

**"CORNERED AT LAST!"** A Magnificent, Long, Complete Football Story by WALTER EDWARDS in This Issue.

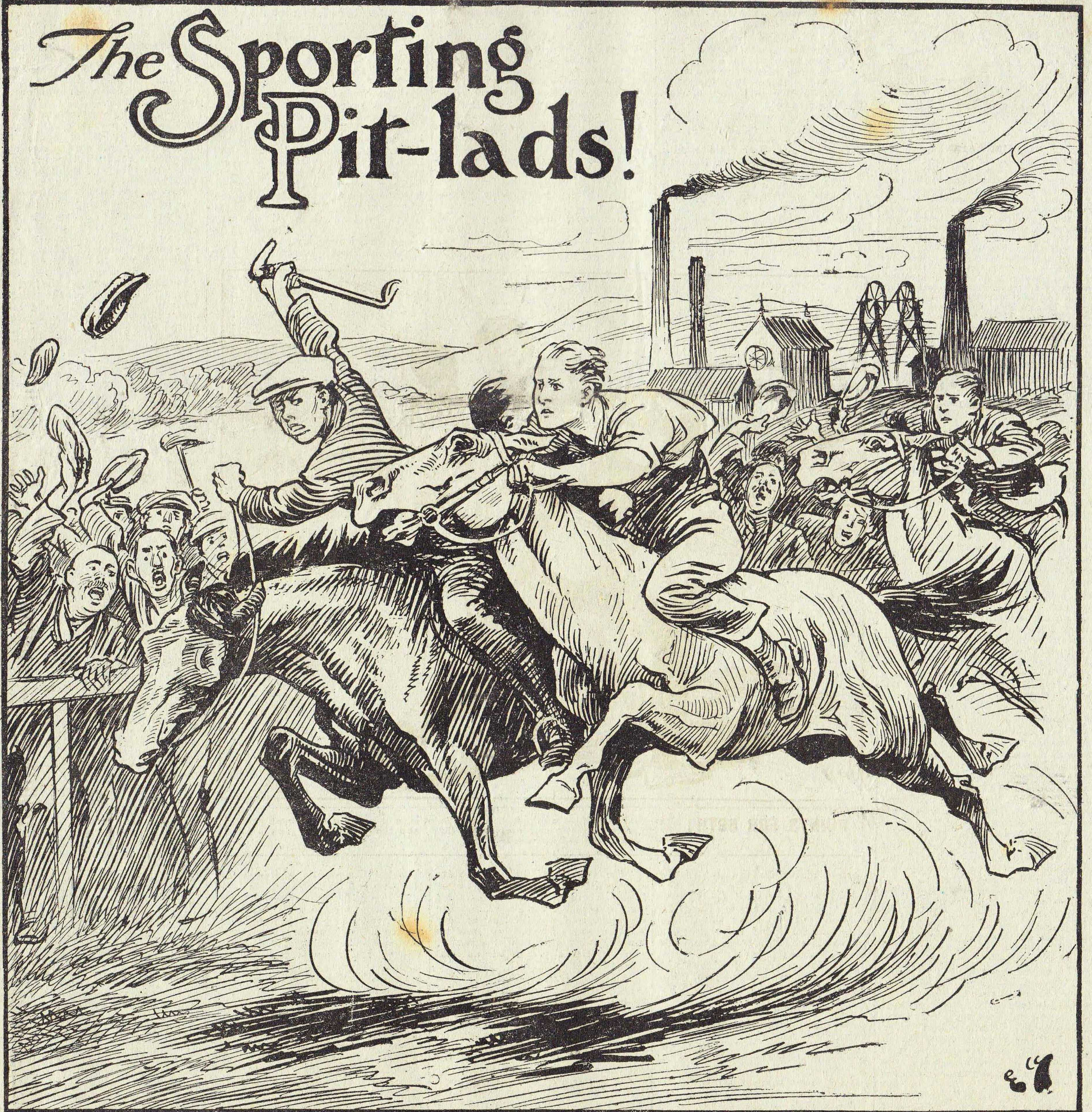
# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>1d</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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THE WORLD-FAMOUS BOYS' PAPER!

[Week Ending October 7th, 1922.]



**THE RUSSELL'S PIT STAKES—CHALLENGED AT THE POST!**

**JACK OGDEN'S SUPREME EFFORT FOR THE SPORTING PIT-LADS!**

(A thrilling incident from the magnificent story of the North included in this number.)



A Superb Story of Jimmy Silver &amp; Co. at Rookwood School!



# Jimmy Silver's Secret!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

## The 1st Chapter. Under Suspicion!

"You'll be late, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver did not answer.

It was the well-known motto of Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Rookwood Fourth, to "keep smiling." But for once Jimmy Silver was wearing a worried look.

Arthur Edward Lovell grinned at him through the doorway of the end study as he noted that worried look. Raby and Newcome grinned, too. Whatever was the trouble that weighed upon the mind of Jimmy Silver, evidently it was not taken very seriously by his chums.

"Better get a move on, Jimmy!" said Raby. "We've got to turn up for footer with the new coach, you know."

"Mr. Wilmot's on the ground already," said Newcome.

Lovell gave a chuckle. "Still got that fat-headed idea of yours in your head, Jimmy?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jimmy quietly.

