

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

TWELVE PAGES! ON SALE EVERY MONDAY.

No. 1,088. Vol. XXII. New Series.]

27 YEARS OLD—AND STILL THE BEST!

[Week Ending April 15th, 1922.]

## THE SPORTS SYNDICATE GETS GOING IN TWO SPORTING EVENTS!



HOLLIES

# The SPORTS SYNDICATE!

By CAPTAIN MALCOLM ARNOLD

SCREAMINGLY FUNNY ADVENTURES OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., AT  
THE HANDS OF A NEWCOMER TO ROOKWOOD SCHOOL!

# The Amazing New Boy!

By OWEN CONQUEST.



The 1st Chapter.

Tubby Butts In!

Third lesson had ended in the Fourth Form room at Rookwood School—the last lesson for the day, as it happened to be Wednesday—a half-holiday. But Mr. Dalton had not given the word to dismiss.

Apparently the Fourth Form master had something to say to his pupils before they went trooping out into the spring sunshine.

The Fourth wondered what it was. Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather anxious.

They had the usual number of sins upon their youthful consciences, and they wondered dismally whether anybody was going to be detained, and whether worst of all, it was going to be their noble selves.

The weather was unusually warm for the time of year, and the Fistical Four had arranged a swim for that afternoon, which, of course, detention would have knocked on the head.

And the Co. at that moment were acutely conscious of the fact that they had rolled Smythe of the Shell down the School House steps that morning, with disastrous results to Smythe's shining topper and to his gorgeous necktie. If Mr. Dalton knew about that, and if he regarded the incident as more serious than it really was—Form-masters had a way of regarding incidents as more serious than they really were!

"Silver!" Jimmy repressed a groan. "You have doubtless heard that a new boy is expected at Rookwood," said the master of the Fourth.

"I—I've heard it mentioned, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "Chap named Gunner, or something."

"A boy named Peter Cuthbert Gunner," said Mr. Dalton. "He arrives at Coombe by the three-thirty train from Latham. It is probable that he will enter the Fourth Form here. In any case, he will be on the Classical side. As you are head boy in the Form, Silver, I was thinking of requesting you to meet him at the station and conduct him to Rookwood."

"Oh, yes, sir! Certainly!" said Jimmy.

"Very well, then. This boy, Gunner—"

Tubby Muffin jumped up. "If you please, sir," spluttered the fat Classical, "I—I—I'm willing to go and meet Gunner, sir."

"Muffin!"

"Jimmy's got something on for this afternoon, sir," said Muffin; "and—and I know Gunner, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Dalton. "If you are personally acquainted with the boy Gunner, Muffin—"

"Oh, quite, sir!" said Tubby. "He will be delighted to see me. No need for Jimmy Silver to go, sir."

Jimmy Silver gave Muffin quite a grateful glance. For once in his fat career Tubby Muffin had come in useful. As a rule, Tubby was neither useful nor ornamental. But he had justified his fat existence for once—in the opinion of Uncle James.

Mr. Dalton reflected for a moment or two. Reginald Muffin was not the fellow he would have selected for any task or duty. But the Form-master was a kind-hearted young man, and he

could see that his request had considerably disconcerted the Fistical Four. And Tubby's statement that he was acquainted with the new boy made a difference.

"Very well, Muffin!" said Mr. Dalton, at last. "The matter shall be left in your hands."

"Thank you, sir!" purred Muffin.

"You will be at the station in good time for the train, Muffin, and you will bring Gunner directly to Rookwood."

"Certainly, sir."

And Mr. Dalton dismissed the class.

As the Fourth Form went down the corridor, Jimmy Silver tapped Tubby on his fat shoulder.

"Good for you, Muffin!" he said. "You're not a bad little fat oyster, after all. I didn't know you knew the new kid, either."

Tubby grinned. "I haven't exactly met him," he explained.

"Then how the thump do you know him?" asked Lovell.

"Well, everybody knows the name—Gunner's Hardware, you know,"

"But, I say, Jimmy, what about that half-crown—"

"Nothing about it, old fat bean!"

And the Fistical Four walked out cheerily into the quadrangle, leaving Tubby Muffin as stony as they had found him. But Master Muffin was in a very hopeful frame of mind.

