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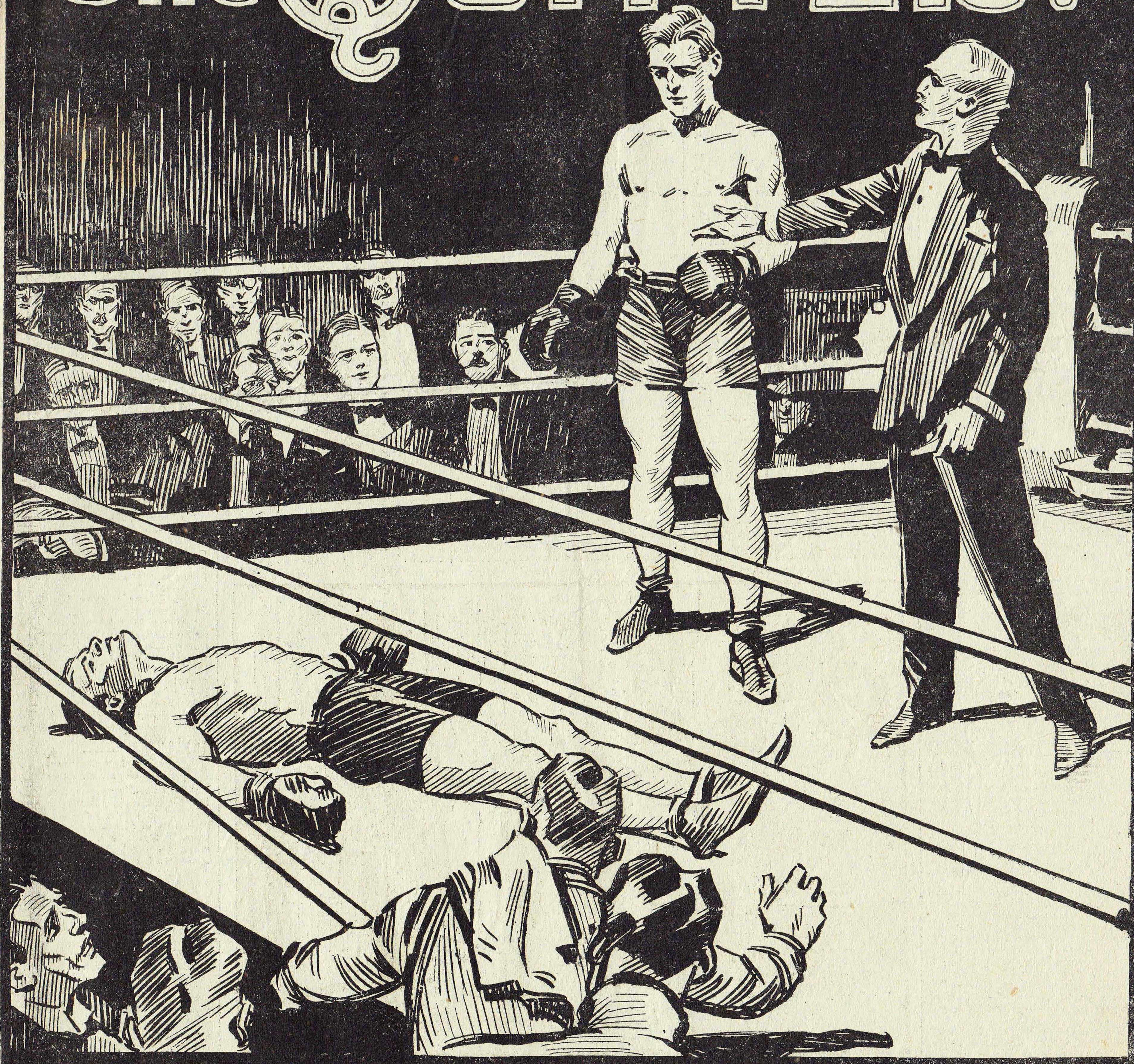
TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending October 15th, 1921.

The QUITTER!



COUNTED OUT!

Tex Rennie tried to swing his right to the body. Quick as a flash Harry Duke sidestepped and, as the American followed his own punch, Duke met him with a terrific uppercut which cut through his guard and landed full on the point. Rennie went crushing to the floor to take the full count and Mr. Edwards of London in his ringside seat smiled. He had believed in The Quitter—and The Quitter had won!

A Splendid Long Complete Rookwood School Story by Owen Conquest.



"The Rookwood Charity Boy!"

The 1st Chapter.

Adolphus is Sorry He Spoke!

"There's the charity cad!" Smythe of the Shell made the remark, as Dick Morcom came up the staircase at Rookwood.

Adolphus Smythe was lounging by the landing window, with Townsend and Topham of the Fourth. He turned his eyeglass upon Morcom with a lofty glance of scorn, as he spoke, loud enough for the new junior to hear.

Morcom did not heed, though he certainly heard.

He had a letter in his hand, and a rather worried frown upon his brow. As a rule, Morcom was as cheery and happy-go-lucky as any fellow in the Classical Fourth; but just now he seemed decidedly troubled.

He passed the group of knuts on the landing, and went on to the upper staircase, unheeding.

And Adolphus Smythe, encouraged, continued in still louder tones:

"What's Rookwood comin' to, I wonder, when dashed gamekeepers' sons are sent here? Looks to me as if our people ought to interfere, and put it before the governors. What?"

"Jolly good idea!" assented Townsend.

"Toppin'!" said Topham. "The worst of it is, that the rank outsider is planted in our study! Contaminatin', you know!"

"Horrid!" agreed Smythe sympathetically. "Disgustin', in fact! The fellow ought to be kicked out of Rookwood!"

Still Morcom did not heed. He had heard many unpleasant remarks since he had come to Rookwood, and perhaps he was getting used to them. And Adolphus, still more encouraged, continued in the same strain, under the impression that the new junior was affecting not to hear, from motives of "funk."

"Low bounders like that, who shove themselves in among gentlemen, ought to be dealt with in a drastic way. What about rollin' him down the staircase, for a start?"

Morcom, who was half-way up the upper staircase, stopped at that, and looked round.

He put his letter into his pocket, and came down again, to the landing.

Townsend and Topham looked rather uneasy. And Adolphus Smythe, though he was a Shell fellow and much bigger than Morcom, did not seem quite easy in his mind as the new junior crossed the landing towards him.

Possibly Adolphus wished, just then, that he had made one remark fewer.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Smythe, with an attempt at bluster, as Morcom walked up to him.

"I want to be rolled down the staircase, if you can handle the job, old bean," answered Morcom agreeably.

"Don't call me old bean!" said Adolphus. "I want to have nothin' whatever to do with you."

"Towny and Topy can lend you a hand, if you like!" suggested Morcom.

"Oh, get out!" said Townsend.

