he turned his back on the three Moderns.

That evening six names were crossed out of the list on the board. Mornay's own name remained, and Ercoll's; Kit Ercoll was sticking to his chum through thick and thin. And the names of the three nobs of the Shell also adorned the list. The new skipper wanted six more men—and where he was going to find them was a problem that remained for him to solve.

CHAPTER 25.

Show for Show

JIMMY SILVER wore a worried look. Had he been jealous of the new skipper, as some of the fellows expected him to be, and had he desired to see the difficulties crop up round the feet of his successful rival, certainly Jimmy would have felt "on velvet" now.

But nothing of the kind was the case. Jimmy was not pained at being supplanted, as was only natural. But he was honestly desirous of giving Mornay a chance to show what he could do; and loyally prepared to back him up to any reasonable extent. To support him

in risking defeat on the cricket-field, as a reward to corrupt voters for their votes, was asking a little too much. Jimmy could scarcely be expected to go that length.

But he was worried.

Rookwood's reputation on the playing fields was a great thing to Jimmy, who had often led the Junior team to victory. Junior matches loomed as large in his eyes as did the first eleven fixtures in those of Bulkeley and the great men of the Sixth.

There was a chance, on Wharton's offer, of retrieving the ignominious defeat Smythe & Co. had brought upon Rookwood, in their fatuous conceit. And that chance was being thrown away hopelessly. All the good cricketers in the Lower School, excepting Erroll, had either resigned from Morny's eleven, or refused to accept a place in it. That did not make much difference to the prospects of the match, for victory seemed impossible with Smythe & Co. playing for Rookwood. Three wickets down for pothing meant defeat. But if Mornington had had any chance of a win, with such passengers aboard, it had vanished now.

And so Jimmy was worried.

He found it difficult to put his thoughts into his prep that evening. But prep had to be done; Mr. Bootles, in the Form-room, was not likely to make allowances for cricket worries. Lovell and Raby and Newcome interrupted prep every few minutes with emphatic remarks on the subject of the new junior skipper.

Work was still going on in the end study in a rather desultory fashion, when the door opened without a knock, and Mornington strode in.

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet at once.

Mornington's glittering eyes showed that he had come to the end study looking for trouble.

Jimmy was far from desirous of a quarrel with the new skipper. He was, in fact, very anxious to avoid it. He resolved to keep his temper, if he could.

But Morny's temper was evidently gone. His eyes fairly flamed at Jimmy Silver, and he breathed hard and fast.

"You've done this!" he burst out.

"What have I done?" asked Jimmy Silver quietly.

Mornington clenched his hand, trembling with anger.

"You've dished me over my first match! You've put the fellows up to resigning from the team! It's your work, from beginning to end!"

"Not in the least!"

"I knew you'd never let me have the captaincy in peace," said Mornington bitterly. "I knew you'd be up against me, and looking for chances of dishing me. You've done it as the very start."

Jimmy shook his head.

"I've done nothing," he said. "I refused to play in the team, certainly! You know you must not be play three dashed fools—especially for such a reason as yours! If you make a dishonourable compact——"

"What?"

"A dishonourable compact!" exclaimed Jimmy, his eyes flashing as his temper rose. "What else do you call it? Well, if you do it, you must take the consequences!"

"So there was a compact with Smythe, was there?" exclaimed Lovell.

"What about, I'd like to know?"

"That's Morny's blincy," answered Jimmy. "I can't give him away."

Mornington sneered.

"Do you think I'm afraid of the judgment of this dashed study?" he broke out. "Tell them, if you choose! If you don't, I will!"

"Tell us, Jimmy!" said Raby quietly.

"Very well," said Jimmy Silver, between his set lips. "Morny promised those three cads places in the first match played after the election, as a reward for voting for him, and getting other Shell fellows to vote."

"My hat!"

"You swindling cad, Morny!" shouted Arthur Lovell. "So that was how you bagged votes at the election, was it?"

"And you're chucking a school match away to reward those cads for what amounts to a swindle!" exclaimed Newcome. "That's the kind of skipper the fellows have changed Jimmy Silver for!"

"You can put it in your pipe and smoke it!" jeered Mornington. "I expected this study to be up against me, after Jimmy Silver was kicked out of the captaincy. I could win against Greyfriars, with three passengers in the team!"

"You dummy—you couldn't!"

"Not a dog's chance!"

"You want me to lose the match to spoil my chances; that's why you're standing out, Jimmy Silver. I've just asked Flynn to play, and he's told me he'd ask your advice. I know what that means."

"If Flynn asks my advice, I shall advise him to stand out," answered Jimmy Silver. "The match is a goner, anyhow. And no fellow is called upon to have a hand in it. It isn't as if there was a ghost of a chance of beating Greyfriars, playing eight against eleven. There isn't!"

"I think there is!"

"You try to fancy that you think so, I suppose," said Jimmy contemptuously. "But you know as well as I do that you're throwing the match away. Well, throw it away by yourself."

"You've planned all this," said Mornington, in a choking voice. "You want me to have to take a dud crew over to Greyfriars, and get licked like Smythe & Co. last week. After that, you reckon the fellows will be fed up with me as skipper, and will want to change back."

"Nothing of the kind. If the fellows asked me to take the captaincy again I should refuse—for this term, at least."

"Liar!"

Jimmy Silver's face crimsoned. "You'd better go, Morny," he said, in a low voice.

"Are you going to let him call you

a liar?" roared Lovell in indignant wrath. "Knock the creaky cad over!" Snatch!

A back-hander from the infuriated Mornington sent Arthur Edward Lovell spinning with a loud yell. He crashed against the table, and the inkpot danced.

"That for you!" hissed Mornington.

"Why, I—I—I'll——" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy Silver came quickly round the table. He pushed the furious Lovell back, his eyes glinting.

"Leave him to me!" he said, between his teeth. "Leave him to me, old chap! Now, Mornington, you utter cad——"

"Come on, if you've scrowed your courage up to the sticking-point!" jeered Mornington.

Jimmy Silver did not need a second invitation. He was as angry as Mornington now, and he came on fast enough.

Morny's hands went up to meet him. Raby pulled the table back out of the way and Newcome kicked the chairs aside, to give the combatants room.

"Go it, Jimmy!" muttered Lovell. "I wish you'd left the cad to me! But go it, old scout!"

"Tramp, tramp, tramp!"

Mornington, his face aflame, was fighting furiously, and Jimmy Silver was putting his "beef" into it. The tramping and crashing in the study soon drew attention. Fellows from the other studies came crowding along the passage, to stare into the end study.

"This way, you chaps!" yelled Tubby Muthin. "Jimmy Silver and Morny—A fight—a fight!"

"Go it, Jimmy!"

"Pile in!"

"Hallo, here's Erroll!"

Kit Erroll came racing along the passage. The Classical Juniors made way for him as he ran to the end study.

"Morny!" he shouted.

But Mornington did not heed his chum's anxious voice—he could not, at that moment. The new captain and the old were going it hammer and tongs. Mornington's nose was stream-

ing red, and there was a thin trickle from the corner of Jimmy Silver's mouth. Both faces were flushed and angry, and both getting damaged.

"Morry!" exclaimed Erroll in great distress.

"Go it, Jimmy! Kick the cad!" roared Lovell. "Don't you shove your oar in, Erroll, old top! Morry's been asking for this!"

"Jimmy!" exclaimed Erroll, appealing to the other combatant, as Mornington did not heed. "Morry's playing cricket to-morrow! Stop it!"

"Morry should have thought of that before!" growled Lovell. "He came in here and started it!"

"Separate them!"

"Rats! Let them fight it out!" said Baby.

It was not surprising that the end study were wrathful with Mornington; but Morry's chum, naturally, did not share their feelings. Erroll ran to interfere, at last, and shoved himself forcibly between the two antagonists.

He received two or three blows from either party, without heeding them.

"Stop it!" he exclaimed, pushing Mornington back. "Jimmy Silver, stop it!"

Jimmy dropped his hands, panting.

"I don't care, either way," he said.

"I never asked for trouble with Morry. He came here hunting for it!"

"Stand aside, Erroll!" said Mornington in a choking voice.

"Morry—"

"Stand aside, you fool!"

Erroll did not heed the epithet, and he did not stand aside. His strong grasp held the dandy of the Fourth back from renewing the conflict.

"Will you let go?" panted Mornington.

"No, I won't, Morry! You're playing cricket to-morrow. What state will you be in for the game, at this rate?"

"Hang cricket!"

"A lot he cares about cricket, from the way he makes up his team!" growled Lovell. "He's come here to pick a row with Jimmy, because the

fellow won't stand his thundering nerve! Offering places in the eleven to fellows as a bribe for votes! My word!"

"Let me get at him!" roared Mornington.

"Let him!" said Lovell. "I'm ready!"

"Come away, Morry!"

"You fool, let go! Hang you!"

"Nice pal!" giggled Tubby Mullin. "I'd like to pal with Morry—I don't think! Isn't he nice to his friends?"

Erroll was forcing his chum towards the door. He was a good deal stronger than Morry, and the dandy of the Fourth had to go. He lifted his clenched hand once, as if to strike full at Erroll's pale, distressed face. Erroll's eyes met his calmly, and Morry's hand dropped to his side again.

"Will you let me alone?" he muttered.

"Come away!" was Erroll's answer.

And he drew Mornington from the study.

"Well, this is a pretty kettle of fish!" remarked Jones minor, with a whistle. "I fancy Morry won't have a long run as junior skipper. You'd better put up again, Jimmy Silver. You'll get votes of about ten to one, I should say."

"Only I shan't put up!" answered Jimmy Silver quietly.

"Morry's no good!" said several voices from the passage.

"You elected him!" answered Jimmy. "Give him a chance! He's made a bad beginning; but give him a chance! Anyway, I'm not up against him, and that's settled!"

And Jimmy Silver sat down to the table again to resume his work.

In Study No. 4, Mornington was pacing to and fro, a good deal like a wild animal in a cage, his eyes glittering, his hands clenched. Erroll watched him in silence. There was no doubt that Mornington had made a bad beginning, and it looked as if he had nothing left but the faithful friendship of his one loyal chum. But that, at least, was not likely to fail him.

CHAPTER 24

Morny's Bat!

"JIMMY——"

"Oh, buzz off, Tubby!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

Jimmy Silver was dabbing his nose with his handkerchief in the end study. There were stains of crimson on the handkerchief. And Jimmy was not in his usual sunny temper.

But Tubby Muffin of the Classical Fourth did not buzz off. He rolled into the study instead.

"I say, Jimmy——" he persisted.

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Roll away, barrel!" said Lovell. "Can't you see that you're superfluous, Tubby? The charms of your fascinating society have palled. Roll away!"

Tubby did not heed.

"I want you to lend me your bat, Jimmy!" he said.

Jimmy Silver stared at the fat Classical over the crimsoned handkerchief. His nose was feeling rather painful.

"My bat?" he exclaimed.

"That's it!"

"What the thump do you want a bat for at nearly bed-time?" demanded Jimmy.

"I don't want it to-night, of course. To-morrow, I mean," explained Tubby Muffin. "You won't want it, as you're not playing at Greyfriars to-morrow, Jimmy. I've sold my bat—I sold it to Jones minor, you know, when I was stony last week. Of course, I never foresaw that I should be asked to play in the junior eleven to——"

"Wha-a-ah!"

"You never asked me to play for Rockwood when you were junior captain, Jimmy," said Tubby Muffin reproachfully. "I offered my services more than once, and you always refused. It's different now Mornington's captain. Morny knows a good man when he sees him."

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at the fat junior.

They could not speak for a moment.

Tubby Muffin as a member of the junior cricket team took their breath away.

Tubby was a great man in his own line; he was the very best customer at the tuckshop; he was the best cook in the Fourth Form, and what he didn't know about frying savenges wasn't worth knowing. But as a cricketer Tubby did not shine. As a cricketer he was probably more hopeless than even Smythe of the Shell.

"You in the junior eleven!" ejaculated Arthur Edward Lovell at last.

"You!" howled Raby.

"You!" stuttered Newcome.

"Oh, my only hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Morny must have gone fairly off his rocker, I think!"

Tubby Muffin blinked indignantly at the Fistical Four. He could not see anything surprising in his inclusion in the Rockwood junior team.

"The fact is, Jimmy, Morny's a better skipper than you ever were," he said. "He's giving me a chance. You can cackle if you like, but you'll see! You wait till I'm knocking up runs at Greyfriars to-morrow!"

"Oh, dear!"

"But I want you to lend me your bat, Jimmy. Of course, I can't knock up runs without a bat."

"Nor with one, you howling nest!" exclaimed Lovell. "I'd like to see you facing the Greyfriars bowlers! Has Morny gone potty? First he puts Smythe and Howard and Tracy in the team—three born idiots. Now he's picked out the fattest chump in the Fourth——"

"Look here——" roared Tubby, in great wrath.

"Greyfriars will have something to shoodle over to-morrow!" snorted Lovell. "They had some comic cricket when Smythe took a team over. Morny's team will be funnier than Smythe's at this rate! What is Rockwood cricket coming to?"

"I suppose Morny's potty!" growled Jimmy Silver.

Sniff—from Tubby Muffin.

"You'd say that, of course!" he grunted. "You're jealous, Jimmy!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You always kept me out of the cricket!" said Tubby indignantly. "You know you did, Jimmy Silver!"

"There was no room for a potty porpoise in my eleven when I was skipper, Tubby!"

"You silly ass!" snorted Tubby Muffin. "You're ratty because Morny punched your nose; that's what's the matter with you, Jimmy Silver. Serve you right if he'd licked you! He would have if Errol hadn't interfered! Yah!"

"Oh, dry up, fathend!"

"I'll borrow a bat somewhere else," said Tubby Muffin; "I won't have yours now if you offer it! Yah!"

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"You can have the bat if you're playing cricket to-morrow, Tubby," he said. "I won't stand in the way of your knocking up a thousand runs or so for Rockwood. Are you going to make it a thousand or a million?"

"I hope I shall get a century!" said Tubby, with dignity.

"It will take you about ten centuries to do it!" grunted Lovell.

"Yah!"

Tubby's reply was emphatic, if not elegant.

And he rolled out of the end study in a state of great indignation.

Jimmy Silver dabbed his nose again thoughtfully. Mornington's knuckles had landed there an hour before with painful effect. Jimmy Silver had been resolved to keep on good terms with the fellow who had taken his place as junior skipper, but it had not worked out like that. Mornington had made a bad beginning, and he was already in bitter conflict with the former skipper.

"Well!" said Lovell, with a deep breath, when the fat Classical was gone. "This takes the cake, and no mistake! I'm jolly glad we're not in the eleven! Greyfriars will make

themselves to death over this match!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Morny's in a fix, of course," he said. "He's determined to play Smythe and Howard and Tracy—which means throwing away the match. Every other fellow has resigned from the team in consequence, except his own chum Errol; and Morny must make up an eleven somehow if he's going over to Greyfriars at all."

"And what's he playing Smythe & Co. for?" heated Lovell. "Because he promised them places in the team for voting for him at the election! A dirty trick!"

"Rotten!" growled Baby.

"Caddish!" snorted Newcombe.

"It was rotten enough," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But Morny doesn't seem to think so. He looks on it as an electioneering trick. It wouldn't do for this study——"

"I should jolly well say not!"

"But Morny's a queer fellow, and he never meant to put those silly asses into a good match. It's really an accident that the Greyfriars match comes off to-morrow. He can't get any good man to play, with Smythe & Co. in the team, but he's got to make up the number. But fancy falling back on Tubby Muffin!"

"I dare say he's put up a new list by this time," growled Lovell. "It ought to be interesting to read. Let's go down and see."

"That's a good idea."

The Fiskal Four left the end study and went downstairs. They found a good many juniors gathered before the notice-board, upon which was the list of players for the Greyfriars match in Morny's elegant hand. The comments that were being passed on the list were very emphatic.

"Look at this!" said Conroy, as the Fiskal Four came up. "What do you think of this merry menagerie?"

Jimmy Silver read down the list.