"Get rid of it, old fellow," urged Lovell. "You can take my word for it that there's nothing in it."

"Unfortunately," said Jimmy Silver, with mild sarcasm, "I can't take your word for it, Lovell. You see, the opinion of a horn ass isn't much use to me!"

"Look here—" began Lovell warmly. "I've told you how the matter stands," said Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Wilmot, the new footer coach, is the man we nearly caught escaping after the burglary at Deepden Manor, when we were on our holiday tramp. If he isn't the man, he's his twin brother, at any rate."

"He's neither," grunted Lovell. "There may be a bit of resemblance. But it was jolly dark that night—"

"I saw his face clearly."

"Imagination, old chap!" said Lovell. Jimmy gave him a glare.

"Dash it all, Jimmy, you must be mistaken, you know!" urged Raby. "If the man is a dashed crackman, how could he get a job at Rookwood as coach? It's not reasonable. The Head must have known all about him before engaging him."

"Besides, his record's known," said Newcome. "He was a professional player for Loamshire United. He had a good record in the war. Lots of the fellows know about him."

"I know!" said Jimmy.

"Then you see that you're wrong," said Lovell.

"No, I'm right!"

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell impatiently. "Blessed if I ever knew you were such an obstinate ass, Jimmy. If you were to go to the Head with a yarn like that, you'd jolly well get caned. Do you think Dr. Chisholm would listen to you for a single moment if you told him that his new football coach, a well-known man, was a giddy burglar?"

"No!" said Jimmy, with a deep breath. "That's why I've said nothing so far. I don't know what to do."

"Take my tip and chuck the rot out of your head," said Lovell kindly. "Anyhow, we've got to turn up for footer with the Wilmot bird, so come along."

"There's one thing," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "I saw his face clearly that night, and he must have seen mine as clearly. I've kept out of his way since we came back for the new term. Now I shall have to meet him face to face—and he will know that the chap who collared him that night at Deepden is a Rookwood chap. When he sees that, he's bound to show some sign, I should think."

"If it was so," grunted Lovell. "But it isn't so. But I'll tell you what we'll do, Jimmy. You shall meet the Johnny face to face, and we'll stand round and watch him, and look for the signs of a giddy guilty conscience. What?"

Jimmy Silver rose.

"That's a good idea," he said. "Keep your eyes on him, all of you, and see how he shows up. It's bound to give him a start, finding me at Rookwood. Of course, that night at Deepden he couldn't have had any idea that I belonged to Rookwood. He will find it out for the first time to-day."

"And if he's the man, he'll bolt!" grinned Raby.

"Very likely."

"If he does, we'll all collar him!" chuckled Lovell. "I'll get him by the left ear—you bag his right, Raby. His hair for you, Newcome."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyhow, come along, or we'll be late!" urged Lovell.

Jimmy Silver joined his chums, and they went downstairs, the Co. smiling, but

Jimmy Silver in a very grave and thoughtful mood. What he ought to do, in the strange circumstances, was a mystery to Jimmy Silver. In the few days that he had been at Rookwood School, Mr. Wilmot had already won golden opinions; almost everyone liked the young man. Jimmy would have been favourably impressed by him, but for his secret knowledge of what the man was—or what Jimmy believed him to be.

To state what he knew to the Head was almost impossible.

Jimmy could imagine his headmaster's stare of cold surprise; he could foresee Dr. Chisholm's utter disbelief. It was, indeed, a staggering statement to make.

Yet Jimmy was absolutely certain that Wilmot was the crackman whom he had collared at Deepden Manor in Berkshire. The Reading police were still hunting for the man, armed with Jimmy's description of him—a description that was Mr. Wilmot's to the last detail.

The Fistical Four joined a crowd of the Fourth going down to Little Side, where Mr. Wilmot was to take them in hand for the first time.

Some of the juniors were grumbling—slackers like Peele and Gower and Tubby Muffin. But they had already seen

Mr. Wilmot looked round, and gave Jimmy a pleasant nod and a smile.

Jimmy drew a quick breath.

Wilmot's eyes were full upon his face; and, surely, if he was the crackman of Deepden, he was bound now to betray some sign of recognition, if not of alarm.

If it was so, Eric Wilmot was certainly a master of his feelings; for his handsome face expressed nothing but a polite interest in the Rookwood footballer.

"Ah, you are Silver, the captain of the Fourth?" he said.

His voice was deep and pleasant.

"Yes," stammered Jimmy.

"Your friends have been telling me about you," said Wilmot. "From what I hear, you have little to learn from me."

"Oh!" said Jimmy confusedly.

Lovell suppressed a chuckle. Mr. Wilmot had stood the test; there was no mistake about that. Arthur Edward decided to push the matter a little farther.

"Jimmy thinks he's seen you before somewhere, Mr. Wilmot," he said.

"Yes?" said the young man inquiringly.

"Were you ever in Berkshire?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy caught his breath.

"Many times," said Mr. Wilmot. "In my days as a professional footballer my

At all events, the crackman knew that he was known now, and the next move was up to him. And by that next move Jimmy felt that he had to be guided.

But if Eric Wilmot was a man with a guilty secret weighing on his conscience, he showed no sign of it that afternoon. He devoted himself to his duties quietly, calmly, and with keen interest; and by the time the practice was over, the opinion of the Classical Fourth was that Eric Wilmot was a "good man"; in fact, the right man in the right place.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### Tubby Muffin's Discovery!