Morcom grinned. "Dear men, are you really funky of a gamekeeper's son—and you three to one?" he asked.

"Don't talk to us, you outsider!" said Topham.

"But Smythe was talking to me," said Morcom cheerfully. "At least, he meant me to hear. Are you going

to roll me down the stairs, Smythey?"

"I'm not going to soil my hands on you!" said Adolphus.

"I'm not so particular about my hands," grinned Morcom. "I'm going to soil them on you, Smythey."

Adolphus backed hastily to the window.

"Hands off, you cad!" he exclaimed wrathfully. "If you dare to—"

"I'm going to roll you down, old bean," said Morcom. "Here goes!"

He made a jump at Adolphus Smythe, and collared him. The dandy of the Shell went reeling across the landing in the grasp of the sturdy new junior.

"Oh!" gasped Smythe. "Ow! Lend a hand, you fellows!"

Townsend and Topham hesitated for a moment. They objected very strongly to disordering their elegant "clobber" in a rough-and-tumble on the stairs. But Adolphus Smythe was really in need of help; there was no doubt about that.

"Come on, Topy!" muttered Townsend.

And the two knuts of the Fourth rushed to Adolphus Smythe's aid.

They grasped Morcom, just in time to keep him from rolling the Shell fellow down the lower stairs.

Morcom returned grasp for grasp; and his grasp was a good deal harder and more determined than that of the knuts.

For a few moments, four juniors were mixed up in a wild scrimmage on the landing.

Then from the struggling bunch, Townsend was suddenly detached, hurled over the edge of the landing. He bumped on the stairs and rolled down.

Topham followed him a moment later.

Smythe struggled frantically to save himself from a similar fate. But he was swept away in the powerful grasp of the new junior.

"Ow! Leggo! Oh! Oooooop!" spluttered Adolphus, as he went down.

He crashed on Townsend and Topham, who were sprawling breathlessly on the stairs.

Morcom, a little breathless, with his tie streaming out, and his Eton jacket badly rumpled, stood on the landing and looked down at the knutty trio. They did not look so knutty now.

"Coming up to have some more?" he asked, with a chuckle.

"Oh!"

"Ow!"

"Oh gad!"

There was a shout of laughter from the lower passage, where a dozen fellows had witnessed the disaster of Smythe & Co.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go for him, Smythey!" shouted Gower of the Fourth.

"Oh dear!" gasped Adolphus.

"Play up, Towny!"

"Ow! Wow!" said Towny.

"Not coming up?" grinned Morcom. "I'm not going to wait for you, you know! Don't you want any more?"

Evidently the knuts of Rookwood did not want any more. They picked themselves up, and went down instead of up the staircase.

Morcom chuckled, and turned away, and ascended the upper staircase again. He went along the Fourth Form passage to the end study, still smiling.

But the smile died off his handsome face as he drew from his pocket the letter he had placed there before the scrimmage. It was a very troubled-looking junior that stepped into the end study—the quarters of Jimmy Silver & Co.

The 2nd Chapter. Danger Ahead!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at home. It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and early in the afternoon. The Fistical Four were discussing the half-holiday. Jimmy Silver was of opinion that it ought to be spent on the footer-ground, while Lovell

averred that even footer could be overdone, and that such a fine afternoon was an excellent opportunity for a spin on the bikes. Raby was inclined to look in at the "pictures" at Latcham; while Newcome's taste was rather in the direction of a botanical expedition to Coombe Wood. The Fistical Four all gave Morcom a smile and a nod of welcome as he came in. Excepting for Mornington, they were the only fellows at Rookwood who knew Morcom's secret. All the rest of the school, including the Head, believed that the new junior was Dick Morcom, son of Lord Maybrook's head gamekeeper, sent to school by the kindness of the old nobleman. Jimmy Silver & Co. knew that he was Lord Bob Egerton, the son of the old marquis himself, who had taken Dick Morcom's place and name for various reasons, but chiefly for a "lark."

"Hallo, kid!" said Jimmy Silver. "Wherefore that worried look? Are you feeling very deeply the aristocratic scorn of Towny & Co.? Are you pining for a friendly look from the great Adolphus?"

"You've only got to tell them who you are," grinned Arthur Edward Lovell. "Smythey will lick your boots if he finds out that your pater is a giddy marquis."

Morcom smiled faintly.

"I'm in no end of trouble," he said. "Too bad!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Tell your Uncle James."

"I've had a letter from my pater." Jimmy Silver sat up.

come out sooner or later. Your pater will expect a reply."

"Worse than that," said the new junior. "He's coming here!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's got some dashed business or other at Bunbury about the dashed election, or something, and as he's passing within a few miles of Rookwood in the car he's goin' to drop in and see me," said Morcom dimly.

"When?" asked Lovell.

"This afternoon."

"Phew!"

"He will land here about three or half-past, as I figure it out," said Morcom. "It's half-past two now. Jevver hear of a fellow bein' in such a confounded fix?"

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"You asked for it!" he said. "Of all the potty stunts—"

"Well, I had a good reason," said Lord Bob. "Morcom was nervous about comin' here; he thought there might be snobby fellows who'd look down on him and make him uncomfortable. And he was right, by Jove! Smythe and Towny, and the rest, would have harrowed his feelings no end. He's sensitive—much more than I am!" Lord Bob grinned. "It doesn't hurt me to be looked down on by Smythey. It's rather amusin'. But poor old Morcom is so jolly sensitive he'd feel it deeply. I'm jolly well going to advise him not to come to Rookwood, after all. But the pressin' trouble is: How am I goin' to deal with the jolly old pater this afternoon? He'll drop in here expectin' to see Morcom, and when he sees me—"

"Do marquises whack their hopeful sons?" grinned Lovell. "If they do, it seems to me that you're booked for a jolly licking!"

"Better own up, old top!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's bound to come out some time, so you may as well own up now."

Lord Bob shook his head.

"I'm not tired of Rookwood yet," he answered. "I like school ever so much better than 'tootin' at home with a tutor. The pater doesn't see it. He thinks he knows best—paters

thoughtfully. "You fellows could meet the pater and tell him so."

"But do you know which road the car's coming by?"

"No; that's the beauty of it. I'll walk towards Fernwood to meet the car. It couldn't come that way!" grinned Morcom. "The pater won't be able to stay very long. The Head will tell him all about Morcom, and that will satisfy him. Got a better stunt than that, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"It's as good as anything, if you want to dodge your pater," he said. "But my advice is—"

"Bow-wow! You tell the pater that I've gone towards Fernwood to meet the car. Say I left that message with you," said Lord Bob. "Of course, the car might possibly come by Fernwood."

"Suppose it does and you meet it?" grinned Newcome.

