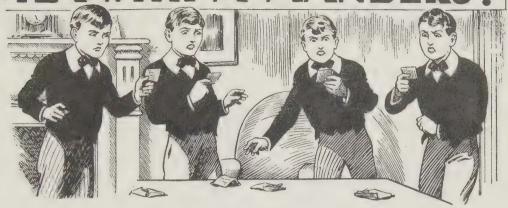
TEAWITH MB MANDERS!



#### By OWEN CONQUEST

Tea parties at Rookwood School are never sedate affairs. This one in particular was a—but it needs a whole, long, complete story to describe it!

# THE FIRST CHAPTER Mr. Manders is Very Kind

TOMMY DODD of the Modern Fourth at
Rookwood put a grinning face
into Jimmy Silver's study on the
Classical side.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at home. It was a fine, frosty afternoon, and it was much against their will that the Fistical Four were at home. But they had no choice in the matter. There were lines to be done, and Jimmy and Lovell, Raby and Newcome were grinding at a great rate through their impositions, in order to get away to the football ground.

Having not a moment to spare, they were naturally not at all pleased by an interruption, especially from a Modern fellow.

Four pens pointed at once to the door as Tommy Dodd came in.

"Buzz!" said Jimmy Silver laconically.

" Get!" said Lovell.

"Take your face away!" snapped Raby.

"And bury it!" added Newcome.

Tommy Dodd did not seem at all perturbed by that inhospitable reception. Neither did he depart. He stood and regarded Jimmy Silver & Co. with a grinning face.

"Busy?" he asked, quite cheerfully.

"Of course we're busy!" growled Jimmy Silver: "All the fault of your blessed old Manders, bless him!"

"And we shall be late for the footer," grunted Lovell—"late enough without wasting time on a Modern worm! Buzz off!"

"But Manders hasn't given you lines?" said Tommy Dodd, puzzled. "A Modern master can't give Classicals lines."

"Reported us to Dalton!" snapped Jimmy. "It was quite by accident my footer buzzed on him in the quad. I really didn't see him coming. But he was bound to march us in to Dalton and report us. And here we are—two hundred lines of Virgil each, and a footer match waiting!"

"Why don't you Modern chaps lynch Manders?" demanded Lovell. "We'd scrag him if we had him on this side! Unsympathetic beast! We actually told him we'd got a footer match on this afternoon, and it

didn't make any difference. He was determined to get us detained."

"Awful rotter!" groaned Raby.

"Better fill up the team with Modern chaps," suggested Tommy Dodd.

" Rats!"

"I'll captain the side, if you like!"

" More rats!"

"The footer match is going to wait till we've done this impot," said Lovell. "We shan't be long, if you'll leave off jawing, Tommy Dodd. Have the Latcham fellows come yet?"

" Not yet," said Tommy cheerily.

"Well, you can see 'em when they come, and ask 'em to wait a bit,' said Jimmy Silver. "Tell 'em we've got a detention task for biffing a footer at an awful beast, and ask 'em nicely."

"Can't be did!" said Tommy Dodd.
"You'd better leave the match in my hands, as vice-captain, Jimmy. Honest Injun, you

can't play. Look here!"

Tommy Dodd tossed four envelopes on the table.

"What the dickens are they?" asked Jimmy, in surprise.

"They're from Manders."

"Manders!" ejaculated the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Yes; he's just sent me over with them," said the Modern junior. "I'm really sorry, you chaps, but you're booked, unless you choose to decline Manders' invitation."

"Invitation!" yelled Raby.

" Look at it!"

Jimmy Silver yanked his envelope open, and his chums followed suit. Four cards fell out on the table. The Classical juniors stared at them.

They were invitations!

Mr. Manders, the senior master on the Modern side at Rookwood, was a very precise gentleman, as well as a very tart and sharp-tempered one.

It was supposed to be an honour and a pleasure to have tea with a master in his study, and fellows who were invited generally put on their cleanest collars and neatest ties, and went meekly.

As a matter of fact, tea with Mr. Manders, though it might be an honour, was scarcely a pleasure.

Mr. Manders' invitations were generally extended to fellows on the Modern side, naturally; and certainly Jimmy Silver & Co. had never expected to be asked to tea

by him.

The Modern master disliked them cordially; and on this especial afternoon, too, he had demanded their punishment at the hands of Mr. Dalton, their Form-master, owing to a sad accident with a football in the quad.

So it was with blank faces that Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at the cards.

Other masters when they asked a fellow to tea would do it by word of mouth, or by a hasty note dashed off by a pencil, as a rule. But Mr. Manders was very precise. Perhaps, also, he was a little given to "side." He used engraved invitation cards for the purpose. Perhaps he desired to impress upon the minds of the recipients that the honour done them was very great indeed.

Mr. Manders' cards were quite well known at Rookwood. They ran:

"The pleasure of Master.....'s company is requested to tea in Mr. Manders' study, ...... o'clock."

The blanks were filled in with pen and ink with the names of the fellows, and with the hour appointed.

In the present instance the hour read "Four o'clock," and the names of Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were written in. They were not written in Mr. Manders' own hand. The Modern master generally called in a fag to perform those little tasks for him.

Tommy Dodd grinned at the expression on the faces of the Fistical Four. They regarded one another blankly.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Blow him!"

" Cheek!"

"Asking us to tea, just after getting us detained!" yelled Raby. "What does the old donkey mean?"

"Awfully kind of him, isn't it?" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "Perhaps he means it to make up for the detention."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"The mean rotter!" he growled. "I know what he means. He's not satisfied with what Dalton gave us, and he's giving us this to make us sit up."

"Well, his feed isn't worth having!" said Lovell. "Weak tea and bread- and - scrape, and a smell of jam. He's too jolly mean to stand a cake. But I suppose he can't intend it as a punishment, though that's what it is."

"He does!"
howled Jimmy Silver. "He knows we can't refuse, and he knows we've got a footer match on!"

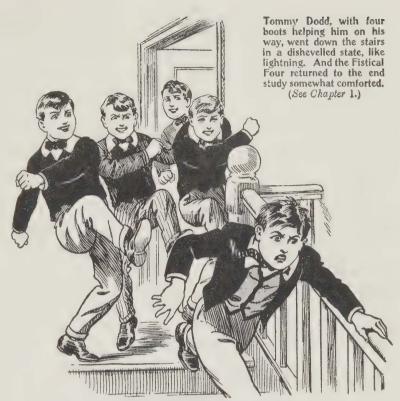
" Oh!"

"We can't finish the match by four—we're detained, and can't begin early!" hooted the captain of the Fourth. "That's his game!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "Manners is rather a Hun, but he wouldn't be undignified enough to play a trick like that on kids."

"What has he asked us for, then?" howled Jimmy. "He's never asked us before. He never asks any Classicals, except that swanking ass Smythe of the Shell, and Mornington and Townsend, and that lot sometimes. He knew we'd got a footer match on—Lovell told him!"