Gunner's hardware had a world-wide fame. Nobody could read a newspaper without learning something about Gunner's hardware.

It stood to reason, in Tubby's opinion, that some of the hardware profits would arrive at Rookwood in the pockets of the son and heir of the great Gunner, and Tubby had great confidence in his skill as a borrower.

Tubby's idea was that that afternoon he was going to meet not merely a new kid, but a horn of plenty, and during dinner Tubby's fat face wore a smile of happy anticipation.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Arrival of Gunner!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sauntering out at the gateway that afternoon when Reginald Muffin came along. The Fistical Four smiled as they saw him. Tubby had been taking a little trouble to make a good impression upon the new fellow.

there a coin previously overlooked—a wild hope that proved unfounded.

When the train came in from Latham, Tubby Muffin was on the alert. The local train carried few passengers, and among the half-dozen that alighted at Coombe, Tubby was confident of picking out a new junior for Rookwood. But he was puzzled now.

Two big farmers, a soldier in khaki, and a lady with a shawl and a shopping-bag passed him. Not one of this party could possibly be supposed to be Peter Cuthbert Gunner.

Then there was a fat, sporting-looking gentleman, whom Tubby recognised as Mr. Joey Hook, of the Bird-in-Hand. The sixth and last passenger to alight was a rather big fellow, and as he was the only boy in the train, Tubby concluded that he must be Gunner.

But Tubby was puzzled. Mr. Dalton had said that Gunner was likely to enter the Fourth, and this youth was bigger than most fellows in the Shell at Rookwood; indeed, he looked almost old enough and big enough to be in the Fifth.

"That must be him!" murmured Tubby, with a ruthless disregard of his nominatives. "That's him! But what a whacker for the Fourth! Must be some awful dunce."

He blinked rather uncertainly at the stranger. Gunner—if this was Gunner—stood on the platform and looked about him. He was a sturdy fellow, with a rather round face and rugged features.

Tubby had rather expected a shy and sheepish fellow. New boys were often shy and sheepish. But there was absolutely nothing shy or sheepish about this new boy.

From his looks, the railway-station might have belonged to him. He had the air of being monarch of all he surveyed.

His size and his assured looks smote Tubby Muffin with doubts. This was not exactly the kind of fellow to be taken under the protecting wing of the fat Classical, and led in the way in which he should go, and subjected to the gentle process

"Muffin!" repeated Gunner. "Is that your name?"

"Yes—Reginald Muffin."

"My only sainted Sam!" said Gunner. "What a name! Do you really go about calling yourself Muffin?"

Tubby Muffin breathed hard. He was justly proud of his name, which was at least unique. Moreover, Tubby was, according to his own account, descended from Sir Reginald Muffin de Muffin, who came over with the Conqueror, and he had often told an unbelieving Fourth so.

But he checked the wrathful retort on his lips. He had not come there to dispute with P. C. Gunner.

"I'm to take you to Rookwood, old chap!" he said.

Gunner sniffed.

"Take me to Rookwood! I suppose I can get to Rookwood without your help, Muffin Crummet, or whatever you call yourself!"

"I—I say—"

"Jolly careless of them to send a Fourth Form fag to meet me!" said Gunner, frowning. "Not respectful."

"You're going into the Fourth, ain't you?" asked Muffin.

"What rot! I'm going into the Sixth, I expect."

"Wha-at?"

"The Fifth at least!" said Gunner. "I really left St. Bede's because they wouldn't give me my remove. You can cut off, Muffin, or Shortbread, or whatever your name is. I don't care for the company of fags!"

With that Peter Cuthbert Gunner walked off the platform, leaving Muffin staring after him.