"The awful rotter!"

Thus Tubby Muffin.

Jimmy Silver smiled as he came along the Fourth Form passage, and found Tubby gasping and groaning on the window-seat. Reginald Muffin looked as if he found existence too heavy a burden to be borne by his plump shoulders.

"What's the trouble, Tubby?" asked the captain of the Fourth, stopping, with the generous intention of giving a few minutes to listening to the recital of Muffin's woes.

"That awful beast Wilmot!" groaned Tubby.

Jimmy started.

"What about Wilmot?" he asked quickly.

Jimmy wondered whether the Peeping Tom of Rookwood had found out anything regarding the suspected man. Certainly, if anyone had a secret to keep, it was not safe to keep it in the neighbourhood of Tubby Muffin. It had already occurred to Jimmy that if the man was what he suspected, evidence of some kind would exist in his room in the School House. Jimmy would have regarded with utter disdain the thought of spying upon him; but if the inquisitive Tubby had nosed out something—

"He's a thorough rotter!" said Tubby.

"What do you mean?" asked Jimmy impatiently. "Have you found out anything about him?"

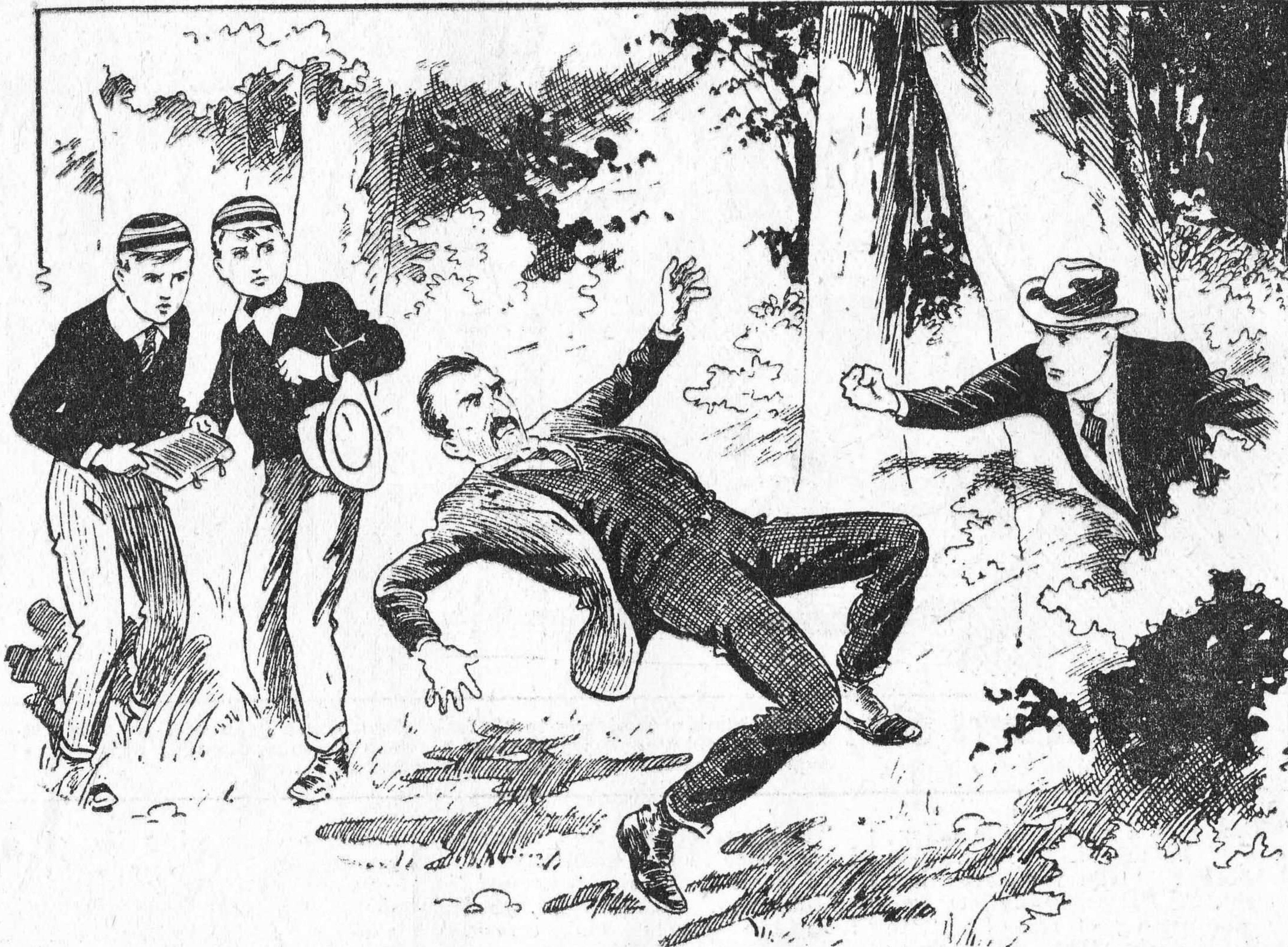
Tubby blinked at him.

"Eh? What is there to find out?" he asked.

Jimmy bit his lip.

"Well, what's the matter?" he asked gruffly.