It ran:

"Morrington, Erroll, Smythe, Tracy, Howard, Mullin, Leggett, Townsend, Topham, Peole, Lattrey."

"My only hat!" said Jimmy Silver, almost overcome.

The list contained two names of cricketers—Morrington and Erroll. The rest were hopeless cases. Morrington had evidently been driven to desperation by the resignations from his team. He had filled the places anyhow he could, and the result was deplorable. So far from being fit to play Greyfriars Remove, the team was not "class" enough to stand up to an eleven chosen from the Second Form.

"Well, that puts the lid on!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a snort. "That's the skipper you've changed Jimmy Silver for! My word! I hope you're pleased with him now you've got him!"

The Rookwood fellows certainly were not looking pleased!

"This won't do!" said Jimmy Silver abruptly.

"You can't help it," said Raby. "You can't interfere, Jimmy. Let the silly ass make a fool of himself. He will be booted out of the captaincy for this, anyhow; and that will be to the good."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

He did not want to see Morrington "booted" out of the captaincy, though many of the fellows did not give him credit for his good wishes towards his successful rival.

"Something's got to be done!" he said.

"Br-r-r!" grunted Lovell.

Jimmy Silver walked away, leaving an excited crowd commenting on the remarkable cricket list. Jimmy Silver was thinking deeply. He wanted to save Rookwood from a crushing defeat at Greyfriars, and he wanted to save Morny, if he could, from the results of his obstinacy and folly. But that was a big problem, even for the astute "Uncle James" of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 22.

Jimmy Silver to the Rescue!

"MORNY, old man!"

Valentine Morrington was pacing to and fro in his study, when Erroll came in, closing the door after him.

Morny was looking angry and perturbed.

He was quite conscious of the bad break he had made in beginning his career as junior captain of Rookwood. He was aware, too, that he had made matters worse instead of better by his fight with Jimmy Silver in the end study. Everything seemed to be going wrong for Morny; and his feelings towards the late junior captain were bitter enough.

He stopped his restless pacing and looked round sullenly as Erroll came in.

"Well?" he snapped.

Erroll took no notice of his savagery. His patience seemed inexhaustible in dealing with his obstinate and willful chum.

"I've just seen the fellows looking at your list, Morny."

"What are they saying?"

"They don't like it, of course."

Morrington sneered.

"I didn't expect they would! It's all Jimmy Silver's doin'. He's determined that I shan't make a success of it as captain."

"You know I don't agree with you there, Morny."

"Hain't you better desert me, like the rest, and back up Jimmy Silver?" broke out Morrington, bitterly and scornfully. "I shouldn't be surprised if you did."

"I think you would be surprised, Morny, and you know I shan't do it, anyhow. It won't be pleasant to play in such a team; but I'm sticking to you, of course. If you're determined to keep on like this—"

"What can I do?" exclaimed Morrington savagely. "Jimmy Silver set the example of standing not of the

team. The other fellows followed it. Even the Modern fellows did. I'm left to make up a team the best way I can, and nobody who can play cricket will come into it. Do you want me to go over to Greyfriars to-morrow with a team of two—you and me?"

"You must take a full team, of course."

"Then how am I to make it up, without playing those chuffers, if the cricketers boycott the team?"

"By doing the right thing, Morny," said Erroll quietly. "The trouble began by your putting Smythe and Howard and Tracy into the eleven. They can't play cricket, and everybody knows they can't. It's asking for a licking to play them. Cut them out."

"I can't!"

"If you dropped them, as you know you ought, the other fellows would come round, and Jimmy Silver would be the first. You can't expect him to play in a match he knows must be a defeat, because you persist in putting in three silly fools who don't know a wicket from a wicketkeeper."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"You know why I put them in," he snapped. "I promised them places in the next match, for their votes at the election. I was fixing up a jag match for to-morrow, so that I could keep my word without any damage being done. Then Wharton offered to replay the match to-morrow—the cue Smythe mucked up by his trickery last week. I was forced to accept Wharton's offer; and we're booked to play Greyfriars. I've got to keep my word to Smythe, and play him and his friends."

"You oughtn't to have made such a promise."

"It's easy enough to say that; I know it as well as you do; and I'm sorry I did it, if you come to that. But I've done it now, and I can't break my word. Do you advise me to do that?"

Erroll was silent for a moment.

"Couldn't you make some arrange-

ment with Smythe, and buy him off somehow?" he asked.

"I've tried."

"And he refuses?"

"Yes. He's jolly glad to pin me down. The silly fool thinks he can play cricket, and he's dead set on clearing in the Greyfriars match."

"It's a rotten position," said Erroll, after a pause.

"I know it is. But we had a chance of winning, even carrying three passengers, if the other fellows had backed up."

"You couldn't expect them to, under the circumstances. And there wasn't a chance, Morny. The match will be touch and go, anyway. With three hopeless duds in the team, we haven't an earthly."

Mornington grunted.

"Still, the fellows ought to have backed up," he said. "Jimmy Silver said he was going to support me as captain. This is how he's doing it. Hang him!"

"I can't blame him. You put three fumbling fools into the team, for a reason you can't explain in public. No wonder all the decent fellows clear out of it."

"Go it!" said Mornington bitterly. "Pile it on!"

"I don't want to do that. But—I wish you'd let me give you some advice, Morny."

"I'd be glad if you would. But it's no good preaching at me. What's done can't be helped."

"Suppose you go to Jimmy Silver?"

Morny rubbed his nose.

"I've been to him already!" he said grimly.

"That was a silly thing to do, Morny—you pitched into Silver for nothing at all. It was your own fault, not his, that everything's gone wrong. Go to Jimmy Silver, and put it to him frankly—tell him you're in a scrape, and ask him, as a friend, to help you out of it."

Morny set his lips.

"After punching his nose an hour ago!" he said.

"Never mind that. He will do the best he can for Rockwood, if not for you."

"I'm not going to humble myself to him."

Erroll looked impatient.

"Look here, Morry, you're in the wrong, and you ought to own up to it," he said. "You can't take that team of prize idiots over to Greyfriars to-morrow, just to satisfy your silly pride."

Mornington started.

This was unusually plain language from his patient chum.

There was a tap at the door, in the pause that followed, and Jimmy Silver looked into the study.

Mornington gave him a grim look.

"Come in!" he said, with a sneer.

"Have you come to finish that little affair that Erroll interrupted in your study? I'm ready!"

Jimmy Silver gave him a cold, quiet look.

"I haven't come here to row with you, Mornington," he said. "If you're in that temper, I'd better go, and nothing said. But—"

"Don't go," said Erroll quickly. "We were just speaking of you, Jimmy. I think you ought to help Morry out of the scrape he's got into."

"I'm willing."

Mornington compressed his lips. He was trying to overcome his savage temper, but he found it hard.

"Well, if you can do anything, I'll be glad," he said ungraciously. "I'm in a scrape, no mistake about that. I don't want to take a team of duds over to Greyfriars to-morrow. But what's to be done? Everybody else has cleared out of the eleven including yourself."

"You're still determined to play Smythe & Co.?"

"I've got to. I've promised the cads. You needn't tell me I'd no right to make such a promise, for such a reason. I've had that from Erroll a

dozen times. Besides, I know it." Morry paused a moment. "Look here, Silver, I know it was a rotten trick, beginn' votes at the election by such methods. I did it carelessly, without thinkin'—never meanin' to let Smythe into a match that mattered. I know I oughtn't to have done it. I wouldn't do it over again. But it's done. I can't break my word to the rotters; an' you wouldn't advise me to do that?"

Jimmy Silver's face softened a little.

A confession of wrong-doing from the lofty Morry was rather unexpected, and Jimmy knew it cost him a good deal to make it.

"Well, I've been thinking the matter over," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "You mayn't believe it, Morry, but I really wish you well, and I'd like to see you make a success of your job. I think I can help you."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Erroll.

Mornington looked at the late junior captain very curiously.

"If you mean that——" he began.

"I shouldn't say it if I didn't mean it."

"Well, go ahead, then."

"It all hinges on Smythe & Co.," said Jimmy. "I'm not going to preach. We'll let it go that you've landed yourself to play them. But if they play, the match is a goner. No good anybody else going over to Greyfriars with them to gather up a thumping licking. But if those three fools would stand out——"

"They won't!"

"They might be persuaded to."

"I've tried that," said Mornington impatiently.

"Leave it to me, then," said Jimmy Silver. "I think I can persuade them to see reason on the subject."

"My hat! You must be a giddy magician, then!"

"Leave it at that," said Jimmy Silver. "I'll speak to the fellows, and get them to join up again. You can depend on Lovell and me, and the other fellows will come round when

they know Smythe & Co. are not in the team. You can rely on that."

Morny drew a deep breath.

"But they won't stand out, and I can't turn 'em down," he said.

"Leave that to me, I tell you. Now, we've got to get off early to-morrow," said Jimmy. "Smythe & Co. have permission to leave early, as members of the team. They'll start with us. On the way, I'm going to use my eloquence on them, and I'm certain I can persuade them to see reason. We shall have to get leave for three extra players to go as reserves. That's easy enough. And now, Morny, draw up a fresh list, for goodness' sake, and put it on the board before the fellows talk themselves into a fit."

Morny grinned faintly.

"You're asking me to leave a lot to you," he said, "and you're not explaining very clearly. I don't believe Smythe will give in for any consideration whatever."

"I guarantee that."

"You've got some hold on the rotter, do you mean?"

"You'll have to leave all that to me. But I answer for it that if you're willing to do so, I'll see that you reach Greyfriars with a good team."

Morny laughed.

"I can't do better than accept that offer, Ervill," he said.

"Jump at it!" said Ervill.

"Well, I'll jump at it, then," said Mornington. "Done, Jimmy Silver!"

"Right-ho!"

Jimmy Silver left the study, and Morny knifed his brows in deep thought.

"He must have some hold over Smythe," he said slowly. "Smythe wouldn't let up simply for being asked."

"You can trust Silver, anyway."

"Oh, yes; I suppose so."

Just before bedtime there was a new list on the board—which caused fierce indignation in the fat breast of Tubby Muffin. Muffin's name no longer adorned the list, and Tubby was no

longer in need of Jimmy Silver's bail, with which to knock up centuries at Greyfriars. There were other indignant duds as well as Reginald Muffin. But nobody heeded them or their indignation.

The new list gave satisfaction. There were fourteen names in it. Jimmy Silver had induced the cricketers to join up again, on the assurance that Smythe & Co. would be standing out. Smythe & Co.'s names still figured in the list, making it up to the unusual total of fourteen, which was rather a puzzle to all who read it.

For Adolphus Smythe, consulted on the subject, loudly declared that he hadn't the faintest intention of standing out, and Howard and Tracy heartily concurred.

"But Silver says you're going to stand out!" Conroy told them.

"Silver's an ass!" was Smythe's reply.

Whereupon the Australian junior hurried back to Jimmy Silver.

"Smythe says he's still in the team!" he announced.

"His name doesn't do any harm on the board, does it?" asked Jimmy.

"Not if he doesn't play to-morrow."

"Well, he won't play to-morrow."

"He says he will!"

"Let him!"

"Look here, you're sure of it, Jimmy Silver?"

"Quite!"

"Blessed if I can understand this game!" said Conroy, in perplexity.

"You'll understand to-morrow."

"Oh, all right!"

And so the matter ended for that night.

CHAPTER IV.

A Perplexing Position!

ADOLPHUS SMYTHE, the ornament of the Shell, might have been observed the following morning, wearing a thoughtful expression.

Smythe had food for thought.

His aristocratic name still figured in the Greyfriars list, and Smythe was assured that Morny would not break his word—that he would not venture to do so, if he wanted to.

But it was perplexing.

"You see," said Adolphus to his chums, after breakfast, "Morny's put fourteen names in the list. Takin' three reserves, of course. But he doesn't specify which are the reserves. It's odd!"

"Jolly odd!" agreed Howard.

"Dashed odd!" said Tracy.

"He can't be intendin' to drop us at the last minute," said Smythe. "He wouldn't dare! Besides, Morny's a man of his word!"

"Oh, yass!" said Howard.

"Then what does it mean?"

"Better ask Morny!" suggested Tracy, after some thought.

And the nuts of the Shell bore down upon Valentine Mornington just before the juniors went into the Form-rooms.

"What does your cricket list mean, Morny," Adolphus inquired.

"What it says!" answered Mornington curtly.

"Startin' a new fashion, an' playin' fourteen men in the match?" asked Adolphus sarcastically.

"No—ass!"

"To come to the point, you're keepin' your word to us?"

"Unless you stand out, of course."

"We're not standin' out!" exclaimed the three Shell fellows together.

"Harr! Jimmy Silver spoken to you?"

"No; and we could speak till he was black in the face, and we shouldn't stand out, to please him," said Adolphus with a disdainful sniff.

Mornington knitted his brows.

He was perplexed, as well as the nuts of the Shell.

He was acting on Jimmy's assurance that Smythe & Co. would stand out of the match, and on that understanding the other cricketers had rejoined the team.

Excluding Smythe & Co., Morny had as good a team as the Lower School at Hookwood could possibly turn out.

If Smythe & Co. stood out, all was plain sailing, and Morny looked forward to his first match as captain with high hopes.

But if the nuts persisted in claiming their rights, Morny had to play them, and then all the trouble would begin again, for the cricketers were quite determined not to play if Smythe & Co. did.

Jimmy Silver had assured him on the point; yet, if Jimmy was right, surely Smythe & Co. ought to know whether they were standing out or not.

But they didn't. Their impression was that they were playing at Greyfriars that day.

It was certainly a perplexing position.

The bell rang for classes, and Mornington went into the Form-room with the rest. Adolphus & Co. strolling off gracefully to the Shell quarters.

Morny's face was clouded that morning in class.

He was worried. Erroll's advice, and his own common-sense led him to rely upon Jimmy Silver to reassure him from the scrape he had fallen into. But he could not see light. Jimmy Silver, certainly, was not the kind of fellow to "talk out of his hat." But he really looked as if Jimmy had been talking out of his hat this time.

Classes did not last long for the cricketers that morning. The members of the junior team had leave to quit classes early, on account of the long journey to Greyfriars, and leave had been given for three reserves to go with the rest.

At eleven o'clock fourteen fellows came out of the Form-rooms and prepared for the journey.

There was Morny, Erroll, Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, Conroy, Van Ryn, Selwyn, Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle—and Smythe, Howard, and Tracy.

The wots of the Shell looked self-satisfied and supercilious as usual.

Evidently they had, so far, no intention of standing out of the Greyfriars match.

Mornington looked at Jimmy Silver.

"All ready?" said the latter cheerily.

"Are we all starlin'?" asked Morny.

"Why not?"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver," said Mornington, sinking his voice, "I'm relying on you, an' you know it. If you're pulling my leg——"

"I'm not!"

"You said that Smythe & Co. are standin' out?" muttered Mornington.

"I can't turn them down, and you know it. But if they play at Greyfriars, the other fellows won't."

"That's so."

Mornington knitted his brows.

"Well, I suppose I've got to see it through, as I've agreed," he said.

"I don't understand what you've got up your sleeve, Jimmy Silver."

"That doesn't matter. Let's get off."

Fourteen juniors walked down to Coombe, to take the train for Letcham Junction, where there was a change.

Smythe & Co. walked with the rest.

The party was very silent; most of the fellows were more or less perplexed by the strange state of affairs.

Only Jimmy Silver, Lowell, and Raby seemed quite placid.

Jimmy Silver's chums were evidently in his confidence, and had faith in the persuasive powers he intended to exert upon Smythe & Co. before they arrived at Greyfriars.

It was a bright and sunny morning, glorious weather for cricket, and Jimmy Silver & Co., at least, were in great spirits.

The cricketers turned into the short cut through the wood. Jimmy Silver looked at his watch as they walked along the leafy footpath.

"You're taking the tickets, Morny?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Cut ahead and take them, then. There may be a crowd, and we don't want to risk losing the train. If we lose the connection at Letcham, we're dashed."

Morny glanced at him.

