

The Ghost of Rookwood



By

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Conquest

CHAPTER I

SHIRTY!

“LOVELL!”

No reply.

“Coming out?”

Still no reply.

“Chance to get some of those Modern ticks with a snowball.”

Grunt!

Three fellows had come up the Fourth-form passage, on the Classical side at Rookwood School, and were looking into the end study.

One fellow was in that study.

It was Arthur Edward Lovell. He was seated at the table, with a pen in his hand, and an almost ferocious expression on his face.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome gazed at him.

After class there was no special reason, so far as they could see, why Lovell should be busy in the study, till prep. It was not yet dark, though the December dusk was falling. And there was snow in the quad. It was a chance, as Jimmy Silver said, to get some of the Modern fellows with snowballs: an idea that might certainly have been expected to appeal to Lovell.

Now he did not heed, save for a grunt.

"Lines for Dalton?" asked Newcome.

"No!"

"Well, what—?" began Raby.

"Do let a chap get through."

Lovell did not even look up. His pen ran on while he answered over his shoulder.

"Well, if you're busy—!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Can't you see I am?"

"O.K. We'll get out and leave you to it—"

Lovell looked up, at that.

"Oh, get out by all means, if you can't wait a minute or two for a chap." he said, sarcastically. "Don't mind me."

Having added a snort to that remark, Lovell resumed operations with the pen.

The three juniors in the doorway exchanged glances.

Arthur Edward Lovell, evidently, was "shirty". He was not the most reasonable fellow, at the best of times. In a shirty state, he was apt to be a little unreasonable.

But they were great pals in the end study at Rookwood. If Arthur Edward Lovell was shirty, as not infrequently he was, his chums were wont to bear with him. So having exchanged a glance—and a smile!—they came into the study, instead of getting out and leaving him to it.

Lovell scribbled on.

Apparently he had a task to complete, and was anxious to complete it as soon as possible, which was only natural, as there was very little daylight left for a fellow to get out of doors. It was not, it seemed, lines for Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth. His friends looked over his shoulders to see what it was: and then they stared.

"Le fantôme. Le fantôme. Le fantôme."

That was what Lovell was writing, or rather scrawling: a single French word over and over again.

"What the dickens—?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Shut up while a fellow's working."

"Something for Mossou?" asked Raby.

"Yes! Shut up."

"But—!" said Newcome.

"I said shut up!" hooted Lovell. "I'm just on the finish! Can't you fellows keep quiet for a minute?"

Three fellows became dumb.

With the dusk thickening, and lock-ups close at hand, they really would have preferred to get out. It was close on break-up for the Christmas holidays, and snowballing Tommy Dodd and Co. of the Modern side, would have given their old foes and rivals something to remember them by till next term. They had been looking for Lovell till they found him in the study: and now perhaps they rather wished they hadn't looked!

However, they waited patiently, glad to hear that Arthur Edward was near the finish, for whatever mysterious reason he was writing that French word over and over and over again.

Lovell threw down the pen at last: or rather, hurled it down. He gave a gasp of relief.

"That's done!" he said. "I'd better count 'em, though! The little beast said a hundred times."

"But what—?"

"Shut up a minute."

Lovell proceeded to count the words he had written. Once more Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome exercised patience.

"Oh, blow!" hooted Lovell, suddenly.

"What—?"

"Only ninety-nine! I thought I'd done a hundred." Lovell grabbed up the pen again, jabbed it into the ink, and added one more "le fantôme". Then he banged the pen on the table again, with a bang that snapped the nib off short.

"Are we getting out now?" asked Newcome, meekly, as Lovell rose from the table.

"I've got to take this rot down to Mossoo!" said Lovell. "By gum, I'd like to catch him with a snowball. Making out that a fellow can't spell."

"But what—?"

"He picked it out of my French exercise," explained Lovell. "I happened to spell the word f-a-n-t-u-m—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came involuntarily from Jimmy and Raby and Newcome. Even in English, Lovell was no whale on orthography: but apparently he had excelled even himself in that French exercise.

Lovell glared at them.

"Think it's funny?" he demanded. "The little beast jumped on me, making out I couldn't spell a word in French—"

Really, what else Monsieur Monceau was to "make out", if Lovell spelt "fantôme" f-a-n-t-u-m, Lovell's friends did not know. But Arthur Edward, evidently, was deeply indignant.

"He told me to look the word out in the dick, and write it a hundred times,"

he went on. "Just as if I was a fellow like Tubby Muffin who couldn't spell for toffee! I'll jolly well make him sit up for it, somehow."

"Rot!" said Jimmy Silver. "Mossoo's a good little ass—"

"If I get a chance at him with a snowball—"

"Forget it, old chap! Mossoo's all right!" said Jimmy Silver, soothingly. "Anyhow you'll remember the French word for 'ghost' now."

"Blow the French word for 'ghost'. Who wants to remember it?" hooted Lovell. "Making a fellow stick in a study writing a silly word a hundred times— I tell you I'll jolly well rag him—"

"You jolly well won't!" said Jimmy, shaking his head.

"I jolly well will!" bawled Lovell, and he added emphasis to that statement, by bringing down his fist with a bang on the study table.

"Look out!" gasped Raby.

But it was too late! Lovell was a rather emphatic fellow. He had a heavy hand. He had banged on the table not wisely but too well. The inkpot danced—and overturned. A stream of ink shot across the sheet on which Lovell had so laboriously written "le fantôme" a hundred times!

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

"Oh, my only hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "You've done it now."

"Done it to a turn!" said Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell gazed at the ruin. That sheet was swamped with ink. More than half the words written on it were illegible: Monsieur Monceau, had he looked at it, couldn't have guessed whether Lovell had spelt that troublesome word "fantôme" or "fantum". Obviously, that imposition could not be taken to the French master in that state.

"Oh!" repeated Lovell. "You silly idiots—"

"What—?"

"All your fault!" roared Lovell. "Now I've got to write that tosh all over again! You silly asses—"

"But—!"

"You blithering fatheads! By gum, won't I jolly well rag Mossoo for this!" breathed Lovell. "All that rot twice over—!"

"But—!"

"Oh, shut up, if you don't want me to shy the inkpot at you!" bawled Lovell.

"But—!"

Lovell clutched up the inkpot. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome faded out of the end study. Lovell, evidently, was better left alone just then! They departed, and Lovell kicked the door shut after them with a terrific bang.

Then he sorted out a new nib, a fresh supply of ink, and another sheet of paper, and sat down to write "le fantôme" a hundred times. And when, about ten minutes later, the study door opened, and a fat chubby face looked in, Lovell turned a glare on that fat chubby face that was absolutely deadly.

"I say, ain't Jimmy Silver here?" asked Tubby Muffin. "I say, I heard that Jimmy had a parcel of mince pies from home—wow!"

Why Arthur Edward Lovell, without even speaking, hurled a French dictionary at his fat head, Reginald Adolphus Muffin did not know. But he knew that Lovell did! The fat Classical uttered a wild howl as the dictionary landed on a plump chin, and he disappeared quite suddenly from the doorway—his disappearance followed by the sound of a heavy bump, and a loud howl, in the passage. After which, Arthur Edward Lovell kicked the door shut once more, and once more settled down to endless repetitions of "le fantôme": quite unlikely to be interrupted again by the fat Tubby.

CHAPTER II

LOVELL KNOWS HOW

"I'LL GIVE him fantômes!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that remark some hours later, in prep.

Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome sat round the study table, deep in Latin. They had a section of the Aeneid to prepare. Lovell, of course, had his prep to do, as well as his friends. But he was not giving the same attention to it. Lovell had other matters on his mind. When Lovell had other matters on his mind, it was not uncommon for him to give his prep only very cursory attention—if any! Which sometimes caused a spot of bother with Richard Dalton in the form-room the next day.

Lovell was sitting at the table with the others. But he had not even looked at Virgil. His brow was knitted: a sign that he was thinking: if Lovell's mental processes could be described as thinking, which his friends sometimes doubted.

He was silent, which was a blessing at any rate. Often when Arthur Edward let his prep slide, it was because he had something to say, which made it difficult for other fellows to get work done. But so long as he was content with silent reflection, his friends were able to get on.

When he broke silence at last, with that rather cryptic remark, Lovell seemed to expect the other three fellows to abandon Virgil and give him attention: to sit up and take notice, as it were.

But they did not! They just went on, as if prep was more important than anything Lovell might have to say.

Lovell glanced round from face to face, breathing rather hard.

"I spoke!" he said, with dignity.

"Yes—shut up, old chap," said Raby. "Prep, you know—"

"Never mind prep for a minute," said Lovell.

"Vix e conspectu Siculae telluris—!" murmured Newcome. "Telluris—telluris—let's see, that's tellus—is telluris dative or ablative, Jimmy?"