"I shall dodge into a hedge."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Morcom turned to leave the study. The Fistical Four grinned as he went down the passage. They were very greatly tickled by the peculiar "stunt" of the marquis' son; and still more tickled by the thought of what Smythe, Towny, & Co. would say when they discovered that they had been ragging and persecuting the son of the Marquis of Maybrook—barring from their select circle a youth whom, if they had only known the facts, they would have been delighted to honour.

That youth would still have been exactly the same youth, certainly; but he would have assumed a very different aspect in the eyes of the snobs of Rookwood. Between the son of the Marquis of Maybrook and the son of his head-gamekeeper there was a great gulf fixed, in the opinion of Smythe & Co., though the two happened to be one person in the case of Dick Morcom, alias Lord Bob Egerton.

Morcom looked round as he went down the passage, half expecting to see something of the knuts, and to find further trouble. But Adolphus Smythe and his elegant pals were not to be seen. Apparently they had had

A SURPRISE FOR THE MARQUIS OF MAYBROOK!



RAGGING THE CHARITY BOY! Adolphus Smythe & Co. made way for the car to pass, but to their astonishment it slowed down and the occupant put his head out of the window. For a moment there was silence and then—"I am the Marquis of Maybrook. Release my son instantly!" To say that the snobs were surprised is insufficient. It suddenly dawned upon them that they had been ragging the son of a real live marquis—a boy who, if they had but known, they would have made most welcome!

"From the marquis?"

"Yes."

"But he doesn't know you're here, does he?" asked the captain of the Fourth, puzzled. "He supposes you're on your holiday in Cornwall, and you've not told him that you sent Morcom there instead, and came along here with a borrowed name. Has he found it all out?"

"No. He's written to me here as Morcom."

"Oh, I see!"

"You see, I haven't written home," explained Lord Bob ruefully. "I can borrow Dick Morcom's name and baggage, but I can't borrow his fist. The pater seems to have expected a sort of dutiful letter from his protegee—naturally, of course. Morcom would have written. I—I haven't. The pater would know my fist at once."

Jimmy looked thoughtful.

"Well, you were an ass to play such a jape!" he said. "It was bound to

always do. But I want to hang on at Rookwood as long as this stunt can be made to last. See?"

"Blessed if I see how you'll manage it if Lord Maybrook is dropping in this afternoon specially to see you!" said Raby.

"That's what I want some advice about," said Morcom. "Can't you fellows suggest somethin'?"

Jimmy Silver reflected.

"If you hadn't had the letter you might have gone out," he said. "But, after getting it—"

"It's a half-holiday," said Lovell, with a nod. "You might have gone over to Latcham to the pictures. Then the merry old marquis would miss seeing you."

"I—I wonder—"

hesitating.

"Better own up," said Jimmy Silver seriously. "You see—"

enough. And the new junior was glad of it. He was only anxious to carry out his little plan, and get clear of Rookwood School before his noble pater arrived there in the family Rolls-Royce.

"Young ass!" commented Arthur Edward Lovell. "Fancy playing the part of a giddy gamekeeper's son when you could swank around as a merry marquis! What would Smythe give for the chance?"

"He'd better have owned up," said Jimmy Silver. "It's bound to come out, and the cheery old marquis will be ratty. I suppose marquises do get ratty? If they do—and I suppose they do—Lord Bob's father will be ratty. But I suppose he knows his own bizney best. He's settled our argument for us, anyhow. It will have to be footer."

"How's that?" demanded Lovell.

"We've agreed to see the Marquis

(Continued overleaf.)

nobby old nobleman when he comes, and explain to him why Morcom has done the vanishing-trick," said Jimmy. "So we can't go out of gates."

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a grunt.

"I didn't think of that." "I did, old infant," said Jimmy. "Let's get down to the footer, and knock some of the duffers into shape. I'll tell Tubby Muffin to bring us word as soon as the merry marquis' car comes rolling home."

And the Fistical Four went down to the footer, Tubby Muffin agreeing to keep an eye open for the marquis' car. There wasn't much doubt that Muffin would do that, anyway. He was keen on marquises, having, as he told Jimmy, so many titled persons in his own family circle. And, learning that the marquis was coming, evidently to see his protegee, Tubby began to reflect that it might be worth while to be civil to Morcom, if only for one day, in order to catch a little reflected glory from the marquis. And Tubby looked up and down and round about for Morcom, only to discover, after a long quest, that that youth had gone out of gates before Jimmy Silver & Co. had gone down to Little Side. Whereat Tubby Muffin granted emphatically.

The 3rd Chapter.

Adolphus Takes Control!

"Talk of angels!" ejaculated Adolphus Smythe suddenly.

"By gad! There he is!" murmured Townsend.

The knuts of Rookwood were lounging by a gate in Coombe Lane that fine, sunny October afternoon. Smythe and Howard and Tracy of the Shell, Towny and Topsy, Gower and Peele of the Fourth were there, and they were in conclave. They had strolled out of gates for their secret conclave, which was upon the important subject of dealing with the "rank outsider" who had thrust himself between the wind and their nobility. Adolphus Smythe presided over the group by the gate. He sat on the gate, majestic, and expounded his views.

Adolphus' views were the views that might have been expected of Adolphus. The fact that Morcom had rolled him down the staircase that afternoon only rendered his views more emphatic. He considered that the "rank outsider, the low bouncer, the awful rotter" ought to be made an example of. All Rookwood ought to testify what they thought of him, and cover him with ignominy as with a garment—Adolphus & Co. apparently being, in their own eyes, all Rookwood, or nearly all.

The other knutty youths agreed cordially, but wanted to know how it was to be done. But Adolphus was full of ideas.

"You see, the miserable worm has his fees paid here by an old nobleman, who is probably rather dotty," said Smythe. "Must be a bit cracked, to think of sendin' his gamekeeper's son to a school like Rookwood. Like his cheek, anyhow. It's charity, his payin' Morcom's fees, and charity isn't a nice thing. It's said to cover a multitude of sins, but it leaves a nasty taste in a fellow's mouth. Morcom is bound to wriggle if we rub in the charity—what?"

"He seems to be a pretty thick-skinned beast," said Townsend dubiously.

"Tough as a rhinoceros!" said Howard.

"Tougher!" said Topham.

Adolphus Smythe shook his head. "I tell you, that's the stunt to make him feel awfully small," he said. "We've got him there. We'll show him up. What about collarin' the cad, tyin' his hands, and stickin' a placard on him?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And marchin' him round," said Smythe. "I've got the placard here. I've drawn it up ready for the stunt." Adolphus felt under his coat, and drew out a roll of cartridge-paper. He unrolled it under the interested eyes of his knutty comrades. On the large sheet of paper had been daubed, in large black letters:

"CHARITY CAD! SPARE A COPPER!"

"We hang this on him, with his paws tied behind his back," said Smythe. "We parade him around in that style—what? If that don't make his flesh creep, he must be as tough as—as—as a giddy hippopotamus! What?"