"Does that mean that you're goin' to jaw to Smythe now?" he asked, in a low voice.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Well, yes," he said, also in a low tone. "I'd rather everybody didn't hear what I've got to say to Adolphus. It's private—in fact, very private."

"You've got some hold on the cad, and you're goin' to make him give in," muttered Morny.

"I'm not going to explain. You've agreed to leave it to me."

"Oh, I'll leave it to you fast enough, if you can induce that fool to let up on me, and keep out of the team; and I'll be your debtor for life into the bargain."

"Done!" said Jimmy.

"Come on, Erroll!" called out Mornington. "We'll get ahead and see about the tickets."

"Right-ho!" answered Erroll.

The two chums quickened their pace, and soon disappeared in the windings of the footpath.

Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered on in a more leisurely way.

Smythe and Howard and Tracy were chatting to one another; the rest of the party had nothing to say to them.

Adolphus was expatiating on the game he intended to play at Greyfriars, rather enjoying the restive looks of the other fellows as they heard him.

"We stop here!" said Jimmy Silver suddenly.

Adolphus Smythe glanced round.

The juniors had reached the middle of the wood, and there certainly seemed nothing to stop there for, so far as Adolphus could see.

"What are we stoppin' for?" asked Smythe.

"For you, my dear infant."

"I'm not stoppin'."

"Your mistake; you are, old bird."

answered Jimmy Silver cheerily, and he put his arm through Smythe's. "This way."

Adolphus struggled.

"Let go, you fool!" he shouted.

"This way!" repeated Jimmy coolly.

He drew Adolphus, in spite of his resistance, off the footpath, into the wood, much to the surprise and indignation of the dandy of the Shell.

Lovell had taken Howard's arm, and Raby performed the same service for Tracy.

In the grip of the three chains, the nuts of the Shell were led off the path, wriggling and loudly expostulating; and the rest of the party started at the scene in blank astonishment.

"What on earth's this game?" demanded Conroy.

"Loggot!" yelled Smythe. "I'll punch you, Jimmy Silver!"

"You'll lose the train!" called out Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, we'll soon be after you!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're going to have a heart-to-heart talk with Smythe. We're going to urge him to stand out of the team, for the sake of the side."

"I won't!" yelled Adolphus.

"Well, we'll see what eloquence will do. You other fellows keep on. Tell Morny we're coming in-time for the train."

"Oh, all right!" said the amazed Conroy.

The cricketers walked on, while Adolphus & Co. struggled in vain in the grasp of Jimmy Silver & Co. In a few minutes Conroy and the rest were out of sight.

CHAPTER 25.

Jimmy Silver's Way!

JIMMY SILVER watched the cricketers out of sight along the footpath, still keeping an iron grasp on Adolphus' arm.

Then he turned to Adolphus, with a smile.

"Now we're going to have a little talk!" he remarked.

"Let go my arm!" roared Adolphus.

"I'd rather keep hold, if you don't mind," smiled Jimmy Silver. "You see, you might bolt—you're such a slippery customer."

"But I do mind!" snapped Adolphus.

"Same thing, old nut; I'm keeping hold."

"You cheeky cad——" began Tracy.

"Keep that ass quiet, Raby. Knock his head against a tree."

"What-ho!" grinned Raby.

Bump!

"Yooop!" roared Tracy. "You rotter! Ow!"

"Now, Adolphus——"

"I'm not goin' to talk to you!" said Smythe fiercely. "I know what you want, and there's nothin' doin'. I'm goin' on to Greyfriars."

"Let's have it out——"

"I'm goin' on, I tell you, and if you don't let go my arm, Jimmy Silver, I'll punch your head!"

"Punch away!" answered Jimmy cheerily. "I'd just as soon thrash you before I talk to you!"

Smythe of the Shell clenched his hands; but he unclenched them again. He had no chance in a fist encounter with the chief of the Physical Four, and he knew it. He had tried that before, and the results had been too painful.

"Oh, you rotter!" he mumbled.

"I'm quite at your service," smiled Jimmy Silver. "Are we going to have a talk, or a fight first?"

"I—I don't mind talkin' to you, hang you!" mumbled Adolphus.

"That's better. Now, the matter stands like this. About a week ago you dished us over the Greyfriars match. You spooled us into getting into a motor-car, and sent us wandering, while you took a team of born idiots in Greyfriars to play us the Rockwood junior team. They walked all over you, as anybody but a born idiot might have expected."

"Look here——"

"Wharrier's offered to play the match over again now he knows the facts,

and the offer's accepted. You've got the cheek and impudence to stick yourself in the team, after the exhibition you made a week ago on the same ground. You've planned down Moray on a rotten promise he made you at the election. Now, I put it to you, Smythe, that this isn't playing the game."

"Rats!"

"I request you, as a decent chap, to stand out of the team, as Moray isn't in a position to turn you down. Leave the match to fellows who can play it."

"Rot!"

"Will you stand out?"

"No!" howled Smythe. "An' now let me go, you rotter!"

"Do you fellows say the same?" asked Jimmy, glancing at the angry faces of Howard and Tracy.

"Yes," said Tracy at once.

"Just the same, word for word!" growled Howard.

"And now let us go, and get after the fellows!" said Adolphus. "You're only waddin' time, Jimmy Silver! I told you there was nothin' doin'."

"That's your mistake, Adolphus. I've given you a chance to do the right thing. As you won't, you'll be made to!"

"You can't do anything!" sneered Smythe. "You're not captain now, Jimmy Silver! Moray's captain, and he dare not turn us down."

"There are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "As you won't step out of the team, Smythe, you'll be put out. You're staying here, my pippin!"

"I won't stay here!"

"We shall see!"

Jimmy Silver fumbled in a pocket with his left hand, and drew out a coil of thin, but strong cord.

Smythe & Co. stared at it.

For the first time a suspicion of Jimmy Silver's little scheme dawned upon them.

"Wha-a-ay's that for?" stuttered Adolphus.

"That's for you, old bird!"

"Why, you—you—you——"

Jimmy Silver looped the cord round Adolphus' wrists. At that the dandy of the Shell began to struggle again. An iron grip on his neck forced him to his knees in the grass, and there was a loud rap as his head came into contact with the trunk of a tree.

"Yaroooh!"

"Better take it quietly, Smythe! You've got to take it, you know!" said Jimmy Silver, with deadly earnestness.

"Ow, ow!"

Adolphus made no further resistance. He had to give in, and he did not see any use in getting a thrashing first.

Jimmy Silver tied his wrists together securely, and then ran the cord round the tree-trunk and tied it there.

Tracy and Howard watched that proceeding with dire apprehensions, aware that their own turn was coming.

But Lovell and Raby held the Shell fellows fast, and there was no escape for them.

Having finished with Smythe, Jimmy Silver turned to his comrades.

"Look here——" began Tracy furiously.

"Enough said! Give me your paw!"

"I won't!" howled Tracy.

"Knock his head, Raby! He wants another!"

Bump!

"Ow! Yow! Slappit!"

"Have another, old nut!" asked Raby affably.

"Yow-ow! No! Oh!"

Tracy's hands were tied together, and then to the cord on the tree where Adolphus Smythe stood with a scowling countenance.

Howard was the next victim, and he did not venture to resist.

In a couple of minutes he was secured with his nutty pals.

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned as they looked at them. The three nuts of the Shell were standing round the tree, secured by the cord round the trunk. There was no escape for them.

Jimmy had done his work too well for that.

Certainly, they would call for help; but they had been taken off the footpath into the wood, and the path was not much frequented. It was not likely that help would come to the hapless nuts.

"I think they'll do!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You horrid rotters!" groaned Adolphus. "You're not going to leave us here like this! You dare not!"

"I rather think we do," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Try to imagine that you're playing at 'Babes in the Wood,' old top!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've asked Newcome to give you a look-in after lessons," continued Jimmy Silver. "He will come along presently, and let you loose—after dinner. When it's too late for you to bump along to Greyfriars, you know!"

"Oh, you rotter!"

"Don't call me names when I've been so good to you!" said Jimmy Silver reproachfully. "I've asked Newcome to bring you some sandwiches, as it won't be safe to let you loose in time for dinner."

"Hang Newcome!"

Adolphus Smythe was evidently not in a grateful mood, in spite of Jimmy Silver's thoughtfulness.

"Well, ta-ta, old beans!" said Jimmy Silver. "I hope you'll have a good time studying nature's beauties and all that! Come on, you fellows!"

The chums of the Fourth turned away and walked back to the footpath, followed by wrathful yells from Smythe & Co.

They did not heed the yelling of the hapless nuts.

"Uncle James" was not likely to be turned from his purpose by the objections of the nutty pats of the Shell.

In a cheerful mood, the three Fourth-Formers trotted along the footpath, and arrived in the village.

"Lots of fun!" remarked Jimmy Silver, glancing at the station clock. "Hallo! Here's Moray!"

Valentine Mornington was waiting for them at the entrance to the station, with a cloud upon his brow. He stared at the three juniors, evidently surprised to see them arrive without Smythe & Co.

"Where's Smythe?" he ejaculated as they came up.

"Staying behind," answered Jimmy Silver carelessly.

Mornington drew a deep breath.

"You—you've persuaded him?" he stammered.

"Yes."

"And—and Howard and Tracy?"

"The whole merry family! They're standing out of the match, and everything in the garden is lovely!"

"Blessed if I know how you managed it! Smythe was dead-set on playing at Greyfriars. You must have a hold on him somehow."

"Well, I had a hold on him, certainly," said Jimmy Silver, with a grin. "You don't know what a persuasive chap I can be, too, when I begin. After a little argument they yielded the point, as I thought they would. Let's get in, Moray—the train's nearly due."

They went into the station.

Mornington was still in a puzzled mood; but his handsome face was very bright now.

How it had been done he did not guess; but the fact itself was clear. He was rescued from the incubus of Smythe & Co., and saved from the result of the unscrupulous pledge he had given the nuts of the Shell.

He owed it to Jimmy Silver—he knew that. Jimmy Silver, whom he had replaced, if not supplanted, had saved him from disaster at the very beginning of his career as captain. And Mornington did not forget it.

It was a very cheerful party, of cricketers that crowded into the train for Latcham. And most cheerful of all

was Valentine Mornington—looking forward eagerly to the match in which, for the first time, he was to figure as captain of Rookwood juniors.

CHAPTER XX.

MORNY'S REVENGE.

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

The powerful voice of Bob Cherry of the Greyfriars Home greeted the Rookwooders as they poured from the train at Courfield.

Bob Cherry and Wharton and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh had come to meet the cricketers at the station.

"Jolly glad to see you chaps!" said Harry Wharton, as he shook hands with Jimmy. "The last match was rather a joke; but there will be a different sort of game this time."

"The differentiation will be terrific!" remarked Hurree Singh—a remark that made the Rookwooders smile.

"It will!" said Jimmy Silver. "By the way, you know Mornington—he's our skipper now. Is that your 'bust'?"

"That's it! Tumblin' in!"

In a few minutes the cricketers were rolling away cheerily to Greyfriars School.

After a hospitable lunch they repaired to the cricket ground.

Jimmy Silver clapped Mornington on the shoulder.

"Feeling merry and bright—what?" he asked, with a smile.

Mornington smiled and nodded.

"Toppin'!" he said. "I don't know how you worked it to get me out of my scrape, old fellow, but I'm no end obliged! And—and—" Morny paused, and lowered his voice. "I'm sorry we had that trouble in your study last evenin', Silver. It was my rotten temper! I'm sorry!"

"All serene!" answered Jimmy cheerfully.

"And—and about that election business," said Mornington, colouring. "I really acted without thinkin' much in bribin' Snythe & Co. to vote for me.

I didn't realise, at the time, that it was a low-down trick. It didn't make any difference to the result, as it happens, as you stood out of the election. But—but I wish I hadn't done it; it wasn't playin' the game, an' I know it. I'd like you to believe that, Silver."

"Of course I believe it," answered Jimmy.

"It's jolly good of you to back me up in this way, considering that I've backed your job, in a way," muttered Mornington.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Not at all," he answered. "The fellows wanted a change, and they've got it. So long as you make a success of the job, it's all right, and I'm satisfied."

"I—I suspected you of wanting to make me make a hash of it," faltered Mornington.

"You know better now, then?"

"Yes, rather. You're a good chap, Silver, and I shan't forget this."

"All serene."

"Wharton's ready for you, Morny," chimed in Erroll. Erroll was looking very bright now, as well as his chum.

"Right-ho!" said Morny.

He tossed with Wharton for the innings. It fell to Rookwood in bat first, and Mornington opened with Jimmy Silver at the other end.

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh bowled the first over for Greyfriars.

The dusky junior was at the top of his form, as he soon showed. Morny knocked away a couple of balls, and then one for two runs. But the fourth ball whipped his leg stump from the ground.

Morny's face was a study, as he looked down at his wrecked wicket.

"How's that?" sang out half a dozen voices.

"Out!"

Morny seemed to gulp something down. It was cruel luck at the beginning of his innings. He suppressed his feelings as he came back to the pavilion with his almost unused bat.

"Man in, Erroll!" he muttered.

"Hard cheese, old chap!" muttered Erroll.

"It's all right. Get in!"

Erroll went to the wicket.

Mornington stood looking on with a clouded brow. The Greyfriars bowlers seemed in great form, and their field was very much on the alert. Rockwood wickets went down rather fast. Erroll put up ten runs, and Jimmy Silver the same number; but after them there was a "procession." There were no "duck's-eggs" scored for Rockwood, but there were several ones and twos. All down for thirty-six was the result after quite a brief innings.

"Better luck next time!" Jimmy Silver remarked to his skipper. "Keep smiling!"

Mornington nodded without speaking.

Greyfriars batted well. Jimmy Silver, the champion bowler of the Rockwood team, did well; but the other bowlers did not seem quite up to the form of the Greyfriars bats. Harry Wharton & Co. totalled fifty-six for their first innings.

"Oh, my hat!" was Arthur Edward Lovell's comment.

Jimmy Silver and Erroll were put on to open the second innings for Rockwood.

This time the bad luck came Jimmy's way, and he was caught out by Frank Nugent for four runs.

Erroll was dismissed for eight. Lovell was keeping his end up, when Mornington came in to join him.

Then there was a turn of the tide, exemplifying once more the glorious uncertainty of the great summer game.

Four, and four more from Mornay, brought cheers from the Rockwooders. Hurren Singh tackled his wicket in vain, and it was tackled in vain by Nugent, Squiff, Linsley and Wharton.

Other bats came and went, but Mornington remained "set" at his wicket, piling up the runs.

Erroll watched him with a smiling face.

He rejoiced more in his chum's

success than he would have rejoiced in any triumph of his own.

"Good man!" said Jimmy Silver heartily. "Oh, good man! There he goes again—they can't touch him!"

"That was a narrow squeak!" remarked Courroy, as Mornay got back to his wicket a second before it crashed under a rapid throw from the field.

"Not out!"

"A miss is as good as a mile!" said Jimmy Silver. "A batsman who never takes chances never gets anything."

"Bravo, Mornay!"

It looked as if Mornay was set for the rest of the innings; and so it turned out. There were forty runs to his credit, when Rockwood were all down for eighty-five—Mornay not out.

Then there was an adjournment for tea.

After tea came the Greyfriars second innings, with Wharton and Bob Cherry at the wickets. Mornington and his men went into the field, and Jimmy Silver was given the ball for the first over.

"Mop 'em up, old chap!" said Mornington; and Jimmy Silver smiled.

Complete cordiality reigned now between the old rivals of the Fourth Form at Rockwood.

But Jimmy did not succeed in "mopping" them up in the first over. The Greyfriars innings opened well, and runs piled up. It was Courroy who took Bob Cherry's wicket, by way of a start. Wharton was joined by Squiff, and the two of them made the running at a great rate.

The Rockwooders looked serious when the score stood at thirty for one wicket down. Greyfriars wanted another thirty-five to tie, with a heap of wickets in hand to do it with, and Bob Cherry was heard to remark that they could do it "on their heads."