"Never mind whether it's dative or ablative," said Lovell. "You can chuck that tosh for a minute or two. That little beast Mossoo—"

"Never mind Mossoo—"

"I do mind!" said Lovell. "Cheeky little brute! Making out that a chap couldn't spell, and giving him a word to write out a hundred times, as if a chap was a fag in the Second Form. And I had to write it out twice over, owing to you fellows making me upset the ink over it—"

"—in altum vela dabant—!" said Raby.

"I said I'll give him fantômes!" said Lovell, unheeding. "That's what put the idea into my head—that idiotic French word fantômes. Christmas is the time for phantoms, isn't it?"

And Lovell chuckled.

Jimmy Silver looked up from prep. Evidently, Lovell had something he was determined to say, and blessed silence would not accrue until he had said it. "Uncle James" of Rookwood was always patient: patience indeed was his long suit. Really he needed it, with Arthur Edward Lovell for a pal.

"Get it off your chest," he sighed.

"Well, look here," said Lovell, "It will be no end of a jape. There's a legend that Rookwood is haunted by a ghost at Christmas time, and we're jolly close on Christmas now. Well, the ghost is going to walk, see?"

"What rot!" said Raby, staring. "It's only an old yarn, and there isn't any ghost, and—"

"I know that!" yapped Lovell. "Think I believe in ghosts? All the same, there's that old ghost story, and I remember once a fellow turned out the light on the landing, and put a sheet over his head, and a lot of fellows were scared—they thought it was the Rookwood spook. Bet you Mossoo will be scared when he sees a ghostly figure at midnight."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"That's the idea," said Lovell, with another chuckle, "I can tell you, when I took my impot. in to Froggy this afternoon, I came jolly near chucking it at his head! But—I didn't!"

"We can guess that one!" remarked Raby. "You'd get home a bit early for the Christmas vac if you did!"

"But I've got it in for him!" said Lovell, darkly. "If he thinks he can treat me like some silly fag in the Second Form, he's got another guess coming. I'll give him fantômes—more fantômes than he likes."

"But—!" said Jimmy Silver.

"The Rookwood ghost is going to walk to-night!" said Lovell. "Easy

enough, with a sheet, and a white handkerchief over the face, and a spot of phosphorescent paint! What?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Raby.

"I make up in the dorm," went on Lovell, who had evidently been thinking the matter out in detail, "Mossoo's room is across the landing. I creep out quietly, when everybody's fast asleep—"

"Oh, scissors!"

"I hike across to Mossoo's room," continued Lovell. "What do you think he will feel like, when he wakes up suddenly and sees the ghost of Rookwood at his bedside? What? Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell laughed, loud and long. He seemed to expect his chums to join in that outbreak of merriment, at the idea of Monsieur Monceau waking up suddenly and beholding the ghost of Rookwood at his bedside. But they did not laugh. They only gazed at Arthur Edward.

Lovell's merry peal of laughter died away. He stared, or rather glared, at his silent chums.

"Don't you think it will be funny?" he demanded.

Three heads were solemnly shaken.

"Not at all!" said Jimmy.

"Anything but!" said Newcome.

"Mad?" asked Raby.

"So that's what you think of it, is it?" snorted Lovell. "Talk about wet blankets! I take all the trouble to plan the jape of the term, and that's all you've got to say about it! Think of the silly little ass popping up in bed and thinking he's seeing a ghost! Why, he will yell the House down! Think he will guess that it's a fellow from the Fourth larking? Of course he won't! He will think it's the ghost of Rookwood visiting him at dead of night, and I'll bet you he'll wake up all the other beaks with his yelling."

"Very likely," said Jimmy Silver, "and they'll catch you out of your dorm, with a sheet over your head—"

"They won't! The ghost will vanish when Mossoo starts yelling," grinned Lovell. "I shall be back in bed on time, when the beaks are roused out. Leave that to me."

"You utter idiot—!" said Newcome.

"What?"

"Mossoo might have a fit—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. The idea of Monsieur Monceau having a fit seemed to appeal to his remarkable sense of humour.

"So that's what you've been thinking out, is it?" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's it!" said Lovell, complacently.

"Then the sooner you forget all about it, the better. It's a mad trick playing ghost. Man with weak nerves might get an awful jolt. A fellow like Muffin would be scared out of his wits—"

"Muffin will be fast asleep in bed, and he hasn't any wits to be scared out of, anyway. It's Froggy I'm after."

"Froggy's all right—"

"Is he?" snorted Lovell. "Making out a fellow can't spell—"

"Well, you can't!" pointed out Newcome. "If you spelt 'fantôme' f-a-n-t-u-m, did you expect him to pat you on the back?"

"I can spell your head off, and chance it, Newcome. I'll give him fantômes!" said Lovell, vengefully. "He will be fed up of fantômes by the time I've done with him! And if you fellows don't like the idea—"

"We don't!"

"Then you can jolly well lump it!" said Lovell, defiantly. "Why, you silly asses, everybody will be laughing like anything to-morrow, when they hear that Mossoo thinks he's seen a ghost— Ha, ha, ha!"

Again Arthur Edward roared with laughter. Again he had the roar all to himself. Judges on the bench could not have been graver than Jimmy Silver, Arthur Newcome and George Raby.

Lovell was, in his own esteem at least, the man for ideas. He was the fellow to plan things: he esteemed himself a tremendous planner. Often and often his ideas found no appreciation whatever in his own study. But never had one of his bright ideas fallen so flat as this.

But if Jimmy Silver and Co., fancied that opposition would have a deterrent effect on Lovell, it only showed that even yet they did not quite know their Arthur Edward. If Lovell had had a lingering doubt, it was gone now. Opposition had the effect on him of a spur.

"Now, look here, old chap—!" argued Jimmy Silver.

"You think it's a rotten idea?" snapped Lovell.

"Quite putrid!" said Jimmy.

"Then you can shut up!"

"But look here—!" said Raby.

"You shut up too!" said Lovell.

"But—!" said Newcome.

"And you shut up!" said Lovell.

"Well, we may as well get on with prep," remarked Newcome. "We don't all want a row with Dicky Dalton in the morning."

And they got on with prep. Lovell, at last, condescended to give a little attention to that trifling matter. A frown lingered on his brow. The reception of his brilliant idea by his comrades was annoying and irritating: but its only effect on Lovell was to make him more determined to carry on. If his friends had a lingering hope that Arthur Edward might see reason, and abandon that extraordinary project, there was nothing in it. The ghost of Rookwood was going to walk that night!

CHAPTER III

THE GHOST WALKS!

SCRATCH!

A match scratched, in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth, as the last stroke of midnight from the clock-tower died away. There was a flicker of flame, and it revealed the features of Arthur Edward Lovell, sitting up in bed.

Everyone else in the dormitory was fast asleep. The sound of regular breathing could be heard on all sides. From Tubby Muffin's bed came a snore. Lovell was the only fellow awake.

He reached out, and lighted a candle-end placed in readiness beside his bed. All his preparations had been made. Lovell would have preferred his friends to enter into that remarkable jape, and turn out and help him to make up as the ghost of Rookwood, and give him his meed of applause when he had successfully scared Mossoo out of his seven senses. But they had turned the whole thing down: and gone to sleep regardless of him and his bright ideas: and he was going to let them stay asleep, and be blowed to them.

That at all events was his intention; but it did not quite work, as he kicked the chair beside his bed, in getting out, stubbed his toe, and uttered an unintentional but somewhat emphatic ejaculation.

"Ow! ow! ow!"

Three heads lifted from three pillows. Three fellows peered through the dark at the flickering candle.

"What's that?" came Raby's drowsy voice.

"Who's up?" asked Newcome.

"Is that you, Lovell?" came Jimmy Silver's voice.

"Ow! wow! Yes, it's me," snapped Lovell. "Don't jaw—I've no time to waste jawing! Go to sleep." He rubbed a painful toe.

Three fellows sat up in bed, peering at him. Having finished rubbing his toe, Arthur Edward plunged into his trousers, tucking his pyjamas into the same. Then, taking a sheet from his bed, he draped it round him, securing it round his neck with a couple of safety-pins.

"Hallo, what on earth's that?" came a startled voice, as Valentine Mornington sat up in bed, "—Who—what—what the dooce—?" That figure in white, in the glimmer of the flickering candle, was startling.

"Only Lovell, Morny," sighed Jimmy Silver.

Morny stared at Arthur Edward.

"What on earth's that game?" he exclaimed. "Gone crackers?"

"Wake up the whole dorm!" said Lovell, sarcastically. "Yell! Perhaps you'd like to bring Dicky Dalton here with a cane."

"But what—?"

"Froggy's going to see the ghost of Rookwood, if you want to know!" snapped Lovell. "Now shut up."

"Oh, gad!" said Mornington.

"Playing ghost?" Rawson was awake now. "That's a fool's game, Lovell."

"Fatheaded!" came from Conroy's bed.

"Chuck it, Lovell, you ass!" called out Oswald. More and more of the Classical Fourth were sitting up, at the sound of voices.