Tommy Dodd whistled.



"It's a trick!" said Raby furiously. "He knows we can't refuse a master's invitation, and that we're keen on the footer."

"Oh, the deep rotter!" groaned Newcome.

The Fistical Four exchanged furious looks. Almost incredible as it seemed that a master should so forget his dignity as to trick juniors in this manner, they had no doubt.

Mr. Manders disliked them—they had had many rubs. But a Modern master had no authority over Classicals, and Jimmy Silver & Co. generally managed to give Mr. Manders a wide berth. The Modern master had been palpably discontented with the punishment Mr. Dalton had inflicted on the four for the accident with the football.

He was aware that they were playing a visiting team that afternoon, and that they

were keen footballers. The Fistical Four hadn't the slightest doubt that he had sent those invitations for the especial purpose of "dishing" them.

"By gad, it does look like it!" said Tommy Dodd. "Of course, you can refuse

the invitations if you like."

"Go and tell him we can't come, and he can go and eat coke!" growled Lovell.

Tommy Dodd grinned. He was not likely to take a message like that to the Modern master.

"Does Manders want an answer?" asked

Jimmy.

"Oh, no! He didn't say so. He takes it for granted you'll go, of course," said Tommy Dodd. "You can leave the footer

to me, you know."

"I suppose we shall have to," growled Jimmy Silver. "After all, it isn't a very hard match—not like the St. Jim's or Greyfriars. If it were one of those, I'd refuse Manders and chance it."

"Let's refuse it, anyway," said Lovell savagely. "I know it's a trick. I'm pretty "

certain it is."

"But—but—"

"Dalton would be ratty when he heard," said Newcome. "Manders would be sure to tell him."

"It's up to us!" grunted Jimmy Silver.
"It's the first time he's ever asked us, and
we're not certain it's a trick. It would look

jolly ungracious not to go."

"It will be all right about the footer," said Tommy Dodd encouragingly. "I'll put four Moderns in your places, so the match will be rather more of a sure thing than it was. Yaroooh!"

Tommy Dodd broke off with a wild yell as

the Fistical Four seized him.

They were exasperated enough to have ragged Mr. Manders, if that had been feasible. As it wasn't, the Modern junior served their turn. He was a Modern, anyway, and he had brought the unwelcome invitations.

The Fistical Four grasped him on all sides, and Tommy Dodd, roaring, was swept off his feet.

Bump!

"Yooop!" yelled the unfortunate Modern.

"Kick him out!" roared Lovell.

"Yow-ow-ow! You silly asses! Yaroooh! Oh, my hat!"

Tommy Dodd fled wildly down the passage, with four boots helping him on his way as far as the stairs. He went down the stairs in a dishevelled state like lightning. And the Fistical Four returned to the end study somewhat comforted.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER Not Nice for Jimmy Silver!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. ground away at their lines with savage faces.

As they ground on, they heard voices in the quadrangle, which announced that the Latcham Ramblers had arrived.

But it was no use going down.

There was no football for the chums of

the end study that afternoon.

In any case, the match would have had to be postponed for half an hour, as they had strict orders to get their impositions done and taken in to Mr. Dalton before they left the house.

It was getting towards three now, so even if the match had been started at once it could not have been finished by four o'clock. And it could not be started at once.

Had it been one of the great matches of the season—such as those with St. Jim's, or Greyfriars, or Bagshot—Jimmy Silver would have "chanced" it, and refused Mr. Manders' kind invitation to tea.

But it was not so serious as all that. Tommy Dodd could raise a team quite good enough to beat Latcham, even with the Fistical Four left out. The Rookwood colours were in no serious danger. The Fistical Four admitted that.

But it was bitterly exasperating to have to slack about for an hour or so, and then be cooped up in a study over a meagre tea with a grim master—a master they cordially disliked, and who disliked them—instead of playing the great winter game. And they could not help suspecting that Mr. Manders had timed the invitation to cause them the maximum of inconvenience. That he could

really have any desire for their company at his tea-table was not to be thought of.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in a decidedly

bad temper.

They threw the invitation-cards on the floor and jumped on them, by way of solace, and then settled down to grind at Virgil.

Oswald of the Fourth looked in.

"Not finished?" he asked. "Shall I ask

Latcham to wait?"

" No good! We're asked to tea by old Manders, and I suppose we've got to go!" growled Jimn:v Silver.

" Hard cheese!"

" Tommy D o d d will captain the team," sail Jimmy. " It can't be helped. May as well get on with the match now. We'll give you a look in presently. Tell Doddly."

"Right-ho!" said Oswald.

And he ran off.

Jimmy Silver settled down to work again. But work that afternoon was fated to be interrupted.

An eyeglass gleamed in at the door, and Smythe of the Shell grinned in at the detained juniors. Tracy, his

chum, grinned in over his shoulder. The knuts of the Shell were evidently highly

amused.

"By gad, I hear you're in for it!" chuckled Adolphus Smythe. "Goin' over to tea with Manders instead of playin' footer, what?"

"Oh, buzz off!" growled Lovell.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, if you like,"

said Adolphus condescendingly. "I'll take the match off your hands, Silver."

" Bow-wow!"

"Well, I wish you joy with Manders. He has tea too weak to come out of the pot. I've sampled it!"

"And jam you need a microscope to see!"

chuckled Tracy. "I've sampled it."

" Ha, ha, ha!"



The merry japers were quickly busy. Smythe mixed ink and gum with the jam, with a workmanlike hand. Ink was soaked into the extremely small cake, and gum added to the milk. Mornington arranged some jumping. crackers amidst the sticks in the sireplace. (See Chapter 3.)

"And it needs a microscope to see the butter on the bread!" chortled Adolphus. "But the bread's as thick as your head, Silver."

" Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buzz off, you cackling asses!" roared Jimmy Silver, seizing a ruler and jumping

Smythe and Tracy departed, chuckling. and the Fistical Four could hear their merry

# Not So "Soft" as He Looks!



chartles dying away down the passage: The detained juniors looked at one another in exasperation.

"I suppose it's awfully funny!" snorted Lovell. "Blow Smythe, and blow old Man-

ders, and blow everybody!"

Four pens scratched away again. Then came footsteps in the passage, and three youths in footer rig, with coats and mufflers on, smiled into the study. They were Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three "Tommies" of the Modern side.

"We're just going to begin," said Tommy Dodd cheerily. "You chaps can look out of the window every now and then

and watch our goals!"

" Br-r-r-r!"

"Faith, and you can congratulate yourselves," grinned Doyle. "You're winning the match for us, Jimmy Silver, by staying in here!"

" Ha, ha, ha!"

"Old Manders must have planned this, to make sure of a win for Rookwood!" declared Tommy Cook.

