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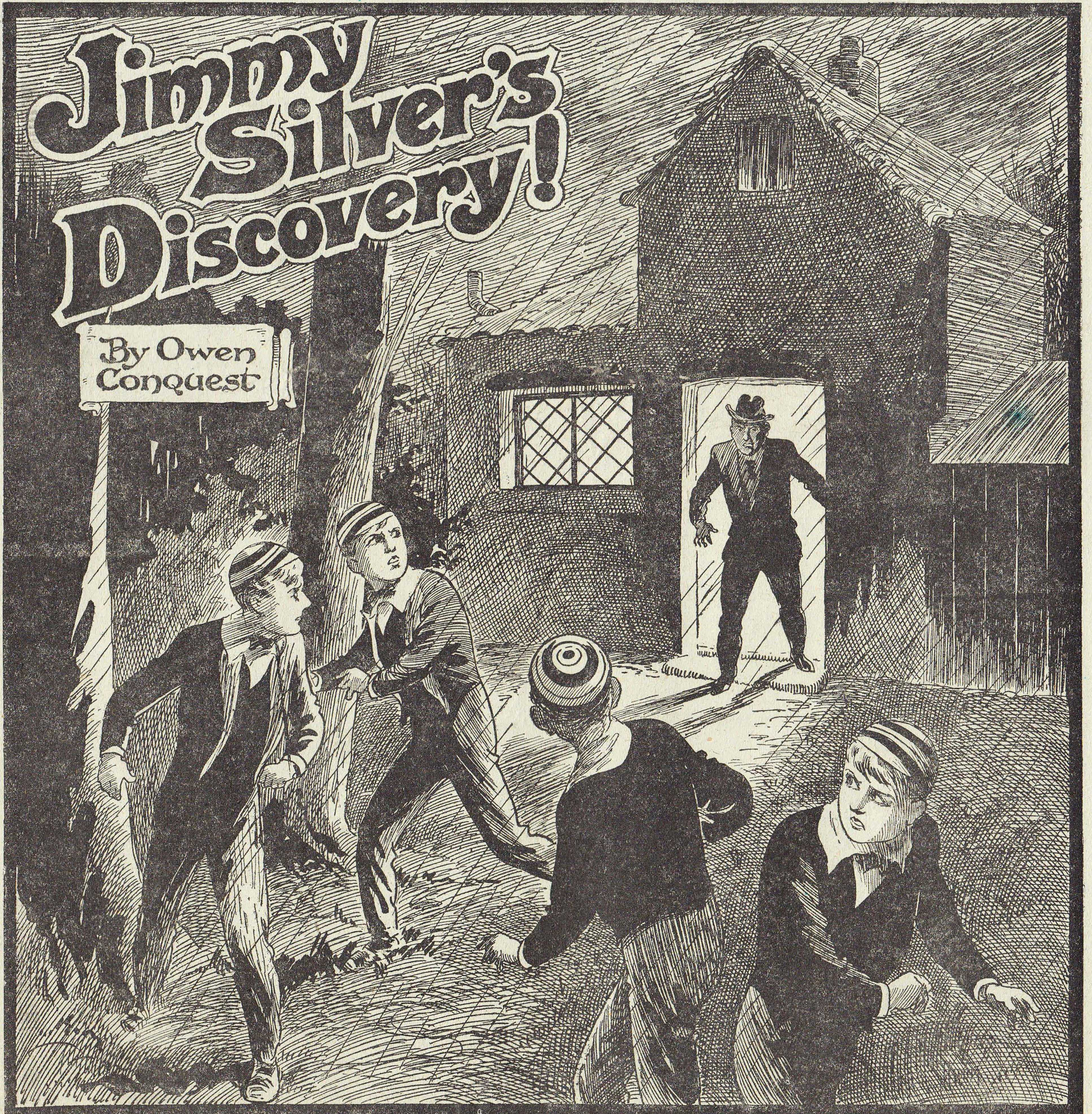