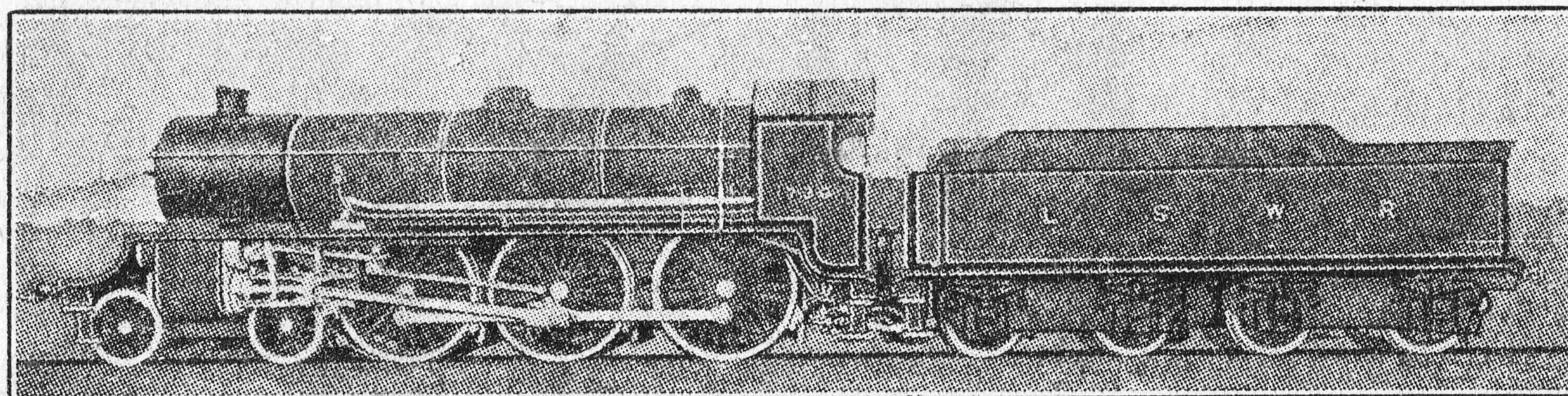
"Oh crumbs!" said Muffin, in dismay.

He rolled out of the station after Gunner. His hopes were reduced almost to zero; but after all the trouble he had taken, he would not leave a stone unturned.

He overtook the hefty new fellow outside the station, where Gunner was looking about him again, still with the air of a fellow who was monarch of all he surveyed.

"I say, this is the way to the

Grand Coloured Plate Given Free in This Week's "Popular"!



This splendid plate of the latest type of London and South-Western Railway Express Engine, beautifully printed in correct colours, is presented free with the "POPULAR." On Sale Tuesday!

said Tubby Muffin. "You see it on every blessed hoarding and in every newspaper. Gunner's Hardware is the Best, you know."

"Thought I'd heard the name," said Raby. "But this Gunner can't be that Gunner. This Gunner is a kid, and he can't be a hardware merchant."

"That'll be his father, of course," said Tubby. "The Gunners are simply rolling in money, you know."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

He thought he understood now why Reginald Muffin had thrown himself into the breach, as it were.

"And you want to roll in it, too, you fat boulder!" said Jimmy. "Is that it?"

"I don't call that grateful, after I've saved you from chucking away your half-holiday," said Tubby Muffin severely. "Of course, I made my offer out of friendship for you, Jimmy—pure friendship. Besides, after I'd saved you from giving up your swim, I knew you'd lend me half-a-crown or so."

"Quite a mistake!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"If this is the hardware Gunner, you can stick him for half-a-crown!" chuckled Lovell. "He's got more than we have."

"Look here, I can't go and meet a new chap without a bob in my pocket," said Tubby Muffin. "In the circumstances—"

"Leave him to us, then," said Raby, laughing. "If the new kid's a giddy millionaire, he may be worth meeting!"

Tubby Muffin looked alarmed.

"I—I say, you keep off the grass, you fellows!" he exclaimed. "I'm going to meet Gunner. I've got Mr. Dalton's authority—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You shall have him, for what he's worth, Tubby!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "You're welcome to my share in the hardware profits."

"And mine!" chuckled Lovell.

His collar was spotless—an indication that it wasn't Tubby's own collar, but a borrowed article. His boots shone resplendent, reflecting the spring sunshine—or, to be more correct, Putty Grace's boots shone resplendent, for Tubby had borrowed Putty's best boots for the occasion.

His necktie was really handsome, which was accounted for by the fact that it belonged to Valentine Mornington. Master Muffin evidently felt that he was dressed to kill, and was pleased with the result, for there was quite a strut in his gait, and he bestowed a rather lofty look on the Fistical Four.