" Ha, ha, ha!"

And then the three Tommies departed hurriedly, just in time to escape a furious charge from the end study.

" Everybody seems to think it funny but

us!" groaned Raby.

Scratch, scratch, scratch went four desperate pens again. The impositions were finished at last, while the shouting from the distant footer ground told that the match was in progress.

The Fistical Four were glad enough to get out of the study. They proceeded to Mr. Dalton's quarters and handed in their lines.

" Very good!" said Mr. Dalton. " These lines seem to have been somewhat hastily written-ahem !-but I shall look over that, as it is a half-holiday."

The Fistical Four were glad to hear it. There were certainly signs of haste in the sheets they had handed in to their Form-

master.

"Mr. Manders has mentioned to me that he has asked you to tea with him this afternoon," went on the Fourth-Form master benignantly. "I trust, Silver, that you fully appreciate Mr. Manders' kindness, after the very unfortunate occurrence to-day?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" mumbled Jimmy.

"I trust you will have a very pleasant hour with Mr. Manders," added the Formmaster.

"Thank you, sir!" mumbled the juniors. They left the study feeling furious. In

spite of the attractions of footer, they were glad that they had not refused Mr. Manders' kind invitation. The Modern master had mentioned it to Mr. Dalton, who, in the simplicity of his heart, took it as a sign of kindness and forgiveness on his part. He would certainly have been very much annoyed if the juniors had refused Mr. Manders' invitation, and thrown his kindness and forgiveness, as it were, back into his teeth.

"Deep old beggar!" growled Lovell. "He mentioned it to Dalton so that we can't possibly refuse-or we'd get jawed if

we did. Bother him!"

The Fistical Four, free at last, left the School House. They passed Mornington & Co. in the porch. The knuts grinned at them as they passed, but the chums hardly noticed them. They were keen to get down to the footer-ground and see as much of the match as possible before duty called them to Mr. Manders' study on the Modern side.

They found the footer match going strong. Rookwood Juniors were getting the better of Latcham Ramblers, and Pons, the Canadian. had already kicked a goal. Jimmy Silver & Co. joined heartily in the cheering, and for a time they were able to forget Mr. Manders and all his works.

#### THE THIRD CHAPTER Friendly Preparations I

"Go it, Morny!"
"Yaas, pile in!" said Smythe of the Shell. "What's the scheme? If it's anythin' for takin' a rise out of those cheeky cads, I'm on !"

"Same here!" said Townsend.

"They're goin' to tea with Manders," said Mornington. "Manders is with the Head now. I understand it's for four

# A Spill—and a Hidden Face!



Here's a grand mix-up! Can you find the onlooker?

o'clock, the merry tea-party. Leggett told me so. He filled in the cards for Manders. You know Manders has silly cards he sends out to his victims."

" Ha, ha!"

"Well, you know how much Manders likes those chaps. My belief is that he's asked them simply to dish them over the footer."

"Looks like it, by gad!" chuckled Townsend. "Fancy a master playin' such a kid's trick! Dalton wouldn't."

"But what's the game?" asked Topham. "You said you had a wheeze-

"I'm comin' to that. Manders knows they don't want to come, and that they'll be ratty, though they have to keep civil. Well, suppose the merry tea-party is mucked up somehow—through somebody japin' in his study? He's bound to think they did it, Suppose there's ink in the jam, and fireworks in the fire—"

"But—but there won't be!" ejaculated Tracy.

" There will."

"But Jimmy Silver wouldn't be ass enough. He'd k now Manders would know he did it," said Townsend.

"Quite so. And if we do it, Manders will know Jimmy Silver did it!"

"Oh, my hat!"
"That's the idea," grinned Mornington. "I told Jimmy Silver he'd be sorry for leavin' me out of the eleven. Come on! I've seen Manders go into the Head's House, and all the Modern kids are on the footer-ground. The coast's clear."

" Ha, ha, ha!"

In great glee the knuts of Rookwood followed Mornington across to Mr. Manders' house. As Morny had said, the coast was clear. There was a First Eleven match going on, on Big Side, as well as the junior match on Little Side. Most of the fellows who were not playing were watching the play. The knuts did not meet a soul as they entered Mr. Manders' house.

"Tracy," said Mornington. "Whistle if

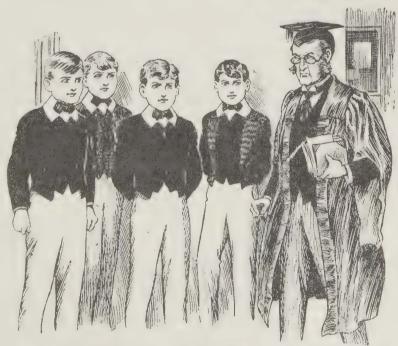
you see old Manders in the offing."

"You bet!" grinned Tracy.

Mornington and Townsend, Topham and Smythe, entered the Modern master's study. The dandy of the Fourth closed the door,

" Now get busy," he remarked.

The merry japers were quickly busy. Smythe and Townsend devoted their attention to the table. There were the articles for the tea-party. The table was already



Jimmy Silver & Co., who were getting tired of waiting, were glad for once to see the thin, sharp face of the Modern Master. Mr. Manders looked at them grimly.

"Ah! You are here!" he said. (See Chapter 3.)

set. A small pot of jam was there—supposed to be enough for four juniors—quite enough, from Mr. Manders' point of view. Smythe mixed ink and gum with it with a workmanlike hand.

A paper "spill" was twisted into the spout of the teapot with a liberal allowance of gum to keep it there. Ink was soaked into the extremely small cake, and gum added to the milk. Bent pins were placed in readiness on all the chairs in the room.

Meanwhile, Mornington was busy. The fire was laid in the study, but not lighted. As the weather was very cold, it was pretty certain that it would be lighted when the teaparty came. In the midst of the sticks and coal Morny arranged a number of "jumping" crackers, left over from the Fifth of November. Topham poured water into the clock, which promptly ceased to tick, and disconnected the electric bell-push, so that the bell would not ring when the button was pressed.

"By gad," said Mornington, looking round, "I rather think we have done enough to make them happy! We'd better clear."

" Ha, ha, ha!"

The knuts joined Tracy in the passage. "All serene," said Tracy. "Nobody's come along."

Mornington & Co. strolled out of the house. Four o'clock was just striking from the clock-tower, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came into the porch just as the knuts were going out.

"Hallo, goin' in to tea?" said Morning-

ton, with a grin.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

" Is Manders at home?" he asked.

"Not yet, I think. Most likely he'll keep you waitin'," grinned Mornington. "He's with the Head now."

"What are you chaps doing here?" asked

Lovell

"Oh, strollin' round! How's the match

goin' on?"

"One up for Rookwood in the first half. They're beginning the second now. Chance for you to see some footer if you can leave the smokes alone for a bit," suggested Lovell sarcastically.

