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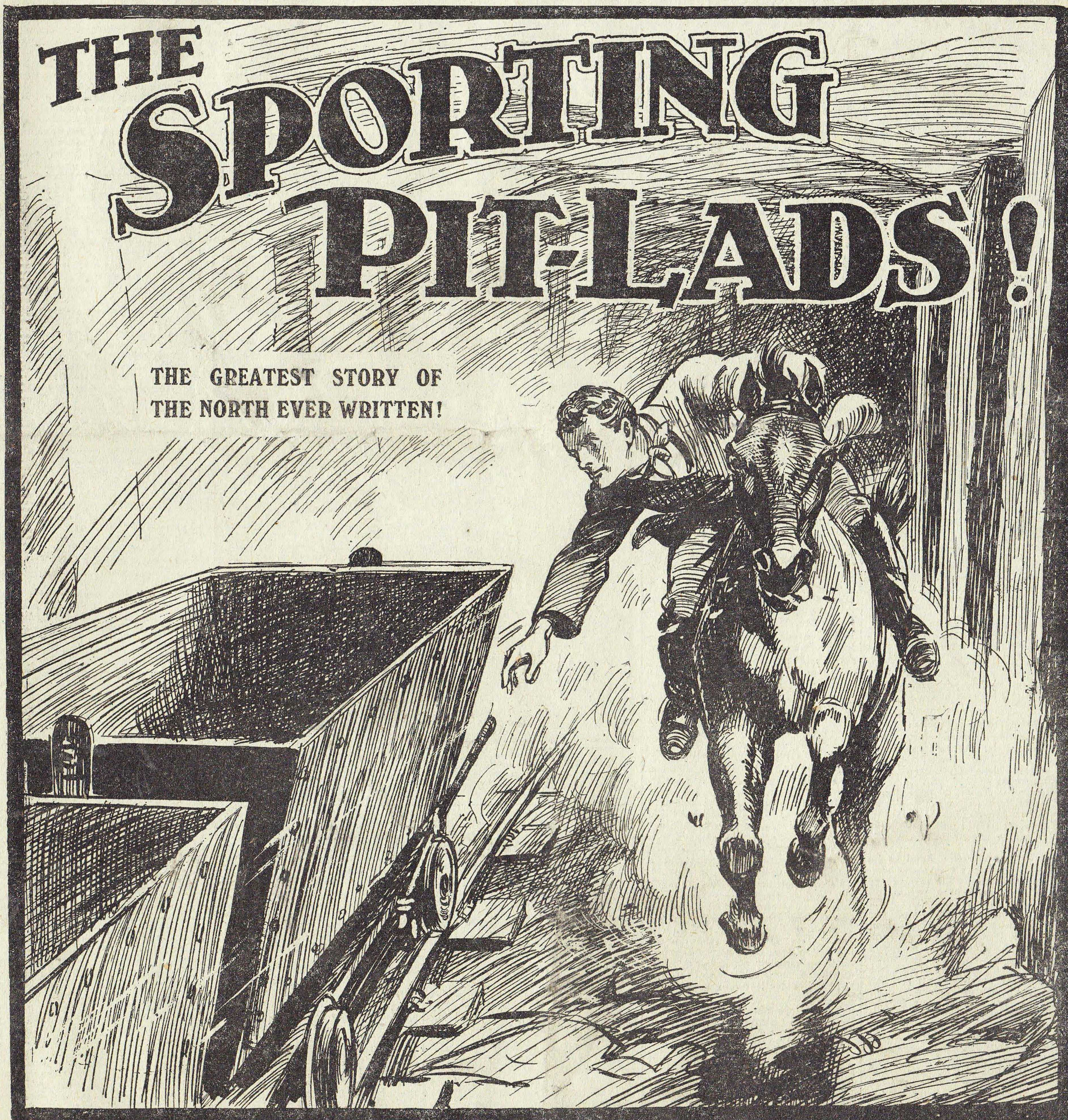
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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending October 28th, 1922.]



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Jack Ogden's Desperate Ride to Avert a Disaster in the Mine!

(A dramatic incident in the magnificent story of the Lancashire coalfields included in this issue.)

"Eric Wilmot" Returns to Rookwood and Surprises the Co.!**The 1st Chapter.****A Very Great Occasion!**

"Silence in the class!" Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, frowned a little. It was about the tenth time that morning that he had had to call for silence.

The amount of whispering that was going on in the Rookwood Fourth was a record.

Even Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Form, and generally a model pupil, was as bad as the rest.

Something evidently was occupying the attention of the juniors, to the exclusion of less important matters, such as lessons.

The buzz died away as Mr. Dalton spoke, and the class concentrated their attention as well as they could on the history of ancient Rome.

But that did not last. On that morning, at least, the Fourth were more deeply interested in modern Rookwood than in ancient Rome. The long struggle between the patricians and the plebeians, exciting enough when it happened, only bored the Rookwooders dreadfully.

"Start at three," Jimmy Silver murmured to Arthur Edward Lovell. "The train gets in at three-forty-five."

Lovell nodded. "That'll give us good time," he murmured.

"Every chap's got to turn up," said Raby.

"Every man jack!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "It's going to be a record celebration!"

