

# SPECIAL BOATRACE NUMBER!

# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>1d</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

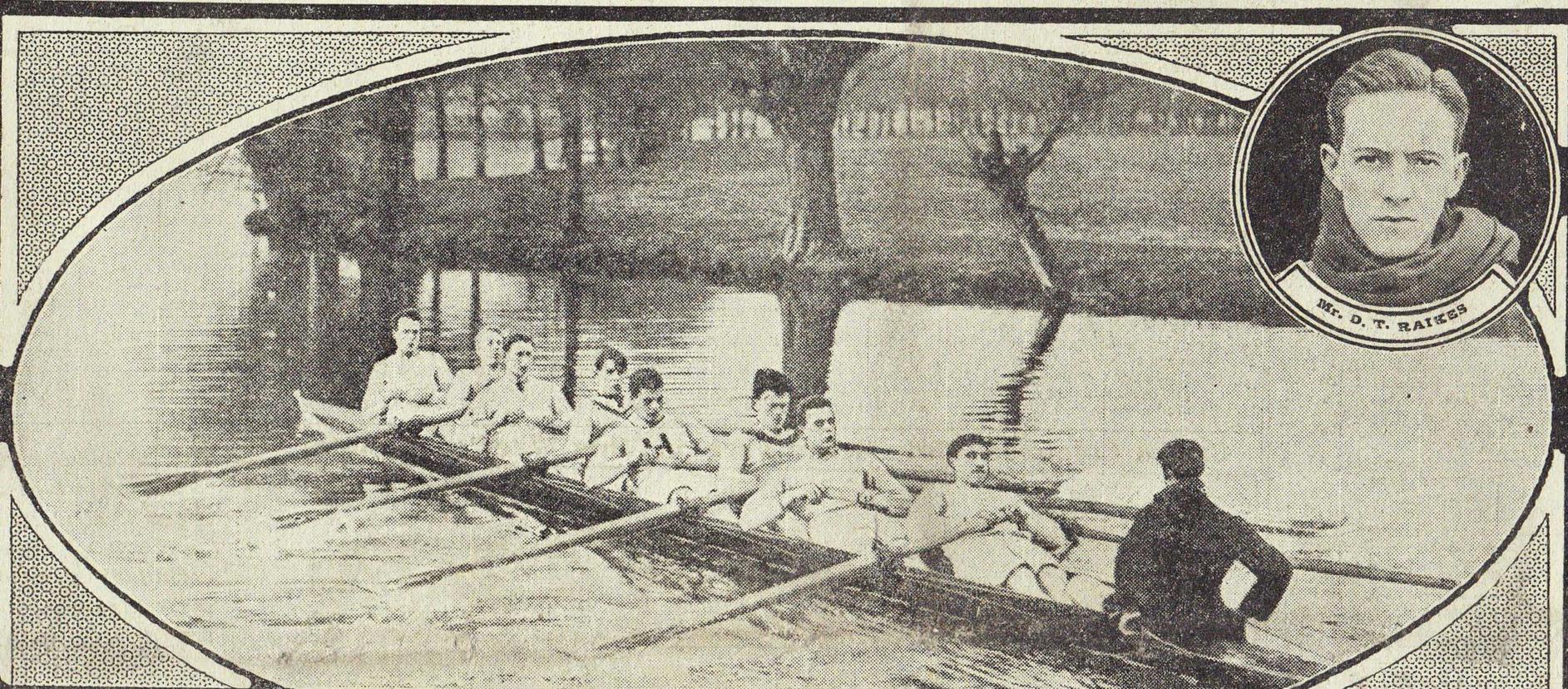
TWELVE PAGES!

ON SALE EVERY MONDAY.