"Oh, go an' eat coke!"

Mornington & Co. strolled away, greatly elated, and the Fistical Four went into Mr. Manders' House.

Jimmy Silver tapped at the door of the Modern master's study.

There was no reply from within. He tapped again, and then opened the door and looked in. The room was untenanted.

"Just like the old hunks to keep us waiting," grunted Lovell. "Shall we wait here.

or inside, Jimmy?"

"Well, I suppose we're entitled to sit down while we wait!" growled Raby.

Jimmy hesitated.

"Better wait outside," he said. "Manders' mightn't like us sticking in his study while he's not there. Blow him!"

The juniors had the pleasure of cooling

their heels in the passage.

Mr. Manders was not in a hurry. But he came along at last. Jimmy Silver & Co., who were getting tired of waiting, were glad for once to see the thin, sharp face of the Modern master.

Mr. Manders looked at them grimly.

He had asked them to tea, for reasons best known to himself, but he did not seem to have much cordiality to waste upon them.

"Ah! You are here!" he said.

"Waiting for you, sir," said Jimmy Silver as cheerfully as he could. "Very kind of you to ask us to tea, sir!"

"I trust you are able to appreciate kind-

ness. Silver?"

"I trust so, sir," said Jimmy calmly.

Mr. Manders gave a little grunt, and opened the study door. The juniors followed him in, feeling more as if they were going to execution than as if they were going to a tea-party.

The meagre preparations for their tea did not delight their eyes. After watching the footer in the keen winter air they were hungry. Another tea would be wanted in the end study after tea with Mr. Manders. That stingy gentleman expended very little upon the entertainment of fellows he invited to tea. Indeed, Tommy Dodd had declared that old Manders asked fellows to tea from a fiendish delight in watching their sufferings. Perhaps Tommy Dodd exaggerated a little. But certainly Mr. Manders' guests were generally glad to get away.

"You may light the fire, Silver," said Mr. Manders.

"Certainly.

Mr. Manders sat down in his armchair.

He reposed gracefully in that armchair for about the hundredth part of a second. Then he leaped to his feet with a wild yell.

"Yarooop!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him. They had never expected to see the crusty Modern master go through gymnastics like this.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Mr. Manders.

"My hat!" gasped Lovell. "Anything

wrong, sir?"

"Yarooh! Oh! Ah! Ooooop! Dear me! What villain has placed a pin in my chair?" shrieked Mr. Manders.

. "Oh, crumbs!"

The Fistical Four blinked at Mr. Manders. That gentleman regarded them with an almost purple face. He caught up a cane.

"Silver! Was it you?"

# THE FOURTH CHAPTER A Very Happy Party!

"Nunno, sir!" stuttered Jimmy Silver.
"Someone has placed a pin in
my chair! I am considerably hurt!" roared
Mr. Manders. "Who was it?"



Mr. Manders reposed gracefully in that armchair for about the hundredth part of a second. Then he leaped to his feet with a wild yell. "Yaroop!" "My hat!" gasped Lovell. (See Chapter 3.)

"Blessed if I know, sir! We. haven't been in the study. We waited for you outside," said Jimmy.

Mr. Manders writhed painfully. He regarded the Fistical Four with great suspicion. He knew exactly how much they wanted to come to tea with him, so he had reason for suspecting them.

However, he put down the cane. Even Mr. Manders felt that it would not be quite the thing to cane his guests on suspicion.

"Very well," he snapped, "I accept your assurance, Silver! But—ow, ow!—I mean, you may light the fire."

" Yes, sir."

"By Jove," said Lovell, "there's some more pins here! Look here!"

As the Classical juniors had not played that trick, they easily guessed that some practical joker had been making preparations for the tea-party. And Lovell looked

at the other chairs. He picked up a bent pin

from each of them.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Manders. "I will find out the author of that wicked trick, and punish him! Dear me!"

The Modern master looked very carefully over his chair before he sat down again.

Lovell & Co. grinned a little, with their faces turned away. They could guess now why Mornington and his friends had been in Mr Manders' house. It was not difficult to surmise who was the author of that trick in the study.

Jimmy Silver was applying matches to the fire. The paper flared up, and the blaze

spread, and then-

Fizzzz!

Crack-ack-ack!

Bang, bang!

BANG!

"Good heavens!" yelled Mr. Manders. Jimmy Silver jumped back from the grate,

with his hair singed.

Sparks were shooting out in clouds, sticks were scattered on all sides, and from the grate came ceaseless detonations of crackers and fizzing of squibs.

Fizzzzzzzz!

Bang, bang, bang!

"Great Scott!"

Mr Manders leaped out of his chair as sparks fell round him in showers, and backed round the table.

" What-what-what-" he stuttered.

Bang, bang, bang!

A jumping cracker spun out of the fire, exploded, and landed at the master's feet, and exploded again. He jumped wildly into the air as the cracker jumped, and it banged again between his knees. He dashed wildly across the study, but the cracker, as if endowed with the spirit of mischief, jumped in the same direction, banging again and again.

"Take it away!" shrieked Mr. Manders.
"Oh, dear! You young scoundrels! Oh-

oh!''

Bang, bang, bang!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

The explosions ceased at last. The hearthrug was littered with scattered sticks, fragments of coal, burnt paper, and dead crackers and squibs. Mr. Manders' face was like the face of a demon.

. He made a jump at Jimmy Silver, and grasped him by the collar, and shook him till his teeth chattered.

"Yow-ow!" roared Jimmy, in surprise and indignation. "Leggo!"

"You infamous young rascal!"

"Yarooh! Leggo!"

"How dare you play such tricks!" raved Mr. Manders. "You ungrateful young rascal!"

"I didn't!" yelled Jimmy. "Leggo! Oh, my hat! Do you think I'd blow my own evelashes off if I could help it?"

"We-we didn't know anything about it,

sir!" stuttered Lovell.

"Then who played this infamous trick?" roared Mr. Manders.

"We haven't been in the study till you

came."

The Classical juniors could guess easily enough that Mornington & Co. had prepared that little surprise for them; but they did not feel inclined to tell Mr. Manders so. They mentally promised the dandy of the Fourth all sorts of things later.

"I do not believe you!" thundered Mr. Manders. "No one else has been here! You have dared to play this infamous trick in

mv study!"

"We didn't know anything about it!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"It is false!"

"It isn't false, and you ought to take my word!" snorted Jimmy, whose temper was suffering as well as Mr Manders'.

"Do not dare to argue with me, Silver! You have dared to play such practical jokes upon me! You shall repent it!"

Mr. Manders jumped for his cane. "Hold out your hand, Silver!"

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"I am going to cane you!" shouted Mr. Manders. "Hold out your hand!"

"We didn't come here to be caned, sir.

I thought we came to tea."