"Shout!" said Lovell, still sarcastic. "Yell and bring Dalton here! Or the Head, perhaps! Like to see Dr. Chisholm at midnight?"

"Quiet, you fellows," said Jimmy Silver. "If Lovell's caught playing the giddy ox like this, there will be a fearful row."

"Silly ass, waking us all up in the middle of the night," said Peele.

"Go to sleep, can't you?" snapped Lovell. "Ow! wow! Dash that rotten pin—I've run it into my finger—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that anything to cackle at?" hissed Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell breathed hard. A ripple of laughter ran up and down the dormitory. All the Classical Fourth were awake now, with the exception of Tubby Muffin. Tubby was still snoring serenely. Reginald Adolphus Muffin, once asleep, was not easy to wake: and the unaccustomed sounds at midnight's still hour passed by his fat ears unheard and unheeded. But all the other fellows were sitting up in bed, staring at Lovell in the glimmer of the candle.

Lovell was fastening a large white handkerchief over his face, securing it at the back of his head with a pin. Two holes had been cut in it: eye-holes for the "ghost" to see through. In the candle-light his eyes glistened quite eerily from the eye-holes.

By that time, he certainly had a very startling aspect. Seen in the dark, there was no doubt that he would produce a startling effect on the beholder. Some of the Classical juniors certainly would have had a jolt, had they awakened suddenly and seen him thus, in the gloom. He proceeded to enhance the unearthly effect with a rub of phosphorescent paint, which added an uncanny glow. Even in the candle-light, he looked a very alarming figure.

"Look here, Lovell—!" Jimmy Silver essayed a last effort at persuasion.

"I'm going."

"But, old chap—" said Raby.

"Do shut up! Do you want the beaks here?" hissed Lovell. "I've got to keep jolly quiet about this."

He blew out the candle, and all was dark. Only a faint glimmer of wintry starlight came from the high windows of the dormitory. In that faint glimmer, Lovell was dimly visible, and undoubtedly ghostly. Had not the other fellows seen him making up, they never would have guessed that that ghostly figure was Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth.

Lovell turned to tramp away to the door. He was ready, and he was going. He added a last word of caution to the staring juniors.

"You fellows keep quiet here! Don't jaw and don't cackle! Not a sound—ow! wow! yow! ow! ooooooh!" Lovell's cautionary remarks ended in a sudden howl of anguish.

"What on earth—?" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Ow! Oh, crikey! That dashed safety-pin is sticking in the back of my neck! Oh, scissors!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled all the Classical Fourth.

Lovell grappled frantically with the safety-pins that fastened the draped sheet round his neck. One of them, seemingly, had been imperfectly fastened: at all events, a sharp point was jabbing into the back of his neck.

"Will you be quiet?" howled Lovell. "What is there to cackle at, I'd like to know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, blow you."

The snore of Tubby Muffin, which had gone on till that moment like an unending melody, ceased. Lovell's wild howl, and the laughter that followed, had awakened even Tubby.

Muffin sat up in bed, blinking round him in the gloom.

"What's up?" he asked. "What—Oh! Oh, crikey! What's that?" Tubby's fat voice rose to a yell, as he sighted Lovell. A white figure in the dark, with a deathly white face glimmering with a strange eerie light, dimly seen in the glimmer of wintry starlight, was enough to startle even a fellow with plenty of nerve—and Tubby was not blessed with much in the way of nerve. His eyes almost popped from his head. "I say, what's that? Keep it off! I say, its the gig-gig-gig-ghost—Help!"

Tubby's frightened yell rang through the dormitory.

"Shut up, you fat tick!" roared Lovell.

"Ow! Help! Keep it away! Help!" yelled Tubby.

"Quiet!" shrieked Lovell. "Do you want to wake the House? Shut up! Do you hear?"

Tubby Muffin certainly heard. But he did not heed. He knew Lovell's voice, but he did not know that it proceeded from that dim ghostly figure in the dark. Really, he couldn't be expected to guess that! He yelled.

"It's the ghost! Help!"

"Will you shut up?" howled Lovell, and he rushed towards Tubby Muffin's bed, to shut him up.

That did it!

Reginald Adolphus Muffin might have sat in bed and yelled till the other fellows had a chance to enlighten him, but for Lovell's rush. But the sight of that ghostly figure rushing at him was too much for Muffin. As Lovell reached the bed on one side, Tubby rolled out of it on the other.

He rolled on the floor in a tangle of bedclothes, roaring.

"Keep off! Help! Oh, crikey! Help!"

Lovell raced round the bed. Tubby Muffin had to be shut up, and that promptly, if masters and prefects were not to be awakened in the middle of the night. He bent and grabbed at Tubby.

Tubby Muffin let out an ear-splitting yell, as the ghostly figure bent over him. In frantic terror he scrambled up, and bolted for the door.

"Stop!" yelled Lovell.

Stopping was the last thing Tubby was thinking of. Lovell rushed after him, caught his feet in the trailing sheet, and stumbled, landing on the floor with a howl as loud as Tubby's. A moment more and Muffin had torn the door open and bolted into the passage still yelling at the top of his voice.

"Ow! Help! Help! The ghost! Help!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "That's torn it!"
It had!

CHAPTER IV

LOVELL ALL OVER!

"WHAT—?"

"Who—?"

"Qu-est-que-c'est?"

"Upon my word—"

"A Fourth-form boy—"

"Muffin!"

"Ow! The ghost! Oh, crikey! Keep it off! It's after me! Help!"

It was quite a hubbub on the dormitory landing. Tubby Muffin had done the passage like the cinder-path, emitting yell after all, and every yell woke echoes far and wide. It was no wonder that the "beaks" had awakened. It would have been a wonder had they not. Doors opened, and lights flashed on, while Tubby yelled and yelled. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth; Greely, master of the Fifth; Mooney, master of the Shell; Monsieur Monceau, the French master, all turned out at the same time, bundling out in dressing-gowns, not even staying for slippers. The light flashing on revealed Reginald Adolphus Muffin in the middle of the landing, with terrified eyes popping from his face, yelling.

"Muffin!" thundered Mr. Dalton.

"Ow! Help! The gig-gig-ghost—" howled Tubby. "Oh, help the gig-gig-gig—"

Mr. Dalton grasped him by a fat shoulder, and shook him.

"Silence, you absurd boy! How dare you make this disturbance at such an hour!" He exclaimed.

"The—the ghost—" babbled Tubby. "It's after me—help!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Greely, "the boy has been frightened, Dalton—"

"Nightmare, no doubt," said Mr. Mooney.

"The ghost—!" howled Tubby.

"Un fantôme—incroyable!" said Monsieur Monceau, little guessing how near he had been to beholding that phantom at his bedside!

"Be silent, Muffin! If you fancy—"

"I saw it—in the dorm!" burred Tubby. "It rushed at me, sir—it was after me—an awful-looking spectre, sir, all in white, with eyes of—of flame—and—"

"Absurd!" said Mr. Greely. "A nightmare."

Mr. Dalton compressed his lips. That Tubby Muffin had been scared out of his fat wits was clear: and hardly to be accounted for on the theory of a nightmare. Richard Dalton thought it more probable that some junior had



"Help me off with these things, you fatheads."

been "larking" in the Fourth-form dormitory. He strode across the landing.

"Follow me to your dormitory, Muffin," he rapped.

"B—b—but the gig-gig-ghost, sir—"

"Follow me, you stupid boy."

Richard Dalton went up the passage to the door of the Fourth-form dormitory with long and rapid strides. He was not surprised to hear a sound of voices as he neared the doorway.

"Help me off with these things, you fatheads—"

"We're trying to—"

"Don't jab that pin into me, idiot! Haven't you any sense?"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Don't jaw! Do you want the beaks to come and catch me like this? That idiot Muffin must have awakened the whole crew—"

"You silly ass—"

"Shut up, Raby. I've got tangled in this beastly sheet—"

"You howling chump—"

"Shut up, Newcome. There's a pin sticking in my neck—"

"For goodness sake, be quick," gasped Jimmy Silver. "Dalton must be up—if he catches us out of bed—oh, my aunt Belinda!" Jimmy broke off, as the light flashed on in the dormitory, switched on at the door.

Richard Dalton stood in the doorway, staring in.

It was quite a startling sight that met his eyes, considering that it was past midnight, when all Rookwood was—or should have been—asleep!

Not a man in the Classical Fourth was asleep, or even lying down. Four fellows were out of bed—every other fellow was sitting up and staring. Jimmy Silver, Raby and Newcome, were making hurried and frantic efforts to help Arthur Edward Lovell get rid of his ghostly outfit before a "beak" could arrive on the scene. Like good pals they had turned out of bed to help: for it was certain that if Arthur Edward was caught in that outfit, there would be sore trouble ahead of Arthur Edward. Even Lovell was no longer thinking of playing ghost! The idea was to get that outfit off, and get back into bed, before the chopper came down. But Richard Dalton had arrived on the scene too quickly for that.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

"Dicky!" breathed Newcome.