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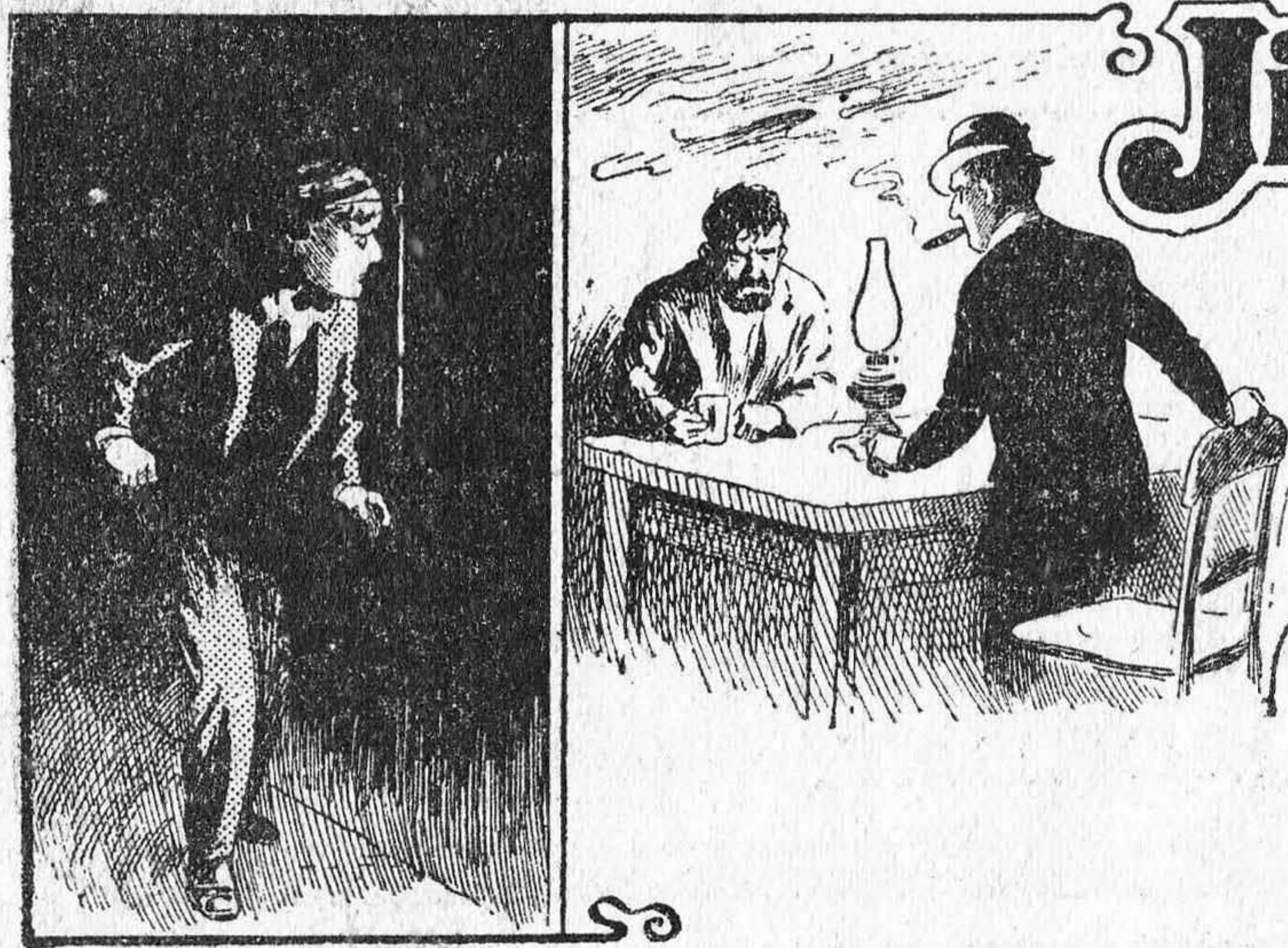
THE WORLD-FAMOUS BOYS' PAPER!