"I refuse to allow you to stay to tea, Silver! I decline to allow such rascally young hooligans in my study at all! You



"Good Heavens!" yelled Mr. Manders. Jimmy Silver jumped back from the grate with his hair singed. Sparks were shooting out in clouds, and from the grate came ceaseless detonations of crackers and fizzing of squibs. (See Chapter 4.)

will go, but before you go I shall punish you severely for these infamous tricks!"

"But we-we-"

" Hold out your hand!"

"We did nothing!" howled Lovell.

"Silence! Will you hold out your hand, Silver? Your turn is coming, Lovel!!"

Jimmy put his hands behind him, his eyes blazing.

"No, I won't!" he shouted.
"Silver! You dare—"

"You've no right to cane Classicals," said Jimmy savagely. "You can complain to our own master if you like. Mr. Dalton will believe our word."

"I dare say you could succeed in deceiving Mr. Dalton," said the Modern master

bitterly. "But you will not be allowed the opportunity. Hold out your hand at once! I take your punishment into my own hands."

Jimmy Silver did not move. He was standing upon his rights, and Mr. Manders was exceeding his authority.

"Will you obey me, Silver?"

" No. sir."

Mr. Manders said no more. He made a jump at the captain of the Fourth, the cane lashing down. It came over Jimmy's shoulders with terrific force.

Jimmy Silver yelled, and dodged for the door. Lovell and Raby and Newcome fled at the same time. Mr. Manders' quarters were growing a little too warm for them.

The door was yanked open, and the Fistical Four fled.

After them came Mr. Manders, still lash.

ing furiously with the cane.

Quite forgetful of his dignity as the senior master on the Modern side at Rookwood, Mr. Manders pursued the fleeing juniors down the passage, lashing away for all he was worth.

Lash, lash, lash, lash, lash, lash!

"Yarooh! Run for it!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yah!"

The Fistical Four hardly knew how they

got out of Mr. Manders' house.

But they escaped into the quadrangle at last, yelling with pain, and the Modern master halted in the doorway, glaring after them.

He returned to his study, breathing hard. The suspicious man was quite sure that the Classical Four had played those tricks in his study, but he felt that they had answered for it.

He pressed the bell angrily for the maid to come up and clear the debris out of the room. The explosion in the grate had scattered firewood and coal and charred paper far and wide. To Mr Manders' rage, there was no answer to his ring. He pressed the bell again and again, but the maid did not appear.

"Scandalous!" hooted Mr. Manders. And he rushed out of the study and bawled

down the lower stairs:

"Jane, Jane! Jane!"

"Yes, sir?" came the voice of the astonished Jane from the regions below.

"Why did you not come when I rang, Jane?" bellowed Mr. Manders.

"You did not ring, sir."

" What-what?"

"The bell hasn't rung, sir."

"Nonsense!" roared Mr. Manders. "I

have rung a dozen times at least!"

"Well, the bell hasn't rung, sir," said Jane sulkily, "which the cook will tell you the same thing, sir."

Mr. Manders gasped. It dawned upon him that the bell in his study had probably been tampered with. He hurried back to the room, and examined the bell-push. His feelings were indescribable when he found the connection severed.

"Infamous young rascals!" hooted Mr.

Manders.

Jane came up, and, with a sulky face, cleared the debris away and lighted the fire. Then she flounced away.

Mr. Manders, when he was a little calmer, sat down to his solitary tea, and made a series of agreeable discoveries—that the spout of the teapot was plugged up, that there was ink and gum in the jam, ink in the cake, and gum in the milk. In a state of mind that was really terrific, Mr. Manders yelled for Jane to clear the table, and whisked away to the Classical side, to lay a furious complaint before Mr. Dalton, feeling that the Classical chums had not had enough yet. Indeed, from Mr. Manders' point of view, boiling in oil would have been too good for Jimmy Silver & Co.

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER A Roland for an Oliver!

"GOAL!"
There was a roar of cheering on Little Side, as the Fistical Fourscame limping on the football-ground. Tommy Dodd had just kicked the winning goal for Rookwood, and Latcham Ramblers were safely beaten. The footballers came off the field amid loud cheers.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not feel like cheering. They felt furious. The lashing of Mr Manders' cane had told upon them, and they were hurt. Never in their career had the Classical chums experienced so terrific a castigation.

Mornington & Co. were on Little Side, and they greeted the Fistical Four with

cheery grins.

"Had tea with Manders already?" asked Mornington.

" Yow-ow-ow!"

"Fallen foul of the old bird?" grinned Townsend.

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

"Hallo! You merchants look awfully chippy!" said Tommy Dodd, coming off the field. "You've won the match for us by

standing out, Jimmy. Is that why you look so happy?"

The Fistical Four groaned in chorus.

"What on earth's happened?" asked Pons, the Canadian junior.

"Had a row with Manders?" asked

Oswald.

Jimmy Silver explained.

The Fistical Four expected sympathy. To miss a footer-match to go to tea with Mr. Manders was bad enough. But to have the thrashing of their lives, instead of the tea, was tragic.

But, to their wrath and indignation, the other fellows did not seem to be sympathetic; they seemed to see something humorous in the occurrence. They yelled with laughter.

- "Oh, my only Aunt Matilda!" shrieked Tommy Dodd. "You'll be the death of me, Jimmy Silver! You shouldn't play tricks on a chap who asks you to tea—especially Mandy!"
- "I didn't!" roared Jimmy. "Somebody sneaked in and did it all ready for us. And I know who it was, too! We met Mornington coming out as we went in."

" Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotten cad!" roared Lovell, shaking his fist under Mornington's nose.

Mornington chortled.

"No law against playin' a jape on a Modern master, that I know of. Why, you've done it yourselves lots of times!"

"You did it to get us in a row with

Manders!" growled Raby.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"That was your bad luck," he said airily. "Of course, we were just japin' Manders. Weren't we, Towny?"

"Yaas, you bet!" grinned Townsend.

"Merely that, and nothin' more." chortled Topham. "Hard luck on you to go to tea with him afterwards, Silver! Some fellows do have bad luck!"

" Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole crowd were yelling with merriment.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were greatly inclined to wipe up the footer-ground with the knuts of the Fourth. But they had to admit that there was no law against "japing" Mr.

Manders. The jape had been timed unluckily for them, that was all.

Jobson of the Fifth came along, and called

to Jimmy Silver.

"You're wanted, Silver, and you others. Mr. Dalton's study."

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

" Haven't we had enough?"

The Fistical Four made their way dolorously to the School House, followed by a howl of laughter from half Rookwood. Their luck was out; and the Rookwooders persisted in seeing something funny in their misfortunes.

Mr. Manders was in the Fourth Formmaster's study, simmering with wrath. Mr.

Dalton was looking very stern.

"Silver, I am surprised at you—surprised and shocked! After Mr. Manders' kindness to you, it seems that you have played a series of extraordinary tricks in his study."