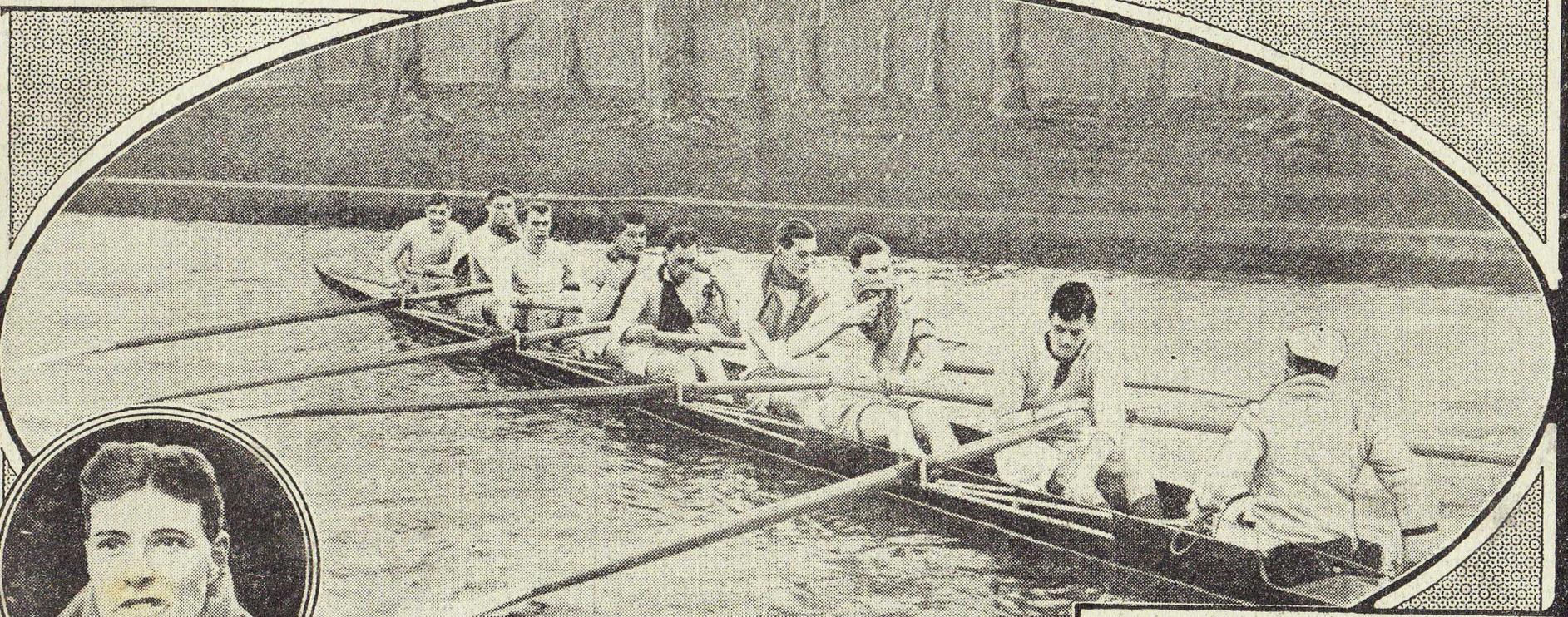
No. 1,086. Vol. XXII. New Series.]

27 YEARS OLD—AND STILL THE BEST!

[Week Ending April 1st, 1922.]



The above photograph shows the Oxford crew pulling well during a practice spin. If they reproduce their good form on Saturday, they should give a very good account of themselves. Inset is a specially taken photograph of their President, Mr. D. T. Raikes.



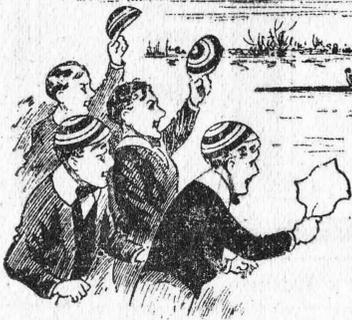
Above is a photograph of the Light Blues starting out on a practice spin. Their form is especially good this year, and Saturday's should be a record struggle. The inset photograph is of their stroke, Mr. H. H. S. Hartley.

READ THE ADVENTURES OF  
**JIMMY SILVER & CO. AT THE BOATRACE!**

## A SPECIAL BOATRACE STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS!

# Jimmy Silver & Co. at the Boat-Race!

By Owen Conquest



## The 1st Chapter. Boatrace Day!

"Ass!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell politely.

Arthur Edward's remark was called forth by a dark blue badge that was pinned on Jimmy Silver's jacket.

"Fathead!" was Jimmy Silver's equally polite rejoinder.

His observation was founded upon Lovell's light blue badge.

There was only one topic at Rookwood just then—the Boatrace. They were great on rowing at Rookwood, and naturally they took a deep interest in the classic event. Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, favoured Oxford, for the no doubt excellent reason that he had a cousin in the Oxford crew. Lovell, who knew all about rowing, and a little more, favoured the Light Blues—having an avuncular connection with Cambridge.

"What do you think, Raby?" asked Lovell.

"I think it would be ripping to see the race!" answered Raby.

"Ass! I mean—"

"What about asking the Head to let us off?" asked Newcome. "Even the Head ought to see that lessons are out of place on a day like this."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"There are lots of things that the Head doesn't see, old scout. That's one of them."

"I'd like to see Cambridge win!" said Lovell.

"Oh, you wouldn't see that!" answered Jimmy Silver airily. "You see, my cousin in the Oxford crew—"

"That's the chief reason!" retorted Lovell. "If your giddy cousin rows like you do, Jimmy—"

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"Order!" said Raby soothingly. "Hullo, here's Erroll, looking down in the mouth! What's your choice, Erroll?"

Kit Erroll gave the Fistical Four an inquiring look. His handsome face was rather clouded that morning.

"Choice!" he repeated.

"Yes, ass! Light or dark?"

"Eh?"

"Oxford or Cambridge?" hooted Raby. "Don't you know that it's the Boatrace to-day?"

"Oh, yes, certainly!" said Erroll, rather absently.

"Blessed if he hadn't forgotten!" said Jimmy Silver, in wonder.

"What tremendous thoughts are bubbling up in your brain-box, Erroll? Too busy to remember Boatrace Day?"

"I—I was thinking of something else," said Erroll. "I'm a bit worried, you chaps!"