"The horrid beast!" groaned Tubby.



**THE WITNESSES!** The footballer hit out straight from the shoulder, and the man with the bushy eyebrows came crashing through the thickets towards the spot where the two startled Rookwooders were standing.

enough of Mr. Wilmot to know that he was not to be trifled with; and they had to turn up for the practice. All the Classical Fourth arrived on Little Side, where they found the new football coach.

Eric Wilmot looked very fit and cheery. He was a good-looking fellow, with well-cut features and handsome eyes. It was almost impossible to believe that this cheery, good-humoured young man was what Jimmy Silver believed him to be.

Yet, as Jimmy looked at him again, he could trace feature for feature in his face, exactly resembling the face that was imprinted on his memory.

Lovell & Co. were grinning.

"Speak to him, old top!" whispered Arthur Edward. "Make him look at you. We're all ready to jump on him as soon as he gives himself away, you know."

"I'm going to speak to him," said Jimmy quietly. "You fellows keep your eyes on his face."

"You bet!" grinned Lovell.

There was no doubt that the Co. would watch the meeting closely—if only to prove to Jimmy that he was mistaken.

Mr. Wilmot was speaking to Erroll and Rawson and some others of the Classical Fourth, when Jimmy came up with his companions. Erroll made a gesture towards Jimmy, drawing Mr. Wilmot's attention to him.

"This is Jimmy Silver, our football skipper," he said.

team visited Reading more than once, and I played there. You may have seen me play, Master Silver."

"Oh, no!" stammered Jimmy.

"It was in the summer vac this year," said Lovell. "Jimmy thought he saw you at a little place some miles from Reading, towards Newbury."

Mr. Wilmot shook his head.

Still his handsome face showed no sign whatever of alarm, or even of any special consciousness.

"No, I was not in Berkshire this summer," he said. "You must have been mistaken, Master Silver."

He dropped the subject at that, as if he had only wasted a few minutes upon it from motives of politeness.

"And now to business," he said.

The football coach proceeded to business, and the practice started. Jimmy Silver's brain was in a whirl.

He did not heed the un concealed amusement of his chums.

What could it all mean, he was asking himself? Jimmy had intended to say nothing of the holiday adventure to Eric Wilmot; but Lovell had said enough to tell him that he was recognised as the crackman of Deepden. And he had given no sign.

Was it merely the iron nerve of a practised criminal, accustomed to hold himself in check in the moment of sudden danger? Or was Jimmy Silver mistaken, after all? Was that possible?

"I've explained to him that I'm delicate, and can't keep on turning up at footer practice, and he takes no notice whatever."

"You fat slacker!" said Jimmy, in disgust.

"I've been to Mr. Dalton," said Tubby, "and he says that in football matters we're under the authority of Wilmot, and we're to do exactly as he tells us."

"Quite right, too!"

"Yah!" said Tubby. "I say, the beast says I eat too much pastry—"

"So you do!"

"And don't take enough exercise—"

"So you don't!" grinned Jimmy.

"And I'm to take up running," said Tubby dolefully. "Regular trots round the quad, you know."

"Good!"

"You're as big a beast as he is!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I tell you we're not going to stand it. Peele and Gower are wild about it, too. They're talking of ragging the brute."

"They'd better keep to talk, then," said Jimmy, laughing. "Mr. Wilmot doesn't look a safe man to rag."

"He's a suspicious beast, too," said Tubby. "Fancy a man suspecting a chap of looking at his letters, Jimmy!"

Jimmy was turning away, but he turned back at that. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were coming up the stairs, and they stopped with Jimmy.

"Tea-time!" remarked Lovell. "I say,

Wilmot is a bit of a corker. He's picked out the slackers, and put them down for special exercise. Peele is talking about scalping him."

"And Tubby says he doesn't like fellows looking at his letters," observed Jimmy Silver.

"Hallo! Prying again, you fat rotter!" growled Lovell.

"I wasn't!" howled Tubby indignantly. "He dropped a letter in the quad this morning, and, of course, I picked it up for him, like a well-bred chap. Lot of good wasting courtesy on that brute, though. He actually took hold of my ear—mine, you know! I'm a Rookwood chap, and he's only a paid coach, and he pulled my ear! Think of that!"

"Serve you right if you were reading his letters," said Lovell.

"I wasn't, I tell you. I may have glanced at it by accident as I picked it up. I was just going to run after him with it when he saw me. It wasn't a minute. I never saw a word that was written in it. I was just glancing at the newspaper cutting that was pinned on it. I suppose a fellow can read a newspaper cutting?" said Tubby, in an injured tone. "It was rather interesting—about a burglary."

"What?"

The Fistical Four uttered that startled exclamation in chorus.

"Oh, you're interested too, are you?" said Tubby. "I jolly well sha'n't tell you about it, as you're so unsympathetic. Where was the harm in a fellow looking at a newspaper cutting? Besides, I remembered that you fellows were in Berkshire in the vac—"

"In Berkshire?" repeated Jimmy Silver. "Was the newspaper cutting about a burglary in Berkshire?"

"I only saw a few lines," said Tubby. "Something about a burglary at Deepwater. No, it wasn't that. Deepford? No, Deepden—that's it—Deepden. Somewhere near Newbury or Reading."