With his fat little nose high in the air, Reginald Muffin marched along the lane to Coombe, and Jimmy Silver & Co., grinning, went on their way by the towing-path.

The Fistical Four were heedless of the arrival of Peter Cuthbert Gunner, and utterly disregarded the millions Gunner senior was supposed to have made in the hardware trade.

They attached more importance to their swim in the Roke that afternoon than to any number of Gunners, poor or wealthy.

Indeed, Arthur Edward Lovell remarked that it did not matter a red cent if the whole Royal Artillery happened along at Rookwood that afternoon—this being a brilliant pun on the new boy's name.

But all Tubby Muffin's fat thoughts were fixed on Gunner, and he arrived at Coombe Station half an hour before the train, leaving nothing to chance.

He spent the interval on the platform, eyeing the automatic machine which provided chocolates, and occasionally groping and fumbling in his pockets in the hope of discovering

of "touching" for a loan or two. Tubby's happy anticipations began to fade.

But he rolled up to the stranger at last, and intercepted him as he turned away from a porter and started for the platform exit.

"I say, Gunner—" began Tubby.

The big youth stared at him.

"Hallo, fatty!" he said.

"You—you're Gunner?"

"I'm Gunner!" assented the big fellow. "P. C. Gunner."

"P. C. Gunner!" repeated Tubby.

"Police-constable Gunner—what? He, he, he!"

This was a joke—a little pleasantry to put matters on a friendly footing at once.

But the pleasantry was wasted on Master Gunner. He did not seem to catch on, as it were. He stared rather grimly at Muffin.

"What's that?" he said. "I don't follow."

"P. C., you know," explained Tubby, with another feeble giggle, "that stands for police-constable, doesn't it?"

"Of course it doesn't!" said Gunner. "It stands for Peter Cuthbert—my names."

"I—I mean, it might, you know," said Muffin feebly. "Only—only a little joke, you know. He, he, he!"

"Joke?" said Gunner. "I don't see the joke. Do I look anything like a police-constable?"

"Nunno."

"Then what do you mean?" asked Gunner.

Tubby began to wish that he had not been humorous. He decided to let the matter drop.

"I'm from Rookwood," he said.

"Mr. Dalton's sent me to meet you, Gunner."

"Who's Mr. Dalton?"

"Our Form-master—master of the Fourth, you know."

"Blessed if I see why he should send you!" said Gunner. "Are you in the Fourth?"

"Yes—Muffin of the Fourth."

school, Gunner!" murmured Tubby. "We—we pass Mrs. Wicks' tuckshop down the High Street. They've got awfully good jam-tarts there, Gunner."

"They can keep them!" said Gunner.

At the end of a side street the river could be seen gleaming in the sunshine, and Gunner started in that direction.

Tubby rolled after him.

"I say, it's a mile longer if you go by the towing-path," he said.

"What's a mile to me?" said Gunner scornfully. "I'm going by the towing-path. I'm in no hurry."

"Mr. Dalton expects—"

"Let him expect! He's not my Form-master," said Gunner.

"But he said—"

"Oh, don't worry."

P. C. Gunner walked off with long strides. Tubby Muffin set his fat little legs in rapid motion. He was determined not to part with Gunner, if he could help it, at least until the last hope was gone. The fat junior breathed spasmodically as he trotted along by the side of Gunner, whose long legs covered the ground in great style.

Gunner followed the towing-path as far as the bridge. Tubby was glad when the new junior stopped on the bridge to take a survey of the scenery. Gunner leaned on the stone parapet and looked over the shining river with an appreciative eye. Tubby almost collapsed on the parapet and breathed in gasps. Gunner grinned at him.

"Fagged?" he asked.

"Ow—yes—a little!" spluttered Tubby.

"You're too fat!" said Gunner.

"Look here—"

"I shall get some swimming here," said Gunner thoughtfully. "Do they do much swimming at Rookwood, Muffin?"

"Lots!" gasped Tubby. "Jimmy Silver's great on it."

"Who's Jimmy Silver?"