"A giddy triumphal march!" grinned Newcome.

"Just that!" said Jimmy. "Wilmot will be pleased, I imagine!" murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Bound to be! You see—"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Dalton. "Oh dear!"

"Silver, you were talking!" exclaimed the master of the Fourth.

"H'm!" murmured Jimmy Silver. He could not deny the soft impeachment. Certainly he had been talking.

"This class seems to be quite out of hand this morning!" said Mr. Dalton severely. "I am afraid that I shall have to detain the class this afternoon!"

"Great Scott!" Blank dismay fell upon the Rookwood Fourth. That afternoon was a half-holiday, and happenings of the greatest importance were to take place. The bare thought of detention dismayed Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Lovell. "You—you see, sir—"

"I see that scarcely a boy in the class is giving his attention to his lessons!" said Mr. Dalton.

"We—we—we—" stammered Jimmy Silver. "It—it—it—"

"Kindly be a little more lucid, Silver, if you have anything to say."

"Oh, yes, sir! It's Wilmot, sir—"

"What?"

"Mr. Wilmot, our football coach, is coming back to Rookwood this afternoon, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We've been arranging for a crowd of fellows to meet him at the station and give him a reception, sir. We want him to know what Rookwood thinks of him."

"Oh!" said Mr. Dalton.

"You know, sir, that Mr. Wilmot was arrested by the police in mistake for a cracksmen, owing to his likeness to the rotter," said Jimmy. "He's proved that he's not the man, and he's coming back to-day. We want him to know that Rookwood believes in him, sir, and stands by him, and looks on him as one of the very best!"

"Without a giddy stain on his character!" said Lovell.

"I understand," said the Fourth Form master. "I have a high opinion of Mr. Wilmot, and I am very glad that he has been able to clear himself of such a charge. But such matters must not be discussed during lessons."

"Oh, no, sir! Only—"

"And if there is any further discussion in class," continued Mr. Dalton grimly, "the whole Form will be detained for the afternoon until five o'clock."

"Oh!" gasped the Fourth.

"We will now resume," said Mr. Dalton.

From that moment there was not a single whisper in the Fourth Form room. The prospect of being detained for the afternoon was too staggering.

Other fellows as well as the Fourth were going to give Mr. Wilmot a

In False Colours!

By Owen Conquest

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")
**A Topping Adventure of Jimmy Silver & Co.,
of Rookwood School!**

reception, and it was simply impossible for Jimmy Silver & Co. to be left out of such an important function.

Never had Roman history seemed so stale, flat, and unprofitable to the Rookwood juniors; and never, on the other hand, had they had a topic of such absorbing interest as the return of Eric Wilmot, the handsome young footballer.

But they made a tremendous effort to be very good. They tried to dismiss Eric Wilmot from their minds, and if they could not quite do that, at least they dismissed him from their tongues.

Morning lessons were a long-drawn-out anguish to the Fourth.

They were anticipating the afternoon with great enthusiasm. Indeed, most of them thought that the Head might have played up on an occasion like this and given the school a whole holiday.

Apparently that had not occurred to the Head. Perhaps the occasion did not seem so important to Dr. Chisholm as it seemed to Jimmy Silver & Co., his interest in the great game of football being considerably less keen.

But everything comes to an end, and so did morning classes at Rookwood that great day.

Never had Jimmy Silver & Co. received the word to dismiss so gladly.

"I am sorry, Lovell, that I bored you in class this morning," said Mr. Dalton gravely.

"Oh, sir! I—I—"

"I must try on future occasions to be a little more entertaining," said Mr. Dalton. "We can only do our best, Lovell."

And with that Richard Dalton passed on, leaving Lovell rooted to the floor, crimson with confusion. The crowd of juniors chuckled as Mr. Dalton turned the corner and disappeared.

"Well, you put your foot in it that time, and no giddy mistake!" chuckled Putty Gray of the Fourth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell gasped for breath.

"My hat! But isn't he a real brick!" he said. "Old Greely or Wiggins would have lined a chap for that! I—I suppose Dicky Dalton was pulling my leg! He's a real brick! I—I say, suppose I'd got detention!"

"We could have run the reception without you, old chap!" remarked Conroy.

"And a pretty muck you'd have made of it!" said Lovell.

"Why, you ass—"

"I'll get off to the study and finish

the satisfaction of even Inspector Troope. Now he was returning to Rookwood.

He had hesitated, wondering whether he should return—wondering whether the school authorities would wish him to do so—after the startling scene that had taken place on Big Side.

It was no fault to bear a resemblance to a man who was wanted for robbery and forgery. But it was unpleasant enough. And now that the circumstances were known to the whole school, it gave the young footballer a notoriety that was not agreeable.

But Dr. Chisholm had written him a kind and friendly letter, urging him to return and resume his duties as football coach at the school. Bulkeley of the Sixth had written also; and there had been another letter, signed by about a score of the Lower School, telling Mr. Wilmot that they wanted him back.

There was no doubt that he would be welcomed home, as it were; and gladly enough the young man had resolved to return to Rookwood.

The trouble had come, and it had gone; and his face, though grave, was very cheerful as he drew nearer and nearer to Rookwood.