"My only hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"I dare say Wilmot knows the place, so somebody sent it to him," said Tubby Muffin. "Where was the harm in a fellow looking at it, I'd like to know? He pulled my ear." Tubby Muffin rubbed a fat ear reminiscently. "And he's only a paid coach, you know. I'd complain to the Head, only very likely he would think—"

"Oh, rats! Serve you right for spying!" said Lovell gruffly. "And he tramped on to the end study, followed by his chums. Tubby Muffin was left to mourn over his woes in solitude."

Jimmy Silver's face had a curious expression as he entered his study. During the past week he had pondered over his strange secret, without getting any nearer a solution of his problem.

He had looked for some move on the part of the suspected man. But Eric Wilmot had gone about his duties at Rookwood in a perfectly normal way, and certainly given no grounds for suspicion. Jimmy had been driven to wondering whether, after all, he had been deceived by a startling resemblance; and he was glad now that he had said nothing on the subject outside the circle of the Co.

But what Tubby Muffin had said brought all his half-satisfied suspicions to new life.

Even Lovell looked surprised and uneasy.

"After all, there's nothing in that!" Lovell said at last. "Anybody might send anybody a newspaper cutting."

"He might!" said Jimmy.

"Some friend of Wilmot's probably lives near the place, and thought it might interest him," said Lovell.

Jimmy looked at his chum.

"That's rot, and you know it!" he said.

"Look here, Jimmy—"

"Deepden is a tiny place in the country, and nobody could be interested in a description of an attempted burglary there," said Jimmy. "Not unless he was somehow concerned in the matter. Somebody's cut that paragraph out of a local paper—it wouldn't be in any of the big newspapers—and sent it to Wilmot. Why?"

"Oh, rot!" said Lovell.

If Lovell saw any reason to change an opinion, it was likely to make him more obstinate in holding that opinion. That was one of Arthur Edward's little ways.

But Raby and Newcome both looked very startled.

"It's queer!" Raby said slowly.

"Jolly queer!" said Newcome. "But—but—there can't be anything in it, Jimmy! The Head must know all about the man!"

Jimmy nodded, and the matter dropped. But Jimmy Silver had plenty of food for thought now, and his secret was like a weight upon his mind.

## The 3rd Chapter. Mysterious!

"Young gentlemen, stop, please!" Lovell glanced round. Raby put on his brake. The two juniors were riding back from Coombe to Rookwood on Wednesday afternoon when they were hailed by a man leaning on the stile in Coombe Lane.

Jimmy Silver had gone with Newcome for a ramble in the woods that afternoon—Newcome being of botanical tendencies, and Jimmy kindly taking an interest now and then in his pursuits. Lovell and Raby had preferred a spin on the bikes for the afternoon, and they had been round the heath and Low Coombe, and were now on their way back to the school by way of Coombe.

Both the juniors looked rather curiously at the man who hailed them, and as Raby had put on his brake, Lovell followed his example, and they jumped down.

"What is it?" asked Lovell, not very graciously.

The man was dressed in dusty tweeds, with a Homburg hat. His face was red,



as if with exposure to wind and sun, and his chin was stubbly, his mouth half hidden by a straggling moustache. His eyebrows were thick and bushy and dark. Lovell was not favourably impressed by his looks, and he did not see why he should jump off his bike because a stranger called to him for no apparent reason. So Arthur Edward was not very gracious.

"Excuse me, sir!" said the man very civilly. "You belong to Rookwood School, I think."

"That's so," said Lovell, "and I'm in rather a hurry to get there!"

This was meant to be sarcastic. "Sorry, sir; but if you would not mind doing me a favour, sir—"

Lovell stared. He saw no reason whatever why he should do the man a favour. But Raby had chimed in before Arthur Edward could express his opinion on that point.

"What is it, then?"

"There's a gentleman at the school I'd like to speak to, sir," said the man in tweeds. "I dare say you know him as you belong there—a Mr. Wilmot."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lovell. "Yes, we know Wilmot. If you want to speak to him, he's at the school. Follow this lane till you come to the school gates, and you're there."

"Would you be kind enough to tell him, sir, that an old friend wishes to speak to him?"

"I suppose I could tell him," said Lovell, puzzled. "Do you mean that you don't want to come to the school?"

"Yes, sir, if you'd be kind enough to mention to him that Bill Smith is waiting for him in the lane."

Lovell glanced involuntarily at Raby. Lovell was quite determined to believe that there was nothing in the least suspicious about Eric Wilmot. But even Lovell could not help feeling that this was rather odd. There was no apparent reason why the man with the bushy eyebrows could not walk on to the school.

"I'll tell him," said Lovell shortly. "Thank you, sir! Tell him his old friend Smith is waiting for him under the trees yonder." The man jerked his finger towards the edge of Coombe Wood, where it bordered the lane a little further on. "I'd be ever so much obliged, sir!"

"I'll do it!"

Lovell remounted his machine, and rode on with Raby. The two juniors did not speak till Rookwood School came in sight, though their thoughts were busy.

"That's rather odd, Lovell!" Raby remarked at last.

"I don't see it," said Lovell.

"Oh, you don't?"

"No, I don't!" said Lovell obstinately. "That chap's a bit shabby, and he mayn't care to show up at a big school and call on Wilmot. I dare say that's all there is in it."