"Oh, I know!" grinned Lovell.

"The Head's giddy visitor—Mr. Durie—"

"Slippery Smith!" said Erroll quietly. "There's no doubt about it, you fellows—he's the man! And I've heard from Inspector Sharpe, at Rookham, that he's not coming over till Monday about it. He's making inquiries, and in the meantime—"

"Well, let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver. "I dare say he knows best."

"I can't help feeling worried about it," said Erroll. "But I suppose I can do nothing. But I've a message for you, Jimmy!"

"Trot it out."

"Mr. Dalton told me to look for you. The Head wants to speak to you before lessons."

"Blow!" said Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth made his way to the Head's study; not with happy anticipations. Interviews with the Head were not always grateful or comforting.

But, rather to Jimmy Silver's surprise, he found Dr. Chisholm genial.

"Ah, I sent for you, Silver!" he said. "I have received a telephone message from your father. Mr. Silver has requested leave for you to witness the race."

Jimmy's eyes danced.

"I have decided to accede to the request, Silver. I shall grant you an exeat for the day—for five."

"Oh, thank you, sir," said Jimmy gratefully. "For—for five?"

"The fifth member of the party," continued the Head, "will be Erroll, of the Fourth Form."

Jimmy Silver fairly gasped.

Erroll was under sentence of threatened expulsion from the school!

"It is Mr. Durie whom Erroll has to thank, Silver!"

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy, completely bewildered. "I—I hardly understand, sir! I—I couldn't have thought—"

"I hope, Silver, that this generous kindness on the part of Mr. Durie will convince you that Erroll's statements regarding him are wild and absurd?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Jimmy. "It does look—"

"Very good!" said the Head.

"You are free to leave the school as soon as you wish, Silver, with your friends. You will return in time for call-over this evening. That is all. You may go now."

Jimmy Silver gasped out his thanks, and almost danced out of the Head's study.

"In the circumstances, yes."

"Then you won't be allowed to," said Jimmy Silver warmly. "You're coming with us, you ass, if we have to yank you by the ears!"

"But—"

"Blow your butts!" said Lovell hotly. "Don't butt like a billygoat now! You're coming!"

"I can't help thinking there's something behind this," said Erroll, with a troubled look. "Why should the man do it? I am his enemy, and he knows it! There's something behind it."

"Shurrup!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Here he comes!"

The Fistical Four stood silent as Lucian Durie approached the cheery group. There was a pleasant smile on the young man's face. Whether Mr. Durie was "Slippery Smith" or not, he knew how to make himself agreeable. He nodded kindly to the juniors.

"I hear that you youngsters are going on an excursion to-day," he said. "I hope you'll have a good time!"

"Thank you!" said Jimmy a little awkwardly.

He could not help thinking at that moment how recently he and his chums had "handled" Mr. Lucian

Mr. Durie was, whatever his motives might have been, the Fistical Four did not mean to let their chum stand on his dignity and lose such a chance.

The Fourth were going into their Form-room now, and Mornington called to Erroll in the doorway.

"Come on, Erroll!"

"No giddy construe for Erroll this morning," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Wish us luck, Morny. We're going to the Boatrace."

"By gad! Lucky bargees," said Mornington. "Room for one more? How did you get leave?"

Mornington knitted his brows thoughtfully when he heard of Mr. Lucian Durie's intervention.

"Jolly 'queer!" he commented. "He's heapin' giddy coals of fire on Erroll's napper. Perhaps he thinks you'll telephone to Inspector Sharpe, and tell him it's all a mistake, Erroll?"

"He's mistaken if he thinks so," said Erroll drily.

"Well, best of luck," said Mornington, and he followed the rest of the Fourth into the Form-room.

Mr. Lucian Durie's kindness was, indeed, rather hard to comprehend, in the peculiar circumstances. But the Fistical Four, at least, did not waste much time thinking about it.

They had enough to think of in their happy exemption from school for the day, and the prospect of witnessing the classic rowing event of the year. In great glee they made their hurried preparations for the journey.

Kit Erroll was glad to go, there was no doubt about that; but he did not look so gleeful as the Fistical Four. There was still a cloud on his brow.

But he really had no choice about going. Jimmy Silver & Co. declined to entertain objections, and undoubtedly they would have walked Erroll

Newcome. "There's a lot of people going."

The Rookwood party were changing at Rookham Junction. The London train was already in, and passengers were taking their places, when Lovell and Jimmy Silver renewed the unending argument concerning the respective merits of Oxford and Cambridge. In point of fact, the argument was ill-timed. So it was postponed, while the juniors rushed for a carriage. A short, thick-set man with a bull-neck and a moustache like a ragged scrubbing-brush, hustled against them close to the train. He was looking along the carriages, but seemed in no hurry to take his seat.

When the five juniors crowded into a carriage, however, the bull-necked man followed them in.

"Full up here!" said Lovell, who had to stand.

The man scowled at him.

"Room for me," he answered.

"There's more room along the train," said Erroll.

The bull-necked man looked at Erroll, and his deep-set, narrow eyes glinted for a moment.