[Week Ending November 4th, 1922.]



THE MYSTERY MAN—IS HE ERIC WILMOT, FOOTBALL COACH, OR DANDY JIM, CRACKSMAN?
(See the magnificent story of the Chums of Rookwood School included in this number!)

Eric Wilmot or Dandy Jim? Jimmy Silver is Doubtful!



Jimmy Silver's Discovery!

A Thrilling Story of the Chums of Rookwood School. BY OWEN CONQUEST

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

The 1st Chapter. Very Wet!

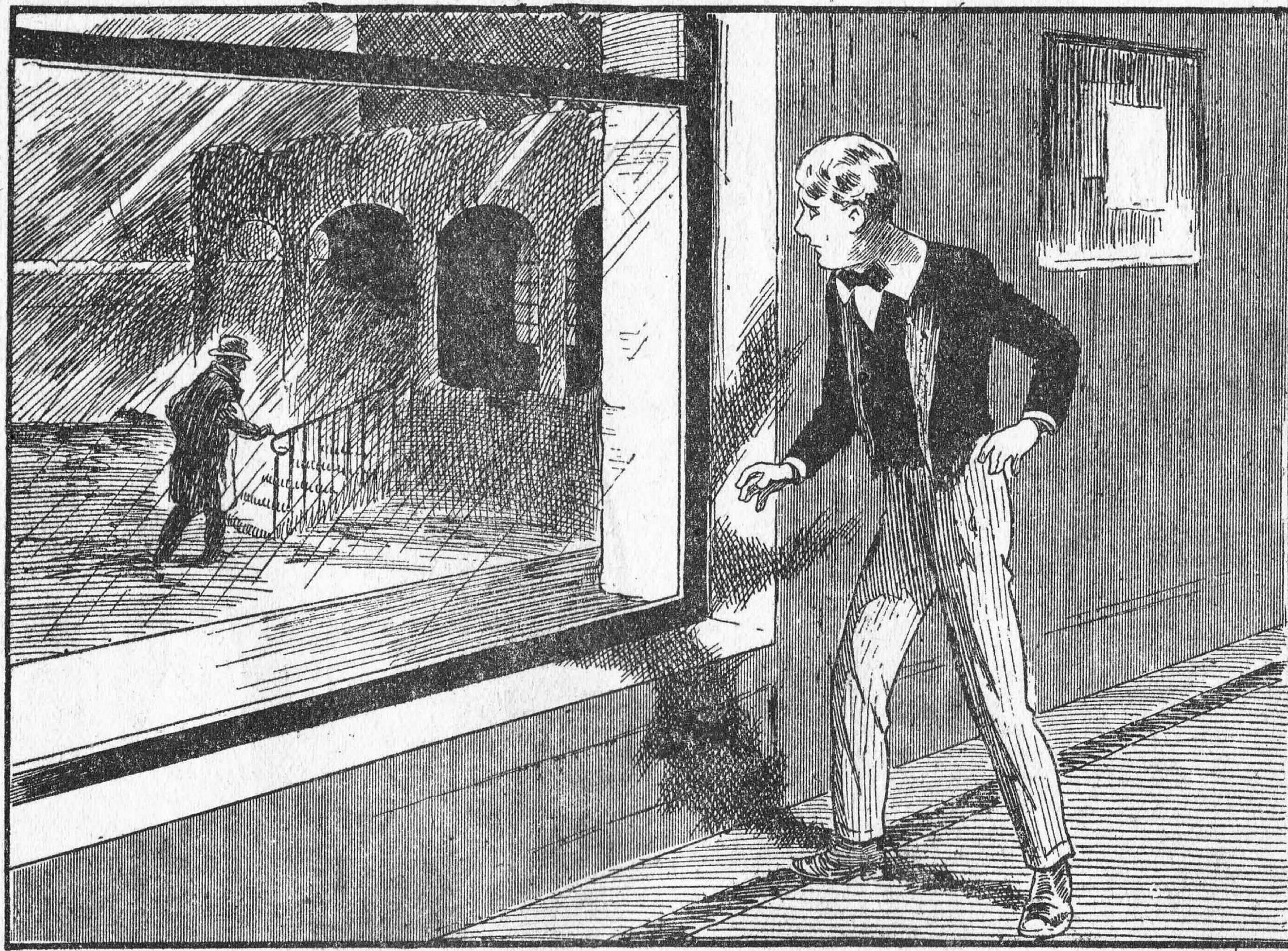
"Jimmy, you ass—" "Jimmy, you chump—" "Jimmy, you duffer—" Lovell and Raby and Newcome of the Rookwood Fourth were not always in agreement. On the present occasion, however, they seemed quite unanimous. Jimmy Silver did not answer. He grunted. The Fistical Four of Rookwood were in a parlous plight. The rain was coming down, not merely in torrents, but in whole cataracts. Round the four juniors stretched the waste of Coombe Heath, weeping with rain. The scattered trees were drenched and dripping, the bushes ran with water, and the grass was like a bog. And several miles lay between the chums of the Fourth and the school. It had been Jimmy Silver's idea to spend that half-holiday in a long tramp across country. The weather had looked doubtful, but Jimmy had declared that they could not afford to take into account such an uncertain quantity as the British climate. In rather watery sunshine the Fistical Four had tramped across Coombe Heath, and the rain began to fall while they were having their tea at an inn far from Rookwood. It had fallen, heavier and heavier, all the way back, till now it was fairly gushing over them. And it looked like getting worse, if worse was possible. Hence the remarks of Lovell and Raby and Newcome. Jimmy had led them into this, and there was some slight solace in telling the captain of the Fourth what they thought of him. "You awful ass!" continued Lovell. "Of all the duffers—" "Keep smiling!" urged Jimmy Silver. "I'm soaked!" "Drenched!" said Raby. "Dripping!" gasped Newcome. "Never mind—keep smiling!" said Jimmy. "No good grousing! We've got to get through it somehow." Arthur Edward Lovell halted. "Ass!" he said. "Fathead! I'm not going to splash along any