ANSWERS  
EVERY MONDAY...PRICE 2:

"Captain of the Fourth!" said Tubby.  
 "Oh, a fag!" said Gunner contemptuously. "I don't suppose he can swim! I was the best swimmer at St. Bede's. I ought to have had the prize the term I left, but there was a mistake. I should have won the long jump, too, only there was a slight accident; and it was me for the hundred yards, but for a fluke. And there isn't much doubt that I should have kicked the winning goal in the match against the Old Boys, only—"

"Only what?" asked Muffin.  
 "Only they wouldn't play me in the team," said Gunner frowning. "I was never properly valued at St. Bede's. I hope it will be different at Rookwood. I'm great on games—simply great."

Tubby Muffin grinned. Gunner's recitals of his triumphs did not really sound to him like the record of a fellow who was great on games.

"Hallo, there's somebody in the water!" exclaimed Gunner with a start.

He stared down over the parapet. The water was deep by the bridge, and on the sunny surface there showed a dark head.

Gunner did not hesitate. To Tubby Muffin's amazement, he threw off his hat, and jumped on the parapet.

"I—I say!" gasped Muffin.  
 Gunner did not heed. He put his hands together and dived, and there was a heavy splash below.

Tubby Muffin simply gasped.  
 "Off his rocker!" he articulated. "Fancy a chap diving into the river with his clothes on! I wonder if he can swim? Lucky that Jimmy Silver's swimming there!"

**The 3rd Chapter.  
 Saving Jimmy Silver!**

Jimmy Silver & Co. were enjoying their afternoon. It was not every junior of Rookwood who was allowed to go out for a swim without the presence of a master or a prefect. But the Fistical Four were quite at home in the water, and they were not reckless. Lovell and Raby and Newcome contented themselves with disporting under the willows; but Jimmy Silver, who was the best junior swimmer at Rookwood, went farther afield. He was swimming across the river near the old stone bridge when Peter Cuthbert Gunner arrived on the scene with Reginald Muffin. Jimmy's task was easily within his powers, and certainly it did not occur to him that anyone, seeing him in the water, would suppose that he was in danger. He had not yet had the pleasure of making Gunner's acquaintance, and so he knew nothing, naturally, of the wonderful processes of that youth's powerful intellect. The Rookwood swimmer was startled when a heavy splash sounded in the water within a couple of yards of him.

He spun round, concluding at once that someone had fallen from the bridge.

A head came up on the surface, and two hands were flung up. Gunner gasped and snorted like a grampus.

"I'm coming!" called out Jimmy at once.

A swift stroke carried him to the struggling Gunner.

He grasped Gunner's collar to keep his head up, and at the same moment Gunner grasped him by the hair. Jimmy, being in swimming costume, it was not easy to grasp him, and Gunner collared his hair as the safest hold. Jimmy gave a yell.

"Leggo!"  
 "Keep cool!" gasped Gunner.  
 "What?"

"I'll save you!"  
 "Save me?" spluttered Jimmy.  
 "Yes. Keep cool! Keep your courage up! I'll save your life!"  
 "My only aunt!"

Grasping Jimmy's rather thick hair tenaciously with his left hand, Gunner swam with his right, heading for the shore.

Jimmy Silver was so astounded that he let go Gunner's collar, and for a moment or two the gallant rescuer had it all his own way.

But Gunner, though he certainly had heaps of pluck, was under a serious misapprehension with regard to his powers as a swimmer.

His clothes were soaked and his boots full of water, and he found it extremely difficult to keep afloat.

He ducked under for a moment, and Jimmy went with him, dragged under by the grasp on his hair, and both came up spluttering.

"Let go!" shrieked Jimmy.  
 "Keep cool!" gasped Gunner.  
 "You silly owl!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Leggo my hair! You're—"

pulling it out by the roots! Yaroooooh! Leggo!"  
 "Oh dear! Ooooh!" spluttered Gunner, as his rather large mouth filled with water. "Ooooooh! Grooooooh! Don't struggle, kid! I'm saving you! Ow!"  
 "You crass dummy!" spluttered Jimmy. "Saving me, you fathead! I don't want to be saved, you frabjous jabberwock!"  
 "Good heavens!" gasped Gunner. "I didn't know it was an attempted suicide. I'm going to save you all the same!"  
 "You—you—grooooooooh!" gurgled Jimmy, as his head was dragged under again.