"Will you fellows help?" came a muffled howl from Lovell. Lovell's head was tangled in the sheet; for the moment, the visibility was not good, and he did not see what every other fellow in the dormitory saw. "Do you want to suffocate me? Haven't you any sense! Do you want Dalton to get here and catch us out of bed?"

"Shut up!" breathed Raby.

"You silly chumps, will you get my napper out of this beastly sheet?"

Can't you get the pins out! You clumsy chumps, there may be a beak along any minute—"

"He's here!" hissed Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, crikey!"

"Lovell! Raby! Newcome! Silver!" Mr. Dalton's voice was not loud, but it was deep. "So this is, as I guessed, a foolish prank. You have been playing ghost and frightening that foolish boy Muffin."

"Oh!" gasped Lovell. He wrenched the sheet off, at last, and blinked at Richard Dalton, "Oh! Copped!"

Mr. Dalton turned his head and called along the passage.

"Muffin! Come here at once."

"The gig-gig-gig-ghost—!" wailed Tubby.

"It was Lovell, playing a stupid trick, you absurd boy. Come here at once," snapped Mr. Dalton.

Tubby Muffin came very reluctantly up the passage. His eyes popped into the dormitory. But the sight of Arthur Edward Lovell, with the sheet still hanging from one safety-pin sticking in the neck of his pyjama jacket, was reassuring. Even Tubby, as he blinked at Arthur Edward, realized that this was not the genuine ghost of Rookwood.

"Oh!" gasped Tubby. "I—I—I thought—I mean to say—it—it looked—I—I didn't know—I—I—I—"

"Go back to your bed, you foolish boy."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" mumbled Tubby.

He rolled back to his bed, Arthur Edward Lovell giving him an expressive look as he rolled. Judging by that look, there was something coming to Reginald Adolphus Muffin, later.

"Lovell! Silver! Raby! Newcome! You have played this foolish, this insensate trick, in the middle of the night, and frightened a foolish boy, playing ghost. I shall deal with you severely," rapped Mr. Dalton.

"It was only me, sir!" Lovell spoke up at once. "The other fellows weren't in it, sir—"

"I find them out of bed, and assisting you. All four of you will go into Extra School to-morrow afternoon."

"But I say, sir—"

"You, Lovell, will be caned, as it appears to be you who actually played ghost," said Mr. Dalton, sternly. "You will come to my study after prayers in the morning, and I shall cane you. You are a very obtuse boy, Lovell, but I should have expected even you to have too much common-sense to play so foolish and dangerous a trick on a boy like Muffin."

"I—I didn't—!"

"What?"

"I—I—I mean—!" stammered Lovell.

"What do you mean?" snapped Mr. Dalton.

"Oh! Nothing, sir!" gasped Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell was not, perhaps, very bright: but he was bright enough to realize that it would not improve matters to let Dalton know that he had intended that trick, not for Tubby Muffin, but for the French master. Certainly Mr. Dalton's wrath would not have diminished, had he learned that it had been a member of Dr. Chisholm's staff who had been scheduled to be scared by the ghost of Rookwood!

"Return to your beds at once!" snapped Mr. Dalton. "If there should be any further disturbance in this dormitory, I shall deal with it very severely."

Four juniors returned to their beds. Mr. Dalton, with a grimly frowning brow, shut off the light, shut the door, and strode away. There was a murmur of voices when he was gone.

"Lovell all over!" remarked Mornington.

"Oh, just Lovell!" said Newcome. "If he frightened anybody got up as a ghost, it was bound to be the wrong party."

"Extra for all of us!" said Raby. "Satisfied now, Lovell?"

"Was it my fault?" hissed Lovell. "How was I to know that that fat chump would take me for a ghost?"

"Didn't you mean Mossos to take you for a ghost?" hooted Jimmy Silver. "Why shouldn't anybody else?"

"That fat idiot's got me a licking—you fellows have only got Extra! Why, I'll burst him all over the dorm!" hissed Lovell.

There was a sound of a bed creaking. Jimmy Silver sat up.

"Is that you getting up, Lovell?"

"Yes, it is!"

"You heard what Dicky Dalton said—"

"Blow Dicky Dalton!" snorted Lovell. "I'm going to bolster that fat idiot Muffin till he can't crawl—!"

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"If you get out of that bed," he said, in concentrated tones, "we'll get out too, and scrag you. You've kicked up enough row for one night, you blithering idiot! If you want Dicky back here with a cane, we don't! Stick in that bed and keep quiet, or we'll scrag you bald-headed!"

Snort, from Lovell. But he did not get out of bed. Perhaps even Lovell realized that there had been row enough for one night: and that he did not want Dicky Dalton to return with a cane. He snorted: but he dropped his head on the pillow: and the Classical Fourth, at last, settled down to slumber.

CHAPTER V

SNOWBALLS FOR SOMEBODY!

"THAT ASS!"
"That fathead!"
"That chump!"

There was no doubt that, in the end study at Rookwood, they were great pals. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome would have stood by Arthur Edward Lovell through thick and thin. Yet it was a fact that when they referred to him, it was generally in terms which might have indicated that they regarded Arthur Edward almost as a fellow of defective intellect. Much as they liked old Lovell, and strenuously as they would have backed him up had occasion required, it could not be denied that he was, in their estimation, an ass, a fathead, and a chump. And just now they could have expressed themselves still more emphatically, still without giving full expression to their feelings.

There was bright sunshine on the snow that powdered the old quadrangle at Rookwood: it was one of those bright, cold, clear December days that naturally make a fellow feel pleased with himself and things generally. But the "Fistical Four" of Rookwood were not looking so bright as might have been expected of such usually cheerful youths. They were booked for "Extra" that afternoon, and there were so many things more attractive than Extra School on a half-holiday.

Lovell, in addition, had had quite a painful interview with Mr. Dalton in his study after prayers. He had been wriggling quite uncomfortably in form that morning. His only consolation was to kick Tubby Muffin, which he had done several times, to his own satisfaction if not to Tubby's.

After third school, the Co. missed Lovell, and looked for him. Now they had found him, under the old Rookwood beeches. It was as their eyes fell upon him that they considered to one another that he was an ass, a fathead, and a chump. Lovell, clearly, was "up" to something. Exactly what he was "up" to, Jimmy and Raby and Newcome did not know: but his attitude and aspect indicated only too clearly that it was "something".

Under the trees, the snow was piled rather thickly. There was ample ammunition for snowballing. Lovell, while his friends were looking for him, had been busy: for he had manufactured a stack of solid snowballs, which he had piled against a beech trunk. Now, with a snowball clutched in hand, he was half-hidden behind that trunk, watching the path that ran under the beeches.

In that rather secluded spot, he was not in general view. Still, anyone coming along would have seen him: and it would have leaped to the eye, at

once, that Lovell was lying in wait for somebody to come down that path, with snowballs ready for him when he came: one clutched in his hand, the others ready in a stack.

The three juniors came on him from the rear, and had a back view of him. Lovell, having of course no eyes in the back of his head, did not see them coming. He continued to watch the path in the other direction.

They gazed at the back of their chum.

"The ass!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"The blithering idiot!" said Newcome.

"The benighted fathead!" said Raby.

"Who's he waiting for?" asked Newcome. "Is he going to snowball Dicky Dalton for giving him six this morning?"

"Shouldn't wonder!" sighed Jimmy Silver. "Six on the bags wouldn't be enough for Lovell, without a Head's flogging to follow."

"Better stop him," said Raby.

"Oh, rather," agreed Jimmy. "Whatever Lovell's ever up to, it's better to stop him. Come on."

They walked on towards Lovell, and he turned his head. He did not seem gratified by the sight of his friends. He frowned at them.

"What do you fellows want!" he asked, irritably. "Look here, you'd better keep clear of this! I shan't get spotted—I've got my wits about me—but I'll bet you fellows would. Cut before he comes along."

"He—who?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"That little beast Froggy, of course," snapped Lovell. "He's doing one of his trots, and he went this way ten minutes ago. He will be coming back any minute. You fellows cut off."

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome did not cut off. They remained where they were, with expressive looks fixed on Lovell.

"Froggy!" said Newcome. "You're waiting here to snowball a beak?"

"It was rather a frost last night with the ghost business," said Lovell. "Owing to that fat idiot Muffin, I couldn't carry on. Better luck next time—"

"You're thinking of trying it on again?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Why not? These snowballs are just for Mosssoo to go on with."

"Why not?" repeated Jimmy, almost dazedly. "About a million reasons why not, I think. You howling ass—"

"That will do!" interrupted Lovell. "Cut off before Froggy hikes along. If he sees you, he'll think you had a hand in it."

"And he won't think you had a hand in it?" asked Newcome, with gentle sarcasm.