"Good egg!"

"Good old Smythe!"

"I fancy that will make the cad squirm!" said Tracy, with a chuckle.

"He can't get out of the charity, anyhow."

"Exactly!" said Smythe.

"But what about collarin' him?"

asked Townsend, who seemed smitten with doubts. "The cad is rather hefty."

"Dashed hefty, if you come to that!" murmured Gower.

"He's a low ruffian, too," continued Towny. "He would think nothin'—simply nothin'—of kickin' up a vulgar shindy."

Adolphus nodded. "I know that. I'm not thinkin' of fightin' with the cad. I despise him too much!"

"Too much honour for him," said Howard. "A fellow fights only with a fellow of his own class and standin'."

"Just so. In the circus, we're justified in refusin' anythin' in the nature of a fight with the ruffian," said Smythe. "Cads like that have to be ragged. It would be beneath our dignity to fight him, but we can rag him. There's seven of us here. With all his ruffianly ways, he couldn't put up much of a tussle against seven."

"Jimmy Silver would chip in, if he saw—"

"And Mornington. He's made friends with Morny, somehow."

"We've got to catch him out of gates, for a start," said Smythe.

"But how?"

It was then that the youth they were discussing suddenly dawned upon the vision of the knuts of Rookwood. He was coming down the lane at a good pace, evidently unaware of the meeting that was being held by the gate on his account.

Morcom caught sight of the group of knuts; but he did not pause, or change his direction; he came straight on.

Adolphus & Co. smiled at one another with satisfaction. The rank outsider was walking fairly into the trap. Adolphus had suggested catching him out of gates, and, lo and behold! here was the "obnoxious fellow," out of gates, and coming directly towards them! Nothing could have happened more fortunately—from the point of view of Adolphus & Co.

"Oh, what a little bit of luck!" chuckled Townsend.

"Don't give the alarm," grinned Smythe. "Don't look at the cad! Just wait till he comes abreast, and then rush him suddenly."

"Yes, rather!"

The knuts of Rookwood waited with suppressed eagerness. Morcom came on at a swinging pace. He was anxious to reach the footpath through the wood which led towards Fernwood, and he had to pass the group of knuts to reach it. He appeared to take no heed of them; but, as a matter of fact, he was watching them out of the corner of his eye as he came on. But the knuts played their part well. They avoided glancing at him, and Morcom's suspicions were allayed. He came on, and drew abreast of the group, and still they did not look at him. He passed them, and then there was a sudden rush.

Morcom swung round instantly at the rush of footsteps. Howard and Tracy reached him first, with outstretched hands, and Morcom hit out with right and left as quick as a flash. Howard received his right, Tracy his left, and the two Shell fellows rolled in the dust with loud howls.

But Smythe and Gower were up the next moment, and Towny and Topsy close behind them, and Morcom, facing them gallantly, had his hands full. Cyril Peele dodged round and behind him, and Morcom, as he faced the odds, suddenly felt himself seized by the back of the collar.

"Fair play, you rotters!" he shouted.

"Down him!" gasped Smythe.

Morcom still resisted gamely; but he was dragged backwards by Peele's grip on his collar, and he went down, with the snobs of Rookwood sprawling over him.

"Pin the brute down!" gasped Townsend.

Even on the ground Morcom did not give in. He struggled fiercely, and several of his hefty blows landed,

and were answered by loud yells from the knutty crowd.

But he was pinned down at last.

He was rolled over on his face, his hands drawn behind him, and his wrists bound together with whipcord. Then he was jerked to his feet, dusty and breathless, in the midst of the still more breathless circle of knuts.

"Got the cad!" said Adolphus Smythe, rubbing his nose. "Ow! My nose is bleedin'. Wow!"

"I believe my eye's goin' black!" moaned Howard.

"We'll take it out of his hide," said Gower.

"You awful rotters!" said Morcom coolly. "Is this what you call fair play?"

"Good enough for a pushin' cad!" said Townsend. "You can't expect us to soil our hands on you."

Morcom grinned.

"Tain't a laughin' matter for you," said Smythe. "We're goin' to get through your thick hide somehow, you outsider!"

Smythe pinned the cartridge sheet on Morcom's chest. He used several pins to fasten it to jacket and waistcoat, and there was a howl from Morcom as a pin went in too deep.

"Keep still, or you'll get some more!" grinned Smythe.

"You silly asses!" gasped Morcom.

"What are you fixin' me up with that silly rubbish for?"

"Charity cad!" sneered Topham.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Morcom.

"The thick-skinned rotter doesn't feel even that!" said Howard, in disgust.

"Perhaps he will when Rookwood sees him like that. Kick him back to the school!"

Morcom looked uneasy for the first time.

"Look here, this has gone far enough!" he exclaimed. "Chuck it! I don't want to go back to the school."

"You're goin', all the same."

"I've got to get to Fernwood."

"You're not gettin' there this afternoon, old bean," smiled Adolphus.

"You're goin' back to Rookwood fixed up like that, for all the school to see what we think of you. We're goin' to parade you round the gates. Get a move on!"

"Look here—"

"Kick him, somebody!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Morcom.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, will you march!" chuckled Adolphus.

And Morcom of the Fourth marched—there was no help for it. In the midst of the grinning crowd of knuts he was marched back to the gates of Rookwood.

The 4th Chapter.

Something Like a Surprise!

"Charity cad!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Tubby Muffin.

Tubby Muffin was adorning the gateway with his fat person, looking for the arrival of Lord Maybrook's motor-car. He quite forgot the marquis and his car, however, at the sight of Morcom.

Dusty and dishevelled, with his cap gone, and his collar loose, his tie torn out, and the placard on his chest, Dick Morcom looked a rather extraordinary figure.

Several juniors gathered round the gates, and there was a general chortle.

"Take him into the quad!" said Gower.

But Adolphus Smythe shook his head.

"The Head might see him."

"Well, then the Head would know what we think of the cad!" said Tracy.

"Might lick us all the same!" said Adolphus sagely.

"Let's keep the cad in the road, and parade him! The fellows will all be round him soon, excepting Silver and those brutes who are at footer."

"You silly rotters!" roared Morcom, struggling with his bonds.

"Let me go, I tell you!"

"Not just yet!" chuckled Smythe.

"It's beginnin' to work," said

Tracy, with a grin. "He's beginnin' to feel it. Perhaps he'll have the decency to clear out of Rookwood after this?"

"By gad! He would if he had any feelin's at all!" said Adolphus. "Here, keep out of the way of that car!"

A big motor-car had appeared in the distance, coming on in a cloud of dust. At the sight of it, Morcom redoubled his efforts to get loose from his bonds. But it was in vain. His wrists were too securely tied. His face was crimson now, and his eyes gleaming. But his exasperation was due to a cause quite different from that to which Smythe & Co. attributed it. Morcom had recognised the big car in the distance.