At that point Mornay caught Wharton out, and his place was taken by Vernon-Smith, who began with a four. There was a cheer from the Greyfriars crowd. Six more for the over made the Greyfriars fellows remark that it was all

over her shouting, and the Rookwooders were rather inclined to agree with them.

"For goodness' sake give them gyp, Jimmy," said Mornington, as he slung the ball to Jimmy Silver for the next over.

"I'll do my best, old chap."

"Put your beef into it. We're beaten to the wids if you fail us."

Jimmy Silver nodded; he knew that. With nine wickets in hand, Greyfriars wanted only twenty-five to tie. But again there came a turn of the tide. Jimmy Silver was in great fettle now. Squiff went down, and then Tom Brown, and then Linley, and loud cheers from Rookwood greeted the batsman. But Jimmy Silver was not finished yet. Two more wickets fell in the over, only five runs being scored.

Mornington slapped Jimmy on the shoulder as the field crossed over, his eyes glistening.

"Great, old chap!" he said joyfully.

"Simply great! I wish I could give you the next over, by gad!"

"Seven down for forty-five!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell. "We may do it yet, with luck. Go it, Morny!"

Mornington was bowling now.

Vernon-Smith's wicket fell, and the Bouncer of Greyfriars went out. There were five runs in the over; eight down for fifty! Then Jimmy Silver had the ball again.

All eyes were on Jimmy as he went on. Greyfriars wanted fifteen to tie, sixteen to win, and they had two wickets to do it with. Jimmy's manner was very quiet, but there was a gleam in his eyes.

Mornington watched him anxiously.

Upon his old rival depended whether his first match was a win or a defeat; and the difference meant a great deal to Mornington.

"Bravo!" he almost gasped, as the wicket fell.

"Nine down!" chortled Lovell.

Frank Nugent stole a single run for Greyfriars. Then he hit the ball to

the boundary for a four! Fifty-five! There was a breathless hush on the field as Jimmy Silver gripped the round red ball again.

Whiz!

Smack came the bat, and the ball flew.

Then the bowler was seen to jump, and run, and spring into the air, and there was a faint "click" as the ball rested in his palm.

Mornington gave a yell of delight, as Jimmy Silver held up the ball, hot from the bat.

"Caught and bowled Silver!" roared Lovell. "Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Jimmy!"

"Rookwood wins! Hurrah!"

Mornington rushed across to Jimmy Silver, and smote him on the shoulder with a mighty smite.

"Good man! Good man!" he gasped.

"The goodness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh, with a ducky grin. "It was touchful and awful, but the esteemed Silver had snatched victory from the jawfulness of defeat."

"Bravo, Jimmy Silver!"

"Good man!"

Rookwood had won by ten runs! Morny's first match was a success, and he owed it to his old rival. It was Jimmy Silver who had snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

"How did it go?"

That was the question a score of voices asked, as the Rookwood cricketers returned in the summer dusk.

"My dear chaps, how could it go?" smiled Jimmy Silver. "We won, of course. What with Morny's batting, and—ahem!—somebody else's bowling—"

"Swank!" grinned Newcome. "What did you beat them by? An innings?"

"Not quite."

"Fifty runs?" asked Oswald.

"Less than that."

"How many, then?"

"Ten!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "But ten was as good as a

hundred, under the trees. Has Smythe come home?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, they're home," chuckled Newcome. "I let 'em loose after dinner, the dear boys. They seemed in a bad temper about something."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Smythe says he is going to thrash you and Morny——"

"The dear man," said Morny, "What does he want to thrash me for?"

"He didn't like being tied to a tree."

"Tied to a tree!" yelled Mornington. "Was that how you persuaded him not to come to Greyfriars, Jimmy?"

"That was it."

"Oh, gad!"

"The only way, as the chap says in the play," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "As we beat Greyfriars by ten runs, Morny, you can calculate how many they would have beaten us by if Smythe & Co. had been there. But if he wants to thrash us, we'd better go and be thrashed. Come on!"

And Morny and Jimmy Silver repaired to Adolphus Smythe's study. But on their arrival there, it transpired that Adolphus had changed his mind about the thrashing—which was a very fortunate circumstance for Adolphus.

Smythe & Co. had a grievance; but nobody sympathised. Morny's first match had been a success, owing to the solving of his difficulties by Jimmy Silver—and only Adolphus & Co. had any fault to find with Jimmy Silver's way.

CHAPTER 25.

Trying it Out.

"FAG!"

It was Hanson, of the Fifth Form at Rookwood, who called.

And—amazing as it was—Hanson of the Fifth was evidently addressing Jimmy Silver & Co.

Jimmy Silver looked at him. Arthur Edward Lovell gave a loud snort, a good deal like an angry war-horse,

Raby snuffed, and Newcome grinned. But Hanson of the Fifth, undeterred by those signs of contempt and resentment, raised his hand and beckoned to the Fustical Four, and repeated:

"Fag!"

"Are you talking to us, Hanson?" demanded Jimmy Silver, more in surprise than in wrath.

"Yes; I want a fag!"

"You want a fag!" repeated Jimmy Silver, as if scarcely able to believe his ears. "You want a fag!"

"Yes, and sharp!"

"Well, my hat!"

"I don't care which one of you it is," said Hanson. "You'll do, Silver! Out down to the tuckshop——"

"You cheeky ass!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, in sulphurous wrath. "Do you think the Fourth fag for the Fifth?"

"You warbling jacobwerk!" said Raby. "Why, we don't even fag for the Sixth unless we choose!"

Hanson made a lofty gesture.

"I don't want any cheek! I want a fag!" he said. "Now, Silver——"

"Go to sleep and dream again!" suggested Jimmy Silver.

"Look here——"

"Bow-wow!"

"I tell you——" roared the captain of the Fifth.

"Rats!"

Then there was a pause.

The Fustical Four stood their ground. There were three other Fifth-Formers with Hanson—Lumsden, Talboys, and Brown major. If it came to a "scrap," four juniors hadn't much chance against four seniors. But Jimmy Silver & Co. didn't even think of that. Wild horses would not have dragged them into the humiliation of fagging for the Fifth.

Jimmy had a shrewd suspicion, too, that Hanson did not specially want a fag. What he wanted was to establish fagging rights. There had often been trouble between the two Forms, Hanson & Co. looking on the Fourth as cheeky fags, and the Fourth looking

on Hansom & Co. as swanking duffers, who strove to imitate, at a distance, the manners and customs of the mighty Sixth.

While Jimmy Silver was captain of the Fourth, that rather unruly Form had certainly kept its end up. But Mornington was junior captain now, and Jimmy Silver only a "common or garden" junior, so to speak. Perhaps Hansom regarded that as a favourable opportunity for asserting his long-disputed and resisted claim.

Hansom had a walking-cane under his arm. He had cornered the Fifth-Former near the archway which led from Little Quad into Big Quad—a rather deserted spot. He let the cane slide down into his hand as he came nearer to the quartette.

"Now, I don't want any nonsense!" said the Fifth-Former. "I've had enough chinwag from you, Silver!"

"I've had more than enough from you, old bean," answered Jimmy Silver. "Give your chin a rest. It can do with it."

"Are you going to the tuckshop for me?"

"No fear!"

"I shall be sorry to lick you."

"You will if you begin," assented Jimmy.

"You kids in the Fourth think a lot too much of yourselves, don't you know," remarked Tutoys. "You're only dashed fags, you know!"

"Merely that, and nothing more!" grinned Lumsden.

Hansom shook his cane at Jimmy Silver.

"I give you a last chance," he said magnanimously. "I don't want to be hard on you. Cut off to the tuckshop or——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Get the things on this list, and take them to my study——"

"Think again!"

"And you shall have one jam-tart for yourself," said Hansom generously. Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"You silly ass——" he began.

"I've arranged with Sergeant Kettle about paying," went on Hansom. "You've simply got to present the list, and take the goods. See?"

"Pathetic!"

"And if you don't I'll jolly well wallop you!" roared Hansom.

Jimmy Silver's lips opened for a defiant retort.

But he checked himself suddenly, and a glimmer came into his eyes.

"You'll wallop me if I don't?" he asked.

"Yes, and jolly hard!"

"Then I'd better obey orders?"

"You had—rather!"

"Give me the list, Hansom."

Jimmy Silver held out his hand meekly.

Lovell and Baby and Newcome simply blinked at him.

That Jimmy Silver would consent to fag, at the order of the Fifth-Former, was a thing far beyond their imaginings.

Hansom himself was surprised.

This was really what the juniors would have called a "try-on" on the part of the Fifth-Former, and they had not been at all certain of success.

And here was success, easy and simple.

Hansom smiled with satisfaction as he handed the list to Jimmy Silver. The latter read it over.

"One currant cake, pot of jam, pot of marmalade, pound of biscuits, tin of bloater-paste, tin of pineapple, half-pound of chocolates, half-dozen powdered eggs." Is that the lot, Hansom?"

"That's the lot!" said Hansom, with a triumphant grin at his companions. "Get a move on!"

"Right-ho!"

"Take the stuff to my study," continued the Fifth-Former. "Get tea ready there. Mind you don't boil the eggs hard, or you'll catch it. If it's not all ready within a quarter of an hour, I'm sorry for you, that's all!"

"I'll have tea ready in a quarter of an hour, Hansom."

"You'd better! Cut off!"

Hanson waved his hand jolly, dismissing the fags.

"Come on, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, starting through the arch with the paper in his hand.

"You—you you howling idiot!" gasped Lovell. "You're not going to lag for the Fifth! You're not——"

"Dry up, old chap, and come on!"

"But I tell you——" shrieked Lovell.

"Do come on, or Hanson will be annoyed!" murmured Jimmy.

"What the merry thump do I care if Hanson is annoyed!" bellowed Lovell. "Are you off your silly rocker?"

"Come on, I tell you!"

Jimmy fairly dragged his incensed chum away. Raby and Newcome followed, amazed and angry.

"Well, by gad!" murmured Talboys, as the four juniors disappeared into Big Quad.

Hanson smiled.

"It only needs a firm hand," he explained, as he strolled on with his chums. "That's all—a firm hand! Bless your little hearts, I know how to manage fags! Leave it to me! A firm hand—that's all it wants!"

And Hanson's chums had to agree that he did know how to manage fags. It looked like it at all events. And Hanson swanked even more than usual as he sauntered round Little Quad with his friends, quite elated with his success.

CHAPTER 26.

A Speed in the End Study!

"JIMMY, you ass——"
"Jimmy, you chump——"
Lovell and Raby and Newcome were all speaking together as the Pictorial Four crossed the quad towards Sergeant Kettle's little shop behind the beeches.

Jimmy Silver was smiling, but his chums were quite wild with wrath.

They had been prepared for a scrap with the Fifth-Formers, and even for a "walloping"; but for this abrupt surrender on the part of their leader

they had not been prepared—far from it.

"You—you you idiot!" gasped Lovell. "Can't you see it's a put-up job? Hanson's fixed this up just to show off that he can lag the Fourth."

"I know—I know," assented Jimmy.

"He's paid for the stuff at the tuck-shop, and could have taken it in himself quite easily; but he's not done that so as to lag somebody in the Fourth."

"I know."

"And you've let him do it!" shrieked Lovell.

"Why not?"

"Why not! Why, you—you silly ass—you—you——"

"Easy does it," urged Jimmy Silver.

"Nothing to rag about."

"You—~~you~~——" stuttered Lovell.

"Hallo! What's the row?" asked a cheery voice.

Mornington and Eroll, coming away from Little Side, met the Pictorial Four in the quad.

"Not rowing, surely, you chaps?" asked Eroll, with a smile.

"Not at all," answered Jimmy.

"Lovell seems excited about something, that's all."

"I put it to you, Morny, as junior skipper," shouted Lovell. "Do we lag for the Fifth?"

Mornington frowned.

"No jolly fear!" he answered emphatically.

"That's what Jimmy's doing."

"Rot!"

"He is, I tell you!" shrieked Arthur Edward. "Hanson's given him a list of stuff to get at the tuck-shop, and he's going to get tea in Hanson's study in a quarter of an hour. What do you think of that?"

"Bosh!" answered Morny. "I suppose Lovell's off-side, as usual, isn't he, Jimmy?"

"Naturally."

"I tell you——"

"I'll explain how the matter stands, if you like," said Jimmy Silver with a yawn. "Hanson is standing us a tea in the end study——"

"Wha-a-at?" stammered Lovell.

"He's given me an order on the sergeant for the stuff. Now, we're not on the best of terms with the Fifth; but if Hanson chooses to stand on a tea, why refuse?"

Lovell blinked.

"He told you to take the stuff to his study?" he howled.

"I believe he did," assented Jimmy.

"But I'm going to take it to my study, old top."

"You—you said you'd get tea in a quarter of an hour."

"So I shall—in our study."

"Oh!"

"Understand at last!" asked Jimmy cheerfully. "I think this will be rather a valuable lesson to Hanson about fagging the Fourth. And we're stony, and this feed will come like corn in Egypt in one of the lean years. Come on."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby and Newcome.

Lovell grinned.

He understood at last.

"Good man!" chuckled Mornington, and Errol laughed. "You're full of good ideas, Jimmy. Go it!"

"You two fellows come to tea with us," said Jimmy Silver. "There's lots for a whole family. And I think we may have a visit from the Fifth before tea is over. You never know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll come," said Mornington. "I'll bring a cricket-stump with me, in case it's wanted."

"Come on, you chaps," said Jimmy.

And the Fistical Four headed for the tuckshop again, in quite a cheery and contented mood now.

Four faces were smiling brightly as Jimmy presented Hanson's list to Mr. Kettle.

The old sergeant had the goods ready. It was evidently, as Lovell had said, a "put-up" job on the part of Edward Hanson. He was going to establish the right of fagging the Fourth, and he was beginning with Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver certainly was a hard

nut to crack; but Hanson possibly considered it judicious to crack the hardest nut first.

If Jimmy Silver gave in, it was probable that others would follow his example. No doubt that was how Hanson looked at it.

And the egregious Hanson was now busily engaged in counting his chickens before they were hatched.

Jimmy Silver & Co. left the school shop laden with Hanson's parcels.

In the distance, Hanson and his friends, sauntering through the arch from Little Quad, caught sight of them, and smiled.

"There they go!" murmured Brown major.

"Faggin' lor us, begad!" said Talboys.

Hanson smiled superior.

"I think I told you so," he remarked.

"You did, old chap!" said his chums admiringly. "You did!"

And Edward Hanson's nose was an inch higher as he strolled on.

Doubtless the Fifth-Formers would not have felt quite so satisfied if they had known the real destination of the good things.

The Fistical Four did not head for the Fifth Form quarter of the School House, far from it. They headed for the end study in the Fourth Form passage. Tubby Muffin joined them as they progressed along that passage with their parcels.

"Feed on?" asked Tubby, with keen interest.

"Yes. Like to come?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"My dear old chap, I'm your man!" said Reginald Muffin affectionately.

And he came.

Teddy Grace was met farther along the passage, and he also was invited, and accepted. "Polly of the Fourth" was a good man in a scrap, and Jimmy thought it probable that there would be scrapping later on.

There was soon quite a festive scene in the end study.

The Fistical Four, Morny and Errol,

Tubby Muffin and Putty, made quite a numerous party.

But there was enough for all. Hansom's goods were quite enough to go round, and the Fourth-Formers piled in with a will.

The good things vanished fast under the attacks of eight hungry juniors.

Tea in the end study was rapid, and it was nearing its end when Conroy, the Australian, looked in.

"You kids been asking the Fifth for trouble?" he inquired.

"They've been asking us," said Jimmy Silver. "And the answer was in the affirmative, as the political chingwiggers say in the House of Chipwag."
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, they're tanning," said Conroy. "Let 'em all come. Try these biscuits, Conroy, they're good. Hansom paid a good price for these biscuits."

"Hansom did?" ejaculated Conroy.

"Exactly."

"Oh! So that's why——"

Jimmy Silver explained, and the Australian junior roared. He called in his canteen, Pons and Van Ryn, to help him try the biscuits. They were also on the scene, ready for the expected arrival of the Fifth. If Hansom & Co. came to the end study they were likely to wake up a very serious hornets'-nest there.