further! We've got to find a shelter!" "Nothing but these dashed trees!" groaned Raby. "And they're wetter than the rain!" "Must be something somewhere," said Lovell, peering through the thickening gloom and the lashing downpour of rain. "A cattle-shed would be better than nothing." "Oh, come on!" said Jimmy. "I'm not coming on!" roared Lovell. "It's a good two miles to Rookwood, and I'm fed up! There must be a shelter somewhere." Jimmy Silver halted. He would have pushed on to the school, but it was clear that the Co. were not of the same mind. Jimmy, by that time, repented of defying the weather. Certainly, he could not have foreseen this tremendous rain-storm. "There's a cottage on the heath not far from here," he said. "Nobody lives there, but we might be able to get in. You remember that old shepherd's cottage that was damaged in an air raid in the war-time—it's somewhere about here." "Where?" grunted Lovell. Jimmy Silver blinked round him. The early October evening was darkening over the heath, and what little light was left was obscured by thick clouds. Jimmy remembered having seen the half-ruined, deserted cottage, but he did not remember its exact location. "Hallo, there's a light!" he exclaimed suddenly. "By Jove!" From a fringe of dank trees at a little distance the light glimmered through the gloom. "That's it!" exclaimed Jimmy. "I remember now. The cottage is on the other side of those trees." "You said nobody lived there," said Lovell. "If that's so, why the thump is there a light?" "Well, nobody lived there last term," said Jimmy. "Perhaps it's occupied now. There's a shed to it, and we can get shelter—if anybody's there, he'll let us come in out of the rain, I suppose. This way!" Jimmy turned from the muddy footpath and started towards the trees, the wind and rain lashing in his face. Lovell & Co. followed him. It was no time to think about being late for call-over at the school. What they wanted was shelter from the rain—and the warmth of a fire, if possible. They tramped on through blinding rain, squelching mud at every step. The light grew clearer as they advanced. They passed through the trees and came in sight of the cottage. It was too