As the knuts hustled him to the roadside, to let the car pass, Morcom made a desperate effort, butted his way through them, and started to run, still with his hands bound.

"Stop him!" roared Smythe.

"After him!"

The knuts rushed on Morcom, and collared him again. Two or three pairs of hands seized him and dragged him back. The big car was passing, and it was slowing down. It stopped outside the school gates.

The liveried chauffeur at the wheel sat motionless, but an elderly gentleman looked from the car. He looked out with a frowning brow, and adjusted a pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez on his prominent Roman nose, and looked again, apparently startled and shocked.

"I—I say, that must be the marquis!" ejaculated Tubby Muffin.

"Stop this scene at once!" thundered the old gentleman in the car.

And Smythe & Co. spun round in astonishment. It had not occurred to them that the occupant of the car might be a caller at Rookwood.

"Eh, what?" ejaculated Smythe.

"What's it got to do with you?" demanded Tracy insolently.

The old gentleman turned almost purple. He stepped from the car with a gold-headed cane in his hand.

"You young rascals—"

"Oh, mind your own business, old so-bersides!" called out Peele.

The old gentleman spluttered.

"Upon my word! Is that the way you address—?" He choked. "Good gad! What are boys coming to—Rookwood boys, too! Good gad! Release that lad at once! Release him, I say! He is my son!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"It's the merry old gamekeeper!" yelled Peele.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Smythe.

"Morcom, is this your pater? Has he borrowed his master's car for a joy-ride! What a neck!"

Whack!

Adolphus Smythe gave a howl as the old gentleman's cane whacked across his shoulders.

"Ow! Whoop!"

"Here, chuck that, you old fossil!" yelled Gower, jumping out of reach.

The prisoner was released now, and he stood rather unsteadily, facing the old gentleman with a crimson face. Lord Bob's "dodge" had been a hopeless failure. He had not been able to escape the meeting with his father, after all, owing to the unexpected intervention of the knuts.

Now the cheerful young gentleman had to face the music!

"Bob, what does this mean?"

"Oh dear!"

"Your hands are tied—"

"Only—only a lark, father—"

"I do not see any lark, as you call it, in this outrageous affair!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

"You young rascals! Release my son at once! Good gad! I will report this to your headmaster! Upon my word!"

Tubby Muffin untied the junior's hands. Tubby knew—he felt at least—that this stately old gentleman must be the marquis Jimmy Silver was expecting, though his claiming Morcom as his son was a bewildering puzzle to Tubby. Even Smythe & Co. were realising that this couldn't possibly be the gamekeeper!

"And now, Bob, tell me what you are doing at Rookwood!" exclaimed

the old gentleman sternly. "I supposed you were in Cornwall."

"I—I—"

"Have you come so far to visit young Morcom?"

"I—I—"

"You should not have made such a journey without informing me," said the old gentleman. "However, there is no harm done. Morcom is here. I suppose?"

Smythe & Co. exchanged glances of blank wonder. They wondered whether this irascible old gentleman was right in his mind. Smythe had a sudden brain-wave, and he darted towards the chauffeur, who was looking on at the scene with a stolid face.

"Who's that old gent?" he breathed.

The chauffeur looked at him.

"Lord Maybrook!" he answered.

"The Marquis of Maybrook?" stutered Smythe.

"Yes."

"Oh gad! Wha-a-at does he mean by calling that fellow his son, then?"

"That's his son, sir—Lord Robert Egerton."

"Ye gods!" stutered Smythe.

The knuts fairly gasped as they heard the chauffeur's reply. Meanwhile, the hapless Lord Bob was stuttering confusedly under his father's stern, inquiring eye. There was no doubt that the facts had to come out now, and the sportive youth, at that moment, rather regretted his escapade.

"Come in with me, Bob," said Lord Maybrook. "I am here to see Morcom, who has not written to me, as I expected. What are you hesitating about?"

"I—I—"

"What is the matter?" snapped his lordship. "Take that ridiculous paper off, boy! What is it pinned on you for?"

Lord Bob jerked off Smythe's entertaining placard.

"I—I— he stutered. "The— the fact is, father, Dick—Morcom isn't at Rookwood."

"What!"

"But—but I am—"

"Eh?"

"You—you see," stammered the junior, "Dick was a bit nervous about coming to the school, so—I made him go to Cornwall instead and—"

"Robert!"

"And—and came here in his name, just to see what the place was like, so—so that I could put Dick up to the ropes, father."

"Good gad!"

Lord Maybrook stared speechlessly at his hopeful son for a full minute. By that time a crowd of Rookwooders were on the spot, and they all stared on in an astonished silence.

Bob hung his head.

"Only—only a lark, father," he faltered. "I—I—"

"You young rascal!" burst out the marquis at last. "How—how dare you play such a trick on me and on the headmaster of Rookwood! Upon my word, I shall request Dr. Chisholm to flog you for this, Robert!"

"Yes, father," said Lord Bob meekly.

"And you will come away with me!" exclaimed his lordship. "So—so you have been passing here as Dick Morcom?"

"Ye-e-es."

"Ah, I think I understand now!" exclaimed the marquis, and his eyes turned on Smythe & Co. with a glance that made them feel excessively uncomfortable. "That is why you had on that ridiculous placard. That is why—Upon my word! You were supposed to be my gamekeeper's son, and so, in the circumstances, I am glad Morcom did not come here. Rookwood is not good enough for him."

"Oh, these silly cads don't count here, father!" said Lord Bob hastily.

"Most of the fellows are awfully decent. I—"

"You will go in at once, and prepare to leave with me!" exclaimed his lordship. And he strode in at the gates, his Roman nose red with wrath.

The 5th Chapter.

Lord Bob Leaves Rookwood!

Lord Bob followed his father more slowly. He was scarcely inside the gates when he felt a touch on his arm. He glanced round, and met the smiling, ingratiating face of Adolphus Smythe.

"Awfully sorry, old bean!" said Adolphus.

"What?"

"Thank you for that bounder Morcom, of course. I—I—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!"

"I'm awfully sorry!" stammered Adolphus. "If I'd known—"

Lord Bob turned his back on Adolphus, and walked towards the School House. Four juniors came

(Continued on page 154.)

Result of Football Competition No. 1.

In this competition one competitor sent in a correct solution of the pictures, and the FIRST PRIZE of £5 has been awarded to:

STANLEY LOVE,
20, Enmore Green,
Shaftesbury.

The THREE PRIZES OF A TUCK HAMPER have been awarded to the three following competitors, whose solutions came next in order of merit:

R. Clark, Milton, Glen Ogilby, by Forfar; J. C. V. Batter, 76, Derby Road, Ponders End, Middlesex; G. Chambers, 172, Dover Road, Folkestone.