CHAPTER 31.

(Not According to Program).

"**R**EADY?" asked Edward Hansom. He glanced into his study in the Fifth Form passage.

Hansom had allowed a good quarter of an hour to elapse. He wanted to give his fags time to get his tea nicely for him.

Hansom was judicious in this. Later on, he could hurry up his fags, and cuff them for delay, and so forth, like the great men of the Sixth. But this was an experiment, at present; and he was anxious to break the tea success-

fully, as it were. So he gave Jimmy Silver plenty of time to get tea.

And his tone was quite cheery and polite as he looked into his study, and asked if it was ready.

His expression changed the next moment, however.

No, I in the Fifth was empty.

There was no sign of tea, and there was no sign of fags. The grate was cold and empty. There was no fire—no pile of warm toast. There was no set table—in fact, there was nothing that hadn't been there when Hansom had left his study.

"By gad!" ejaculated the Fifth-Former.

He stared into the study blankly.

The captain of the Fifth could not quite make it out. He had ordered Jimmy Silver to get his tea ready in a quarter of an hour, and he had allowed him twenty minutes in which to do it. And there was no tea, and there was no Jimmy Silver.

It was quite perplexing.

"All serene?" asked Cecil Talboys, from the passage.

"Nunno."

"Isn't tea ready?" inquired Lumsden.

"N-no."

"My word! Give those fags a jolly good hiding, then!" exclaimed Brown major wrathfully. "They've had plenty of time."

"They—they're not here."

"Eh?"

Lumsden and Talboys and Brown major looked past Hansom into the study.

They were surprised, like their leader, to find it empty.

"Jolly queer!" said Lumsden.

"Where are they?"

Hansom knitted his brows.

He had "swanked" over his success in forcing the Fourth; but secretly he had been very much surprised at his easy success. It was now dawning upon him that he had not been so successful as he had believed.

"1-1-1 think——" he began haltingly.

"Well, they're not here!" said Talboys.

"Where are they, Hanson?"

"And where's tea? I'm hungry."

"I—I think perhaps they— It's jolly odd," said Hanson, colouring. "I—I suppose that young rascal Silver wouldn't have the nerve to disobey my orders—my direct orders, you know—"

"Hum!"

"Hum!"

Hanson's followers thought it very probable, as a matter of fact, that Silver would have the nerve.

"I—I say, what's become of the grub, though?" exclaimed Brown major in dismay. "They had that right enough; we saw them carrying it away from the shop."

"They—they've got that!" stammered Hanson. "They—they wouldn't have the cheek to—to—to—"

He stopped.

The Fifth-Formers looked at one another.

The dreadful truth occurred to all of them at once. They understood, rather too late, the real reason for Jimmy Silver's mock submission. He was not fugging for the Fifth, after all! He was bagging the Fifth Form spread, which was quite a different matter, and not at all gratifying to the hungry heroes of the Fifth.

"Let's go and look for the young sweeps!" said Lumsden abruptly.

Hanson nodded, and the four seniors hurried off towards the Fourth Form quarters. They met Rawson on the staircase, and inquired if he had seen Jimmy Silver. It was then that Conroy spotted them, and took the news to the end study.

"Seen Jimmy Silver?" asked Rawson reflectively. "Oh, yes!"

"Well, where did you see him?"

"In the Form-room."

"Come on, you chaps," said Hanson hurriedly. "They're feeding on our stuff in the Form-room! Out of the way there, you know! We—we—we'll jolly well slaughter them!"

The Fifth-Formers rushed downstairs to the Fourth Form room, deserted at that hour. Rawson primed, and went into his study. His statement had been well-founded; he had seen Jimmy Silver in the Form-room. He only omitted to mention that he had seen him there during lessons, a couple of hours earlier.

But his meaning dawned on Hanson & Co. when they rushed into the Form-room with warlike looks, and found it empty.

"They—they're not here, negad!" ejaculated Talboys.

Hanson gave a snort of fury.

"That cheeky young rascal was pulling our leg!" he howled. "Come on! We shall find them in Silver's study, I expect."

"Oh, gad!"

In a frame of mind, by this time, that was almost tigerish, Hanson & Co. rushed upstairs again.

This time they did not inquire after Jimmy Silver; they rushed along to the end study to see for themselves.

The door was shut. It opened with a crash as Hanson drove his boot against it.

The four seniors rushed in.

"Here they are!" gasped Hanson.

The rush of the Fifth had to stop. The study was crowded. There were eleven juniors in the room; and junior studies were not planned for parties of eleven. There was not much room for the seniors. And there were loud and wrathful exclamations as they collided with the Colonial Co., who were nearest the door.

Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Hallo, you fellows! Want anything?" he asked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's my tuck?" yelled Hanson furiously. He had forgotten, for a moment, his claims to fagging service, in his anxiety for the spread.

"Only one egg left, old bean."

"What?"

"But you can have that!" added Jimmy Silver kindly.

Whizz! Crack! Smash!

Hanson received the egg—on his nose!

"Grooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hanson made a wild leap at Jimmy Silver. The egg was streaming down his face, and the Classical Juniors were roaring with laughter. The Fifth-Former drove his way through the juniors and reached Jimmy Silver.

"Back up!" roared Jimmy.

"What-ho!"

"Collar 'em!"

"Kick 'em out!"

"Hurrah!"

And the scene that followed was worthy of the pen of a Homer, or at least of the typewriter of a Kipling.

CHAPTER 32.

Van Vixxit

"BACK up!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Down with the Fifth!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh! Ow! Yow! Yoop!"

Against the Fistic Four alone the four seniors would no doubt have proved themselves victors. But eleven juniors were rather too much for them. Even Tubby Muffin joined in the scrap. Tubby Muffin was not a warrior, but he was equal to sitting on anybody who was down, and he sat on Hanson when that warlike youth was floored.

And when Tubby Muffin sat on a person, that person was hors de combat. There was no arguing with Tubby's swardupon.

Hanson crumpled up as Tubby sat on him.

Lunsden and Talboys and Brown major were still putting up a losing fight. Apparently they had expected to walk over a gang of fags with ease. What happened was quite the reverse. The gang of fags walked over them.

Lunsden went down with his head in the ashes, and three or four juniors

pinned him there, and Pultr playfully sprinkled ashes over his upturned, furrowed face. Brown major reeled under the table, with juniors pommelling him on all sides. Cecil Talboys struggled with Morry and Conroy and Van Ryn, but he struggled in vain. The dandy of the Fifth was chiefly concerned about his clothes, on which the juniors showed no mercy whatever.

"Mind my collar!" wailed Talboys, in tones of anguish. "Mind my necktie!" Oh, gad!

His collar came off in Van Ryn's grasp, what time Conroy jerked out his necktie. And three or four grasping hands rent his elegant jacket up the back.

"Oh, you awful rotters! Yow-ow! I give in!" gasped Talboys. "I give in! Stoppl! Yaroooh!"

"Kick him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, I'm goin', you know—Yoooop!"

Talboys went. Three or four boots behind him helped him to go; and he left the end study almost whizzing.

Fourth-Formers were hurrying along the passage now, to the scene of the uproar. The alarm had gone forth that the Fifth had invaded the sacred quarters of the Fourth; and there was not a man in the Fourth Form who was not prepared to do battle with the invaders. Even Peele and Gower and Lattrey, even Toway and Toppy, rushed up with the rest. And Talboys, as he fled, had to run the gauntlet of the new arrivals.

"Kick him out!" yelled Jimmy Silver from the doorway of the end study.

And his direction was obeyed.

Every foot in the passage seemed anxious to get a kick at Cecil Talboys as he fled; and there seemed to be innumerable feet. The hapless Talboys felt like a football by the time he reached the stairs, and bounded down them three at a time.

"Any more there?" roared Higgs from the passage.

"Three more!"

"Cluck 'em out, and we'll give 'em beans!"

"What ho!"

Jimmy Silver turned back into the study. The end study had rather a wrecked appearance, but it did not look so wretched as Hansom and Lamden and Brown major. Those three unhappy youths were wriggling painfully under the weight of the juniors who pinned them to the floor.

"Brown next!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Leggo!" roared Brown major. "I—I'll go, if you like—"

"You will, old top!"

"On your neck!" grinned Lovell.

Brown major was hauled to the door and hurled forth.

He landed on his hands and knees in the midst of the excited crowd of juniors outside.

A dozen feet found him as he dropped on the floor.

"Oh, my hat! You young villains! Help! Yaroooh!"

"Punish him!" roared Higgs. "Kick him out! Gerrout of the way, Peck! I've only kicked him once!"

Brown major picked himself up and fled. A hurricane of kicks accompanied him along the passage, till he scrambled down the stairs and escaped.

Lamden was the next.

He was tossed out of the end study like a sack of coke, and kicked along to the stairs, amid yells of laughter.

Edward Hansom was left till the last. The captain of the Fifth looked very apprehensive as he was yanked to his feet.

"Your turn now!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Cluck him out!"

Hansom gasped. Tubby Muffin's weight had told on him. He was in a breathless state as he was hustled to the door.

"You—you young sweeps! Leggo! Oh, crumba! Oh, crickey! Yaroooh!"

"Do you want us to lag for you any more, Hansom?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yaroooh!"

Hansom went out headlong. He fell into the crowd outside; and Jimmy Silver & Co. followed him up. His comrades had fared roughly; but their experience was a joke to Hansom's. By the time the captain of the Fifth reached the stairs, he felt as if he had been through an earthquake and a cyclone and an air-raid rolled into one. And even then he was not done with. The exuberant juniors rolled him down the first flight of stairs, bumping him on each stair. He was allowed to roll down the next flight by himself; and he lay on the next landing in a dazed state.

The unfortunate fagger of the Fourth was just able to crawl away.

He was followed by yells of derision from above, and loud invitations to come back and lag the Fourth again; but the hapless Hansom was not thinking just then of lagging the Fourth.

He picked himself up and limped off to his study, where he sank into his armchair, and for the next quarter of an hour was chiefly occupied in gasping and groaning.

The Fourth Formers cheered loudly as they went back to their studies, victorious.

Jimmy Silver and his chums came back into the end study, chuckling. The study was in a deplorable state; but they set to work very cheerfully putting it to rights.

"I rather think that Hansom will be tired of fagging this study, after this!" Raby remarked.

"I shouldn't be surprised!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I don't think the Fifth got much change out of us this time. Anyhow, they're pretty certain not to send us for luck again."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But where did Morny come in?" cried Lovell.

"Morny?"

"Well, Morny's junior captain now, and it was up to Morny to deal with the Fifth. But he's left to this study

to take Hanson down a peg." Arthur Edward Lovell shouted. "Morny was in a back seat all the time—it was Jimmy Silver first, second, and all the time."

Jimmy Silver looked rather serious.

"I don't want to be taking the lead now Morny's captain," he said. "A fellow must play the game. But——"

"But it can't be helped, old top. You're a bit of an ass in your way, Jimmy, but you ought to be skipper, and you know it. Morny isn't really big enough for the job."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy uneasily.

But other fellows in the Fourth took Arthur Edward Lovell's view. There had been a tussle with the rival Form, and the Fifth had been beaten; and it was Jimmy Silver who had been the leader. And from Morny's very thoughtful look, when Jimmy saw him again, Jimmy could guess that the same thought had occurred to him.

CHAPTER 31.

A Fag at Last!

"IT'S the principle of the thing!" Edward Hanson of the Fifth made that remark a couple of days later in his study.

His audience consisted of his study-mates, Lumsden and Talboys.

Both of them were looking dubious.

"The principle of the thing!" repeated Hanson. "That's what we've got to think about."

"The fact is, old chap," said Lumsden, with a cough. "It looks to me to be more trouble than it's worth. The unruly little beasts——"

"Unruly little beasts require ruling with a firm hand."

"Well, after all, we ain't prefects, and the Fourth don't matter a tuppenny button to us."

"I'm fed up with the scrubby little scoundrels," said Talboys. "I know they simply ruined my clobber the other day!"

"Bother your clobber!" said Hanson irritably.

"Well, you'd think about your clobber if your tailor sent you in bills like mine!" said Talboys mournfully. "I hadn't had that jacket a week——"

"Blow your jacket!"

"And they ripped it up the back. I'm going to have it repaired for knock-in' about in—chap has to be economical these days. I can't wear it out of doors again. Simply can't—with a seam up the back and across the shoulder. And the tailor——"

"Hang the tailor!"

"The tailor man is chargin' me a guinea for repairs. Perhaps you'd like to stand the guinea, Hanson?" suggested Talboys, rather sarcastically.

"If you can't talk sense, Cecil, old man, you'd better give your chin a rest!" said the exasperated Hanson. "Now, as I was saying, it's the principle of the thing. We're seniors, and therefore we have a natural right to fag the juniors. The Sixth do. Carthew of the Sixth was sniggering at me this morning over our affair the other day in the fag quarters. Carthew thinks he can manage fags."

"Carthew's a bully!"

"Well, a certain amount of bullying isn't bad for kids, you know, when they don't know their place. But I'm not thinking of ragging the Fourth. The fact is, I was rather hasty the other day."

"You were!" agreed Lumsden.

"I started with Silver—a thoroughly obstinate little beast, if ever there was one. I would have been wiser to begin with a less obstinate young scoundrel—like Muffin, for instance."

Lumsden grinned.

"Muffin would fag for anyone if he was offered a jam-tart!" he said.

"We can't bribe the fags!" said Hanson loftily. "We've got to remember that we're seniors; and there's the dignity of the Fifth Form to consider. But a thick ear would do it. Offer him a thick ear for refusing, and a fat little fink like Muffin would come to heel."

fast enough. It's reaching a beginning and breaking the ice. I ought really to have started with Muffin instead of Silver; I can see that now. What I want is to get the principle of the thing recognised."

"Well, go ahead!" said Lumsden. "We'll back you up, of course; the young rascals ought to lag for us!"

"They ought, for certain!" assented Talboys. "A lag would be no end useful to me; brushin' clothes, and all that. But——"

"I've told Muffin to come to this study," said Hansom casually.

Lumsden indulged in a wink at the ceiling.

"Will he come?" he asked.

"He will come."

"It's like that Welsh chap in Shakespear, you know," remarked Lumsden. "He said he could call spirits from the vasty deep. And Hotspur said, 'But will they come when you do call to them?' Now, it's all very well to tell Muffin to come here. But——"

"I've given him orders to come."

"Them?"

(Tap)

Hansom gave his study-mates a triumphant glance as a tap came at the study door.

The door opened, and the fat face of Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, looked in, with a beaming, fat smile on it.

"Oh!" ejaculated Lumsden, taken aback.

Tubby Muffin had evidently obeyed orders.

"Come in, Muffin!" rapped out the captain of the Fifth.

"Yes, Hansom!"

The fat Classical rolled in.

"Shut the door!"

Tubby closed the door obediently.

Lumsden and Talboys looked on in surprise. Here was a member of the Fourth Form obeying Hansom's orders, at all events. True, Tubby Muffin was likely to obey anybody's orders rather than take a licking. But he hadn't

been licked yet, at all events. Yet his only object in life at the present moment seemed to be to make himself agreeable to Hansom.

Hansom was growing lofter than ever in look. He had rather a weakness for "showing off" before his friends.

"Muffin!" he rapped out.

"Yes, Hansom?"

"Put some more sticks in the fire, and shove the kettle on!"

"Certainly, Hansom!"

Tubby Muffin carried out those directions with cheerful alacrity. It really looked as if Hansom had found an obedient lag at last.

But when the kettle was disposed on the blazing sticks, Tubby Muffin turned towards the captain of the Fifth with an inquiring look.

"Where are they?" he asked.

Hansom coughed.

"Oh, I said you could have some tarts, didn't I?" he remarked carelessly.

"There they are—in the bag!"

"Oh!" murmured Lumsden.

The tarts were in the bag; but the cat was out of the bag now. The magic power that had turned the fat Classical into an obedient lag for the Fifth was not Hansom's eye of command or the terror of his glance. It was the promise of jam-tarts.