"We didn't, sir," groaned Jimmy.

"Mr. Manders assures me—"

"Silver is speaking falsely!" snorted

the Modern master.

"I'm not speaking falsely!" flamed out Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Dalton, we never entered the room till Mr. Manders came! Some other fellows had done what was done before we got there. I give you my word, sir!"

Mr. Dalton looked worried.

- "Mr. Manders, I cannot believe that Silver is speaking falsely," he said. "I know him to be an honourable lad. Someone else—"
- "And Mr. Manders has been licking us already!" burst out Lovell. "We're marked all over with his confounded cane!"

" Lovell!"

"Well, it's true, sir!"

Mr. Dalton rose to his feet.

"It appears, Mr. Manders, that you have already punished these juniors. Nor is there any evidence to connect them with what happened in your study. I decline to take any further notice of the matter!"

"They are lying," hissed Mr. Manders
"'lying unscrupulously! I regard them
as the worst boys in the school! Pah!"

And Mr. Manders whisked furiously out

of the study.

Mr. Dalton made a gesture of dismissal, and the Fistical Four followed. They went to the end study in a state of furious indignation.

"The awful rotter!" said Lovell, between his teeth. "Calling us liars—us, you know! And he didn't think we've been licked enough! Jimmy Silver, you fathead, if you don't get on to a wheeze for making old Manders sit up and howl, you're not leader of this study any longer! You're sacked!"

Jimmy Silver looked grim.

"We're going for Manders!" he said.

"And that cad, Mornington! I'll scalp him!"

"Never mind Mornington. Mornington will keep. Manders is our game now."

"And those cackling Modern idiots---"

"Blow the Moderns! I'm going to have

a big think!" said Jimmy Silver

The Fistical Four rubbed their shoulders and arms, where Mr. Manders' lashing cane had fallen. They were hurt, and they felt it severely. They could hear a cackle of laughter along the passage. Every fellow in the Fourth was chortling over the unhappy outcome of tea with Mr. Manders.

Never had the prestige of the end study

been at so low an ebb.

Jimmy Silver, as he sat with wrinkled brow, thinking, gave a sudden start, and stooped to pick up a card that lay on the floor.

It was one of Mr. Manders' invitationcards, which the chums had danced upon that afternoon.

" By gum!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well?" grunted Lovell.

" Look at that card!"

- "Blow it! Only one of Manders' silly cards!"
  - "I've got it!"
    "Got what?"
- "The wheeze, my son!" said Jimmy Silver triumphantly. "The merry wheeze, for making Manders sit up, and Tommy Dodd sit up, and Mornington sit up! Ha, ha!"

- "What the dickens has that card got to do with it?"
- "Everything! Look at it."
  "We've seen it before, ass!"
- "Manders makes a fag fill in these cards for him," said Jimmy. "That looks like Leggett's fist. But any fist would do."
  - "What the thunder are you driving at?"
- "Easy enough to get some of these cards from Manders' study," said Jimmy Silver.

"What the dickens do you want them

for?"

"Suppose "—Jimmy's eyes gleamed—" suppose a lot of fellows got invitations from Manders to tea on Saturday afternoon, at different times—say, every quarter of an hour from three to five—invitations that didn't come from Manders at all—"

" Eh?"

"Suppose they arrived, one after the other, all the afternoon. I rather fancy that Manders would begin to feel worried."

"I dare say he would."

"And some of them would get what we got, I fancy. He would take it for a jape

" But---"

"I could disguise my fist a bit to fill in the names on the cards, and get a fag to take them round——"

"My hat!"

"And Manders would have guests arriving all the afternoon. We'll pick an afternoon when he's busy——"

"Oh. crumbs!"

"And after he's got fed-up with it, the chaps who come in will catch something—Mornington & Co., say. As Morny says himself, no harm in japing Manders, and if he has the bad luck to go there to ten when Manders is ratty, that's his look-out—same as it was ours."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Oswald looked into the study, grinning.

- "Hallo! You can see the joke yourselves now?" he remarked. "You seem quite cheery."
- "We can!" grinned Lovell. "It's the joke of the season. Ha, ha, ha!"

### The Rookwood Champion!

"BATTLING" BATEMAN, a massively-built bully of a prizefighter, lorded it long enough over Coombe village, adjacent to Rookwood School, in the heart of Hampshire. It was Hugh Dickson, a strapping six-footer of the Rookwood Sixth Form, who eventually stood up to the bully and, in the Year of Grace 1805, showed him that as a bare-knuckle fighter he, the "Battler," was a back number. Planned as a very private and secret affair, news of the projected combat somehow leaked out among the villagers.

At once a number of farmers and local sportsmen took charge of the arrangements. A rope ring was fixed up, in a secluded spot on the Downs, and at the appointed hour the onlookers lined up, with a chosen half-dozen or so Rookwood boys to cheer on their champion. To guard against interruption, the Rookwood boys had posted two scouts on the brow of the hill.

Several years the Battler's junior, the Rookwood champion stripped as clean as a whistle, and firm muscles rippled smoothly beneath the white skin. Perspiration gleamed like silver beads on the skin of the fighters, and Hugh had just hooked a smashing upper-cut to the bully's chin, when came the alarm, "The sheriff's men!"

In the excitement of the fight, a supporter of the Battler had slunk unobserved from the ringside and informed the sheriff what was afoot. The fight must be stopped before the bully was down for the count! But that last upper-cut handed out by the Rookwood champion did its work well, and even as the school scouts came running back the bully sagged and dropped—out for the count!

Needless to say, Dickson of the Sixth Form became the hero of the school and indeed of all the countryside round about. For the story of that brief, but furious, fight came out by degrees, and it is rumoured that it reached the ears of the Head of Rookwood eventually. But if this was so, the Head of that day was sports- ? man enough to take no action in the matter. \( \) three! What a queer time for tea!"

THE SIXTH CHAPTER Many Invitations!

" TOLLY queer!" said Tommy Dodd.

It was Saturday afternoon. The three Tommies had intended to spend that half-holiday out of doors. But Wegg of the Third had looked into their study while they were getting ready for their excursion, and tossed three envelopes on the table. And in the envelopes were three cards which the juniors knew well. Tommy Dodd grunted discontentedly as he glanced at his card. It

" The pleasure of Master Dodd's company is requested to tea in Mr. Manders' study at three o'clock."

The card was engraved, only the name and the hour being filled in with ink in a handwriting Tommy Dodd didn't know.

"Three o'clock!" said Tommy Cook.

"Fancy having tea at three!"

" It's odd," said Tommy Doyle. " Manders is doing exam. papers this afternoon. I know that. I thought he'd be busy."

"He's always ratty if he's interrupted when he's on exam. papers," said Tommy Dodd, in wonder. "Fancy asking us to tea just at that time! It's jolly queer."