"I shall keep behind this tree! I've got it all planned," explained Lovell. "Leave that to me. Cut off, see!"

"Drop that snowball!" rapped Jimmy Silver.

"Don't be an ass! I've got it ready for Mosssoo."

"Chuck it, I tell you."

Lovell stared.

"What's the good of chucking it now, when he's not coming?" he asked. "I'm waiting for him to come before I chuck it."

"I mean chuck it—drop it—stop it—have a little sense!" hooted Jimmy Silver. "You're not going to snowball old Froggy, see?"

"Ain't I?" said Lovell, grimly. "You'll see! I'm going to get him right in the eye with this one, and then jolly well pelt him till he doesn't know whether he's on his head or his heels! I've got it in for him."

"Look here—!"

"Shut up and clear off—he's coming!" hissed Lovell. "If you don't want him to fancy you did it, get clear, you fatheads."

In the distance, up the path, a little plump figure came in sight. It was Monsieur Monceau, coming back along that path under the beeches, as Lovell had expected him to do. That Lovell would get him with snowballs, when he came within range, there was no doubt—but that Lovell would escape undetected after that exploit, there was very considerable doubt, in the minds of his friends at least. Moreover, they did not want Froggy snowballed. Mossoo was, in the estimation of the Co. quite a good little ass: even if he had found fault with Arthur Edward for spelling "fantôme" "fantum".

"Will you hook it?" breathed Lovell. "You'll spoil the whole thing, butting in like this! Look here—"

Jimmy Silver stooped, and picked a snowball from Lovell's stack. Then he picked another with his other hand.

Newcome and Raby stared, for a moment. Then, guessing what was in Jimmy's mind, they too stooped, and supplied themselves with snowballs.

Lovell stared at them.

"I tell you, you'd better keep clear of this!" he snapped. "I can look after myself—I've got brains—you fellows haven't and can't! Look here, I don't want you joining in snowballing Froggy, see?"

"That's all right!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're not going to snowball Froggy—and you're not, either! Go it, you fellows."

"What-ho!" chuckled Raby.

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Lovell. "I tell you—ooooch—why—what—stoppit—oooooogh! Wooooogh!"

Whiz! whiz! whiz! crash! smash!

Lovell hardly knew what was happening, for a moment. Snowballs—his own snowballs, so carefully prepared for the bombardment of Monsieur Monceau, were fairly raining on him. He drooped his own snowball, as he clutched at snow in his eyes, in his ears, and in his neck.

"Urrgh! Wharrer you up to?" spluttered Lovell. "Gone mad? Why, you silly idiots—grooogh—oooooch!"

"Go it!"

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Whiz! whiz! smash! Three juniors, helping themselves liberally from Lovell's stack of snowballs, “went it,” with vigour. Lovell staggered away from the tree into the path, followed up by his three loyal pals, raining snowballs.

“Ooogh! Wooogh! Will you stoppit?” spluttered Lovell. “You mad asses—whoooooh! Stoppit! I—I'll smash you! Yoooooch! Wurrrrggh! Stoppit!”

The Co. were not thinking of stopping it! They were going to keep Arthur Edward Lovell busy, till Mossou had passed, and was out of the danger-zone. Luckily, Lovell had piled up plenty of snowballs—there was plenty of ammunition. His own supplies crashed and smashed on Lovell from all sides. He trotted wildly in the path under the beeches, yelling and spluttering, and sat down.

“Ciel!” Monsieur Monceau, coming down the path, stopped to stare. “Mon Dieu! Mes garçons! Ah! Ces Anglais! Zese English, how zey luff ze rough game viz ze ball of snow! Zese English!”

Mossou skirted the busy group on the path, with a wary eye open for whizzing snowballs, and hurried on: happily unaware that he had had a narrow escape of taking part in that rough game with the balls of snow. He disappeared at a trot, leaving Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome still busy, and Arthur Edward Lovell still yelling and spluttering, as he sat in the snow.

The French master having disappeared, and the supply of Lovell's snowball's having been exhausted, Lovell was given a much-needed rest. He sat dizzily, gouging snow out of his eyes, his ears, his hair, and his neck. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome walked cheerily back to the quad, leaving him to it.

They had, undoubtedly, saved Arthur Edward from another row: probably from an interview with his headmaster. But they did not expect any gratitude from him for services rendered: and they did not get any. When they met at dinner, Arthur Edward Lovell's looks indicated anything but gratitude.

CHAPTER VI

RAP!

“LUFFELL!”
No answer.

They were in Extra School. Monsieur Monceau was detention master, and he seemed to have a special eye on Lovell of the Fourth. Possibly that was because Lovell had a grim, dogged, indeed rebellious expression on his face:

or perhaps it was because his weakness in French spelling made the dutiful little gentleman single him out for special attention.

When he called on Arthur Edward, however, there was no reply: and Arthur Edward seemed unconscious of his call. Lovell's name was not Luffell, and he saw no reason why he should answer to a name that was not his own. In a less disgruntled state, no doubt, he would have done so. Now he wouldn't.

"Luffell!" repeated Monsieur Monceau, more loudly.

Jimmy Silver nudged his chum.

"Wake up, you ass! Mossoo's speaking to you!" he whispered.

"Is he?" grunted Lovell.

"Deaf, you ass?"

"Not at all," drawled Lovell. "He's calling somebody named Luffell. That's not my name, is it?"

"Oh, you ass!" breathed Jimmy.

Lovell, evidently, was out for more trouble.

It was not uncommon for spots of trouble to accrue in Extra, when Mossoo was detention master. Fellows would drop books, and bang desks: quite by accident of course, though such accidents never happened under the eye of a master like Richard Dalton. The little French gentleman was so patient and long-suffering, that thoughtless fellows often took advantage of it: not with any ill intent; but from the sheer exuberance of youth. Still, it was uncommon for a fellow to remain stonily silent when his name was called, and all the detention class looked round at Lovell.

Mossoo had about a dozen hapless fellows in his class that afternoon—the Fistical Four, Mornington and Oswald of the Classical Fourth: Smythe and Tracy of the Shell; Tommy Dodd and Towle of the Modern Fourth; and two or three others. Nobody liked Extra: few liked French: all were restive: and there had been quite a number of accidents in the way of dropping books and desk-lids.

"Luffell!" said Monsieur Monceau, for the third time. He was looking directly at Lovell, and Lovell was looking directly at him. But no answer came from Arthur Edward. He did not appear to know that he was being called upon.

"Luffell! Stand up at vunce viz you!" rapped Monsieur Monceau, showing signs of losing patience.

Lovell did not stir.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome gave him expressive looks. Most of the other fellows grinned. They scented a "rag": and a rag was ever so much more entertaining than French verbs.

"Is it zat you are deaf viz you, Luffell?" exclaimed Mossoo, "Vat is it zat you have ze mattair, Luffell?"

Grim silence.

A gleam came into Mossoo's eye. He had a pointer in his hand, and he came across and tapped Lovell on the shoulder with it.

"Vy you no answer ven zat I speak?" he rapped.

Lovell stared at him.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" he asked, calmly.

"Mon Dieu! Is it zat you are sourd, zat you do not hear me?"

"I heard you, sir! But my name isn't Luffell!" explained Arthur Edward.

"My name is Lovell, sir! You said Luffell."

Monsieur Monceau gazed at him. His cheeks reddened, as he realized that Arthur Edward was being impertinent. Nobody in Extra would have been surprised had the pointer come into play as a reward for Arthur Edward's affected misunderstanding of the pronunciation of his name. But Mossos seldom or never used that pointer for corrective purposes. Probably there would have been fewer rags in the French class, had he done so.

"You are mauvais garçon, Luffell," said Mossos. "Vat you sa is ze sheeky —vat you call sheek in English."

"Is sheek an English word, sir?" asked Arthur Edward. "I've never heard it, sir."

Mossos breathed hard.

"Assez! Zat is enoff, Luffell. Now you take ze chalk and you write a sentence in French on ze blackboard. And if it is not spelt correctly, you will write out, after ze class, one hundred times, all ze words zat are wrong." Evidently Mossos was getting his back up.

Lovell too breathed hard, as he rose and went to the blackboard. The rest of the class looked on, with interest. Unless Lovell carefully selected words of one syllable, it was probable that he would have some writing-out to do after class! Even with words of one syllable he might have bad luck.

"Oh, the ass!" sighed Jimmy Silver.

"Asking for it!" grunted Raby.

"Isn't he always?" said Newcome.

Lovell stood at the blackboard, the chalk in his fingers, and deep thought in his brow. All eyes were upon him: Mossos's with impatience.

"Zat you proceed, Luffell!" he snapped.

To the surprise of the detention class, a grin dawned on Arthur Edward Lovell's face. Some bright idea, evidently, had come into his active brain. He began to handle the chalk quite briskly.

Having chalked a sentence on the board, he stepped back, to give the class a full view of it.

There was a gasp, and a chuckle in the class.