dark now to make out the building clearly, but they could see the square of the window, with the light shining through the blind. "There's a tenant there now, that's certain," said Jimmy. "There were no blinds to the windows when I passed the place last term. Whoever it is, he'll let us dry our clothes at the fire, and wait till the storm's over." That prospect cheered the juniors a little. They tramped on, and reached the door of the solitary cottage on the heath. It was a small building—one room downstairs and one up—with a lean-to shed at the side. The shed was in a bad state of disrepair, and open to the wind if not to the rain. But the cottage, which had been disused since its damage years before in a Hun raid, had been roughly repaired. The porch was in a tottering state, but the door looked strong and stout enough. Jimmy Silver knocked loudly. There was a sound of a movement within, and Jimmy thought he caught a murmur of voices. But no one came to the door. "Bang on it!" said Lovell savagely. "We've got to get in."

rotter might say 'no.' Let's get into it—better than the open air, anyhow." And the Fistical Four, in dismal spirits and a very angry mood, moved away from the cottage and groped their way through rain and gloom into the shed.

The 2nd Chapter. A Startling Discovery!

Incessant rain pattered and splashed on the lean-to roof of the shed as the shivering juniors groped into it. Within there was blackness. But through the blackness there glimmered a thin beam of light, which puzzled the juniors for a moment or two. But they soon ascertained that it came from a crack in the crazy old wall of the cottage where the shed adjoined it. "Quiet!" whispered Jimmy Silver. "If that rotter hears us, he may turn us out of this!" "I'd like to see him turn me out!" breathed Lovell. "I'd damage his features for him, I know that!" "Might set a dog on us!" murmured Raby. "Oh!" It was evident that the unknown occupant of the cottage on the heath



WHAT SILVER SAW! Jimmy Silver started as, through the window, he saw a figure wrapped in a raincoat ascend the balcony leading to Mr. Wilmot's room. The football coach had returned!

Thump, thump! There were footsteps at last in the room. The door was on the room itself; there was no passage within. Whoever was in the room obviously could not fail to hear the knocking at the door. The footsteps came across the room to the door, but the latter was not opened. A rough, harsh voice called from within: "Who's there?" "We're caught in the storm," answered Jimmy Silver. "Will you give us shelter for a while—" "No!" "Wha-a-t?" "I'm not letting tramps into my house! Get on your way!" "We're not tramps," roared Lovell, "and we want shelter from the rain! We'll pay for it." "Get out!" The footsteps receded again. In the darkness in the shaky old porch the juniors looked at one another. "Inhospitable rotter!" groaned Newcome. Lovell set his teeth. "My hat! Of all the rotten Huns!" he breathed. "I'd like to be within hitting distance of that chap's nose. What are we going to do?" "There's the shed," muttered Raby. "Better ask—" "No good asking," said Lovell. "The

was utterly inhospitable and unfeeling, and it behaved the Rookwood juniors to be careful. The shed was cold and dark and damp; but the sloping roof kept off most of the rain, and it was a great improvement on the torrents falling outside. The hapless four drew as close as possible to the cottage wall, where the shed was driest and most sheltered. The wall was of ancient weather-boards, tarred; but it was old and crazy, and had been patched in several places by new boards, showing cracks here and there. From the little opening whence the light came, the beam fell across Jimmy Silver's cheek in the dark, showing up a fragment of his face with a rather ghostly effect. From the slit, too, a smell of tobacco escaped. The sound of a voice came to the ears of the juniors—the harsh voice that had answered them at the door. "Only somebody wanting shelter. They've gone." Evidently the man was answering someone who had spoken to him in the room. "Sure they've gone?" That was a softer and more cultivated voice—and it was a voice that made Jimmy Silver jump. For he knew it! There was a muffled exclamation from Lovell.