Raby shrugged his shoulders slightly, and said no more. Argument only confirmed Lovell in his opinions. Raby, as a matter of fact, was coming round to Jimmy Silver's suspicion.

The two juniors arrived at the school, and after putting up their bikes, they looked for Mr. Wilmot. They knew that he was engaged on the football ground with the Fifth that afternoon, so he was certain to be within the school precincts.

Eric Wilmot was coming off the football ground when they found him, with Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth, chatting pleasantly with the two seniors.

He stopped as Lovell and Raby came up, seeing that they wanted to speak to him, and Talboys and Hansom strolled on.

"I have a message for you, Mr. Wilmot," said Lovell.

"Yes?" said the footballer. "From the Head?"

"Oh, no; a man named Smith!"

Wilmot started.

"Smith!" he repeated.

Lovell explained.

The footballer listened quietly, and Raby, who was watching his face curiously, noticed how his lips tightened, and a glitter came into his handsome, dark eyes.

Raby did not need telling that Mr. Smith's message was extremely unwelcome to Eric Wilmot, and that the footballer had no desire whatever to see his "old friend Smith."

"Very well," said Mr. Wilmot. "Thank you very much for bringing me the message!"

"Not at all, sir!" said Lovell. "Glad to be of any service!"

He added that little bit of politeness chiefly for Raby's benefit.

Eric Wilmot nodded, and went rather quickly into the School House. Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth made a movement as if to rejoin him, to continue their football chat. But Mr. Wilmot did not seem to see them, and he disappeared into the house.

Lovell looked at Raby half accusingly. "I suppose you think that's suspicious!" he said.

"Well, I think it's jolly odd," said Raby. "Jimmy would think so, too. People who are above-board don't generally have surreptitious meetings like this."

"I don't see anything surreptitious about it," said Lovell. "I think Wilmot's a splendid chap in every way!"

"Well, you're an ass, you know!" remarked Raby.

"Br-r-r-r!" said Lovell.

The two juniors stopped to speak to Rawson of the Fourth in the quad, and when they went into the house a few minutes later, Mr. Wilmot passed them coming out.

He had on his hat and coat, and was evidently going to keep the appointment with his friend Smith. Monsieur Monceau, the French master, came out of the house at the same time, in his frock-coat and silk hat, and he addressed Mr. Wilmot on the steps.

"You go for leetle promenade, isn't it, mon ami?" said Mossoo genially.

He was on pleasant terms with the

young footballer, as most of the Rookwood masters were.

"Yes," said Mr. Wilmot briefly. "Bien! I walks wiz you, if you zink so," said Mossoo. "I also go for leetle promenade."

Lovell and Raby could not help waiting to hear what Eric Wilmot would say in reply to that. If there was anything surreptitious about his meeting with Smith, he was not likely to take the French master of Rookwood along with him if he could help it. There was a distinct pause before Wilmot answered.

"I am afraid you would not care for a ramble in the woods, Monsieur Monceau."

"Ciel! Non!" said the Frenchman. "I vawks wiz myself on ze route, isn't it? You go ramble in ze wood, yes?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Zen," said Mossoo, smiling. "I promenades wiz you as far as ze wood, and zere we parts company."

"Excellent!" said Mr. Wilmot. And the two gentlemen walked down to the gates together.

"Well?" jeered Lovell. "Nothing suspicious about a chap who takes Mossoo with him to meet the Smith man, Raby?"

"Bet you he drops Mossoo before he starts the Smith bird!" answered Raby.

"Oh, rats!"

"Bike after them, and see!" grinned Raby.

"I wouldn't if I suspected the man," said Lovell. "But as I don't suspect

in the wake of the two walkers. They soon sighted them ahead, sauntering along the leafy lane. They had passed the stile, and reached the border of Coombe Wood, where, according to what he had told Lovell, Smith was to be in waiting. There was no sign of Smith to be seen; he was among the trees, if he was there at all. In the lane the two men stopped.

Lovell and Raby rode on and passed them. As they passed, Mossoo was speaking.

"Oui, I am a leetle fatigue! I zink I rest here on zis grass bank, isn't it, while you take your ramble in ze bois!"

"The grass is a little damp, sir, I think," said Mr. Wilmot. "You are liable to catch cold."

"Mon Dieu! Oui! I did not zink of zat! I walk on, I zink!" said Monsieur Monceau; and he walked on, leaving the footballer standing alone.

Lovell rode forward grimly; he would not look back. But Raby glanced over his shoulder, and saw Eric Wilmot disappear among the trees after the Frenchman was at a distance. Then the two juniors rode on without speaking. It was obvious to Raby, at least, that Wilmot had been desirous of getting rid of the Frenchman before Smith appeared in sight; and it would have been obvious to Lovell also, but for that youth's remarkable tenacity in sticking to an opinion once formed.

"Well?" said Raby at last.

"Rot!" said Lovell.

two or three valuable specimens that he had been arranging in his botanical portfolio.

Without speaking, the two Rookwooders stared at one another.

Wilmot was evidently close to them in the wood, though a thick screen of underwoods hid him from their sight.

Another voice—a cool, mocking voice—answered:

"I wrote to you. You did not answer. Did you think that I should answer your letter, you rascal? How dared you write to me at all!"

"Oh, draw it mild! I gave you time to answer, and you did not. That is why I have come."