Hansom avoided meeting his chums' eyes as Tubby Muffin travelled through a couple of jam-tarts. They did not take him long. Two jam-tarts weren't much to Tubby Muffin. Two dozen would probably have left him inquiring for more.

"Is that all, Hansom?" he asked.

"Yes," granted the Fifth-Form.

"Do you think I keep a tackshop here for fat lags?"

"Well, you said tarts!" answered Reginald Muffin, in rather aggrieved tones. Of course, two tarts are tarts. But I thought——"

"You needn't trouble to think!" snapped Hansom. "You're not wanted

to think, Muffin! You're wanted to do as you're told!"

"Oh, am I?" said Tubby warmly.

"Yes. And don't argue!"

"I'll argue if I like!" retorted Reginald Muffin independently.

"You'll get a licking if you do!"

Evidently the fagging was beginning in earnest. The fly had walked into the spider's parlour—attracted by jam-tarts. It was not going to be so easy to walk out again.

That consideration seemed to dawn upon fat Muffin's brain, for he began to back towards the door.

Hansom raised his hand.

"Stop!" he commanded.

Edward Hansom was firmly under the impression that, like the lamented parent of the Prince of Denmark, he had "an eye like Mars, to threaten and command." He was exercising it now.

So far, however, from being awed by Hansom's eye like Mars, Tubby Muffin made a jump for the door. He sensed danger.

Hansom jumped up.

His commanding eye was evidently useless in this case. But a commanding hand dropped on Tubby's fat shoulder before he could get the door open and swung him back. Hansom had a heavy hand, and it was much more efficacious than his eye.

"Now, then, you cheeky young rascal——"

"Yaroooh!"

"Shurrup!"

"Help!"

"You silly young ass!" roared the exasperated Hansom. "Stop making that row! I haven't touched you!"

"Leggo!"

"Now, Muffin——"

"Rescue!"

"Give me that cane, Lummy!"

"Here you are," said Lumsden, grinning.

"Hold out your hand, Muffin!" said Hansom, just as if he was a prefect of the Sixth Form.

Muffin blinked at him.

"Mum-mum-my hand!" he stuttered.

"Yes; sharp!"

"Wha-a-at for?"

"I'm going to cane you!"

"Kik-kik-cane me!" howled Tubby Muffin indignantly. "Yah! Do you think you're a prefect, you silly owl? Yah!"

Lumsden and Talboys grinned; they couldn't help it. Hansom flushed with wrath.

"Hold out your hand!" he thundered.

"Yah!" retorted Tubby Muffin.

"Then you'll get it harder!"

Whack, whack, whack!

The hapless Tubby did get it—across his fat shoulders. Hansom laid it on with great energy. He felt that he was upholding the dignity of the Fifth, as well as establishing the important rule that the Fourth fagged for the Fifth. Tubby Muffin squirmed and howled.

But there was no help at hand for poor Tubby. He was in the spider's parlour, far from help.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yooop! Stopp! I say, Hansom, old chap—— Yaroooh! You beat! Chuck it! I say, old fellow, leggo! Yaroooh!"

"There," said Hansom severely, "I think that ought to be a lesson to you, Muffin!"

"You-ow-ow!"

"Do you want any more?"

"No!" howled Tubby.

"Then set to work, fagging!" commanded Hansom. "Clear the tea-table, tidy up the grate, and put the kettle away, and—*and* dust the room! I'll watch you do it!"

"I'm not going to fag for the Fifth!" roared Tubby.

Whack!

"Yaroooh!"

"What did you say, Muffin?"

"I—I said—I—I mean I'll fag for you with pleasure, old fellow!" gasped the unhappy Tubby.

"Don't call me old fellow! I don't like it from fags!"

"All right, old fellow—I mean, you

beast—I—I meaner say, yes, Hansom! All right!"

"Ple in!" commanded Hansom.

Tubby Muffin cast a longing glance at the door. But Hansom was between him and the door. The fat Classical was paying dearly for two jam-tarts. With a furious face, he set to work fagging, under the commanding eye of Hansom of the Fifth.

Hansom had tagged a fag at last!

CHAPTER 31. The High Hand!

"JIMMY!"

"Hallo, parker!"

Jimmy Silver was on his way to the cricket-ground, when Tubby stopped him—red and wrathful and plantire at the same time. Jimmy passed good-naturedly.

"Been in the wars?" he asked.

"Yew-ow-ow!"

"Well, what's the trouble? Lovell's yelling to me!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I've been fagging for the Fifth!" gasped Tubby.

"What?"

"They got me into Hansom's study," groaned Tubby dolorously, "and then the beast licked me till I fagged for him, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"You oughtn't to have done it," he said.

"What could I do?" demanded Muffin warmly. "Think I could fight three of the Fifth? Three of the Fourth would be as much as I could tackle."

"And a little over, I think," said Jimmy, laughing.

"Well, ain't you going to take it up?" exclaimed Tubby. "Are those Fifth Form cads going to fag the Fourth, and wallop 'em?"

"No fear! But—but—" Jimmy hesitated. "Morny's junior captain now, Tubby; it's Morny's bisney to take it up for the Form. You'd better go to Mornington!"

Tubby Muffin gave a snort.

"Morny's no good!" he answered.

"Go to Morny!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Why, you young sweep, you voted for him at the election—"

"Well, he stood me a feed, you see—"

"Well, Morny's your man!" grunted Jimmy, and he detached Tubby's fat hand from his sleeve and joined his thumbs, who were waiting for him impatiently.

Tubby Muffin blinked after him, and then rolled away to Valentine Mornington's study. Tubby was simply athirst for vengeance for his manifold wrongs, and although he had voted for Mornington at the junior captain's election, his faith was stronger in Jimmy Silver. But there was no choice for him now, and he rolled away to pitch his tale of woe to the new skipper.

Morny was alone in Study No. 4; Errol was on the cricket ground. The new junior captain was wrestling with French conjugations, a task set him by Monsieur Monceau, when Tubby rolled in. He pointed impatiently to the door.

"Travel!" he snapped. "I'm busy!"

"Look here, Morny—"

"Shut the door after you!"

"Do you call yourself junior captain?" roared Tubby Muffin, in a white heat of indignation. "Am I going to be fagged by the Fifth, and nothing said about it? Jimmy Silver would have made the totters sit up for it, when he was captain, I can tell you!"

"Oh! Is that it?" Mornington laid down his pen and rose to his feet. "The Fifth have been fagging you, have they?"

"Yes; Hansom and Lumsden and Talboys, in their study!"

"And you fagged?"

"I had to. Hansom whacked me till I did, I—I fought hard!" said Tubby Muffin. "I—I knocked him flying once—fairly spinning. But there were three of them—"

"Didn't you knock them all spinning?" asked Mornington sarcastically.

"Why didn't you take all three, and bash their heads together?"

"Well, I would have, only—only after I'd knocked Hanson down, the others, you know—"

"You should have knocked them down, too!" grinned Mornington.

"Well, I did, you know," said Tubby. "I fought like a—lion. But altogether, they were too much for me. See? And—and I've been thrashed, and made to fag, and it's your bluney to take it up as junior captain, Morny, you know it is!"

Mornington frowned.

"You're such a blunp's fat, little liar," he said, "I don't know how much there is in your yarn. But I'll go and see Hanson about it!"

"Fat lot of good that will be!" grunted Tubby Muffin discontentedly. "Jimmy Silver would have—"

"Never mind Jimmy Silver now—I'm skipper. Shut up, and leave it to me!" snapped Mornington.

The junior captain left his study, and made his way to the Fifth Form quarters. That was rather a reckless proceeding on his part in the circumstances, but Morny did not stop to think about that; he was reckless by nature, and it did not occur to him to be prudent.

There was a sound of laughter in Hanson's study as Morny reached the door. He threw it open.

Hanson & Co. seemed in a merry mood.

The principle of the thing, as Hanson termed it, had been established—the ice had been broken. The Fourth had started fagging for the Fifth. True, only Tubby Muffin had started; but it was a beginning.

Edward Hanson confidently predicted that Muffin's example would be followed, especially if a few more thrashings were handed out. And Hanson was prepared to hand them out as fast as required.

The three Fifth Formers stared at Mornington, still smiling.

"Hallo! Did you tell this fag to

come here, Hanson?" yawned Talboys.

Hanson shook his head.

"No; I'm not wanting a fag at present," he said. "You can cut, Mornington. I'll call you when required!"

"You silly chump!" was Morny's reply.

"Cut off at once!"

"I want to know whether you've been fagging Tubby Muffin, of my Form?" said Mornington.

Hanson nodded genially.

"Yes; I believe it was Muffin who fagged here," he asserted. "One of your scrubby gang, anyhow. I think it was Muffin!"

"I think you're already aware that the Fourth don't fag for the Fifth!" said Mornington.

"We're going to knock all that nonsense out of you, my boy," assured Hanson. "I shall probably want you to-morrow. Be ready!"

"You picked Muffin, I suppose, because he's a lanky ass, to begin with?" said Mornington disdainfully.

Hanson glanced round.

"Where's that came?" he asked.

"Here you are, old top!" said Talboys.

"Now, Mornington," said Hanson, taking the case, "you've been cheeky. Cheek to the Fifth isn't allowed. I'm sorry for you, but I've decided to put down this unruliness among the fags with a firm hand!"

"You silly ass!"

"Hold out your hand, Mornington!"

"Oh, don't talk out of your neck!" said Morny contemptuously. "Do you think I'm another Tubby Muffin, you swanking duffer? I've got this to tell you, Hanson—Tubby Muffin personally don't matter two pence; but you won't be allowed to fag the Fourth, not even Muffin. I'm going to make you all up for it. That's all."

And Mornington swung round on his heel to walk away.

The next moment Hanson's hand was on his collar, and he was swung back. Without a word, Mornington

hit out, and Hanson staggered back.

"Ow!" he gasped.

Mornington darted into the passage again, and almost into the arms of Brown major, who was coming to the study. Brown major grasped him at once.

Mornington struggled fiercely. But the big Fifth Former held him securely enough, and bundled him back into the study.

Hanson closed the door and put his back to it.

"Now I think you'll sing a different tune, my pippin!" he said savagely. "Hold out your hand, Mornington."

"Rats!"

"Will you obey orders?"

"Oh, don't be a goat!"

"Lay him across a chair!" commanded Hanson.

Lumsden and Talboys and Brown major laid Morny across a chair. It required all three of them to do it, for Morny was fighting like a tiger. There were signs of damage about the three seniors, and they were panting when they had Morny safely down at last.

Then Hanson started in with the cane.

Whack, whack, whack!

Mornington still struggled furiously, but in vain. The grasp on him was too strong.

"Now, are you going to hold out your hand when you're told?" chuckled Hanson.

"No, you rotter!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Not a cry left Morny's lips: and he still struggled savagely. Hanson laid on the cane with great vim. It was a chance that might not occur again, and he was making the most of it.

"I say, that'll do!" said Lumsden at last. "He's had enough!"

"Well, perhaps that'll do," assented Hanson. "I don't want to be hard, even on a cheeky fag. Chuck him out now he's licked! I dare say he'll do as he's told to-morrow."

Brown major opened the door, and Mornington was dropped into the passage. The door closed again, and the hapless Morny heard loud laughter from within as he staggered to his feet. Hanson & Co. were enjoying their triumph.

Valentine Mornington limped away.

Tubby Muffin met him on the staircase. The fat Classical blinked inquiringly at him, and then grinned. It did not need much perspicacity to discern what had happened.

"He, he, he! Call yourself junior captain?" hooted Tubby. "Do you think Jimmy Silver would have— Yawoooooh!"

Mornington smote, and the fat Classical sat on the stairs with a yell. Then Morny strode on to his study, leaving Tubby Muffin yelling.

There was excitement in the Fourth Form at Rookwood when Reginald Muffin spread the news—which he very quickly did.

The Fifth had started fagging the Fourth successfully! And they had licked the junior captain for objecting! The Rookwood Fourth was quite wild with wrath, and on all sides the question was loudly asked—what was Morny going to do about it? And upon the answer to that question, Morny's leadership of the Lower School at Rookwood depended.

CHAPTER 35.

Unpleasant for Morny!

"RESINK!"

Valentine Mornington stared. Morny had just come up to his study—No. 4 in the Fourth—and he was about to push open the door, when that surprising word, chalked on the panels, caught his eye.

"Resink!"

Mornington paused, and blinked at the remarkable word. He did not quite understand it.

"Hallo! That you, Morny?" came

Kit Erroll's cheery voice from within Study No. 4.

"Yes! Come out here a minute. Anything up?"

"Yes."

Erroll came out of the study, looking a little surprised. Mornington pointed to the chalked letters on the outside of the door.

"Look at that!" he said.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What the thump does it mean?"

"Somebody's chalked it there," remarked Erroll—"somebody rather weak in orthography, I should say. Cheeky as, whoever he was!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. came along the passage from the stairs. It was tea-time, and the Fistical Four were bound for the study. Arthur Edward Lovell had a bundle under his arm, and Raby was carrying very carefully a bag of eggs. The four chums stopped at the sight of Morny and Erroll staring at their study door.

"Hallo! What's that game?" asked Newcome.

"Only some cheeky ass!" said Erroll hastily. "I'll rub it out, Morny—"

Lovell blinked at the chalked word.

"Resin," he said. "Resin, with an extra 'e' on the end. What the dickens does it mean? Why should anybody chalk 'Resin' on Morny's door?"

Jimmy Silver smiled, but made no remark. But Raby chimed in, with a grin:

"Put the accent on the final syllable, Lovell, old top. Then you'll get at it."

"Resine!" repeated Lovell. "Oh, resign! I see!"

And he chortled.

"Resign!" grinned Newcome. "It's a message from somebody who's not satisfied with you as junior captain, Morny."

Morny's brow darkened.

"I think I can guess who it was, from the spelling," he said.

"Tubby Muffin, of course!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Well, you're not going to resign, Morny, because

Tubby Muffin isn't satisfied. Stand him a bun, and he'll think you're the best junior skipper Rookwood ever had."

But Mornington did not smile. He was evidently deeply exasperated by that cheeky message from the fastest junior at Rookwood.

It touched a tender spot, as it were. Valentine Mornington's handsome face was dark as he sat down at the testable in Study No. 4.

Erroll was silent, but good-humoured. He was accustomed to tolerating patiently the variable moods of his chum.

"I've a jolly good mind to chuck up!" growled Mornington, breaking the silence at last.

"I shouldn't do that, old chap!"

"I haven't really had a chance of making good yet," said Mornington restively. "Tain't all roses being junior skipper. I've a good mind to go along now and give Muffin a thumpin' good hidin'! But he's only said what the other fellows are thinkin'—I know that."

"Well, Tubby's got a grievance," said Erroll, with a smile. "Hansom of the Fifth fagged him—"

"The fat cad oughtn't to have fagged for Hansom!"

"I know that; but Tubby isn't exactly a hero. Hansom and Iansden and Talboys had him in their study and licked him. Now, the Fourth don't fag for the Fifth," said Erroll. "We're not going to stand it. Something has got to be done about it, Morny!"

"And it's up to me, you mean?" granted Mornington.

"Well, yes. You're junior captain, and it's up to you to take the lead and give the Fifth a lesson," said Erroll frankly. "Hallo! What on earth's that?"

"That" was a peculiar sound from the passage.

"Yam-ow-ow! Ochone! Yaroooh! Oh, oh, oh—ow!"

"It's Flynn!" granted Morny.

Erroll opened the door and looked

out. A good many other doors had opened, too.

Patrick O'Donovan Flynn, of the Charmed Fourth, was coming along the passage, rubbing his hands dolorously and uttering sounds of woe.

"What's the row, Flynn?" called out Conroy from Study No. 3.

"Ochbone!"

"Bootles been licking you?" asked Erroll sympathetically.

"Sure, it was the Fifth!"

"Hallo! Paggies again?" exclaimed Conroy.

"Ye intirely!" grained Flynn.

"Sure, I've got something to say to Morny. Where is the thafe of the werruld?"

Flynn looked in at the door of No. 4, and Mornington gave him a surly glance.