"Wants to get tea over early, perhaps, before he piles in," grunted Cook. "I

suppose we've got to go."

Of course we have, fathead. We don't want to get Manders down on us. We can go down to Latcham afterwards."

And Tommy Dodd & Co., not in a verv good humour, postponed their little excur-

sion till after three o'clock.

Meanwhile, Wegg of the Third sauntered across the quadrangle, and stopped to speak to Adolphus Smythe, Tracy, and Howard of the Shell, who were airing themselves

"Something for you chaps," said Wegg. And he handed them an envelope each. and walked off.

"Oh, gad!" said Adolphus Smythe, taking a card from his envelope. "Old Manders is askin' me to tea!"

"Us, too," said Tracy. "Half-past

H.A. .

"Jolly good mind not to go," grunted Howard. "This knocks on the head our little run down to the Bird-in-Hand."

"Must go!" snorted Adolphus. "We can get out for a bit and come in by half-past three. I don't want to offend

Manders."

Wegg of the Third was not finished yet. He came into the School House, and up to No. 4 Study. Mornington of the Fourth was adjusting his necktie before the glass in the study, and Townsend and Topham were waiting for him. The knuts of the Fourth also had a little excursion planned for that afternoon.

"Hallo! What do you want?" asked

Townsend.

"Something for you chaps," grinned Wegg. "I was told to bring you these—they're invitations, I believe."

He tossed the envelopes on the table, and

departed, whistling shrilly.

"Oh, gad!" groaned Townsend. "That looks like invitations from Manders. He plays these silly tricks. Can't send a pencil note like any other man."

Mornington frowned.

"Is the old fool askin' us to tea?" he inquired.

"I suppose so. Look!"

"At four o'clock," said Mornington, glancing at the card. "I suppose we've got to go. It means trouble if you refuse a master's invitation."

"Oh, it's rotten! I don't want to go," growled Topham. "I thought the old donkey was busy this afternoon, too. I heard Jimmy Silver askin' Towle somethin' about him, an' Towle said Manders was on exam. papers this afternoon. He's given orders that he's not to be interrupted."

"Well, I suppose it's rather complimentary to ask us," said Mornington. "We want to keep in with the old bounder!"

"Yaas, but what about goin' out?"

"We can get down to the Feathers for a game of billiards, an' get back by four. Better not be late—he's too ratty. We can put in a word or two for Jimmy Silver over tea—make him a bit more down on that rotter."

"Yaas, that's so."

Wegg of the Third strolled along the passage to the end study. He found the Fistical Four there.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver, as the grin-

ning fag came into the study.

"All serene," said Wegg. "I've delivered the lot. Now, where's that cake?"

Jimmy Silver took a cake out of the study cupboard. That was Wegg's reward for his valuable services.

"Here you are, kid. Mum's the word, you know."

"You bet!" grinned Wegg.

And he departed with the cake, grinning.

"I rather think this little game is going to be a success," murmured Jimmy Silver. "Lots of the fellows think it's funny to get a licking when you're asked to tea. They can share in the fun—such as it is—what?"

"What-ho!" chuckled the Co.

"Tommy Dodd & Co. arrive at three; Smythe & Co. at half-past; and Morny and his gang at four," remarked Jimmy Silver; "and, as Manders doesn't know they've been asked, I fancy there will be some trouble."

" Ha, ha!"

"Manders should really keep those nobby cards of his locked up," smiled Jimmy Silver. "They're liable to be burgled. Still, I left twopence in his desk to pay for the nine of 'em I borrowed. And it's lazy of him to make a fag fill in the merry cards—after this, he may fill 'em in in his own fist. Towle says he's busy with exam. papers this afternoon—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell and Raby

and Newcome.

The Fistical Four strolled out into the quadrangle in great spirits.

# THE SEVENTH CHAPTER Quite a Tea-fight!

TAP! Mr. Manders gave an irritable snort.

He was hard at work in his study, with all his attention fixed on the examination papers he was preparing. He had given strict orders that he was not to be interrupted on any pretext whatever. Yet, as three o'clock sounded from the clock-tower, that tap came at his door.

" Come in!" snarled Mr. Manders.

He supposed that it must be something extremely important for his orders to be disregarded in this way. He stared blankly when Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle presented themselves, with their best smiles on.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

The three Tommies looked surprised, as well they might. This was hardly the way to greet fellows who had been invited to tea.

"We — we've come, sir," faltered Tommy Dodd, not at all liking the look in Mr. Manders' eye.

'I can see that you have come,' said Mr. Manders, reaching for a can e. "How dare you interrupt my work, when you are quite aware that I have given strict orders to the contrary?"

"But—but we've come to tea, sir!" ejaculated Tommy, growing very red. He wondered whether the Modern-master had forgotten sending the invitation.

Mr. Manders jumped up. He could scarcely believe his ears.

As he knew nothing whatever of the sending of the famous invitation-cards, his angry astonishment was natural. Three juniors had interrupted him on his busiest afternoon with the cool announcement that they had come to tea! It was enough to anger a more patient man that Mr. Manders.

"You have—have come to tea!" he shouted.

"Yes, sir," gasped Tommy; "we-we

"How dare you!" thundered Mr. Manders.

"We-we-" gasped Tommy Cook.

"Leave my study at once! Take five hundred lines each, and remain in the

Form-room this afternoon and write them out!" ordered Mr. Manders. "Go!" he thundered.

Tommy Dodd felt as if his head was turning round.

"But—but—but—' he stut-tered helplessly.

Mr. Manders strode round the table, grasping his cane. The three Tommies departed quickly enough then. They just escaped the cane as they dodged out of the study Mr. Manders slammed the door after them,



Mr. Manders, trembling with anger, pointed to the doorway.

"Go!" he thundered. Smythe & Co. limped away down the passage, wringing their hands. (See Chapter 7.)

and snorted and returned to his work.

"My hat!" breathed Tommy Dodd, when they were at a safe distance. "Did you ever see such a blighter? Asking us to tea and then giving us lines and detention. Did you ever?"

"Never!" groaned Cook and Doyle. "Five hundred lines! Oh, dear!"

The Fistical Four met them on their way to the Form-room.

"Had tea already?" asked Jimmy Silver cheerily

"We're detained!" gasped Tommy Dodd.
"Five hundred lines each! Manders has gone mad! Br-r-r-r!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three Tommies did not laugh. Jimmy Silver & Co.'s adventures at tea with Mr. Manders had struck them as comical. But there seemed nothing comic in their own adventures. They went dolorously into the Form-room.

The Fistical Four sauntered contentedly in the quadrangle. They were sauntering outside Mr. Manders' house when Smythe and Howard and Tracy came hurrying in at the gates close upon half-past three.

The knuts of the Shell disappeared into

Mr Manders' house.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged blissful

glances.

Smythe tapped at Mr. Manders' door, and opened it. The three Shell fellows entered the study.