Eighteen competitors, next in order of

merit, divide the EIGHT PRIZES OF 5/- EACH:

Miss M. Kemp, 15, Musard Road, Hammersmith; Miss May Kemp, 15, Musard Road, Hammersmith; H. C. Love, 20, Enmore Green, Shaftesbury; F. C. Love, 20, Enmore Green, Shaftesbury; Lilly Bachelor, 19, Kettering Road, Levenshulme, Manchester; A. Jones, Vine Cottage, Dudley Road, Ventnor; H. C. Donaldson, 13, Woodstock Road, Gosport; John Clark, 724, Great Northern Road, Woodside, Aberdeen; J. S. Marriner, 95, Langthorne Street, S.W. 6; W. T. Young, 74, Monmouth Road, Lower Edmonton, N. 9; F. Diver, 55, Rutland Road, South Hackney, E.; Blanche Brooks, 16, Nicholls Square, Hackney Road, E. 2; Ivy

Gapper, Holwell Manor, Sherborne, Dorset; D. Manning, 185, Westbourne Grove, W. 11; William Scott, 424, Parliamentary Road, Glasgow; C. G. Schumacher, 38, Kilmiston Street, Kingston, Portsmouth; H. Ellis, 41, Naylor Street, Miles Platting, Manchester; Norman Willis, Whelford, Langdon Road, Cheltenham.

The correct solution is as follows:

It will be eight months before the fate of the Football Trophy is decided, and there will be numerous exciting contests before the great day of the Cup Final. "May the best team win" will be the wish of all football's enthusiastic followers.

THE MISSING CENTRE-FORWARD.

(Continued from previous page.)

would have had to post it, not send it by hand."

"Where did she live when she was here?"

"In Stafford Street, sir; close up against the Blue Moon."

Holdfast nodded.
"I'll go and make a few inquiries," he said. "Cheer up, Mr. Crawford; don't look so glum! I fancy I may be able to find your man in time for you yet."

He strode off down the main road, walking lightly and quickly, and whistling what he quite unjustifiably believed was a tune.

Now, although Storn-ton-over-the-Bridge was a bigish place commercially, its main shopping was restricted to a small area round about the market-place.

There were other shops in the by-streets, isolated, shy-looking little places, but they sold mostly cheap sweets, inferior brands of cigarettes, and similar odds-and-ends. There was also a fried-fish emporium, which did a roaring trade in fish-and-chips in the evenings, and advertised the fact by a gaudy electric-light sign.

Holdfast concentrated on the market-place. He had a specimen of the paper on which the note had been written in his pocket. It was a fairly expensive type of paper, such as only one of the bigger stationers would be likely to keep in a place like that.

He drew blank at the first two. But at the third, the largest, which was also a lending library, he struck it lucky.

He was told that they kept paper of that kind there, though there was little or no sale for it.

In fact, they hadn't sold any for weeks until a day or two ago, when Mr. Davis, of the Blue Moon, had bought some.

Holdfast bought a box, envelopes and all complete, for half-a-crown, and, not wishing to be bothered with it, left it thoughtfully on the counter of a tobacconist's near by, where he bought some cigarettes.

He then made his way to the Blue Moon, and ordered a tankard of ale.

He retired with it to a seat in the bow-window of the bar, which was crowded, and listened to the talk which went on.

Inside five minutes he recognised the fact that Mr. Sam Davis, the proprietor, was not only a publican, but a public-spirited man, who was willing to lay five to three on the home team winning the match.

Sam Davis was a big, jolly-looking man, with a loud voice—a round waist-line, and a nose which looked as if it had been shaped and moulded at the wrong end of "Petticoat Lane."

He was doing brisk business, too, for in a quarter of an hour or so he had booked something like a couple of hundred pounds in bets.

Holdfast set down his empty tankard, lit a cigarette, and strolled out into the yard at the back of the inn.

It was a large yard, and had many coach-houses and stables, for in days gone by it had been a famous old coaching inn.

At the moment, barring a farmer's trap or two and a couple of side-cars, it was empty.

At least, it wasn't quite empty, because in one of the coach-houses was an uncleaned light lorry, and on the floor-boards of the lorry there were some darkish-brown stains. Nothing very noticeable, but there they were. And they were bloodstains!

Holdfast slipped a little sliding steel rule out of his pocket, measured the length of the wheel base, the width of the axle, and compared them with a slip of paper on which he had scribbled some notes. He left the yard, and went back to the inn.

The crowd had drifted away, and Mr. Davis was meditatively chewing the butt of a cigar.

Holdfast invited him to have a drink, and ordered some beer for himself. He seated himself in the bow-window, as before.

There was a basket of small squares of cheese on the table, biscuits and pepper in a cruet. He loosened the top of the cruet, and with a clumsy jerk splashed the pepper all over the linoleum, just as Mr. Samuel Davis came up with the beer.

Holdfast apologised, and whilst Davis sent for one of the maids to sweep up the mess, he took the measurements of two excellent impressions of Davis' footprints.

Later, he inquired the price of rooms at the inn, and said that he'd heard there was a football match coming off.

"I fancy the Orford lot myself," he said casually.

"Do you now?" said Davis. "Well, I'm nothing if not a sportsman, and I stand by our own crowd. I do a bit of betting on the quiet, just to oblige folk as it were."

"I'll give you five to three—there. No; I'll make it two to one, if you like," he added. "And there ain't nothing mean about me! You can have it in fivers or tenners, so long as I see your money first. No offence; but you're a stranger."

"Being a stranger," said Holdfast, "I'm not betting high. There's two pounds ten in notes. If I win, I'll come and stay here for a day or so and take my winnings out that way. How does that suit you?"

"You're a sportsman, sir!" said Davis. "And if you win, I'll see that you have the best there is!"

Holdfast bade him good-day and went out, smiling quietly to himself. He was beginning to appreciate the humour of the situation.

To begin with, he had ascertained in his rambles that Mr. Samuel Davis, for all his apparent prosperity, was really on the verge of bankruptcy and had put to it to make two ends meet.

If he won all his bets on the forthcoming match he might be able to tide matters over, and to enable him to do so, he had undoubtedly been the moving spirit in collaring young Longford.

There were the bloodstains on the floor-boards of the light lorry. The wheel base and axle measurements corresponded, and so did the marks of Mr. Samuel Davis' flat feet!

Again, he had been the only recent purchaser of the particular type of paper used by Rose Hampton, and he would have had dozens of opportunities of getting specimens of her handwriting to make a clumsy copy of—yet clever enough to deceive young Longford, who had read the brief note in a bad light, and Remington, his uncle, who had probably only seen it a few times.