It was no time for argument, and his rescuer was obviously impervious to argument. There was only one way of releasing his captured hair, and that was by giving Gunner a gentle "jab," which Jimmy Silver accordingly administered.

He jerked his head free then, and backed away in the water. Gunner swam blindly, spluttering and gasping. His head went under, and Jimmy, realising that his extraordinary rescuer was being dragged down by his soaked clothes, seized him by the collar again.

"Don't struggle!" he said sharply.  
 "Leggo my collar!" spluttered Gunner. "How can I save you if you hang on the back of my neck, you idiot?"

Jimmy chuckled breathlessly. It was Gunner that needed saving, though he did not seem aware of it.

Keeping a grip like iron on Gunner's collar, Jimmy steered him shoreward, while Peter Cuthbert struggled and splashed and floundered frantically.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome swam out to lend aid to their chum, and they all grasped Gunner, and finally dragged him into the rushes. There the bulky new boy was landed, on his back, spluttering. Tubby Muffin came scudding down from the bridge.

Jimmy Silver pumped in a dazed state, and he was pumping in breath also, in spasmodic jerks.

"You've got him out?" gasped Muffin. "I thought he was a goner! I say, Jimmy, that's Gunner! Is he mad, do you think?"

"Jolly near it, I should say!"  
 "Didn't he fall in?" asked Raby.

"Jumped in—with his clothes on!" said Tubby. "Fancy that! Must be off his silly rocker, you know!"

"Must be!" said Newcome, in wonder. "They've sent him to Rookwood in mistake for a lunatic asylum, I should say."

Gunner sat up.  
 "All safe?" he gasped.  
 "Safe?" said Lovell. "Of course! Why shouldn't we be safe?"

"Oh, here you are!" said Gunner, blinking at Jimmy Silver. "I've saved your life, then."

"Saved Jimmy's life!" said Lovell dazedly.

"Lucky I came by the towing-path, wasn't it?" said Gunner. "I saw you in the water, and came in for you, young 'un. Pretty hefty dive from the bridge—what? But I'm a topping swimmer, luckily. You were a young ass to go into danger like that. But I'm glad I saved you."

"You frabjous, burbling jabberwock!" said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones. "I wasn't in danger. I was taking a swim. And you might have been drowned if we hadn't yanked you out of the water, you crass fathead!"

Gunner looked at him.  
 "Is that what you call gratitude?" he asked.

"Gratitude!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. When a fellow's saved your life at the risk of his own, you might at least thank him."

"You haven't saved my life!" shrieked Jimmy Silver. "We've saved yours, if any lives have been saved, you frumpious chump!"

Gunner staggered to his feet.  
 "I'm feeling a bit blown," he said. "Otherwise, I'd lick you for your cheek. Still, I'm glad I've saved your life."

"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin.  
 "You'd better get to the school and change your clothes," said Jimmy Silver. "You'll catch cold at this

rate. Tubby, you're supposed to be in charge of this born idiot. Tie a string on him and lead him to Rookwood."

"He, he, he!"  
 The Fistical Four went back to their swimming, and Gunner stared after them.

"Hi!" he called out.  
 "Hallo! What is it now?" asked Jimmy.

"Don't go out of your depth again."  
 "Wha-at?"

"I'm off!" said Gunner. "I've got to get a change of clothes. I can't stay here to pull you out again."  
 "Oh, my hat!"

"Keep in your depth," said Gunner.  
 And with that Peter Cuthbert Gunner started up the towing-path with Tubby Muffin, and the Fistical Four blinned at one another.

"So that's the giddy new kid," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Of all the born idiots—"

"Of all the frabjous chumps—" said Raby.  
 "Of all the burbling, footling dummies—"

"He's got pluck!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "But of all the crass, fat-headed, potty duffers—"

Peter Cuthbert Gunner had not succeeded in making a great impression on the Fistical Four of Rookwood. But he was quite satisfied with himself, which, after all, was perhaps the important point.