There was still a cloud on the horizon. Dandy Jim, the cracksmen, was still at large. It had been reported in the papers how the hunted man had been discovered in the woods near Rookwood School by a party of juniors and routed out, narrowly escaping capture. But he had escaped; and he was still at large. For reasons of his own, Eric Wilmot was not sorry to hear that the man had escaped; but he fervently hoped that he would never set eyes upon Dandy Jim again.

"After all, it's not likely!" he muttered. "He's been hunted away from Rookwood; he'll never dare venture near the school again. I—I hope he'll get out of the country. Anyhow, I'm done with him! One thing I am resolved upon. If he comes in my sight again, I will hand him over to the police!"

And Eric Wilmot's jaw set grimly.

"Latcham!" sang out a porter, as the train slowed down. "Latcham Junction! Change 'ere for Rookham, Coombe, and Rookwood School!"

Eric Wilmot stepped from the express.

"That was not difficult," he remarked.

"It is the talk of Rookwood."

"You have ventured near the school?"

"I never wanted for nerve, dear boy," said Stacey, with another laugh. "I've even pumped the school porter!"

"Well, and what do you want now?" asked Wilmot grimly. "You have no business with me, Dandy Jim."

He spoke in his ordinary tone without subduing it, and the cracksmen's eyes gleamed with anger and alarm.

"Quiet with that name!" he muttered.

"I shall speak the name loudly enough when I hand you over to the police!" said Wilmot coolly. "You must be mad to betray yourself to me, James Stacey! Do you think I shall allow you to escape—especially after what has happened?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Then you are mistaken!" exclaimed Wilmot angrily. "I shall speak to the station policeman at once!"

Dandy Jim's eyes glittered.

"You will hand over your cousin—your own flesh and blood—to the police?" he said, in a low voice. "You will send the son of your mother's brother to prison for seven years?"

"You've left me no choice. I've no right to leave a human beast of prey at large!" Wilmot's voice trembled a little.

"I've spared you before. I could never make up my mind to give you up to justice when you tempted me! But that's over now."

"And you are willing to have your name dragged through the papers in the account of the trial?" sneered the cracksmen. "You may bet your sweet life that I shall rub it in for you!"

"Another threat, you rascal, and I will hand you over at once!" the young footballer exclaimed.

Stacey breathed more freely. The words showed that the young man was already hesitating to carry out his intention.

"I don't mean to threaten," he said; "but it will be bad for you, Eric. After all, we're cousins—blood relations. I've got a reason for speaking to you. I'm at the end of my tether."

"No business of mine."

"I had a safe hiding-place in the woods near the school," muttered the cracksmen. "I was hunted out by a gang of schoolboys—"

"I was glad to hear of it!"

"I've got a chance now, Wilmot. I want only a little help to get out of the country. Once I can get safe away, I'm going to chuck up the whole game—I swear that! You'd rather see me an honest man than see me in prison. Won't you help me for the last time?"

Wilmot looked at him, hesitating, doubtful. But his look showed that he was wavering.

"If I could trust you—" he muttered.

"We can't talk here," whispered Stacey. "I've run a frightful risk coming here at all, even in this rig. But I had to see you. They're hot on my track—I can't get back to any of the old haunts—I swear I'm going straight if I can get out of the country! And you can help me. Look here! Come out of the station—"

"My train goes at three-fifteen."

"That gives you twenty minutes. If I do not satisfy you in a quarter of an hour, hand me over to the Latcham police, and go your way."

There was a long pause.

"Give me a hearing—that's all I ask!" muttered the man. "You won't be sorry for it. I mean business!"

Wilmot made up his mind.

"I'll give you a chance!" he muttered. "But if you are attempting to deceive me, the handcuffs will be on your wrists in ten minutes!"

And Eric Wilmot followed the cracksmen from the station.

The 3rd Chapter.**A Change of Identity!**

"Well?"

Eric Wilmot spoke impatiently. He had followed Stacey from the station along the railway viaduct over which the line ran for some distance. The arches under the railway were mostly boarded in, some of them being used as warehouses, some as shops, and others as lodgings. It was into one of the latter that James Stacey led the young footballer, pushing open a shabby door. Within was a rather dismal room, lighted by a small cobwebby window. Stacey closed the door carefully when they were inside.

Wilmot glanced round him and shivered. A criminal life had not brought much profit to his rascally cousin. In that wretched den, which only the poorest would have taken for a shelter, the cracksmen was not even safe. If the rascal had resolved to "go straight," it was not surprising, after such an experience of the wages of sin.

"This is my lodging at present," said Dandy Jim bitterly. "It's to be pulled down, and is vacant at present. I've sneaked in unknown. Tramps sleep in here; but generally I have it to myself. It's a shelter, at least, as long as it lasts."

"And this is what crime has brought you to!" said Wilmot. "You had better chances in life than I had; your people were better off. If you'd been content to keep straight, you could hardly have finished worse than this."