Holdfast went back to the Bull Inn and had a quiet rest. As the surest way of getting to sleep, he read a mid-Victorian novel, which he found on a lace-covered table in the window. At least, he read some five pages of it, dropped it on the floor with a thud, and woke up an hour or so later.

Then he reviewed matters seriously. Davis was undoubtedly a knave to risk his neck unnecessarily. Also, he would presumably feed Longford. This food would have to be taken to him after dark and presumably after closing-time.

Holdfast decided that the quickest way of finding Longford was to trail Davis.

At nine-thirty he was at the Blue Moon—at least, he was outside it in a drizzle of rain, and watched the stragglers depart and the lights turned down. Half an hour afterwards Mr. Samuel Davis and another man slithered out of the front door, and closed it quietly behind them.

Mr. Davis was carrying a coil of rope over the crook of his left arm—an unusual thing to go for a walk with late at night. The other man carried a basket which appeared to contain food.

Holdfast allowed them twenty yards grace, and followed discreetly.

He had rubber studs on the soles of his boots, and, in any case, he could walk as quietly as the proverbial cat on hot bricks.

The origin of that saying is "wrapt in mystery." Cats like a fireside, it is true, but it is difficult to understand why they should amuse themselves by a placid stroll on hot bricks.

The way lay up the hill out of the town, and the old cobble-stones gave place to bare earth.

Ahead of them lay a wooded ridge, the fringe of which they reached after crossing three stiles. Half-way up the ridge Davis and his companion came to a halt, and by the light of a torch adjusted some clumsily made cloth masks, with eye-slits in them, to their faces.

Holdfast, sitting behind a big beech-tree, and watching them, was mildly amused. He also took care to see that the safety catch of his automatic worked easily and smoothly. Sometimes they have a nasty knack of jamming at a critical moment.

The men went on a few yards, looking to Holdfast's mind extremely ridiculous in their masks, and arrived at a small, low wooden building. The front of it was of rough timber, and so was a portion of the roof.

The rest seemed to have been dug out of the side of the hill.

He recognised it at once as an old ice-house—a place where the ice, cut into blocks with ice-saws in the winter, used in even late Georgian times to be stored for summer's use.

As a rule, the pit is at least twenty, and sometimes thirty or forty, feet deep, and belonged to the big house of the district. Nowadays, of course, such things, though a few still exist, are obsolete for all practical purposes.

Davis opened the door, which was fastened by a clumsy, old-fashioned padlock, and went in, followed by the other man.

They in turn, were also followed by Holdfast. He was within less than six feet of them when they peered down into the pit by the light of one of the torches, and Davis, hooking the basket to the rope, let it down.

"There's some grub for you," he said, "and you can think yourself mighty lucky to get any. Don't you try any fool tricks, my lad, or may be we'll forget all about you to-morrow and the next day, and the next after that. You can 'oller till you're 'oarst, but no one will 'ear you, an' I'll—"

"That's just where you are mistaken," said Holdfast.

And, kicking Mr. Davis, who was in a stooping and favourable position, he sent him flying into the depths below.

Whether he landed on one ear or not, or whether he broke his neck, Holdfast had no time to inquire, for the other man sprang at him from the side with an oath.

Holdfast dodged quickly, and thrust out a foot, throwing himself backwards at the same instant, and bracing himself with his hands.

There was a yell of dismay, and the man, torch and all, arrived somewhere down below with a heavy thud and a grunt.

By some miracle his torch wasn't broken, and remained at the bottom of the pit gleaming dimly.

"You there, Longford?" asked Holdfast. "It's all right. I'm a friend of your Uncle Remington. Sorry for dropping things on you, but I had to get rid of the animals somehow."

"Are you fit enough to climb? There seem to be some handy timbers let into the wall, and if you can chuck me up that rope I can give you a hand."

"Right, sir!" came the answer. And a snake-like coil of rope flew upwards.

With the aid of the rope and the timbers Longford managed to climb up.

"I don't know who you are, sir," he said, breathing a bit quickly, "but

I'm very grateful to you. All the same, I don't understand what has happened in the least."

"My name's Holdfast, and when you disappeared, your team manager, Crawford, came to me and asked me to find you. I said I would, and I have. But let's have your end of the story first, and then I'll explain."

"Well, sir, I can't make it out. I came down with the rest of the team, and got leave to stay at my uncle's, at the Bull Inn."

"In the evening I went for a short sprint along the road. I'd strained my left leg a trifle, and wanted to work off the stiffness. When I got back a letter was handed to me from a girl I used to know—a Miss Rose Hampton—saying that she'd heard I was back, and that she was in great trouble, and wanted to see me at once."

"We were as good as engaged to be married, in spite of her father, who is an old waster. So naturally I started off at once. I went out by the window and through the garden, that being the shortest way to her place. I was in such a hurry that I didn't even wait to change, and I was a bit puzzled, too, because I thought she was down at the sea."

"It was dusk, and I was going along at a brisk trot, when all of a sudden a couple of men sprang out at me. One of them hit me in the face, making my nose bleed badly, before I could even fling up an arm to guard, and the other caught me a whack over the back of the head which knocked me silly."

"All I can remember is that they seemed to have something funny wrapped round their faces, and that I was bundled into a car of some kind."

"When I came to I had a splitting headache, and was down at the bottom of a deep hole of some sort, and couldn't get out."

Holdfast nodded.

"It's an old ice-house, and they must have lowered you into it whilst you were more or less insensible."

"Ice-house!" said Longford, peering about in the gloom. "Why, then, we must be in Storn-ton Park. There's an old disused ice-house there. I remember it as a kid, but who—"

"Do you know a man named Sam Davis, of the Blue Moon, in Stafford Street?"

"Know him? I should think I do, the swindling sheeny!"

A howl came up from the depths below, and Holdfast grinned.

"That's him," he said. "I rather fancied he'd broken his neck when I kicked him down there just now, and he's got a pal to keep him company. Those were the two beauties who laid you out. Davis has been betting heavily against your team, and he's practically broke, so he thought he'd turn the odds in his favour by kidnapping you. That letter of Miss Hampton's was a little bit of forgery of his, and he trusted to your reading it in a bad light, and bringing off his coup."

Holdfast stayed on for the match, and had the satisfaction of seeing Longford score the two winning goals, but he did not have the satisfaction of getting his money back or lifting a fiver off Mr. Samuel Davis, for the simple reason that that individual, having contrived to get out of the ice-house, had discreetly and wisely vanished.

THE END.

("The Sterne Road Mystery!" is the title of the story forming yet another of the adventures of "Bull-dog" Holdfast, which will appear next Monday. Look out for the next issue of the BOYS' FRIEND.)

THE ROOKWOOD CHARITY BOY.

(Continued from page 152.)

along from the direction of the football ground—the Fistical Four. They had learned from Tubby Muffin at last that the marquis had arrived.