He did not answer, but shoved Lovell roughly back, and forced his way into the carriage.

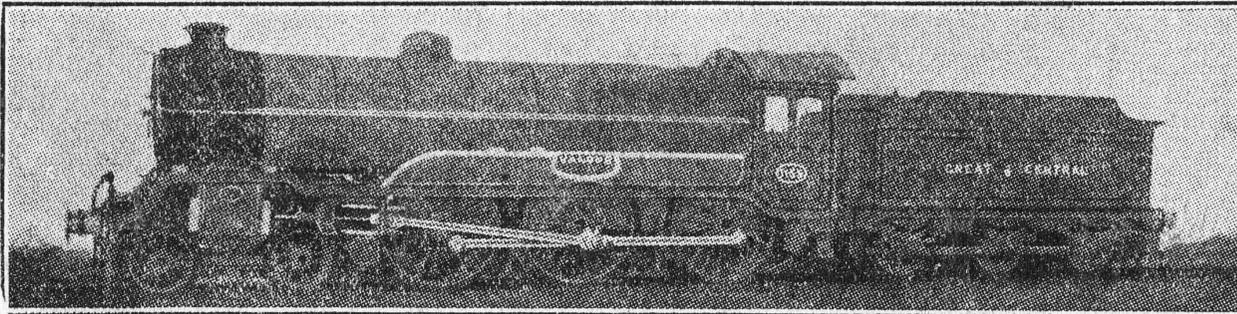
"Look here!" exclaimed Lovell angrily.

"Nuff said! This 'ere carriage will 'old one more."

Slam! The porters were closing the doors of the train. It was in the minds of the Fistical Four to collar the bull-necked gentleman and drop him on the platform, as a reward for his incivility; but it was too late now. The express moved out of the station.

There were more passengers than seats in the carriage; and Lovell stood at one end and the bull-necked man at the other. A passenger alighted a few stations further on.

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## The 2nd Chapter. Luck for Five!

"Hurrah!"

"What—"

"It's ripping!"

"But what—which—"

Jimmy Silver's face was beaming as he rejoined his chums in the Rookwood quadrangle.

He caught Arthur Edward Lovell round the neck and waltzed him round in a state of ecstasy.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell. "What the thump—"

"Are you potty, Jimmy?" yelled Raby.

"Hurrah!" trilled Jimmy Silver.

"We're going to see the giddy Boatrace!"

"What?"

"Leave for five!" shouted Jimmy, releasing the breathless Lovell at last.

"What price that?"

Lovell staggered against a beech trunk and gasped for breath.

"Ow! You silly ass!"

"Little us and Erroll!" chortled Jimmy Silver. "The pater's played up like a merry old trump, and he's got us leave from the Head. Little me, because I've a cousin in the Oxford crew, and you bounders because you're my pals, and Erroll—"

"Why me?" asked Erroll, in astonishment. "It's about the last thing I should have expected, in the circumstances."

"Beats me hollow!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver explained.

Erroll's brow darkened a little as he listened. Lovell and Raby and Newcome exchanged curious glances.

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if the bargee isn't such a blighter, after all!" remarked Lovell. "This is jolly decent of him, anyhow, to put in a word for Erroll!"

"Slippery Smith or not, he's done a decent thing this time!" said Raby.

"Anyhow, Erroll gets off!" said Newcome.

Erroll compressed his lips.

"I don't care about accepting a favour from Slippery Smith," he said quietly. "I'd rather not."

"Why, you ass," bawled Lovell, "are you thinking of missing a chance of seeing the Boatrace?"

Durie, and he marvelled at Durie's geniality.

"I've been looking out trains for you," said Mr. Durie, with a smile.

"You'll do well to catch the nine-thirty at Rookham. That will give you good time."

"You're very kind!" gasped Lovell.

"Not at all!" said Lucian Durie smoothly. "I regret very much having lost my temper yesterday, although you must admit that I was very greatly provoked. I gave you young fellows a bad impression of me. I am sorry!"

"Oh!" stammered Jimmy.

"Your friend Erroll has done me injustice," said Lucian Durie. "I hope to convince him of it. That's all."

Erroll looked at him steadily.

"I do not take back a single word," he said in a clear voice.

"You are Slippery Smith, and I know it. You made a murderous attack upon me, and only these fellows coming along saved my life."

"H'm!" murmured Lovell uneasily.

"I've admitted that I lost my temper," said Durie calmly. "That is all there is about it. You will know me better some day, I hope. Best of times on your excursion to-day, my boys."

And with a genial nod, Lucian Durie walked away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. In spite of themselves, in spite of what they knew—what they were certain of—they were staggered. Was it possible—was it barely possible—that there was some ghastly mistake? That they had misjudged—misunderstood? It did not seem possible, and yet—

"Anyhow, we're going," said Lovell, at last. "And Erroll's coming. Come in and get ready. Jolly decent of him to look out the trains for us. I hate time-tables. Come on!"

"But!" began Erroll. "I don't want—"

"Come on!" roared Lovell.