"Oh, the chump!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, the ass!" murmured Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from several fellows.

They all gazed at the sentence chalked on the blackboard. Monsieur Monceau gazed at it, and his face changed from sallow to purple. Lovell had written a sentence in French, as bidden. And there were no mistakes in the

spelling. But that sentence was one that Monsieur Monceau certainly had never expected to see. The cheery Arthur Edward had written:

Le maître est un âne.

There was no fault to be found with the spelling. Lovell had even remembered to place the circumflex over the "a" in "âne" and the "i" in "maître". So far as that went, the sentence, though brief, was quite in order. But as it meant, "the master is an ass", it was not calculated to give undiluted satisfaction to Monsieur Monceau.

"Oh, gad!" Morny whispered to Oswald. "That chap Lovell knows how to ask for it."

"Don't he just!" grinned Oswald.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome could only look on in dismay. Lovell's face was quite calm. Apparently he expected to get by with this! Monsieur Monceau gazed at the sentence on the blackboard, then at Lovell, then at the blackboard again, and then once more at Lovell.

"Is that right, sir?" asked Lovell, cheerfully.

"Mon Dieu! Zat is too mooch!" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau!" His hand went up, with the pointer in it. RAP!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Lovell.

He seemed surprised, as well as pained, when the pointer in Mossoo's hand rapped on his knuckles. He did not seem to have expected that! Really, he might have—but he hadn't! The crack sounded through the class-room almost like a pistol-shot: and Lovell sucked his knuckles frantically, and almost danced.

"Ow! wow! Oh, crikey! Wow!"

"Now you go back to your place, Luffell—"

"Wow!"

"And if zere is more of ze sheek from you, I report you to Monsieur Dalton. Taisez-vous! Sit down!"

Lovell went back to his place, and Mossoo seized the duster and obliterated that offending sentence. During the remainder of Extra, Arthur Edward Lovell was chiefly occupied in sucking his suffering knuckles: with feelings that he could not have expressed in words, either French or English.

CHAPTER VII

THE ONLY WAY!

"ONE swallow doesn't make a summer!"

Lovell stated that maxim in the end study, at tea.

Jimmy Silver sighed. Newcome looked sarcastic. Raby grunted.

What Lovell stated was undoubtedly true. Its proverbial wisdom was indubitable. It was the inference that Lovell drew from that maxim that worried his chums.

That even Arthur Edward Lovell, with all his well-known obstinacy and fatheadedness, could think, or even dream, of carrying on with that ghost stunt, was really amazing. His comrades would hardly have believed it, even of Lovell. But that was what was in his mind. And it was fixed there—fixed and immutable. Argument had no effect on it. Argument never had any effect on Lovell: it rolled off him like water off a duck. Lovell was so immovably convinced that he knew best—which seemed to him a self-evident proposition—that he had no use whatever for arguments or sage counsels.

"It was a frost last night," continued Lovell. "That was Muffin's fault and I've jolly well booted him for it, too. I'll boot him again next time I see him. But one failure—not my fault—doesn't matter. As I've said, one swallow doesn't make a summer. Next time it will click."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath.

"Lovell, old man, do try to think a minute em!" he urged.

"I fancy I do most of the thinking in this study," said Lovell, disdainfully, "I'd like to know where you fellows would be, sometimes, if you hadn't got me to think for you."

"Ye gods!" murmured Raby.

"And little fishes!" said Newcome.

"Leave it to me!" said Lovell. "I'm on Mossoo's track, and I'm going to make him sit up! Making out a chap can't spell—"

"A lot of making out it wanted!" remarked Newcome.

"And rapping a chap over the knuckles with a pointer, just as if a chap was a fag in Bohun's form!" said Lovell, breathing hard.

"Didn't you ask him to?" inquired Newcome.

"I did what he told me!" said Lovell. "He told me to write a sentence in French on the blackboard! I wrote a sentence in French on the blackboard! Then he raps me over the knuckles—"

"Think you can call a beak an ass, and nothing happen!"

"I didn't call him anything! I wrote a sentence as he told me. If he liked to take it to himself, that's his look-out. Cap fit, cap wear!" said Lovell.

"Look here, Lovell—"

"I'm going to make him sit up! That's settled," said Lovell. "You fellows needn't help, if you're so fond of Froggy. That fat ass Muffin won't be scared if he sees me to-night, and yell the House down. It will be all right."

"But, old man!" pleaded Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see that if a ghost happens, everybody will know that it was you, after what happened in the dorm last night?"

"No, I cant."

"None so blind as those who won't see," remarked Newcome.

"Dicky Dalton will jump on you first thing, if there's a ghost around, after seeing your get-up in the dorm last night!" howled Jimmy.

"I don't see why he should! Any fellow might play ghost," said Lovell. "Not that Froggy will think it's a fellow playing ghost! He'll think it's real, and yell his head off with fright." Lovell chuckled. "I'll give him fantômes! I'll give him rapping a fellow over the knuckles like a Second-Form fag! I'll jolly well show him."

"Now look here, Lovell—!" said his three friends, all together.

Lovell rose from the table. He had finished tea, and he seemed to have had enough of the remonstrances of his friends.

"Nuff said!" he remarked. "It's settled, and that's that!"

"You howling ass!" roared Raby. "If you start your ghost stunts to-night in the dorm, we'll collar you and sit on your head."

"Will you?" said Lovell. "You'll have a black eye to take home for Christmas, if you try it on. Don't you fellows worry," added Lovell, kindly, glancing back from the door. "It will be all right! I know my way about! Leave it to me."

And Lovell walked out of the study.

Three fellows looked at one another.

"The benighted chump!" said Newcome. "Even if he doesn't scare the wrong party, as he did before, he will be copped—"

"Sure thing!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver looked worried. Often and often Uncle James of Rookwood found his chum Arthur Edward Lovell a spot of worry. But never so much as now.

"It's no good arguing with him," he said. "Lovell won't see sense—or he can't. Arguing with him only puts his silly back up, and makes him more fatheaded. But we can't let him carry on with this."

"We can't!" agreed Newcome. "Why, he would have to go up to the Head—might be a flogging—goodness knows what it might be. But how—!"

"Sit on him in the dorm!" suggested Raby.

Jimmy shook his head.

"He would kick up a shindy, and bring a beak up again. We want to keep him out of a row, not land him in one."

"He had six this morning," said Newcome. "Any fellow but Lovell would be satisfied with six. But he wants more."

"It would be something worse than six, if he really scared a beak with his ghost stunt," said Jimmy Silver, shaking his head.

"Think Mossoo would be scared?"

"Well, I think anybody would, waking up and seeing such a ghastly object in the dark. Only an ass like Lovell would think of playing such tricks. I'll bet Lovell himself would be scared, if he came across another ghost, while he's creeping about in the dark."

"Pity there isn't another such silly ass around, to play such silly tricks and give him a scare himself!" grunted Raby.

Jimmy Silver gave a start. His eyes danced. That chance remark from George Raby had caused a sudden idea to flash into his mind.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"What—?"

"That's the idea!"

"What is?" asked Raby and Newcome together, mystified.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Lovell was quoting proverbs at us," he said. "Well, there's another proverb—what's sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander. Lovell's going to tiptoe out of the dorm at twelve to-night, got up as the ghost of Rookwood—"

"Yes, if we don't stop him—"

"We can't stop him! He's going creeping down the passage, and across the landing, rooting after Mossos's room!" continued Jimmy Silver. "Nothing to stop him, unless—"

"Unless what?"

"Unless the real ghost of Rookwood happened to be walking, and Lovell barged into it—"

Raby and Newcome stared blankly.

"But there ain't a real ghost of Rookwood!" said Raby.

"And if there was, he wouldn't happen to be walking to-night, just to oblige us!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Old Lovell isn't the only planner in this study," he said. "He's planned all this—and if he can plan one ghost, we can plan another."

"Oh!"

"Lovell may be fed up of ghosts before he gets as far as Mossos's room—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Raby and Newcome.

When Jimmy Silver and Co. joined Lovell in the hall, he gave them rather a sour glance, doubtless expecting further argument on the subject of ghosts and ghost stunts. But they joined with cheery and smiling faces, and did not utter one more word of dissuasion. Apparently they had made up their minds to let Arthur Edward go ahead: which, as he was determined to go ahead anyhow, was satisfactory to him.

CHAPTER VIII

TWO OF THEM!

B^{OOM!} It was the last stroke of twelve, booming dully through the dark December night.

Arthur Edward Lovell sat up drowsily in bed, and peered round him in the gloom.

He rubbed his eyes.

Lovell was sleepy, as was only to be expected at midnight. He was not accustomed to such late hours.

Several times, indeed, he had almost nodded off.

But he was determined to keep awake. The ghost of Rookwood was scheduled to walk that night: and obviously the ghost couldn't walk, if Lovell went to sleep and stayed asleep. All the more, very much more, because his comrades were totally opposed to the idea, Lovell was determined to carry on. Opposition had that effect on Arthur Edward.