"You scoundrel—you scoundrel!"

"Possibly the headmaster of Rookwood would consider somebody else a scoundrel if he knew the facts!"

Jimmy Silver stared at Newcome blankly. His face was quite pale. If he had needed confirmation of his suspicion, he had it now. Newcome opened his lips, and closed them again. The juniors could not speak without being heard by the two men close at hand. Neither of them had any desire to play the eavesdropper, but they had no choice in the matter.

"Better keep a civil tongue," went on the cool voice. "I think you have as much to fear from me as I from you, Eric. You've got to help me."

"Help you?"

"You're in clover and I'm on my

tongue, when I've got nothing more to lose? Do you think the headmaster will let you hang on? Isn't he more likely to believe you came to Rookwood for what you could lay your hands on? Birds of a feather, you know."

"Good heavens!" breathed Jimmy. He rose to his feet in the grass. Newcome followed his example. The two juniors were determined not to linger and listen to that startling conversation.

"So that is it?" said Mr. Wilmot's voice.

"That's that, my old pal!"

"And you think I fear you?"

"I know you do! Ah, would— Oh!"

Crash!

A fierce blow had been struck, and a staggering figure came crashing through the thickets towards the spot where the two startled Rookwood juniors were standing.

The footballer had hit out straight from the shoulder, and the man with the bushy eyebrows fairly spun away from the blow.

He crashed down in the grass only a few feet from Jimmy Silver and Newcome, who jumped back out of his way.

Through the broken thicket, the pale, set face of Eric Wilmot appeared, staring after the man he had knocked down. He did not see the juniors; his eyes glittered at the fallen, sprawling man.

"That's my answer to you, Dandy Jim!" he said, between his teeth.

"Gad! I'll—"

For a second or two the man sprawled, and then he leaped to his feet with a yell of rage. His hand went under his coat, and reappeared, and there was a flash of steel in the sunlight that filtered through the green branches overhead.

Weapon in hand, the ruffian flung himself at the footballer. A moment more, and the blow would have been struck.

But in that moment Jimmy Silver, almost dazed as he was with the suddenness of the happening, acted promptly.

He sprang at the man, and struck with all his force. His clenched fist crashed on the side of the ruffian's head, and the unexpected blow sent him spinning again.

The knife dropped into the grass, and Newcome jumped at it, picked it up, and sent it whirling away among the treetops.

"You—you here!" Eric Wilmot stuttered the words as he saw the juniors under the dusky trees.

The man he had called Dandy Jim sat up dazedly.

"Collar him!" panted Jimmy Silver.

Wilmot stood irresolute, but the two juniors sprang towards the ruffian. Dandy Jim scrambled to his feet, and dashed away into the wood.

"Come back!" Wilmot was shouting. "Boys, come back! That man is dangerous! Come back at once!"

Newcome caught Jimmy Silver by the arm.

"Chuck it, Jimmy!"

Jimmy's impulse had been to pursue the ruffian, but he nodded, and turned back. The two juniors rejoined Mr. Wilmot, who was standing with a pale and troubled face. There was no doubt that Jimmy Silver had saved the young footballer from a terrible injury, if not from actual death, and Eric Wilmot knew it. Yet it was not difficult to read in his troubled face that he wished the Rookwooders had been anywhere else just then.

"Thank you, Silver!" he said at last, speaking with an effort. "You—you have done me a great service!"

Jimmy nodded. Newcome stooped to pick up his scattered specimens. Mr. Wilmot's glance followed his movement, and he understood how the juniors came to be there. He gave them no explanation of how he came to be there himself.

"You are returning to Rookwood now?" he asked. "You had better, in the circumstances."

"Yes," said Jimmy.

"I will go with you, in case that rascal comes—"

He did not finish. The three left the wood together, and walked in grim silence towards the school.

At the gates of Rookwood Eric Wilmot spoke, in a low tone.

"I cannot ask you to be silent as to what has happened. I have no right to ask it. But if you wished to do me a great service, you would say nothing of what has occurred."

Without waiting for a reply, the young man strode on at the gates, and crossed with rapid strides towards the School House. Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"Well—" he said.

"Well!" breathed Newcome.

"Let's get in!" said Jimmy abruptly. "This will want thinking over."

And they went in in silence.

Lovell and Raby came in to tea, and found Jimmy Silver and Newcome in a thoughtful mood. Raby related the story of "Mr. Smith." Lovell grunting the while. They did not guess that their chums had seen Mr. Smith, and knew more about him than they could tell. Jimmy Silver proceeded to enlighten them, and Raby whistled.

"It begins to look pretty clear," he said.

"Wilmot's the man of Deepden, and Dandy Jim is a rotter in the same line of business."

"It looks like it," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "But—but—" He hesitated.

"You're not beginning to doubt it yourself?" ejaculated Raby.

"I'm blessed if I know!" said Jimmy frankly.

And for that day, at least, Jimmy Silver's secret remained a secret.

THE END.

(Order your copy of next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND to-day. The magnificent story of the chums of Rookwood School appearing in the next issue is entitled: "The Grip of the Law!" and is more thrilling than ever!)