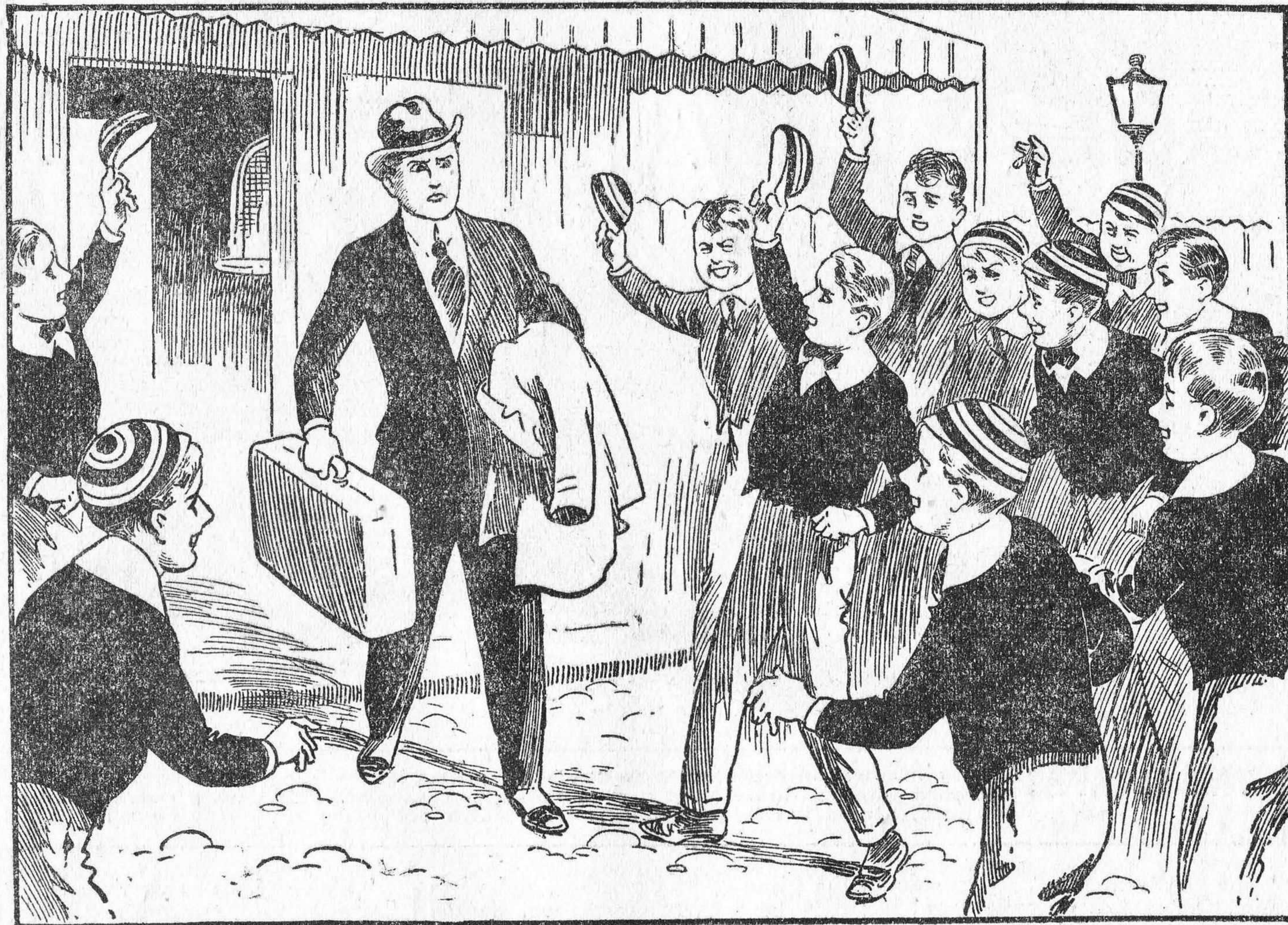
"I know it!"

"Well, what have you to say?" asked Wilmot, seating himself on a rickety box. "If you mean to turn over a new leaf, I will help you as far as I can. I had kindnesses from your father when he was living, and I've not forgotten. But if you are lying—as you have lied before—"

"Give me a chance!" muttered Stacey. "That's why I'm here. What is it you intend?"

"This!"

As he muttered the word the cracksmen was upon Wilmot with the spring of a tiger.



A RIGHT ROYAL WELCOME! "Three cheers for Mr. Wilmot!" There came a roar from the Rookwood crowd as the handsome, athletic fellow they believed to be Eric Wilmot appeared at the station entrance!

They marched out of the Form-room in great glee, and there was immediately a buzz of voices in the corridor, to make up for the enforced silence of the Form-room.

"Blessed if I thought it would ever end!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a gasp of relief. "Never knew that Dicky Dalton was such a fearful bore, you chaps!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I like Dalton, as a rule," continued Lovell; "but I must say I wish somebody had gagged him this morning!"

"Shurrup, you ass!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Dalton was following the class from the Form-room, and Lovell, who had his back to the door, was blissfully unconscious of the fact that his powerful voice was quite audible to the approaching Form master.

"Shush!" hissed Raby.

"Rot!" said Lovell, not understanding the almost frantic looks his chums were giving him. Arthur Edward Lovell was always a little slow on the "uptake," as it were. "Rot, I tell you! Dalton bored me almost to tears this morning! I really wanted to tell him to ring off, you know, and go home and take a rest! And—"

"Indeed!" said a quiet voice at Lovell's elbow.