Kit Erroll was marched into the School House, willy-nilly, to get ready for the excursion. Whatever

off by friendly force if he had declined to accompany them.

While the rest of the Fourth Form were grinding in the Form-room with Mr. Dalton, four merry juniors and one serious fellow walked cheerily out of the gates of Rookwood, and walked down to Coombe. There they took the local train to catch the 9.30 at Rookham.

Mr. Lucian Durie looked after them, as they started, with a smile on his face, a strange, threatening smile.

After they were gone the young man sauntered back to the School House, and went to the Head's study. Dr. Chisholm was in the Sixth Form room then, digging Greek roots with the Sixth, and there was no one to hear Mr. Durie's talk on the telephone. It was a brief talk, after he had rung up a number in Rookham.

"The nine-thirty!" said Mr. Durie. "Sure?" came a rather husky voice.

"Of course. You've lots of time, Dusty."

"Lots!"

That was all. But Mr. Lucian Durie smiled with satisfaction as he put up the receiver and strolled out of Dr. Chisholm's study. The five excursionists were expected—by the Head—to turn up at evening call-over at Rookwood. But if Mr. Lucian Durie's plans worked well, only four of the party were to answer to their names when the roll was called in Big Hall!

## The 3rd Chapter.

### The Boatrace!

"Cambridge!" said Lovell.

"Forget it!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I think—in fact I know—"

"What you know about races, old fellow, would fill a thimble, if it were a tweeny-weeny thimble—"

"Look here, you ass—"

"There's the train, you fellows," said Erroll mildly. "Hadn't you better settle the point after we've got our seats?"

"Just what I was thinking!" remarked Raby.

"Come on, you duffers!" said

and Lovell promptly dropped into the seat, anticipating a movement on the part of the bull-necked gentleman.

"Look 'ere, you give me that there seat!" said the man with a scowl.

"First come, first served!" answered Lovell.

"I tell you—"

"You may take my seat, if you like," said Erroll, who was sitting near the disgruntled passenger. And he rose.

The bull-necked man gave him a quick, very curious look.

"I don't want your seat!" he said sourly, and a little awkwardly, a flush coming into his hard, rugged face.

"Just as you like," said Erroll, and he sat down again.

The man stood silent, letting the matter drop, as the train raced on. Jimmy Silver & Co. chatted away, nineteen to the dozen, if not twenty, as the landscape whirled by the rushing express. They were in the greatest of spirits.

There was another change half an hour later, and the Rookwood party trooped off merrily to the waiting train. They had scarcely taken their seats in it, when the bull-necked man put his head into the carriage.

"Hullo! here's that merry merchant again!" murmured Lovell.

There was an empty seat in the carriage this time, and the bull-necked man sat down in it, favouring the Rookwooders with a black glance. Erroll was seated opposite the man, and his eyes turned upon him a good many times, with something of perplexity in them. The man avoided looking at him, however, staring out of the window during the completion of the journey.

At the London terminus Jimmy Silver & Co. mingled in a thronging crowd, and the bull-necked man vanished from sight and from their minds. Over light refreshments at the station there was a discussion. Lovell advancing his views, at great length, in favour of Cambridge; and by this time Arthur Edward seemed to have settled it, to his complete satisfaction, that the Light Blues were bound to win, for the reason

that Jimmy Silver's cousin was rowing for Oxford! Lovell took this as an irreducible minimum of certainty upon which to found his argument. "Suppose we settle where we're going to see the race!" suggested Erroll, in a pause of the argument due to expenditure of breath.

"What a jolly good idea!" grinned Raby. "For goodness' sake, dry up, you fellows! It will be settled soon, anyhow."

"I think—" hooted Lovell. "You couldn't!" objected Jimmy Silver.

"Fathead!" "Ditto!" "Near Hammersmith Bridge, on the tow-path, is a good place," said Erroll.

"What about Putney, for the start?" said Newcome. "Or Mortlake, for the finish?" said Raby.

"Well, we can't see both start and finish," remarked Jimmy Silver sagely.

"Unless you ask that wonderful cousin of yours to give us a lift in the Oxford boat!" suggested Lovell, with deep sarcasm. "I've no doubt they wouldn't notice the extra weight—with your cousin pulling."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Cheese it, old chap—cheese it!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're wearing out your chin. By Hammersmith Bridge is a jolly good place, though I've no doubt it's pretty well crowded already."

"I think—" resumed Arthur Edward Lovell.

"If you chaps keep on chinning, we sha'n't see the race at all," said Newcome. "There was no need to come up to London to hear you fellows jaw—enough of that in the end study at Rookwood."

"More than enough!" concurred Raby. "Lots more! Heaps more!" "Get a move on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Along the towing-path—that's our place!"

And the Rookwooders got a move on. They were soon in the midst of a thronging crowd, most of them decorated with light or dark blue colours, and all evidently keen on the classic race. In the midst of the throng, a thick-set, bull-necked man shoved by the juniors, and they recognised their acquaintance of the Rookham train.

"Hallo, there he is again!" said Lovell, as the man disappeared in the throng. "Blessed if that merchant isn't haunting us!"