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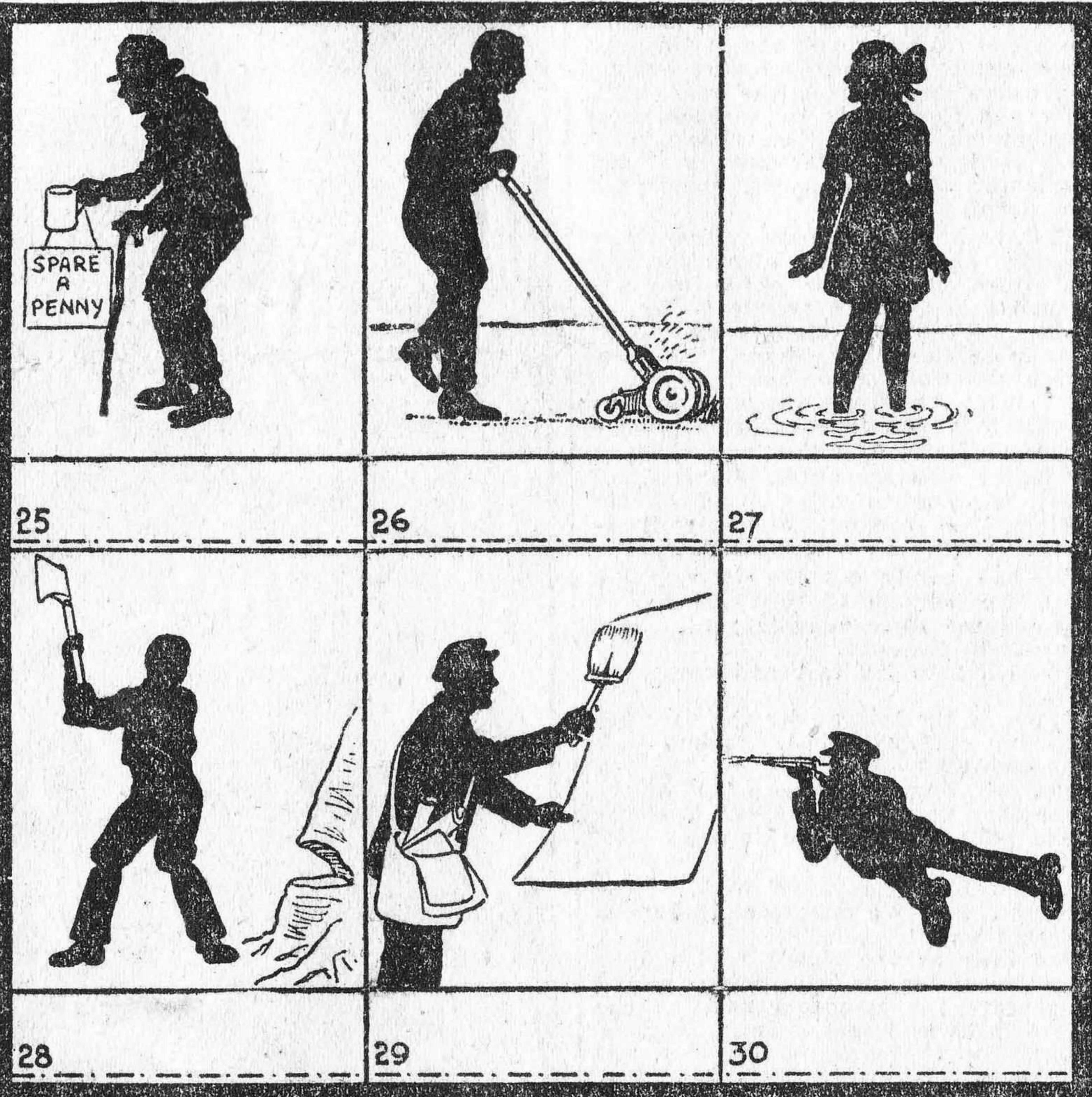
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It must be distinctly understood that the decision of the Editor is final and binding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

"SILHOUETTES."—No. 5.



### The 4th Chapter. For Life or Death!

"Jolly good afternoon!" said Arthur Newcome.

"Oh, ripping!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy had quite enjoyed the ramble through Coombe Wood, already rich in autumn tints. But his interest in the various botanical specimens Newcome had bagged was a little perfunctory.

The two juniors had sat down to rest in the wood near the lane, Jimmy lying with the back of his head in his clasped hands in the grass, taking his ease, Newcome, sitting near him, arranging his specimens.

"You ought to take this up, you know, Jimmy."

"Um!" murmured Jimmy.

Newcome grunted, and went on with his specimens. Jimmy was content to rest in the grass till he was finished, meanwhile thinking out certain details in connection with the Rookwood junior eleven for the forthcoming match with Greyfriars.

The deep woods were silent, save for an occasional twitter from the branches overhead. From the lane there came a faint whirr of bicycles for a moment or two, and then there was silence again. Suddenly, through the stillness of the woods, came a sharp, angry voice—a voice the two juniors knew well, though they had not heard it in such angry tones before.

"You scoundrel! So you have followed me here!"

It was the voice of Eric Wilmot, the new football coach of Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver sat bolt upright in the grass in utter astonishment.

Arthur Newcome started, and dropped

uppers. You know that I'm in need of help. You know that I'm wanted."

"I know that."

"If I'm run down here, what will become of you in your new job at the school? Do you think I shall hold my



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