Arthur Edward gave an almost convulsive jump.

"Oh! Oh, my hat!"

He spun round like a humming-top. "I—I—I— I didn't see you, sir!" he gasped. "Oh dear! I—I—"

my speech!" said Lovell. "It's understood that I'm to do the speechifying."

"No jolly fear!" said five or six voices.

"Rats!" said Lovell.

And he walked off regardless. According to Lovell, the great feature of Eric Wilmot's reception was to be a speech of welcome, composed by Arthur Edward Lovell, and delivered by him—his comrades standing round and applauding. That was quite settled in Lovell's mind; but there were a good many other opinions on the subject that were not at all in agreement with Arthur Edward's.

The 2nd Chapter.**The Cracksmen's Cousin!**

Eric Wilmot sat in a corner seat in the express as it rolled on towards Latcham Junction.

His handsome face was grave; but it was contented. The young footballer was feeling in great spirits.

He had been through an experience that could not be called pleasant. He had been arrested on the football ground at Rookwood School on the charge of being James Stacey, alias Dandy Jim, the cracksmen. And his amazing resemblance to the rascal had made Inspector Troope of Scotland Yard quite assured that he had the right man.

It had been a slow matter to prove the truth to the satisfaction of the authorities. But it had been proved; Eric Wilmot's identity was established, to

Bag in hand, he started for the bridge over the line. It was a short run on the local line to Coombe, the village near Rookwood. In little more than an hour now he would be at the old school, among the crowd of fellows who were eager to welcome him back. Eric Wilmot little dreamed of what was to happen before he saw Rookwood School again.

A man was lounging on the platform by the end of the bridge. Wilmot glanced at him carelessly as passing.

He started a little as he caught two dark, keen eyes fastened upon him, and stopped.

The man was shabbily dressed, and had a stubby beard and a patch of court plaster on his nose. He looked a good deal like a racecourse loafer who had been through hard times.

Wilmot's heart beat faster.

The man moved to intercept him, and stopped in front of him, with a grin on his face.

"You!" muttered Wilmot.

"Little me!" The man spoke in a low voice, glancing round. "But, in the name of wonder, how did you know me? I believe even old Troope himself would not know me in this rig."

Wilmot set his lips.

"I think I should know your evil face anywhere, Dandy Jim! You have been watching for me."

"Right on the nail!"

"How did you know I was coming by this train, then?" exclaimed the young footballer, in astonishment.

The disguised cracksmen laughed.

For the moment the footballer was off his guard.

He went spinning backwards in the grasp of the ruffian, and came with a crash to the brick floor.

"You scoundrel!" he panted. "You—Oh!"

Crash!

There was a loaded stick in Dandy Jim's hand now, and as the young footballer struggled he struck savagely.

Then he sprang to his feet, holding his weapon ready to strike again if the second blow were needed. But it was not needed. Eric Wilmot lay on the muddy bricks, senseless.

Dandy Jim threw down the stick, and wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then he hurried to the rickety door, and fastened it securely, and dragged a box against it.

Eric Wilmot did not move.

How long he lay unconscious, he never knew; but when his senses struggled back he opened his eyes and stared round him feebly, with aching head.

For some minutes he did not realise what had happened. But recollection returned as he caught sight of Dandy Jim.

The cracksman was no longer in the disguise he had worn at Latham Station. The stubby beard and the court-plaster were gone, his face was washed and cleanly shaven; and in his natural state his likeness to the young man lying on the floor was amazing.

There were other changes in him, too. He had discarded the shabby, patched clothes, and was dressed in a well-cut grey suit—the suit Eric Wilmot had been wearing when he arrived at Latham. Wilmot recognised it, and glanced down at his own limbs. He was dressed now in the cracksman's discarded clothes, even to the dirty muffer round his neck and the ragged boots. And he was bound hand and foot, and a gag was in his mouth, fastened there by a cord round his head.

He could not move, he could not speak; he could only lie on the bricks, staring at the rascal dazedly.

Dandy Jim did not even notice for the moment that his victim had returned to consciousness. The cracksman was busy before a little looking-glass stuck on the wall. He was giving the finishing touches to his metamorphosis.

"Good!" he muttered aloud, at last. "I fancy I shall please!"

Wilmot made an effort to move. The cracksman's eyes gleamed round at him at once.

He laughed.

"The tables are turned, my affectionate cousin!" he remarked. "I think I have the whip-hand now!"

Wilmot's eyes gleamed at him with rage and scorn. He made an effort to speak, but the gag choked his utterance.

Dandy Jim smiled down at him.

"I'm keeping my word, dear boy," he said. "Turning over a new leaf—with your assistance! Ha, ha, ha! What do you think of my new line—football coach at a public school? You catch on?"

Wilmot stared at him.

"They're fairly close on my heels," grinned Dandy Jim; "but there's one place where I shall be safe to lie low as long as I like—Rookwood School, under the name of my excellent cousin Eric! The police have already satisfied themselves that Eric Wilmot, football coach at Rookwood, is not Dandy Jim, the cracksman. They will not think of troubling him again. What do you think?"