Without bestowing a thought further on Tubby Muffin, Gunner trotted on at a good pace. He was wet through, but keeping himself warm, and he was in a mood of glowing satisfaction. At his old school he had never been appreciated at his true value, as he had mentioned to Muffin. But fortune had smiled upon his arrival at Rookwood. On his first day at the school he had saved a Rookwooder's life at the risk of his own, and that was bound to bring him into the limelight at once, and show all Rookwood the kind of fellow he was. At his new school Peter Cuthbert Gunner was going to receive the kudos so long denied him, and which he so well deserved.

He found himself at the gates of Rookwood soon after dropping Tubby Muffin. Old Mack stared at him in surprise, as he came in drenched.

"This is Rookwood, I suppose?" said Gunner.  
 "It are," said old Mack. "And who are you, please?"

"I'm Gunner."  
 "Oh, the noo boy!" said Mack, staring. "Ow did you get in that state? Noo boys ain't supposed to come 'ere in that state. You'll get into a row, you will, Master Gunner. It's agin the rules."

"Is it against the rules to jump into the river and save a fellow's life?" asked Gunner.

"Oh crumbs!" said Mack.  
 Gunner tramped on. There were a good many fellows in the quadrangle,

tainly should refuse to be licked. Are you in the Sixth?"

"Eh—what? Yes."  
 "I expect to be put in the Sixth," said Gunner. "I shall refuse to be put in any Form lower than the Fifth, anyhow."

"I understood you were going into the Fourth."  
 "Utter rot!" said Gunner.

Bulkeley gave him a stare, and quitted the dormitory.  
 Gunner towelled himself down, and Tupper, the page, brought a bundle of clothes to the dormitory, and a message that the Head expected him. Gunner squeezed himself into the clothes, and followed the page downstairs. Jimmy Silver & Co. had just come in, and they smiled at the sight of the new junior.

"Behold the giddy rescuer!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

Gunner stared at the Fistical Four.  
 "Oh, you're Silver, I think?" he said. "Feeling all right after your narrow escape, Silver?"

"Ha, ha! Yes!" chortled Jimmy.  
 "How do you feel after yours?"

"Eh? I haven't had any escape," said Gunner, puzzled. "I don't follow. But you needn't worry about me. I'm as right as rain. Bless you, a little incident like that is nothing to me. I'm only glad I happened to come along in time to save your life!"

"What's that?" exclaimed Mornington of the Fourth. "Somebody been saving your life, Jimmy?"

"Not quite," grinned Jimmy.  
 "This frabjous ass saw me swimming in the river, and thought I was in danger, and jumped in. We just managed to get him out alive."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington.  
 Gunner crimsoned with wrath.

"You confounded cheeky fag!" he exclaimed. "What the thump do you mean? Serve you right if I'd left you to drown, I think!"

"It wouldn't have hurt me," grinned Jimmy, "and it would have saved me the trouble of fishing you out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "The 'Ead's expecting you, sir," murmured Tupper to Gunner.

Peter Cuthbert did not heed. Perhaps it dawned upon him just then that he was going to be misunderstood and unappreciated at Rookwood, just as he had been at St. Bede's. It really looked like it.

"Do you know what I'd do if it wasn't infra dig, Silver?" he exclaimed. "I'd give you a thundering good hiding!"

"Infra dig!" repeated Jimmy. "It would be jolly painful for you, old bean. But I don't see the infra dig."

"I can't very well scrap with fags," said Gunner loftily. "As I'm going into the Fifth or Sixth, it would be beneath my dignity. Otherwise I'd give you a terrific licking!"

"Don't let that stop you!" chuckled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Judging by your brains, old chap, you're more likely to go into the Second than the Sixth."

"I'll keep an eye on you, though," said Gunner. "If I'm made a prefect—as I expect—I shall look after you cheeky fags. Trust me for that. Now, then, young shaver, where's the Head? Get a move on!"

"This way, sir!" murmured Tupper.

With a lofty look of disdain at the Fistical Four, Peter Cuthbert Gunner followed the page to the Head's study. He walked with his nose in the air, evidently not at all dismayed by the august presence into which he was about to enter.