"So it's all out now, kid!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lord Bob nodded dismally.
"You didn't dodge your noble pater, after all?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"That idiot Smythe stopped me!" Lord Bob explained what had happened, and Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled.

"Well, it was bound to come out sooner or later," said Jimmy Silver consolingly. "Are you leaving?"

"I'm going back in the pater's car."

"Sorry, old man!" said Jimmy. "We don't want to lose you. I suppose the real, genuine Morcom will be coming along soon?"

Lord Bob grinned.

"I fancy not! After what the pater saw at the gates, I think he's not likely to send Morcom to Rookwood. He's in a rare bait. I hope he won't complain to the Head about those silly asses!"

Townsend and Topham came along, looking rather sheepish and uncertain. They smiled rather feebly to the marquis son.

"I—I say, Lord Robert—" began Townsend.

"We—we apologise!" gasped Topham. "We—we hope you'll stay on at Rookwood, Lord Robert. We—we'll be glad if you'll stay in our study, too."

"Yes, rather!" said Townsend. "It—it was really a misunderstanding in—"

"Oh, quite!" said Topham. "Just a misunderstanding. I hope there's no ill-feelin' on your side, Lord Robert."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "I told you they'd love you as soon as they knew who you were. Morcom—I mean, Egerton."

Lord Bob grinned.
"It—it was all a mistake!" stammered Townsend.

"A rotten mistake!" said Topham. "We—we—"

Lord Bob stepped towards the two Knuts of the Fourth. They smiled at him feebly, hoping that he was going to shake hands.

Instead of which, Lord Bob grasped them suddenly by their collars and brought their heads together with a resounding crack. There was a simultaneous yell from Townsend and Topham.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Lord Bob went into the School House with the Fistical Four, leaving Towny and Topy rubbing their heads, and the rest of the Knuts decided not to offer the olive-branch to the youth they had so unhappily misunderstood. They realised that it was rather too late!

When the Marquis of Maybrook quitted Rookwood an hour later, Lord Bob Egerton went with him in the car—much regretted by the Fistical Four, who liked him, and perhaps still more by Smythe & Co., who had missed their one and only chance of palling with a marquis' son.

And Dick Morcom, as it turned out, did not come to Rookwood. The scene he had beheld at the school gates had quite changed Lord Maybrook's decision, and he made other arrangements for his protegee.

Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered what the Head thought of the transaction, which the marquis had explained to him before taking his son away; but they were left to wonder, for the Head naturally did not confide his views to the end study in the Fourth.

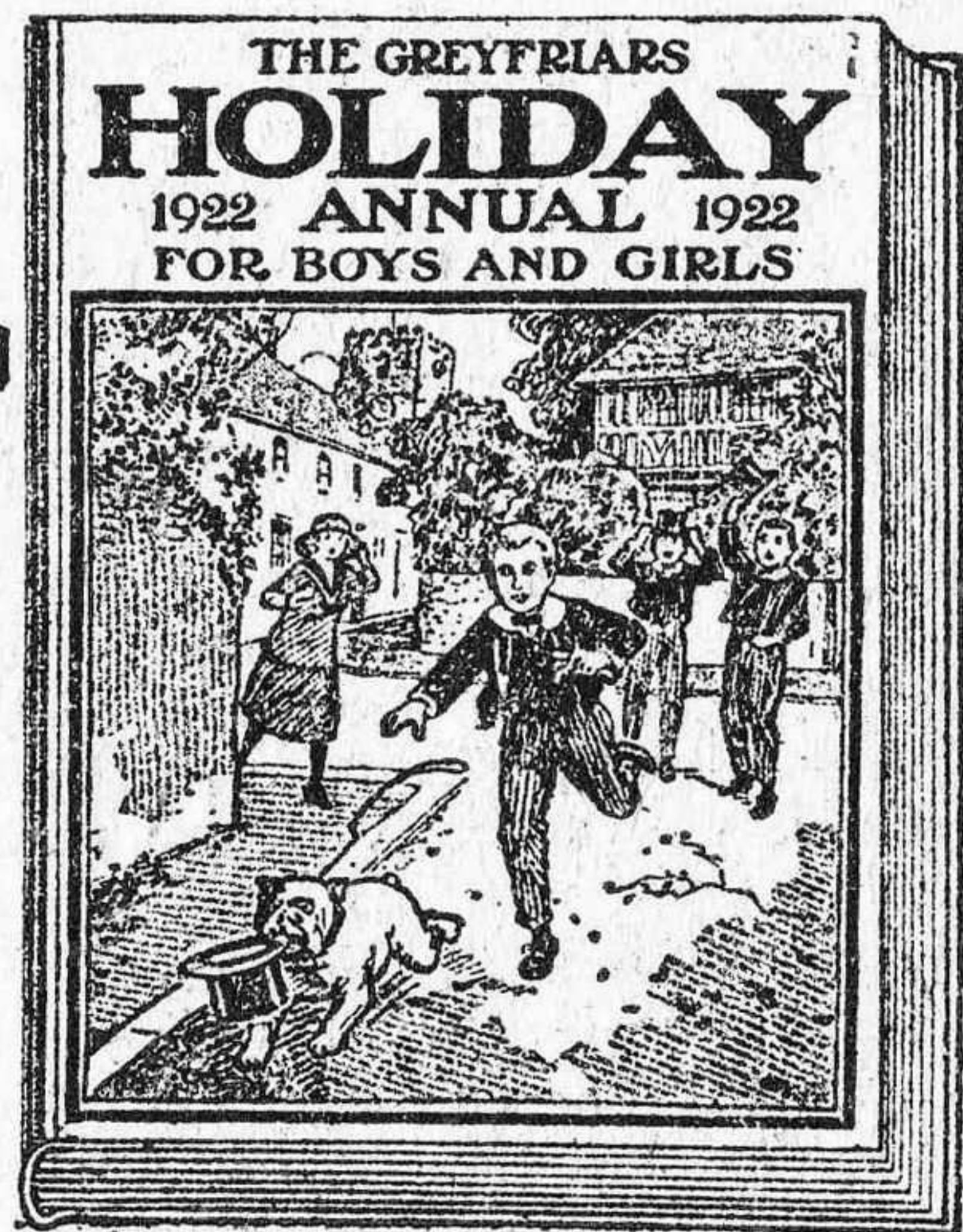
For some days afterwards the chief feeling among Smythe & Co. was a strong desire to kick themselves.

Their snobbish souls would have been delighted by knowing a marquis' son, and they had had the opportunity, and had lost it through snobbishness.

They could have kicked themselves hard. The revelation of Lord Bob's real identity had been a very, very painful surprise for the snobs.

THE END.

("The Rookwood Sleuth!" is the title of the grand, long, complete Rookwood School story appearing in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Secure your copy by ordering NOW!)



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