Wilmot could only stare at him.

His aching brain was slow to understand the daring scheme the hunted rascal had formed; but he understood at last.

"I have your clothes, your papers and letters, your bag, and your loose cash!" Stacey chuckled. "I shall arrive a little late at Rookwood—I have lost your train. Ha, ha! Otherwise, all will go as arranged—only the Eric Wilmot who reaches Rookwood will not be the Eric who left! What do you think of the game?"

An unspoken question could be read in the young footballer's eyes. Dandy Jim understood it.

"What is going to become of you?" he said. "Yes, that's the difficulty. The safest way would make it an unpleasant matter—which would not suit my book. But I shall take care of you, my loving cousin—don't be afraid of that! You won't get away to talk. So long as it suits me to remain at Rookwood, you will be in a safe place. And when it's safe for me to go, I shall clear with something to start afresh with. I believe Dr. Chisholm's safe is fairly well lined. Eric Wilmot may have the credit of lightening it, when I disappear!"

He chuckled.

"I've had this plan in my mind ever since I found you were football coach at Rookwood," he said. "I wondered whether I should ever get a chance—and now I've got it, when things were looking desperate. Everything comes to him who waits!"

He sat down and lighted a cigarette, puffing out the smoke with great enjoyment.

Eric Wilmot lay with aching head and dizzy brain, with something very like despair in his heart.

The cracksman smoked for some time. Evidently he was waiting for something. A low whistle sounded at last outside the door of the wretched tenement.

The cracksman rose to his feet. He answered the whistle. And then three distinct taps sounded on the door.

Evidently it was a signal, for Dandy Jim unfastened the door at once. A burly man with a thick beard entered. He started at the sight of Dandy Jim, and then his glance went past the cracksman to the bound man lying on the floor.

"All O.K., Lurcher!" said Dandy Jim, with a laugh.

"My eye! You've landed him,

guy'nor!" said the Lurcher, in great admiration.

"As you see. You'll remain with him till dark, and then get him away in the cart as arranged. Keep the gag safe, and roll him in the canvas before you move him."

"You're going now, guy'nor?"

"I must! Eric Wilmot is expected at Rookwood!" grinned Dandy Jim. "I must not lose the next train!"

A few minutes more, and the Lurcher was fastening the door of the wretched tenement behind the cracksman. Dandy Jim, with a cigarette between his lips and a smile on his face, walked away cheerily to the railway-station, leaving behind him his hapless victim, a prey to black despair.

The 4th Chapter.
In False Colours!

"Rotten!"

That was the general verdict. Jimmy Silver & Co., and about fifty other Rookwooders, were gathered outside the little station at Coombe.

They were all prepared to welcome Eric Wilmot when he arrived by the three-forty-five.

him respectfully as he jumped off his machine.

"You are waiting for Mr. Wilmot, my boys?" asked the Fourth Form master, with a smile at the Rookwood crowd.

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. "He seems to have missed his train, and we don't know whether to wait any longer."

"He has sent a telegram," said Mr. Dalton. "Knowing that you boys were waiting here, I thought I would come along and tell you."

"Oh, sir, you're awfully good!" said Jimmy, gratefully.

It was just like "Dicky" Dalton to do his Form a good turn like that.

"Mr. Wilmot has telegraphed to the Head from Latham," said the Form master. "He lost the connection there, and is coming by the next train. He will arrive by the four-forty-five."

"Oh, good!"

"Thank you so much, sir!"

"The Head is sending a conveyance for him," said Mr. Dalton. "Doubtless he will be pleased to find so many friends awaiting him."

And, with a pleasant smile to the juniors, Mr Dalton remounted his machine and rode away.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you cackling at?" snorted Lovell.

"Dicky wouldn't be found dead gassing your speech, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Look here—"

"Besides, that speech isn't going to be made," said Putty Grace. "We're here to give Wilmot a rousing reception. Lovell's speech would send him to sleep!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want any silly rot!" roared Lovell.

"We don't, either!" said Putty affably. "That's why we bar the giddy speech, old bean!"

Arthur Edward Lovell snorted scornfully, and disdained to make any other reply.

"I say," remarked Tubby Muffin, "if we're going to wait an hour, we may as well get along to the tuckshop! I say, I'll jolly well stand ginger-pop all round!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You'll lend me ten bob, won't you, Jimmy?"

"Not this year!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"Hurrah!"

It was a roar from the Rookwood crowd.

The newcomer stopped dead, staring at the crowd. Obviously he had not been looking for anything of the kind. Eric Wilmot doubtless had had a suspicion that some welcome was intended, but of that Dandy Jim knew nothing. He was surprised and startled, and the look on his face for the moment was not pleasant.

Confident as he was in his impersonation of his cousin, the rascal was far from desiring any publicity that he could possibly avoid. And he had many difficulties to contend with. He had planned to play his cards very carefully, gradually finding out details that, as Eric Wilmot, he was supposed to be perfectly familiar with. Now he was suddenly brought face to face with a crowd of fellows, every one of whom he was supposed to know personally—and not one of whom did he know by name.

It was a critical moment even for the iron-nerved rascal who was playing so desperate a game.