"You onadhauni!" shouted Flynn.

"What?" snapped Morny.

"Ye spalpeen!"

"What are you babbling about?"

"Sure, I've been fagged!" yelled Flynn, in wrath and indignation.

"Lamsden and Brown major, bedad, told me to fetch a cricket-bat, begorra, and bid into me with a stump when I wouldn't go! Call yourself a skipper! What are ye going to do about it? Think Jimmy Silver would have let the Fifth lag us and rag us? Yah!"

And, having relieved his feelings with those emphatic remarks, Patrick O'Donovan Flynn meandered on to his own study, still rubbing his hands and jowing and wowing.

"Yah! Resign!" came a yell from Tubby Muffin along the passage.

Mornington kicked his door shut.

There was a grim silence in Study No. 4 as Morny and Erroll went on with their tea.

Morny had plenty of food for uncomfortable thought.

Since he had been junior captain the Fifth had renewed their ancient claim to lag the juniors—a claim fiercely disputed by the Fourth.

In Jimmy Silver's time, certainly,

Hanson & Co. had been given as good as they gave, and they had found it judicious to leave the Fourth alone. Now they had their ears up again with a vengeance. Jimmy Silver was dutifully standing aside, leaving the lead to be taken by Morny, loyally prepared to back up the new captain to any extent. But the new captain was rather at a loss. It was not easy to decide how to deal with the presumptions of the Fifth.

Hanson & Co. were determined to assert what they were pleased to consider their rights; and they were setting to work with some strategy. They had "tried it on" with the Fistical Four, and failed dismally. But with Tubby Muffin they had been successful; and so the ice was broken, as Hanson expressed it to his chums, and the principle established.

Flynn was the next victim; and though he hadn't actually fagged, he had been licked for refusing to lag, which came to much the same thing.

Licking the Fifth in return was too large an order. The big seniors of the Fifth were rather too hefty for that.

Mornington wondered what Jimmy Silver would have done in his place. It was quite certain that the former junior captain would have devised some scheme for bringing the heroes of the Fifth to reason.

There was a tap at the door as Morny finished tea. He took no heed of it, but Erroll called out "Come in!"

It was Teddy Grace who came in.

Morny did not even look at him. Putty of the Fourth was smiling and good-humoured as usual; but Morny was anything but good-humoured just then.

"More trouble with the Fifth?" remarked Putty.

"Ye—we've seen Flynn!" said Erroll, with a slight smile.

"What are you going to do about it, Morny?"

"Find out!" was Morny's polite reply.

Teddy Grace coughed,

"I've dropped in to make a suggestion," he observed.

"You can drop out again!"

"So I will, when I've made my suggestion!" answered Putty, with undiminished good-humour. "This won't do, Morny, you know! Hanson is letting alone the chaps who are too hefty for him, and biding his time. But he's getting the Fourth to tag—some of them. Tubby's been told to go to his study and clear up!"

"Is he going?" snapped Morny.

"Well, I've told him not to; but he's afraid of getting another licking, so I fancy he'll go."

"I'll thrash him if he does!"

"No, you won't, old top!" said Putty cheerfully. "That isn't the way to stop tagging for the Fifth!"

"Who'll stop me?" demanded Mornington, with a glitter in his eyes.

"Well, I will, for one—and I fancy most of the fellows will stop you fast enough! That isn't the way. We've got to stop the Fifth."

"Well, anyhow, that's my business, not yours!"

"But you seem so jolly slow getting on with your business, Morny! That's why I'm going to offer a suggestion."

"You can keep it!"

"Oh, let Putty run on!" said Erroll. "He has good ideas sometimes. What's your suggestion, Putty?"

"It's a ripping good idea!" said Putty modestly. "I think of things, you know. But it will need all the fellows to back up to carry it out, and they'll back up if Morny calls on them."

Mornington's brow cleared a little.

"You can run on," he said.

"Thanks; I will! The Fifth have got their ears up, and they've got to get their dashed ears down again. That's agreed, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"We can't—ahem!—lick them; they are too hefty for that. But they claim to tag the Fourth; and that's a claim they've got to give up. Well, what's

sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; but I don't quite follow—"

"If the Fifth tag the Fourth, why shouldn't the Fourth tag the Fifth?"

"Eh?"

"That's the stunt!"

"But—"

"I don't say they'll tag if we order 'em!" grinned Putty. "I don't mean that. But suppose we catch Hanson on his own—"

"Yes?"

"Yank him along to this quarter, where his friends can't rescue him—"

"Oh!"

"And tag him!" said Putty.

"He wouldn't tag!"

"Then we'll try the same method with him that he tried with Tubby—lick him till he does tag!" said Putty cheerfully. "That's the stunt. We'll make him clean up grates and wash tea-cups—"

"Oh, gad!"

"And tag him till he goes down on his knees and begs pardon, and signs a paper—"

"Signs a paper?" yelled Erroll.

"Yes, signs a paper giving up his claim to tag the Fourth—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He wouldn't!" gasped Mornington.

"He might be persuaded to—by shaving his eyebrows off—"

"His—his eyebrows!"

"Certainly; and his hair!" said Putty.

"Before he was quite bald, I am sure he would agree!"

"Ifa, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in Study No. 4. Putty grinned at the junior captain complacently.

"Rather a nobby stunt—what?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Yes, if it will work!"

"That's for you to manage, Morny! I've only made the suggestion, you know. Think it over."

And Putty of the Fourth lounged out of the study. Mornington looked at his drum, and smiled.

"Not a bad idea—what?" he remarked.

"Pipping!" said Errol, laughing.

"It's a wot!"

And a "go" it was!

CHAPTER 25.

Hansom is Satisfied.

EDWARD HANSOM, the captain of the Fifth, was looking quite cheery as he came into his study with his bat under his arm. Lumsden and Tubby followed him in, with equally cheery looks.

The great men of the Fifth had reason to be satisfied.

Reginald Muffin was in the study!

Muffin, certainly, was not ordinarily a person whom it was delightful to behold. There was a plentiful lack of appreciation in his own form for the delights of his society. But on the present occasion, in Hansom's study, he was, as it were, a symbol.

He was of the Fourth, and he was tagging for the Fifth? He was the sign of Hansom's victory.

Tubby, however, was not looking cheery.

He was tagging for the Fifth by Hansom's lofty order, lest worse should befall him. The junior captain had failed to put Hansom's ears down; and Tubby was not in want of another licking with a cricket-stump. So he was tagging, with a deep sense of injury. It was no wonder that he had chalked "Resine!" on Morry's door. He was feeling inclined to take much more drastic measures than that if such had been possible.

He gave the Fifth Formers a dark look.

But Hansom of the Fifth did not intend to have dark looks from his tag. He took Tubby Muffin by a fat ear.

"What are you scowling about?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Yow-ow-ow-wow!"

"Now, then——"

"Pip-pip-please, I—I wasn't scowling!" wailed Tubby Muffin. "Leggo my ear, you beast!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, please, Hansom!"

"That's better!" grinned Hansom, releasing Tubby's fat ear. "I don't want any cheek from my tag, Muffin!"

"Ow!"

"Why, you've broken one of the cups, you clumsy young villain!"

"Pip-pip-please, I c-c-couldn't help it!" gasped Tubby.

"Give me that stump, Lumsden!"

"Here you are, old top!"

Whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Oh, you roller!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, d-d-don't!"

"If you break any more of my crocks, Muffin, I'll scalp you!" said Hansom sternly. "I can't have tags breaking crocks in my study. You've got to replace that cup!"

"Ow!"

"Bring a new one next time you come here to tag!" said Hansom.

"P-Putty says I'm not to come——"

"What?" roared Hansom.

"I—I mean, I'm coming, whether Putty likes it or not. I—I like to come, you know!" moaned Tubby.

"You'd better!" growled Hansom.

"I'm going to make you my regular tag, Muffin."

"Oh, dear!"

"You're to turn up here every day at tea-time. I believe you can cook. You're to get my tea every day."

"Ye-es, Hansom!"

"And if you burn the toast, Muffin, I'm sorry for you, that's all!"

"I—I won't b-b-burn it, Hansom!"

"You'd better not. Now, then, you haven't cleared up that grate. It's horrid, dusty. Pile in!"

"I—I was j-j-just going to."

"Well, get to work. I'm coming back in ten minutes, and if the room isn't like a new pin, you'll know about it!"

"Ye-es, Hanson!" growled Tubby.

The Fifth Formers put down their bats, and lounged out of the study again, grinning. Their lanky claims to fag-service were being admitted after all—at least, by Reginald Muffin.

"That's only a beginnin', you know," remarked Hanson, as they strolled down the passage. "I'm going to bring all those unruly kids to reason in the long run. Dash it all, it's better for them as well as for us—nothin' like discipline, you know!"

"Nothin'!" agreed Talboys.

"It's simply rot that they shouldn't fag for the Fifth as well as the Sixth. Why shouldn't they?"

"No reason at all!" agreed Lumsden.

"Well, we're going to make them! As I said, it's better for them, too. It does a kid good to be taught to obey orders."

"Of course it does!"

"And tea in the study is much more comfy with a fag doin' the work. My opinion is that faggin' is a splendid institution!"

"Toppin'!" said Talboys.

The chums of the Fifth quite agreed on that. Possibly their views would have been different if they had been fags. But they weren't fags, so they did not consider that aspect of the case.

When Hanson & Co. came back to their study, Jones minor of the Fourth was standing in the doorway. He had his back to the passage, talking to Tubby in the study.

"You fat rotter!" Jones minor was saying. "Cut it, I tell you! We'll scrap you for fagging here!"

"I'm not going to be stumped, blow you!" was Tubby's reply.

"Cut it, I tell you! Oh—ah—ow!" continued Jones minor, as Hanson took him from behind by the ear and jerked him into the study. "Yarrah! Leggo!"

"Just arrived in time, Jonesy!" remarked Hanson. "You'll find some ten boots under the table that want polishin'."

"Do you think I'm going to polish your boots?" shrieked Jones.

"Yes, I rather do!"

"I won't—I won't! I—— Yow-ow-ow! Leggo my ear, you beast! Oh, crakey! Yooap! I—I—I'll polish 'em, if you like, you rotter!" wailed Jones minor.

And Jones minor did.

Hanson stood over him with a stomp while he polished the fat boots, and the polishing was well done. When it was done, a lift from Hanson's foot helped Jones minor out of the study, and he fled to the quarters of the Fourth, bursting with rage and indignation, to pour his woes into sympathetic ears.

Tubby Muffin, however, was rewarded with a tart for his fag services.

He left Hanson's study in a more contented frame of mind than the hapless Jones.

"I believe in treatin' fags well," Hanson remarked to his chums. "Lick 'em till they know their place, and then treat 'em well. That's my idea."

And Lumsden and Talboys agreed that it was a good idea.

CHAPTER 2.

In the Hands of the Amoleites!

"READY?" whispered Mornington.

"Ready!" Jimmy Silver whispered back.

And there was a hush.

On the landing of the lower staircase six juniors of the Classical Fourth were in ambush, with bated breath.

The light on the landing had been turned out. All was dark, and all was silent.

Mornington and Effroll, Jimmy Silver and Lovell, Conroy and Rawson, were the six. And there were many more of the Fourth waiting, with bated breath, in the Fourth Form passage, up the next staircase, till the signal should be given that the enemy had walked into the trap.

Hanson of the Fifth was the enemy!

Hanson had been under observation for some time—in fact, all the evening. Scouts of the Fourth had ascertained

when Hanson was at prep in his study. They had noted that Lumsden had gone down to the gym with Brown major, and that Talboys remained in the study doing "mates." They had noted especially that Edward Hanson had gone along to the Sixth Form quarters after prep.

A breathless scout had rushed back with the news that Hanson was in Bulkeley's study, talking to the captain of Rockwood. Probably Hanson was discussing cricket matters with the captain of the school, little dreaming of the measures the wrathful Fourth were taking.

Moray was in command, and he ropped out orders that were promptly obeyed. The ambush of six was stationed on the lower landing.

Hanson had to pass that landing, if he returned to his study. And one of the junior scouts had heard him call to Talboys that he would look in for him.

All was ready for Hanson; and there was a thrill of excitement among the juniors when a step was heard on the stairs.

The landing was in darkness, but from below came a glimmer of light, and the ambushed juniors watched eagerly. It was a Fifth Former who came up, but it was not Hanson. Johnson of the Fifth stumbled on the landing, and grunted.

"Where's that dashed light?"

Six juniors bent very low.

Johnson went on into the Fifth Form passage, without troubling about the light that was out. He was allowed to pass, and he passed without even suspecting that an ambush was there. Johnson was not their game.

"Next man in!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell, when Johnson's footsteps died away, and there was a subdued chuckle.

Next man in was Hanson himself. The juniors caught a glimpse of him in the light below, and they hardly breathed as he came up the stairs. There was a grunt from Hanson as he came to the landing.

"That dashed light not! Some bag playing tricks, I suppose. Ha-h-h!"

Hanson came on.

"Now, then!"

It was a sharp call from Birmingham.

There was a rush of feet, and before Edward Hanson knew what was happening he was seized on all sides, and he went down on the landing with a crash.

"Oh! Yooop! Ah-h-h-h!"

"The bag--quick!"

"Yoooh! Leggo! Help!"

The next moment a bag was over Hanson's head, and was drawn tightly round his neck.

"Got him!"

"Quiet!"

"Bring him along!"

Hanson of the Fifth struggled furiously.

After the first moment or two of blank astonishment, he guessed, really enough, into whose hands he had fallen, and struggled and wrestled and punched and roared for help.

But the bag over his head drowned his yells, and six pairs of hands made short work of his resistance.

He was lifted from the floor and rushed away to the next staircase.

Moray gave a whistle, which was answered from above, and a swarm of juniors came dashing down the upper staircase.

"Get him?" gasped Raby.

"You bet!"

"Hurrah!"

"Lend a hand!"

"Yank him along! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gooop-goooooght!" came a voice from within the bag. "Oh! Ooooooh! Gooooooh! Oooooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wriggling wildly in the grasp of his captors, Hanson of the Fifth was whirled up the stairs. He was a good weight, but his weight was nothing in so many hands. It was a case of many hands making light work. Nine or ten juniors had hold of him now, and Tubby Muffin and Jones minor had an ear

each through the bag. And they pulled at the cats with great vim. They had tagged for Hansom, and now they were indemnifying themselves. And the wild, weird, and woeful sounds from within the bag hinted that the captain of the Fifth was feeling the situation acutely.

There was no doubt that he was.

The unfortunate fagger of the Fourth was upside down as he was rushed along the Fourth Form passage, and his head bumped several times.

But nobody was thinking about Hansom's head.

He was rushed into Study No. 4, and deposited on the carpet with a resounding bump.

He rolled there, gasping.

The juniors swarmed into the study after him. Morny and Erroll and the Physical Four, Conroy and Van Ryn and Pons and Rawson, found room to the study with Hansom. The rest congregated round the door. All the Classical Fourth were there, with very few exceptions, and some of the Modern Fourth; though the latter, at that hour, were supposed to be in Mr. Munders' House. But Tommy Dodd & Co. were not to be left out of this.

Edward Hanson sat up on the carpet, clutching at the bag on his head. He snatched it off and got his head out—a very ruffled and dishevelled head. He gasped for breath, and glared furiously at the grinning juniors.

"Yooooooh!" was his first remark.

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you——" Hanson stammered breathlessly. "You—you—you cheeky young scoundrels!"

"Let me give him a cosh!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I've only pulled his ears so far. He fagged me, you know. Stumped me! Lemme gerrat at him! I want to give him a cosh!"

"Hu, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin, valorous as a lion now, rushed into the study, with his fat fist clenched.

"Here, hold on!" exclaimed Mornington.

"I'm going to give him a cosh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "He's fagged me, hasn't he, and stumped me, too?"

"You—you——" gasped Hansom.

Bliff!

A fat fist smote the breathless Fifth Farmer on the nose, and he rolled on the carpet again.

There was a roar from Hansom.