But it was not easy to keep awake. He almost had to prop his eyelids open. But Lovell was a stickler. If he nodded, he jerked himself out of drowsiness: and he was awake, though drowsy, when midnight sounded from the clock-tower.

The dormitory was very dark, and silent save for the breathing of sleepers, and an occasional rumble from Tubby Muffin's bed. It was very cold: outside, snowflakes whirled against the windows, and the winter wind wailed over the old Rookwood roofs. But a freezing atmosphere did not deter Lovell: though he shivered as he put a long leg out of his warm bed—the shiver accompanied by a yawn. "Twas now the very witching hour of night, when churchyards yawn", as the great poet has expressed it: and Lovell, being drowsy, yawned too. But he stepped out manfully into the cold.

He was very cautious. He did not want to rouse the dormitory, as had so unfortunately happened on the last occasion. True, even Tubby Muffin would not take him for a ghost a second time, if the fat Classical woke. Still, a fellow couldn't be too careful, when he was breaking rules right and left.

Even Lovell realized that, after his first exploit, results would be serious if he was caught a second time at the same game. But he was not going to be caught, so that was all right. To his friends, it was clear as the sun at noonday that if the ghost was seen to walk that night, Richard Dalton and everyone else would know that it was Lovell at his stunts again. But it was not at all clear to Lovell. He had unbounded faith in his own sagacity. He was going to scare Mossoo right out of his seven Gallic senses, and get back to bed undiscovered—and unsuspected! Happily unaware that he was absolutely certain to be found out, he tucked his pyjamas into his trousers, and reached under his bed for the rubber shoes placed there in readiness. Being Arthur Edward Lovell, he bumped his head on the bed, and uttered a sharp ejaculation:

"Ow!"

Remembering caution, he suppressed a second "Ow!" But the single ejaculation had reached other ears.

"That you, Lovell, you ass?" came Raby's whisper.

"Shut up!" breathed Lovell.

"Out of bed, fathead?" asked Newcome.

"Will you shut up?"

Lovell expected to hear Jimmy Silver's voice next. But he did not hear it: Uncle James did not speak. Perhaps he was asleep. Lovell concluded that he was: having not the remotest suspicion that Uncle James had quitted the dormitory a quarter of an hour since, flitting as silently in the dark as any ghost could have done: leaving a "dummy" in his bed in case Arthur Edward's eyes fell on it.

Lovell scratched a match, and lighted his candle-end. He had to have a glimmer of light to don his special outfit.

In the flickering glimmer, he donned the sheet, and fastened it with safety-pins, as before: and pinned the white handkerchief with its eye-holes over his face, and added a smear of phosphorescent paint. Raby and Newcome watched him from their pillows in the glimmer. They did not speak: and Lovell, glancing at them, was rather surprised to see them smiling. He had not expected them to smile.

"You fellows keep mum!" he whispered. "We don't want Dicky up here again. Don't wake the other fellows."

"Mum's the word!" agreed Newcome.

"There'll be row enough when Froggy sees the ghost!" grinned Lovell. "I expect you'll hear him yell, from here."

"Think so!" yawned Raby.

"What-ho!" chuckled Lovell. "But don't jaw—don't wake Jimmy, and start him arguing again. I've had enough of his arguing."

Lovell glanced at Jimmy Silver's bed, as he whispered. In that bed the outlines of a sleeper could be seen, in the glimmer of the candle. Those outlines did not stir.

"What are you grinning at?" added Lovell, transferring his stare from Jimmy's bed, to the faces of Raby and Newcome. "Nothing to grin at, that I know of. Just keep mum and don't wake Jimmy."

"We won't wake Jimmy!" said Newcome.

"He can't hear us!" grinned Raby.

"Well, he might, and I don't want any more jaw. Just shut up," said Lovell.

He gave another glance at Jimmy Silver's bed. But there was no movement in that bed: and no sound from it. There was no intervention from Uncle James to be feared!

Raby and Newcome obediently shut up, though they still grinned. Lovell blew out the candle, and their grins disappeared in darkness. Why they grinned at all rather puzzled Lovell. He had expected argument and remonstrance, not hilarity. However, they were welcome to grin as much as they liked, so far as Lovell was concerned, so long as they did not kick up a row. Leaving them to it, he groped his way in the dark to the door.

Nobody else in the Classical Fourth had awakened: not, apparently, even Jimmy Silver. It was a relief to Lovell to get out without leaving a buzz of voices behind him. Caution was his cue: even Lovell felt a slight tremor, at the thought of his form-master coming on the scene again. But there was no danger of that: all was as silent as he could have wished: nothing was going to be heard, till the yells of a frightened Froggy rent the air. Lovell was going to be safe back in bed by the time those yells caused other beaks to turn out. He opened the dormitory door, and shut it after him very carefully—though with an inadvertent thud.

In the dark passage he stood listening. At that hour, everyone at Rookwood was certain to be in bed: the last light had long been extinguished. It was black as a hat in the corridor, and silent save for the echoing wail of the



With freezing blood he gazed at the ghost of Rookwood.

December wind. That was all that Lovell heard as he listened, and he was quite reassured on the subject of beaks. He trod away silently down the corridor towards the landing, where there was a dim glimmer of starlight and snow from windows. A little to his own surprise, his heart was beating just a trifle uncomfortably. It was all so dark, so silent, so lonely, in the middle of the night: and a fellow playing ghost could hardly help remembering the legend of the ghost of Rookwood, supposed to haunt those ancient dim passages at Christmastide. In the dormitory, among a crowd of other fellows, Lovell would have snorted, at the idea of a ghost: but alone at midnight in shadowy passages it seemed different, somehow. Lovell found himself peering uneasily into the shadows, and listening quite intently for any unusual sound. In spite of himself, a slightly creepy feeling came over him: and he gave quite a start, at a rustle of snow tumbling off ancient ivy at a window.

But he carried on resolutely. Lovell was not a fellow to be scared by darkness, and dim mysterious shadows, and eerie sounds from rustling old ivy. He did not admit to himself that he wished he was back in bed, and had never thought of this uncanny stunt at all! He crept and groped on, peering in the gloom, with ears stretched to listen. But he was going on!

Suddenly he halted, at the sound of a faint rustle.

The blood rushed to his heart.

It was not the ivy this time. It was not tumbling snow outside. It was a faint eerie rustle, as of swishing garments, quite near at hand, on the landing.

He stood with his heart thumping, staring into the gloom.

What was that?

It couldn't be a master up—no beak would have been there in the dark. There was no danger of that. But—what was it?

Again that faint sound came to his straining ears. It was the faint swish of some loose garment: and back into Lovell's mind came that old story of the ghostly monk that haunted Rookwood, in snow-white robe and cowl. It was all rot, of course, but—but—what was that?

Was that a gliding figure in white, or were his eyes and his nerves deceiving him? What—what was it?

He stood rooted to the floor. His eyes bulged, and almost popped from his head.

Dimly, but visibly, in the glimmer from a high window, he saw it. It was not fancy it was not nerves—his startled eyes were not deceiving him. Frozen where he stood, he stared at it—a dim figure in a sweeping white robe, with a white cowl over the face, gliding soundlessly. He did not stir—he could not have stirred, at that moment, to save his life. With freezing blood he gazed at the ghost of Rookwood.

It turned—towards him!

Lovell almost ceased to breathe. Like one spellbound, he watched, with staring eyes.

The strange, unearthly figure glided towards him, and still he did not move. A ghostly hand was raised—in a few moments more, it would have touched him! But before it could reach him, Lovell came out of his trance of terror. He gave one horrified gasp, turned, and raced back to the dormitory.

CHAPTER IX

LOVELL KNOWS BEST!

"I'VE BEEN thinking—!"

"You have?" asked Newcome, as if in surprise.

"Yes!" rapped Lovell.

"Wonders will never cease!" murmured Raby.

Arthur Edward Lovell frowned, across the tea-table in the end study. He frowned at three smiling faces.

"Chuck it, you chaps," said Jimmy Silver. "If you've been thinking, Lovell, let's hear the result!"

"If any!" murmured Newcome.

Lovell breathed rather hard. Lovell was, in his own belief at least, the fellow who did practically all the thinking that was done in the end study at Rookwood. So his remark ought to have been received with respect, if not even with interest, or at least seriousness. Instead of which, his comrades seemed surprised to hear that he had been thinking at all: and indeed seemed to doubt it.

Arthur Edward Lovell had been, as a matter of fact, unusually thoughtful all that day. He was not much given to reflection: but the strange and startling occurrence of the previous night might have made any fellow thoughtful. Even in broad daylight, he felt a little shivery as he remembered that strange spectral figure of the ghostly monk glimmering on the dark landing.

"Carry on, old chap," said Jimmy Silver, encouragingly. "Thinking about the hols—?"

"No!" snapped Lovell.