"Good old Wilmot!"

"Hurrah!"

"Welcome home, sir!"

Lovell was grabbing desperately in his pockets for the manuscript of his speech, so carefully written out for this great occasion. Lovell was certain that he had put it in his pocket when he started—it had stuck out of his pocket in full view, in fact. And he was quite unaware that Putty Grace had jerked it away and relieved him of it.

"Where's that dashed speech?" gasped Lovell. "Oh dear! I—I say, sir—Mr. Wilmot— Welcome home, sir!" Lovell was not blessed with a good memory. He made a desperate effort to recall his written eloquence. "On this auspicious occasion, sir, when—"

"We're here to welcome you, Mr. Wilmot," said Jimmy Silver, surprised by the curious expression on the young man's face.

Never had a man looked so taken aback, and the most imaginative junior present could not imagine that the new arrival looked pleased.

"Welcome back to Rookwood, sir!" roared the juniors.

"On this auspicious occasion," gasped Lovell, "the whole school rises as one man to testify—"

"Dry up, Lovell!"

"To testify—to testify to—to—to—to the auspicious occasion—" Lovell was losing his thread.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Wilmot spoke at last. He spoke in a rather gasping voice.

"Oh, yes! I—I am very glad—glad to be—be welcomed like this! Thank you!"

With that he came out of the station, and as he sighted the sergeant standing beside the trap he strode towards him. Sergeant Kettle touched his hat to the young man.

"Ead sent the trap for you, sir," he said.

"Very good."

"If—if you don't mind, sir, we—we have a few words to say!" stammered Lovell.

The footballer did not seem to hear. He stepped quickly into the trap. It was obvious to the least observant that he was anxious to be off the scene, and Jimmy Silver & Co. could not help feeling that their great reception had failed to have the expected "bucking" effect upon Eric Wilmot.

Sergeant Kettle gathered up his reins. "Speech! Speech!" shouted Conroy.

"I—I've lost the speech—" gasped Lovell.

"Fathead! I don't mean your piffle! Speech, Wilmot!" shouted Conroy.

In the circumstances, Mr. Wilmot might have been expected to say a few words, at least, to his youthful admirers and supporters. But he did not. He made the sergeant a sign to drive on, and Kettle put the horse into action at once. It was obviously an after-thought that the footballer raised his hat to the crowd of juniors as he drove away. As a matter of fact, the impostor dared say nothing, lest he should inadvertently betray himself. He was only anxious to be gone.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, with a whistle, as the trap bowled down the street. "Rather a frost—what?"

"Blessed if I like Wilmot so much as I thought I did!" grunted Raby. "He seems to have changed somehow!"

Jimmy Silver nodded. That had struck him also.

"There ought to have been a speech," said Lovell. "Naturally, he would expect a speech of welcome. That would have made it go off all right."

"Fathead!"

"This yours?" asked Putty, shoving a roll of impot paper into Lovell's hand.

"Good! Where did you find it?"

"In your pocket, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—" gasped Lovell.

"Well, you can make the speech, after all, old top!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "We'll get home to tea while you're doing it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood crowd streamed homeward to the school. Every fellow had a sense of disappointment, not only in the failure of the great reception, but in Eric Wilmot himself. Somehow the footballer they had admired and loyally rallied round seemed a changed man in their eyes. Why, they could not have told, but they all felt a subtle change. But Jimmy Silver & Co. as yet were far from suspecting the truth—though that was to come!

THE END.

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"HISTORIES."—No. 2.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid footer competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Sheffield United Football Club in Picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve the picture, and when you have done so, write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears under the puzzle, pin it to your solution, and post it to "HISTORIES" No. 2 Competition, BOYS' FRIEND Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, Nov. 2nd.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all or any of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Gem," the "Magnet," and the "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.



I enter "HISTORIES" Competition No. 2, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....

Address.....

The three-forty-five local train had come—and gone! But there was no Eric Wilmot!

Lovell had scouted into the station, and returned with the news that Mr. Wilmot was not there. Evidently he had not arrived by the expected train.

So the disappointed crowd of Rookwooders pronounced that it was rotten, as, indeed, it was.

"Must be rather an ass to lose the train!" said Lovell. "Of course, he's missed the connection at Latham."

"That's it," said Jimmy Silver. "But it's odd. There's about twenty minutes to wait for the local at Latham, according to the time-table. And he must have come by the express; he said he would."

"Perhaps he was having a feed in the buffet, and forgot all about the train!"

That valuable suggestion came from Tubby Muffin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, it's happened to me!" said Tubby. "More than once, too!"

"It might happen to you, fatty, but it wouldn't happen to Wilmot!" grunted Lovell.

"Still, he's lost the train!" yawned Tommy Dodd. "When is the next local in from Latham?"

"An hour!" said Jimmy Silver, with a grimace.

"Are we going to wait for it?"

"The giddy ass might miss the next, and perhaps he hasn't come to-day at all!" was a comforting suggestion from Putty of the Fourth.

Jimmy looked rather doubtful. Waiting an hour was not exactly pleasant; but waiting an hour for a man who might not arrive at all was still less agreeable.