"Is he following us?" said Erroll quietly.

Lovell stared. "Following us? Why the thump should he follow us?"

"He came up from Rookham with us—"

"So did lots of people, to see the Boatrace," said Raby. "That's what he's here for, I suppose. No reason for following us that I can see."

Erroll did not answer, but his brows were knitted. Jimmy Silver pressed his arm.

"You don't suspect—"

"I don't know!" muttered Erroll. "But—but the man is keeping close to us, and you can see the kind of ruffian he is from his looks. And it was Slippery Smith that found us the train from Rookham—"

Jimmy compressed his lips. "We'll jolly well keep our eyes open," he said. "Keep together, you fellows—mind you don't get separated."

It was not easy to keep together now, for the juniors were in the midst of a thick, jostling, swaying crowd. The tow-path was swarming with sightseers, and there was a buzz of discussion as to whether "they" had started. The juniors secured a fairly good place, and they held together, though there were a good many unceremonious elbows at work.

Arthur Edward Lovell cast a glare behind as he felt a shove, and almost jumped at the sight of the bull-necked man, with his sharp, rat-like eyes.

"You again!" ejaculated Lovell. "Don't shove, please!"

Erroll looked round. Without heeding Lovell, the bull-necked man shoved along, until he was standing close to Erroll.

So thick was the crowd now that it was impossible to avoid contact—the sightseers were almost wedged together. There was a shout:

"Here they come!" All eyes were on the river now. In the distance, in the sunshine on the river, there was a glimpse of two racing skiffs. Erroll's eyes turned from the rest—he forgot the lowering face behind him. It was fortunate that Jimmy Silver did not forget. It was almost by inspiration that "Uncle James" of Rookwood turned his eyes from the gleaming river below. The next moment there was a shout and a desperate struggle.

#### The 4th Chapter. A Narrow Escape!

"Help!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"What—"

"Great pip!"

"Jimmy—"

Jimmy Silver was grasping a thick, muscular wrist—and in the hand there was something that glittered and flashed. With his left hand Jimmy struck fiercely at the bull-necked man's savage face.

"Erroll, lend a hand!" "What—?" panted Lovell dazedly. Clang!

The knife dropped on the ground among a swarm of feet. The bull-necked man wrenched himself away. "Collar him!" shrieked Raby.

Jimmy sprang at the man again, and a backward blow sent him reeling. Kit Erroll's grasp was almost on the ruffian, when he squirmed into the swaying crowd out of reach.

The crowd, jostled, swayed, and wedged. Excited voices shouted on all sides.

It had all passed so rapidly that only a few close at hand were aware that there had almost been a tragedy.

"The villain!" panted Jimmy. "After him! Collar him! Stop that man! Stop him—stop him!"

"Order there!" "Keep your place! Stop showing—"

Erroll caught the captain of the Fourth by the arm.

"Too late!" he said quietly. "He's

"There's nothing to be done now, Jimmy," he whispered. "Thank you, old fellow! You've saved my life! Thank you! But the brute's gone! Look at the race, old fellow."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard. But in the wedged crowd it was impossible to do anything further, and he turned his attention to the racing skiffs again, only in time to see them flash by. There was a roll and a roar of shouting voices, and the crowd began to move.

"Cambridge was leading, I think!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Think again!" grinned Raby. "I fancy Oxford was half a length ahead—"

"Quarter!" said Newcome. "Half a length behind, you mean!" said Lovell obstinately. "You'll find that they'll be about three lengths behind at Chiswick Eyot."

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy Silver. "Jolly hot here!" grunted Lovell. "I'm jolly sure Cambridge was leading!"

"Fathead!" It was not easy to get out of the swarming crowd. It was a good hour before the Rookwood juniors were away from it, enjoying the cool breeze there after the heat of the crowd.

"My pater will be at the hotel at Mortlake," said Jimmy Silver. "I was thinking that we might get along and touch him for a spread, but—"

"Jolly good idea," said Lovell. "No 'but' about it."

was lined by a thick hedge, Jimmy turned out of it, through a gap in the hedge. His chums followed him quickly. In a minute or less they were in cover, watching the path they had come by, through the interstices in the hedge. If Jimmy Silver's surmise was correct, and the ruffian was still shadowing them, they would know the truth soon. And in the eagerness of watching for him they forgot even the Boatrace, and its still unknown result; and Lovell even forgot to remark that he was pretty sure that it would turn out that Cambridge was the winner. There was a footfall on the path, and the juniors breathed quickly and hard.