"Now, lemme give him another! I'll——"

Jimmy Silver dragged the infuriated Tubby back.

"Stop it, you mad porpoise!"

"I've only given him odes!"

"Roll that barrel out!" said Mornington.

"Look here, Morny, I'm going to give him one in the eye!" roared Tubby Muffin indignantly. "I tell you——"

The indignant Tubby was pushed out. Hansom of the Fifth was scrambling breathlessly to his feet, quite wild with rage. His nose showed signs of the heavy punch that had been delivered with Tubby's weight behind it.

"I—I—I'll smash you!" panted Hansom.

"Go ahead!" grinned Mornington.

Hansom went ahead. He was far too enraged to count odds at that moment. He made a furious rush for the door, hitting out as he rushed.

The juniors piled on him at once.

Against such heavy odds, even the athletic Fifth Farmer had not the ghost of a chance. He went to the floor again with a crash.

"Now stay there!" said Mornington.

"Better stay there, old top!" advised Teddy Grace. "Every time you get up you'll be knocked down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom tried his luck again, however. He scrambled up and rushed on the juniors. Down he went again, bumping. And this time he stayed down. He was too breathless for any further resistance just then.

CHAPTER 35-

Sauce for the Gander!

VALENTINE MORNINGTON planned round at the juniors in the passage.

"See if any of the Fifth are coming," he said. "They may have heard——"

"Right-ho!" said Puffy.

Puffy of the Fourth cut off to the stairs. But he returned in a minute or less, smiling.

"All serene!" he said. "No alarm!"

"Good!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" Hanson was mumbling from his seat on the carpet.

"If there's any alarm, and they try a rescue, they've got to be stopped!" said Mornington.

"You bet!"

"Now, Hanson——"

"Grooogh!"

"Sit up and pay attention, Hanson!"

"Wow!"

"You've been fagging the Fourth!" continued Mornington, with a stern glance. Excel on the gasping Fifth Farmer.

"Oooch!"

"You're goin' to have a lesson."

"Ow! Wow!"

"You've been brought here to fag!" said Mornington.

"Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hanson, still gasping, blinked at the grinning juniors. He was in the toils, and he realised it; his lofty frowns had no more effect on Morny and his followers than water on a duck.

And he could see that the Fourth Farmers meant business.

"Get up, Hanson!" rapped out Mornington.

Hanson staggered to his feet.

"Get to work!"

"What?"

"The grate is rather grubby," said Morny. "You've to sweep it up. There's a broom there. Then you're to polish the fender!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"After that there's tea-time for you to wash up!"

"Wa-wa-wash up!" repeated Hanson dazedly.

"Exactly!"

"You cheeky fag!" shrieked Hanson.

"Are you going to begin?"

"No!" roared the captain of the Fifth.

"You know how you persuaded Tubby and Jones to fag. You'll get none of the same if you don't begin sharp!"

"I—I—I'll——"

"Are you going to fag?"

"No!" shrieked Hanson.

"Collar him!" said Mornington.

Hanson put up his hands as the juniors closed in on him. He was down almost in a twinkling, however, and the Fifth Four grasped him and stretched him over a chair.

"Tubby, take that stump!"

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"What-ee?" giggled Tubby Muffin.

He grasped the cricket-stump very readily. Tubby had not forgotten his own licking in Hanson's study. He was ready to repay that licking now with compound interest.

"A dozen to begin with!" directed Mornington.

"Leave it to me!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Tubby Muffin was not an athlete; but he put remarkable muscular powers into the stumping. Hanson of the Fifth was well placed to receive it. He wriggled and roared like a bull as the lashes rained down.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Stoppit!" shrieked Hanson. "I'll—I'll— Oh, my hat! Help! Yoop! Yaroooh! Stoppit!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yooooop!"

Whack, whack!

"Help!"

"Chuck it, Tubby! That's a dozen!"

"Lemme give him some more!"

"Hold on! Are you going to lag now, Hanson?"

"No!" roared Hanson.

"Give him another dozen, Tubby!"

"He, he, ho! You watch me!"

Whack, whack, whack! Tubby seemed to think he was beating carpets. The wild howls of Hanson of the Fifth rang through the study, though they were almost drowned by the roars of laughter from the Fourth.

"Say when!" said Mornington, laconically.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yoop! Stoppit!"

"Say when you've had enough, old top!"

"That's a dozen!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Give him a rest, Tubby!"

"Have you had enough, Hanson?"

"You young bende—"

"Will you lag now?"

"No!" yelled Hanson desperately.

"Go it, Tubby!"

Tubby Muffin "went" it. Whack, whack, whack! The energy of the fat

classical seemed quite undiminished. It was a congenial occupation for the ill-used Tubby. Whack, whack, whack!

Hanson made a frenzied effort to drag himself away; but the Fustical Four had him fast. The stump continued to rise and fall.

"Your own medicine, you know," said Jimmy Silver. "That's what you gave Muffin till he lagged!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Whack, whack!

"Stoppit!" yelled Hanson. "I—I—I give in! Ow! Stoppit!"

"Hold on, Tubby! You'll lag, Hanson?" asked Mornington.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes!" groined the Fifth Former.

"Good! Let him go!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. released the captain of the Fifth. Hanson leaned on the mantelpiece, and gasped. It was, as Jimmy had remarked, only a dose of his own medicine; but it was evidently not to Hanson's taste. Discipline was a great thing; but it had its drawbacks when applied to oneself.

"I'm waiting, Hanson!" remarked Mornington.

"I—I—I—" gasped the hapless squire.

"Get on with the lagging, sharp!"

And Hanson obeyed.

There was really nothing else to be done. Tubby Muffin was prepared to go on with the stumping till bed-time; and the other fellows were ready to hold Hanson while he stumped. It was lagging or stumping, and Hanson had had enough of the stump.

So he lagged.

There were loud choruses from the Fourth Form crowd as they watched him.

With a furious face Edward Hanson knelt at the fender, swept up the grate, and sorted clinders from ashes under Morny's direction. And as his first attempt did not give satisfaction, Morny ordered him to sift them all over again. With a furious look on his face, Hanson of the Fifth obeyed.

Then he started washing up the tea things.

There were howls of irrepressible merriment from the Fourth. The doorway and the passage outside were crisscrossed with hilarious juniors.

But Hanson did not feel like laughing. His face, as Lovell remarked, resembled that of a demon in a pantomime as he washed up. He ventured to let one cup fall to the floor, and his ears were promptly boxed for the breakage. After that he was careful not to break any more crockery.

"He hasn't polished the fender!" squeaked Tibby Muffin, when the washing-up was finished.

"Get on with the fender, Hanson!"

"I—I—I'll—"

"Keep that stump handy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tibby Muffin was ready with the stump. But Hanson did not want any more of it; he had too many aches and pains already. He started on the fender, and polished away as if his life depended on it. The juniors shrieked with laughter as he lagged. The sight of the captain of the Fifth on his knees in Mornay's study, polishing the fender was irresistible.

"I think that will do!" said Mornington at last. "You've done that quite well, Hanson!"

"Now let me get out of this, you young rotters!" hissed Hanson. He was thinking, with anguish, of what all Rookwood would say when the story of the fagging spread over the school. It was not likely to remain a secret.

"Not just yet!" said Mornington. "I've got a paper here for you to sign, Hanson."

"Read it out!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

Mornay read out the paper:

"Whereas I, Edward Hanson, of the Fifth Form, have had the cheek to

think of fagging the Fourth, and whereas I have been justly compelled to fag for the Fourth myself, I hereby certify that I give up my cheeky claim to fag-service, and humbly beg the pardon of the Fourth Form, and promise to behave myself in future like a good boy. As witness my signature.

"———"

Hanson's face was a study as he listened. Mornay dipped a pen in the inkpot and presented it to him.

"You sign your name there, Hanson."

"I won't!" roared Hanson.

He made a frantic rush for the door. But he was promptly collared and plumped into a chair.

"Hold him!" said Mornington cheerfully. "Give me the scissors, Kit!"

Errol handed him the scissors. Hanson, helpless, in the grasp of five or six fellows, looked at him with dire apprehension, wondering what he was going to do with the scissors. He soon discovered.

Snip!

A lock of hair brushed past Hanson's nose, and fell on the knees of his trousers. And there was a shriek from the Fourth Form crowd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 22.

Victory!

HANSON of the Fifth sat petrified. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

Snip!

He began to struggle frantically.

"Better keep still," advised Mornington. "I might snip your ear by mistake——"

"Yaroooh!"

"There! I told you so!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you young villain!" panted Hanson. "Let my hair alone!"

"Snip! Another lock fell.

"My dear man, I'm going to cut every hair off your head, if you don't sign that paper!" said Mornington. "And if you don't sign it then, I'm going to begin on your eyebrows!"

"Oh, you—you——"

Snip, snip, snip!

The scissors were getting busy.

Mornington was not an experienced hairdresser. He got the hair off fast enough, but it could not be called a neat job. There were bald spots showing on Hanson's head now.

"You—you—— Stop it!" gasped Hanson. "You—you're disfiguring me! You—you young hoodlum! Stop it!"

"Are you going to sign the paper?"

"No!" shrieked Hanson.

Snip, snip, snip, snip!

There was a rain of hair on Hanson's knees.

It was more than flesh and blood could bear. Already Hanson's appearance was likely to evoke smiles when he appeared in public. He howled to Morny to stop it.

"Hold on! Stop it! I—I—I'll do anything you like!"

"You'll sign the paper?"

"Yes!" gasped Hanson.

"Just in time to save your top-knot!" said Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give him a pen, Putty."

Putty Grace placed the pen in Hanson's fingers. The Fifth Former hesitated a moment, calculating the chances of a struggle. But there was really no chance; and Morny gave a threatening flourish with the scissors. Hanson decided to sign.

"Your usual signature, you know," said Mornington coolly. "If it isn't quite your usual style, Hanson, off comes one of your eyebrows, and I'll draw up a fresh paper for you!"

And that timely warning caused Hanson to change the intention that had already formed in his mind.

With a fiendish look on his face,

the hapless Fifth Former signed his name at the bottom of the paper.

Morny examined the signature carefully.

"Your eyebrow goes off, if it's not all right!" he remarked.

Fortunately for Hanson, the signature was all right. He had not ventured to depart from his usual style.

"That will do!" announced Mornington. "I'm going to post this paper up on the board, Hanson, for all Hookwood to read!"

"Oh! You—you let me go!"

"After it's posted up!" agreed Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Keep him here till I come back, you fellows!"

"Yes, rather!"

Mornington left the study, and Hanson, helpless in the grasp of the juniors, groined in anguish of spirit. He could guess with what hilarity that precious paper would be read when it was put on the notice-board.

In a few minutes Mornington returned with a smile on his face. Hanson gave him a wolfish look.

"Posted it?" asked Lovell.

"Yes; I've pinned it on the board," smiled Mornington. "Bulkeley, of the Sixth, was reading it when I came away. He seemed rather amused!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's quite a crowd round the notice-board now. Most of the fellows seem interested — especially the Fifth!"

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

"I—I—I'll make you sit up for this!" gasped Hanson. "I—I—I——"

"We've done with you now, old top! I think you mentioned, Jones, that Hanson booted you out of his study when he was done with you?"

"Yes, rather!" said Jones minor, with a vengeful glare at Hanson.

"SaUCE for the gander!" said Mornington. "Kick him out!"

Jones minor rushed in for the first kick. But none of the fellows were

backward in coming forward. It was a unique occasion; a chance that was not to be missed.

It seemed to the unfortunate captain of the Fifth that a forest of boots started up behind him to help him out of Study No. 4.

He went out with a rush, and landed on his hands and knees in the passage. But there was no rest for him there. The Fourth Formers closed round him, and Hansom of the Fifth was dribbled along in the staircase, yelling.

He landed headlong down the stairs, and fled.

He was followed by yells of laughter. On the lower staircase Hansom picked himself up dazedly. He rushed down, his only thought to get that tell-tale paper off the notice-board before all Rookwood had seen it. But nearly all Rookwood had seen it already.

There was a swarm of fellows round the board, and they were roaring. Even Lunaden and Talboys were grinning.

"Hallo! Here he is!" exclaimed Neville, of the Sixth. "My only hat! What have you been doing with your mop, Hansom?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom made no reply. He drove through the yelling crowd with jabbing elbows, reached the board, and tore down the paper. Then he fled for his own study, followed by shrieks of laughter.

Hansom of the Fifth was not seen in public again that evening.

He did not appear in class the next day. It was stated that Hansom had a cold, and was excused classes.

Nearly all Rookwood, however, guessed the nature of his "cold." The hapless Fifth Former was waiting for his hair to grow!

But, cold or no cold, he was unable to lie low long enough for it to grow very much, and his hair presented a rather odd spectacle when he was seen in public again. Hansom was deeply thankful, in fact, that he had signed the paper before Mornington had put in any more work with the scissors.

But the paper he had signed was not likely to be forgotten, even after his hair had grown more normal in appearance. Hansom had fagged for the Fourth, and admitted it under his own signature—and there was no getting out of that fact. The Fifth Form chortled at him; and even Lunaden and Talboys reproached him. This was the end of his scheme of fagging the Fourth, they told him; and Hansom could not deny it. It certainly was!

The thorny question rested after that. Whether Hansom still claimed a right to fag-service or not, he certainly did not attempt to enforce his claim. It was, in fact, a game that two could play at; and, having made that valuable discovery, Hansom of the Fifth let the matter drop.

But in the Fourth Form there was endless satisfaction. And Morny, who had risen so effectively to the occasion, was no longer called upon even by Tubby Muffin to "resine."

THE END



DANGERS OF THE DEEP!

THE diver's job is one of the most dangerous in the world. The sea-bed swarms with unknown perils into which these brave men must plunge, often without knowing in what circumstances they will reach the surface again.

When the liner *Egypt* sank off the coast of France with over £1,000,000 of gold and silver aboard, in 1922, there was a lot of talk about getting up the bullion she contained. But although the search for the wreck started almost immediately, it was not found until August, 1930.

Then work started. The disadvantage of the diving-suit used, however, was that it did not allow the diver to help with his hands, his job being to tell the men above by telephone where to lower the grabs which were to be used to get up the gold.

At last the treasure began to come up. And on July 13th, 1933, the last load reached shore. This story gives you some idea of the patience of these men who tread the sea-beds.

Trapped on the Sea-bed!

Here is one incident which will show what huge risks divers run. When gold bullion was being raised from the *Laurentic*, which sank off the northern coast of Ireland, in the year 1917, a diver named Blachford was crawling underneath one of the wreck's plates, when the shackle that was holding the plate up parted. The heavy sheet of metal crashed full on to the diver's back, rendering him helpless. A few seconds later his voice came over the telephone demanding more air. He was given it.

"Still more," the imprisoned diver ordered; the danger he was in was terrific. And still he was asking for more air. Commander Darnant, in the ship above, feared that the extra air would burst the suit. Fortunately, this did not happen.

Another diver went down and lifted slings under the fallen plate. Then the plate was slowly and carefully raised, and Blachford was taken to the surface. He had been demanding more air with the hope that it would buoy out his suit and keep the plate off his back.

Nine Fathoms Down!

Great perils have been experienced in submarines as well as in diving-suits. When the submarine *K 13* submerged during her trials in the Gareloch, on the Firth of Clyde, some of the craft's ventilators were left open. The water flooded all her after-compartments, causing great loss of life. The survivors were trapped in the unflooded compartments, and *K 13* was resting on the bottom, nine fathoms deep.

A night dragged past, and next morning the trapped men—who were nearly exhausted through want of air—heard a knocking on the outside of the hull. Divers had been dropped to help. But Commanders Herbert and Goodhart, who were among the trapped crew, decided to try to help themselves. They entered the running-tower, and the lower hatch was closed. Then water was allowed into the room, and the upper hatch was flung back, and Coast-liners shot through. But Herbert—who had intended returning to the submarine's interior—was shot off his feet also, and he flashed to the surface like lightning. There he was picked up, but Goodhart had been killed. Fortunately their heroic action saved their trapped comrades, for they were later released.

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