When he appeared in the Fourth Form quarters later, Tubby Muffin put a fat, grinning face into the end study, and announced:

"Here he comes! Here's Gunner!"  
 Jimmy Silver & Co. looked out of the study doorway—and so did a crowd of the Fourth from their studies. Gunner came up the passage with quite a peculiar expression on his face. He seemed like a youth staggering under a heavy burden of astonishment.

"Blessed if I catch on to it!" he said. "I told the Head plainly that I expected to be put in the Fifth at least. He said that as I was a new boy he would not care for impertinence. I don't know what he was driving at. They've told me I'm to be in the Fourth—same as I was at St. Bede's. I don't quite follow, you know."

And Jimmy bestowed a sweet smile on Gunner of the Fourth.

THE END.

(*"A New Boy on the Warpath!" is the title of the long, complete Rookwood school story appearing in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. In the meantime, there is a splendid yarn of Jimmy Silver's earlier schooldays in this week's "Popular." On sale Tuesday.*)



**RESCUING THE NEW BOY!** The Fistical Four carried the struggling, yelling new boy in safety to the river bank. Gunner's attempt at life saving had been disastrous in the extreme—for him!

**The 4th Chapter.**

**Gunner—Not of the Sixth!**

Tubby Muffin chortled as he trotted beside Gunner on the towing-path. The "rescue" of Jimmy Silver struck Tubby as the best joke of the term, and he was looking forward to relating it in the Common-room. Gunner squelched out water as he trotted, keeping himself warm by vigorous motion. And Tubby's fat chortle soon died away. He needed all his breath to keep pace with Gunner.

"I—I say, not quite so fast!" gasped Tubby, at last.  
 "I don't want to catch cold, you fat duffer!" said Gunner. "I don't mind going in to save a fellow's life, but I'm not going to catch cold. Is it right on from here to Rookwood?"

"Yes; turn when you come to the boathouse. But, I say—"

"Then you needn't come."  
 "Oh, I say, Gunner—"

"Don't worry!"  
 Gunner increased his speed, and Tubby Muffin had to give it up. He was too winded to keep pace. The fat Classical stopped at last, panting for breath, and in almost a homicidal mood. He had wasted his half-holiday on Gunner. He had dressed himself with unusual care to make a good impression on that youth, and it had all been for—nothing! He had had his trouble for his pains. He had not even been able to approach the subject of a small loan, and he realised that even if he had approached it, he would not have got so near as to touch it. Reginald Muffin sat down on the bank, and gasped for breath, still stony, and faced, also, with the prospect of having to answer for borrowing Morny's necktie, and Putty's boots, and somebody else's collar. He had only one comfort, a faint hope that Gunner might catch a cold!

and they all looked at the new fellow as he passed, squelching water from his boots and dropping it from his clothes. Certainly it was an original manner for a new boy to arrive at Rookwood. Gunner was not in the least disconcerted by so many stares. He walked on as if the quadrangle belonged to him, with the grey old buildings and the beeches thrown in. Bulkeley of the Sixth came out of the School House as Gunner came up, and stopped to speak to him.

"What's this? Who are you?"  
 "Gunner."  
 "Oh, Gunner!" said Bulkeley. "Have you had an accident?"

"No."  
 "Then what are you in that disreputable state for?" demanded the prefect.

"Jumped into the river to save a fellow's life," said Gunner.  
 "Eh—what? Whose life?"

"Don't know his name. A fag. The other kids called him Jimmy, I think—"

"Silver, I suppose," said the astonished Bulkeley. "Jolly queer! Was he in trouble in the water?"

"Drowning!" said Gunner. "I dived from the bridge for him."  
 "My hat!" ejaculated Bulkeley. "Well, you'd better get changed—quick! Come in! I'll show you where."

"Thanks!" said Gunner coolly.  
 He followed Bulkeley into the house.

"Change in this dormitory," said Bulkeley. "Towel yourself down hard. I suppose your things haven't come yet? I'll get you some things to change into somehow. It's jolly odd about Silver. The best swimmer in the Lower School. If you're pulling my leg, Gunner, it means a licking!"

"What rot!" said Gunner. "I cer—"