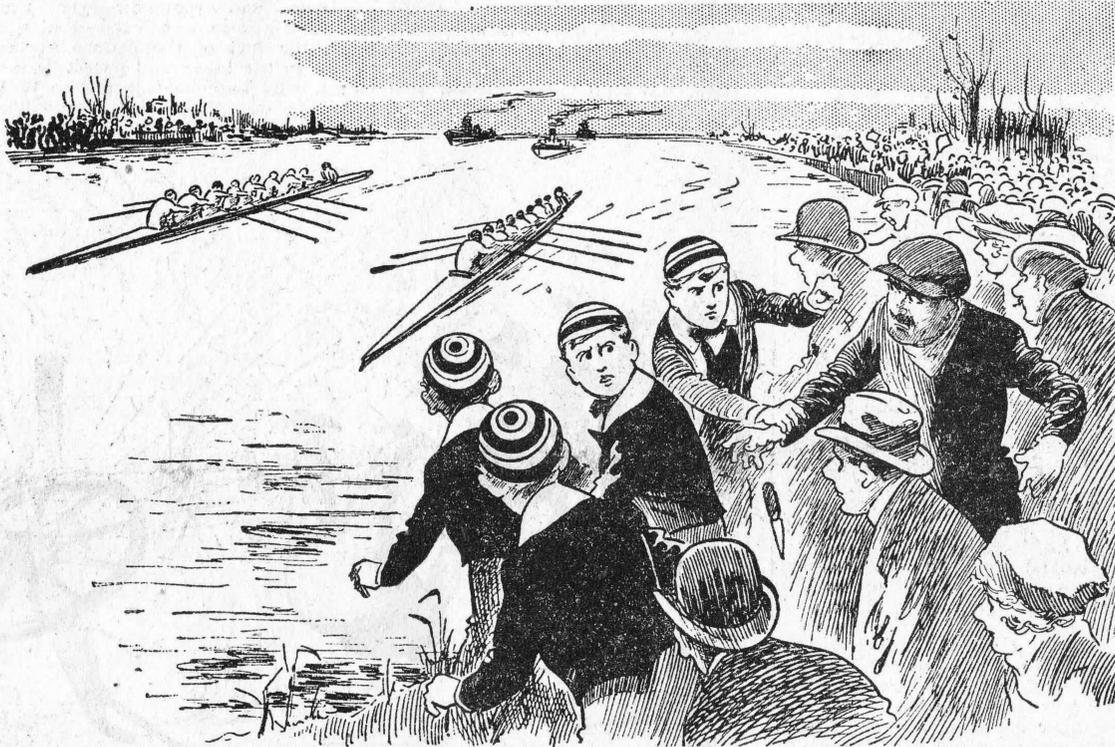
#### The 5th Chapter. Rough Justice!

"There he is!" Jimmy Silver scarcely breathed the words.

Along the lonely shaded footpath came a thick-set figure—a man with a bull neck, whose rat-like eyes were watchfully about him.

Evidently Slippery Smith's confederate was still on the track of the Rookwood juniors. He had failed once, but he was still shadowing his quarry to make another attempt.

The five juniors remained quite silent, watching through the hedge, waiting for the ruffian to come abreast of the gap.



**A MURDEROUS ASSAULT!** Quick as lightning Jimmy Silver was on the man, and a desperate struggle ensued. The next minute there was a clatter as the knife dropped to the ground!

gone! He's knew he was safe in a crowd like this! The villain!"

"But—but what did he do?" stammered Raby.

"He had a knife—"

Jimmy Silver panted. He was white with horror of Erroll's fearfully narrow escape.

"I caught his wrist just in time," he panted. "He wedged close to Erroll, and there was a knife in his hand. In another second Erroll would have been stabbed—"

"Good heavens!" "Jimmy!"

"Here they come!" came in a tremendous roar. "Here they come!"

Jimmy Silver cast a wild glance round. A policeman could be seen towering over the heads along the tow-path, but too far off for speech, and approaching him was impossible. The bull-necked man had vanished, wriggling in the crowd—the swarming throng that made his dastardly attempt safe from his very audacity and daring.

If that murderous blow had been struck, Erroll would have fallen among the crowd. Probably no one would have guessed that a knife-thrust had been delivered till afterwards. The crowd was wedged too thick for observation. But for Jimmy Silver's watchfulness and prompt intervention, Slippery Smith, at Rookwood, would have had nothing more to fear from the boy who had denounced him.

It had been almost a tragedy—a fearful tragedy—and Jimmy's heart felt almost sick within him. Erroll was quiet and calm. He understood the danger he had been in, and he knew to whom he owed it. He pressed Jimmy Silver's arm.

"But," said Jimmy Silver quietly, "we want to deal with the ruffian who tried to stab Erroll."

"He's gone long ago," said Lovell with a stare. "Not likely to show up again, I fancy. We should give him in charge."

"He won't show up where we've a chance of giving him in charge," assented Jimmy Silver. "But you can bet he's not losing sight of us. I fancy if we took a lonely walk he would drop in again."

"Then we won't!" said Lovell.

"We will, you mean," said Jimmy coolly. "We want to see that merchant—and handle him. He's not going to have it all his own way! I want to get my hands on him."

"Well, that's not a bad idea!" agreed Lovell. "If he follows us again—"

"I fancy he will! It's pretty clear that he's a confederate of Slippery Smith, and that's why that villain got Erroll leave to come up and see the Boatrace—and found us our train at Rookham, too. He had fixed it up with the villain to follow us, and find an opportunity of ridding him of Erroll's evidence."