"Well, we break up this week," said Newcome. "I'm thinking about the hols. Jolly old Christmas—!"

"Never mind that," said Lovell. He paused a moment, and went on. "I had a bit of a shock last night. You know what happened—I've told you—I saw the phantom monk in the dark—"

"Oh!" said three fellows.

"I don't mind admitting," continued Lovell, "that it was a bit of a K.O. It looked so jolly real. It gave me a jump. It—it came towards me, and—and—and I—I—"

"You bolted," said Newcome.

"Well, I own up I did!" said Lovell. "I think any fellow would have bolted, in the circumstances. You fellows can grin, here in the study, with the light on, and lots of people about: but it's a bit different alone at midnight in the dark, and the thing happening so suddenly and unexpectedly, too—" He paused. "I wouldn't say that I exactly bolted," he added, cautiously. "But—but I got back to the dorm as—as fast as I could."

"I thought you seemed rather in a hurry when you shot in," agreed Raby.

"Seemed to me in a bit of a rush," remarked Newcome, with a nod.

Lovell gave them a glare each.

"You'd have been in a hurry, in my place," he yapped. "So would you, Jimmy—if that's what you're grinning at."

"Quite, quite!" agreed Jimmy, soothingly. "Seeing a spectre monk was enough to make any fellow think that bed was the best place on a cold December night. I was glad to get back to it myself, without a spectre monk to help."

Lovell stared.

"I didn't know you'd been out of bed," he said. "You were fast asleep when I went out of the dorm—"

"Was I?"

"Like a log!" Lovell grunted. "You never woke up when these fellows chattered. I remember now I thought I heard somebody moving, after I got back to bed. Blessed if I know what you turned out for. Never mind that—as I've said, I've been thinking, and—and—and—" Lovell paused, once more. His three friends regarded him curiously. It was clear that Lovell really had been thinking, improbable as it seemed, but he appeared to hesitate to confide the results to the other fellows round the tea-table in the end study.

"Go it!" said Jimmy, encouragingly.

"Well, I'm not the fellow to make mistakes, or play the fool, or anything of that kind, as you fellows know—"

"Oh!" murmured three fellows.

"But—but—but I own up that I was rather an ass to think of that ghost stunt." Lovell got it out at last. "It's a fool trick I—I hadn't looked at it like that, but—but after what happened last night, I can see it all right. It's a fool trick to play ghost and frighten people."

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy.

"His brain does work!" said Newcome, regarding Arthur Edward Lovell attentively. "We never noticed it before—but it does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows are going to cackle at a fellow—!" roared Lovell.

"My dear chap—"

"I'm telling you what I think," snapped Lovell. "Mind, I don't believe in ghosts, of course—"

"Not in the daytime?" asked Raby.

"Not at any time, George Raby. I was a bit taken aback last night as any chap would have been: but after I got back to bed, and thought it over, I jolly well knew that it wasn't a ghost, but some utter idiot playing ghost—some silly, fatheaded, blithering nitwit—"

"Thanks," said Jimmy.

"Eh? What do you mean? I'm speaking of the fellow, whoever he was, who was got up as the Rookwood monk. I jolly well know now that the monk's robe was jolly well made out of a sheet or something, and the cowl out of a white muffler or something—must have been! Somebody was playing ghost—some utterly idiotic gibbering nitwit—"

"You think a fellow who plays ghost is an utterly idiotic, gibbering nitwit?" asked Newcome.

"Yes, I do!" snapped Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the end study.

"I—I—I mean—" Lovell stammered a little, remembering that he had played ghost himself. "I—I mean—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cut the cackle," hooted Lovell. "It's not a laughing matter, I can tell you. It gave me an awful turn, and I bolted—I mean, I got back to the dorm in rather a hurry—"

"Quite a hurry," said Newcome, with a nod.

"Full throttle," said Raby.

"Well, I'm going to punch that funny ass's head when I find out who it was," said Lovell. "But all the same, I'm glad it happened really—glad I never got as far as Mossos's room. I—I'd been thinking it jolly funny to wake him up to see ghost at his bedside, but—but—I—I'm glad I didn't, now."

Jimmy and Newcome and Raby gazed at him. It was indubitable now that Arthur Edward Lovell had been thinking! Indubitable, too, that, as Newcome had remarked, his brain did work: though slowly, and not often. Evidently Lovell was capable of learning by experience, if in no other way. The spectral monk had given him a useful lesson on the subject of playing ghost! Arthur Edward Lovell was through with such remarkable stunts.

"Well, that's that," said Lovell. "It gave me a jump, I can tell you, and—and I'm glad I never gave Mossos a jump like it. And if ever you fellows think of playing ghost at Christmas—"

"What?"

"Don't do it," said Lovell. "You're asses enough, I know: but just don't do it, see?"

"Sure it wasn't a real ghost that you saw on the landing?" asked Raby, with a wink at Jimmy and Newcome.

"Of course it wasn't," said Lovell, testily. "I—I thought it was, just for the minute—any fellow would have—but how could it have been, when there ain't

such things as ghosts! It was some gibbering idiot playing tricks—and I'm jolly well going to try to find out who it was before we break up, and give him a thick ear to remember me by over the hols. I'm going to look for him, I can jolly well tell you."

"Good hunting, old chap," said Jimmy Silver, blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But it's a bit of a puzzle," said Lovell, wrinkling his brows. "Must have been a man from another dorm—but how could he have known that I should be there? It's plain enough that he was on the spot to give me a scare—but only you fellows knew I was going out of the dorm at all, so it's queer. Perhaps you fellows could help me spot who it was."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Jimmy Silver: while Raby and Newcome chuckled.

"Got any idea who it was?" asked Lovell.

"Sort of!"

"Well, if you know, cough it up," said Lovell. "I'm going to let him know what I think of a fellow who's idiot enough to play ghost in the dark—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, stop cackling for goodness sake, and if you've an idea who it was, Jimmy Silver, tell me—"

"I think it was a fellow about my size!" said Jimmy.

"Eh? Lovell looked at him. "Well, yes, now I think of it, he was about your height. But there's lots of fellows your size at Rookwood. If you know that much, I suppose you know what his name is."

"Oh, quite!"

"Well, what is it?" Lovell rose from the tea-table, evidently prepared to go on the war-path as soon as he learned the name. He pushed back his cuffs in readiness. "Cough it up!"

"Silver!"

"Eh?"

"Silver!"

"What the thump do you mean, Silver?" exclaimed Lovell, irritably. "I'm not talking about silver, or gold either. I'm asking you for the fellow's name who played ghost on me last night if you know who it was. What's his name?"

"Silver!" said Jimmy, for the third time.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Raby and Newcome.

"Oh!" It dawned on Lovell. "That's your name, you ass! Are you trying to pull my leg, or what? It wasn't you!"

"It was!" said Jimmy, cheerfully.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Think you can stuff me like that?" said Lovell, disdainfully. "It wasn't you or Raby or Newcome either—I left all three of you in the dorm, those two chattering like magpies, and you fast asleep and snoring—"

"Did you hear me snore?" gasped Jimmy.

"Well, fast asleep, anyway! I saw you in bed, at any rate—you were there all right—"

"Not exactly. What you saw was an overcoat and a couple of pillows, arranged under the bedclothes—"

"Rot!"

"It was a dummy in Jimmy's bed," chuckled Raby. "He went out a quarter of an hour before you did, and had the things all ready behind the settee on the landing—"

"Rubbish! I can see myself being taken in by a dummy in a bed!" said Lovell, derisively. "Think I'm a mug like Tubby Muffin to be taken in with a yarn like that! Look here, Jimmy, if you know who it was—!"

"Little me!" roared Jimmy. "It was the only way to stop you playing the giddy ox, and that's why, see?"

"Well, if you won't tell me—"

"I've told you!" shrieked Jimmy.

"I suppose you don't know who it was, any more than I do," snapped Lovell. "All right—I'll find him out somehow, and jolly well punch his head." He crossed to the door, his chums staring after him blankly. At the door he glanced back. "I don't know why you're spinning me this silly yarn, Jimmy Silver, but if you think you can pull my leg like that, you've got another guess coming! I'm not the sort of fellow to be taken in, I fancy."

"But I tell you—!" yelled Jimmy.

"Pack it up!" said Lovell. "Keep your funny stories for Raby and Newcome—they may think 'em funny: I don't." And with that, Arthur Edward Lovell departed from the end study, and slammed the door after him.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, scissors!" said Raby.

"Oh, holy smoke!" said Newcome. "Lovell knows best—as per usual!"

Then they all yelled together:

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell did not discover the unknown fellow who had played the part of the ghostly monk of Rookwood. Possibly, at long last, it dawned upon his powerful brain that it really was "Uncle James" who had saved him from himself, as it were. At all events, the desired result had been achieved: when the school broke up for Christmas, nothing more had been seen of the Ghost of Rookwood!

THE END