They expected to be grected by a genial smile and nod from Mr. Manders. But their greeting did not come up to expectations.

Mr Manders gave a snort like a savage beast, and jumped to his feet.

"How dare you come here!" he thun-

Smythe & Co. stared.

"By gad! We—we've come to tea, sir!" stammered Adolphus, utterly taken aback.

Mr. Manders' eyes gleamed.

He could no longer doubt that there was a concerted practical joke arranged for that afternoon, to interrupt and worry him when he was busy. He had asked no one to tea, yet here was a second party of juniors arriving with the announcement that they had come to tea.

The look on Mr. Manders' face made Smythe & Co. back towards the door. They did not like it at all. Though, unless the Modern master had taken leave of his senses, they could not guess what was the matter with him.

"Good heavens!" said Mr Manders. "I have never in all my career heard of such an example of unprincipled audacity. Do you suppose, you young rascals, that you

can play these infamous tricks upon a busy man with impunity? How dare you! I repeat," roared Mr. Manders—"how dare you!"

" Wha-a-at!"

"We-we-we-" stuttered Tracy helplessly.

Mr. Manders whisked round the table, cane in hand.

" Hold out your hand, Smythe!"

Smythe held out his hand dazedly. Mr. Manders was evidently not to be reasoned with.

Swish, swish, swish!

"Yow! Ow, ow, ow!" groaned Adolphus Smythe.

"Now, Tracy!"

"B-b-b-b-but, sir-" babbled Tracy.

"Your hand!" thundered Mr. Manders. Swish! "Now the other!" Swish! "Now the other again!" Swish! "Now the other!" Swish!

"Mummmmmm!" moaned Tracy, in anguish.

" Now, Howard!"

"If—if you pip-pip-pip-pip-please—"
stammered Howard.

Swish, swish, swish! "Yarooh! Oh, jiminy!"

Mr. Manders, trembling with anger, pointed to the doorway with his cane.

"Go!" he thundered.

Smythe & Co. were glad to go. They had had quite enough of Mr. Manders. They limped away down the passage, wringing their hands, and the door slammed after them. They came out into the quadrangle wriggling with anguish.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver. "Tea

over already?"

"Yow! Ow, ow!"

" Manders cut up rusty?" giggled Lovell.

"Wow, wow, wow!"

With their hands under their arms, looking as if they were trying to shut themselves up like pocket-knives, Smythe and Howard and Tracy limped away across the quadrangle.

The Fistical Four gasped for breath.

"It's working!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Oh dear, oh dear! Smythey



"Take that, and that, and that !" Mr. Manders rushed on the three astounded knuts, lashing out furiously with the cane. "Run for it!" shrieked Mornington. "He's mad! Run for your lives!" (See Chapter 7.)

doesn't seem to think now that it's so jolly funny to get a licking when you go to tea!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four waited in great anticipation for four o'clock. Mr. Manders was deep in his work again. He had no doubt that the practical jokers of Rookwood had plotted to worry him that afternoon, but he fancied that the example he had made of Smythe & Co. would deter any other merry youths from following their lead. But Mr. Manders was mistaken. For as four o'clock rang out again there came a tap at his study door.

The Modern master breathed hard through his nose.

It was scarcely credible that more practical jokers were coming, after what had

happened to Smythe & Co. But if they had come, Mr. Manders intended to make such an example of them that they would remember it for whole terms. He grasped his cane, and came round the table as he said "Come in!"

If any juniors entered that study stating that they had come to tea, something like an earthquake was going to happen.

The door opened, and Mornington, Townsend, and Topham walked in cheerily. Mr. Manders fixed an eye upon them like a basilisk.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Mornington pleasantly.

The knuts of the Fourth were somewhat surprised to see Mr. Manders on his feet, with a cane in his hand and fury in his face. That was not how they had expected to be greeted by a gentleman who had asked them—as they supposed—to tea.

They had come back from the little game of billiards at the Feathers just in time to present themselves in Mr. Manders' study at four, and they expected to find tea ready, and Mr. Manders smiling over the festive board. Instead of which——

"You!" said Mr. Manders, in a choking voice. "You—you have come here, interrupting me! I—I presume you have come to tea, Mornington?"

"Yaas, sir!" said Mornington, in sur-

prise.

"I thought so," said Mr. Manders, with a gasp of rage—"I thought so, sir! I was quite prepared for it, sir! Oh, quite! Take that, and that, and that!"

Mr. Manders rushed on the three astounded knuts, lashing out furiously with the cane. He did not tell them to hold out their hands—he hadn't any patience for that. And that wasn't severe enough. He was going to give them such a record thrashing that any other practical jokers would never dare to follow in their footsteps.

And he did!

The cane lashed and crashed on the three astounded juniors.

"Take that," roared Mr. Manders, "and that, and that, and that!"

"Yarooh!"
"Help!"

"He's mad!"

"Run for it!" shrieked Mornington.
"He's mad! Run for your lives!"

The three scared juniors bolted out of the study, with the cane lashing behind. Down the passage they went like scared rabbits, but behind them came the infuriated master. lashing and lashing and lashing. Wild yells rose from the unfortunate knuts as they fled into the quadrangle.

Mr. Manders, gasping for breath, whisked back to his study. He was angry and exasperated, but he felt somewhat solaced. "I do not think there will be any further visitors here," he gasped, as he sat down. "I hardly think so. Scandalous!"

'And Mr. Manders was right—there weren't. Mornington & Co. were the last on the list of invitations. That was the reason.

Mornington & Co. scuttled out of the house in wild alarm, fully convinced that Mr. Manders was mad. What else could explain the extraordinary conduct of a master who invited fellows to tea, and laid in wait for them in his study with a cane, and attacked them the moment they appeared?

They did not stop till they were half-way across the quadrangle, and then they halted out of breath, gasping with anguish and terror.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Townsend.
"I'm hurt all over! I—I say, he's mad—mad as a hatter! Oh, crumbs!"

"Mad as a hornet!" moaned Topham. "Oh, oh, oh! Ow!"

"Yow! Ow, ow!" mumbled Mornington.

"Hallo! You-chaps seem to have been enjoying yourselves," remarked Jimmy Silver, as the Fistical Four sauntered up. "How did you get on with Mandlers?"

"He's mad!" gasped Mornington. "The minute we got into the study he asked us if we'd come to tea, and started on us with a cane! Oh, dear! Mad as a hatter! Yow! Ow!"

" Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington & Co. limped away. The Fistical Four threw themselves into the grass, and kicked up their feet and yelled.

× × ×

The suspicion as to Mr. Manders' sanity was dispelled that evening when the facts were known to the Rookwood juniors. There were exactly nine fellows who couldn't see anything funny in the matter, but the rest laughed till they wept over the story of how the nine had Tea with Mr. Manders!