"I suppose that's pretty clear now," admitted Lovell. "We—ought to have suspected something of the sort, come to think of it. I wonder what the Head would say to this?"

"Not much good telling the Head—we've got to deal with the villain ourselves. And if I get my paws on him"—Jimmy's eyes glinted—"I'll make him sorry for himself."

"What ho!" The juniors turned from the river into a quiet path, shaded by trees. They sauntered on for some distance, and at a point where the narrow path

The rascal came on rather quickly, looking ahead of him as he came. It was evident that he did not suspect for a moment that his intended victim had stopped, and that the five juniors had taken cover to wait for him.

He came opposite the gap in the hedge, and Jimmy Silver made a sign to his chums. Like an arrow from a bow Jimmy leaped out into the path, and before the man had even time to swing round on him, Jimmy's clenched fist struck. There was a gasping howl from the ruffian as he reeled. He made an effort to recover, but the rest of the Rookwooders were on him now. The ruffian went to the ground with a crash, with the chums of Rookwood sprawling breathlessly over him.

If he had a weapon he had no time to produce it. His wrists were grasped and held, and Erroll was kneeling on his chest, and Jimmy Silver's boot was planted on his bull neck.

A savage string of oaths broke from the ruffian.

"Fairly caught!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "You shouldn't have tried the same game twice, my man."

An oath answered him. "Now you're going through it," continued Jimmy. "We can't very well carry you to a police-station, but we're going to make you sorry for yourself. Catch on?"

"A Rookwood ragging!" grinned Lovell.

"That's it!" The bull-necked ruffian cursed furiously, and he had a flow of language that rather startled the Rookwood juniors. But they did not heed his oaths. They proceeded to rag him—carefully, thoroughly, and

scientifically. His own dirty neck-cloth was used to tie his hands, and his own belt was buckled round his legs. Then he was rolled to a deep muddy puddle, and rolled and rolled in it, until he had gathered up all the available mud. By this time the Rookwood juniors were chuckling gleefully; and the ruffian was too breathless to swear again.

But the avengers were not done with him yet. Jimmy Silver produced a penknife and shaved off one half of the ragged moustache, amid yells of laughter. Then he shaved off the bull-necked gentleman's eyebrows—as neatly as it could be done with a penknife. Slippery Smith's accomplice lay and gasped and spluttered and glared, during that operation, the result of which gave him a really striking look.

"Looks a bute, doesn't he?" roared Lovell. "The police will know him now, anyhow."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Now he can hop it!" said Jimmy Silver laughing.

One of Dusty's legs was turned up and buckled into place with his belt. He had one leg left to hop on, but he refused to hop. Instead of that, he lay and yelled out oaths and threats.

"Start him!" said Jimmy Silver.

Five pairs of hands dragged up the ruffian, and he stood unsteadily on one leg, gasping for breath through the mud that smothered him.

"Now, all kick together," said the captain of the Fourth, "and kick so long as he's in reach."

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Go it, ye cripples!" yelled Lovell.

Five pairs of boots commenced operations on Dusty. With a furious yell the ruffian leapt forward on one leg. Five pairs of active boots dribbled him along, and he hopped desperately to escape.

"Hop it!" shrieked Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Hopping desperately, Dusty got up quite a good speed, and the Rookwooders, laughing too much to pursue him further, stopped. Dusty, still going strong, hopped out of sight.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lovell wiped his eyes. "I fancy that merry merchant will remember his meeting with Rookwood chaps. I wonder how he'll get home?"

"That's his biznai!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "I think we're done with him now, anyhow. Now let's hustle along and get to Mortlake in time to catch the pater. I want to congratulate my cousin on a win for Oxford."

"For Cambridge, you mean!" said Lovell.

"Bow-wow!"

"Rats!"

And they started.

Dusk was deepening on Rookwood School when five juniors came in at the gates and headed for the School House, just in time to slip into Hall and answer "Adsum" to their names when the Head called the roll. Jimmy Silver & Co. were a little tired—but very cheerful. They had had a glorious day out, and Jimmy's "pater" had stood a really marvelous spread, and they had news of the Boatrace for the less lucky Rookwooders who hadn't seen it; and so they were quite satisfied with themselves and with things generally. They answered cheerily to their names, and came out of Hall in great spirits; and in the corridor they caught sight of Mr. Lucian Durie. Erroll had stayed behind in Hall to speak to Mornington, and was not in sight when Lucian Durie came up to the Fistical Four.

"Back again, what?" asked Mr. Durie.

"Yes," said Jimmy, "here we are again."

"Isn't Erroll with you?" Durie was breathing quickly. "Hasn't he come back?"

"Sorry!" said Jimmy.

"He hasn't?"

"Ha, ha! He has!"

"Good news for you, Smithy. What?" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

Erroll came out with Morny. Lucian Durie gave him one look, and his face whitened, and he turned and strode away without another word, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went to their study quite happy and bright after their day at the Boatrace.

THE END.

"Truth Will Out!" is the title of the splendid long, complete, Rookwood School story appearing in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Order your copy well in advance. There's going to be a record demand!