"Hallo, here comes Dicky!" exclaimed Lovell.

Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was seen coming up the village street on his bicycle. The juniors capped

"Isn't Dicky a real brick!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "I say, he was jolly friendly with Wilmot at the school; he used to have him in his study to jaw, you know. Suppose we ask him to take part in the reception? I—I'd let him make a speech, if he wanted to!"

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—*—
NOW ON SALE.

"Then I shan't be able to stand the ginger-pop. Suppose you stand it, Jimmy?" suggested Tubby.

"My dear chap, I'm standing you," said Jimmy Silver. "That's about as much as I can stand!"

"Yah!" was Reginald Muffin's elegant rejoinder to that.

Most of the Rookwood crowd strolled away about the village, to fill in the time of waiting; but they all turned up again at the station in good time for the four-forty-five.

Arthur Edward Lovell, who, somehow, had a conviction that he was master of ceremonies, took his stand in the station entrance. He warned his comrades with a shout when the train came in.

"Look out for jolly old Eric!" he shouted. "Train's in!"

"Good egg!"

"Here's old Kettle with the trap!" said Raby, as the vehicle from Rookwood came up to the station and halted. "He's not going to drive Wilmot off before we've spoken to him!"

"No jolly fear!"

Sergeant Kettle descended from the trap. He stood stolidly waiting for Mr. Wilmot to emerge from the station, apparently unmoved by the general enthusiasm. There was another yell from Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Here he comes!"

"Hurrah!"

A handsome, athletic fellow appeared in the station entrance. Handsome he certainly was, and to the eyes of the Rookwooders he was Eric Wilmot, whom they had come to greet. Certainly he was, exactly like the fugitive cracksman whom Jimmy Silver & Co. had chased out of the ruin in Coombe Wood. But Wilmot's resemblance to Dandy Jim was common talk at Rookwood since Inspector Troope's visit to the school. And if there was a look in the man's eyes that was not like Wilmot's, the crowd of juniors were not likely to observe it.

"Where's that dashed speech?" gasped Lovell. "Oh dear! I—I say, sir—Mr. Wilmot— Welcome home, sir!" Lovell was not blessed with a good memory. He made a desperate effort to recall his written eloquence. "On this auspicious occasion, sir, when—"

"We're here to welcome you, Mr. Wilmot," said Jimmy Silver, surprised by the curious expression on the young man's face.

Never had a man looked so taken aback, and the most imaginative junior present could not imagine that the new arrival looked pleased.

"Welcome back to Rookwood, sir!" roared the juniors.

"On this auspicious occasion," gasped Lovell, "the whole school rises as one man to testify—"

"Dry up, Lovell!"

"To testify—to testify to—to—to—to the auspicious occasion—" Lovell was losing his thread.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Wilmot spoke at last. He spoke in a rather gasping voice.

"Oh, yes! I—I am very glad—glad to be—be welcomed like this! Thank you!"

With that he came out of the station, and as he sighted the sergeant standing beside the trap he strode towards him. Sergeant Kettle touched his hat to the young man.

"Ead sent the trap for you, sir," he said.

"Very good."

"If—if you don't mind, sir, we—we have a few words to say!" stammered Lovell.

The footballer did not seem to hear. He stepped quickly into the trap. It was obvious to the least observant that he was anxious to be off the scene, and Jimmy Silver & Co. could not help feeling that their great reception had failed to have the expected "bucking" effect upon Eric Wilmot.

Sergeant Kettle gathered up his reins. "Speech! Speech!" shouted Conroy.

"I—I've lost the speech—" gasped Lovell.

"Fathead! I don't mean your piffle! Speech, Wilmot!" shouted Conroy.

In the circumstances, Mr. Wilmot might have been expected to say a few words, at least, to his youthful admirers and supporters. But he did not. He made the sergeant a sign to drive on, and Kettle put the horse into action at once. It was obviously an after-thought that the footballer raised his hat to the crowd of juniors as he drove away. As a matter of fact, the impostor dared say nothing, lest he should inadvertently betray himself. He was only anxious to be gone.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, with a whistle, as the trap bowled down the street. "Rather a frost—what?"

"Blessed if I like Wilmot so much as I thought I did!" grunted Raby. "He seems to have changed somehow!"

Jimmy Silver nodded. That had struck him also.

"There ought to have been a speech," said Lovell. "Naturally, he would expect a speech of welcome. That would have made it go off all right."

"Fathead!"

"This yours?" asked Putty, shoving a roll of impot paper into Lovell's hand.

"Good! Where did you find it?"

"In your pocket, old chap!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you—" gasped Lovell.

"Well, you can make the speech, after all, old top!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "We'll get home to tea while you're doing it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood crowd streamed homeward to the school. Every fellow had a sense of disappointment, not only in the failure of the great reception, but in Eric Wilmot himself. Somehow the footballer they had admired and loyally rallied round seemed a changed man in their eyes. Why, they could not have told, but they all felt a subtle change. But Jimmy Silver & Co. as yet were far from suspecting the truth—though that was to come!

THE END.

(A splendid treat is in store for you next Monday when you read the long complete story of the Chums of Rookwood School, entitled "Jimmy Silver's Discovery!" Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND in advance!)