"Quiet!" breathed Jimmy. "That's Mr. Wilmot's voice!" whispered Lovell. "Quiet!" "Oh, they've gone!" the harsh voice said, again. "It's all right. Not likely to hang about in this weather, Jim." "I ought to be gone, too; but I fancy I'll wait for the rain to stop!" said the familiar voice. "Hang the weather!" Jimmy Silver was almost trembling with excitement. It was several days now since Eric Wilmot, the football coach, had returned to Rookwood School after his absence. His arrest in mistake for Dandy Jim, the crackman, whom he resembled closely, was still the talk of Rookwood. Dandy Jim was still at large. And the man with the harsh voice had addressed his companion in the cottage as "Jim." Was that the explanation of his seeming inhospitality; was that lonely cottage on the heath the hiding-place of the crackman for whom the police were hunting? It was not only in looks, but in the tones of his voice, that Dandy Jim resembled Eric Wilmot. And the voice Jimmy had just heard was exactly that of Mr. Wilmot, the football coach at Rookwood. The four juniors scarcely breathed now. The same suspicion was in all their minds, and they realised that if it was well-founded, they were in dangerous quarters. Jimmy moved cautiously, to bring his eyes on a level with the crack in the old wall. That gave him a view of a part of the interior of the cottage. A lamp burned upon a small table, upon which stood a bottle and two glasses. The atmosphere was thick with tobacco-smoke. Jimmy drew in his breath hard. He had a partial view of a harsh-featured, bearded man—evidently the man who had answered him at the door. And he had a full view of a handsome, athletic figure—who was either Eric Wilmot or his double. In looks the two were alike; but Jimmy had no doubt that this was the crackman, for he was smoking a cigar, and sipping whisky-and-water—to neither of which was the young footballer addicted. The young man appeared to be listening; and, from the expression on his face, Jimmy thought that he was not quite so

towards the trees. There was a sudden flare of light behind them, as the cottage door was thrown open, and the lamplight streamed out into the gloom. But the darkness hid the juniors now. Looking back, they could see the crackman's figure outlined in the lighted doorway. "Come on!" breathed Jimmy Silver. The juniors hurried on. The 3rd Chapter. Mysterious! "He, he, he! You look wet! He, he, he!" That was Tubby Muffin's sympathetic greeting. The Fistical Four did look wet—there was no doubt about that. They were drenched and dripping. "Caught in the giddy storm?" asked Conroy of the Fourth. "Looks like it!" gasped Lovell. "You've missed call-over," said Putty of the Fourth. "Blow call-over!" "Mr. Dalton's been asking after you!" remarked Oswald. "Bless Mr. Dalton!" "Lovell! Silver! You have returned, then!" Mr. Dalton came out of his study. Lovell crimsoned; but if the Fourth Form master had heard his remark, he took no note of it. "Where have you been, Silver?" "We've been caught in the rain, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "I can see that!" said Mr. Dalton, smiling slightly. "You had better go and get changed at once!" "Yes, sir!" mumbled Lovell. The Fistical Four were glad to go and get changed. Never had they felt so thoroughly in need of a change. Half an hour later, in dry clothes, and seated at tea before a blazing fire in the end study, they felt better. Outside, the rain was still beating against the walls and windows of Rookwood, though the storm had slackened now. "By Jove, I feel better now!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, as he tackled his third egg and his fourth round of toast. "Just as well that we didn't hang on at the cottage, after all. We didn't get much wetter tramping home." "But what are we going to do about what we saw?" asked Raby. "Had we better report to Mr. Dalton, Jimmy?" "We're bound to report it," said Newcome. "The police are looking everywhere for that scoundrel! I never guessed that he was still hanging on near Rookwood." Jimmy Silver nodded thoughtfully. "He's got to be arrested," he said. "But I was thinking we'd better tell Mr. Wilmot." "Good egg!" agreed Lovell. "Wilmot was arrested in mistake for that rotter, and he's bound to be keen on getting him nailed. Why, the same thing might happen again! We'll tell Wilmot, and he can get the police to go with him to the place. He'll be glad of this chance." "That's the idea," said Jimmy. "If Mr. Wilmot doesn't care to take a hand in it, we'll go to our Form master. But I fancy he will jump at it—and we shall be doing him a good turn. I've got to see him about the junior practice, so I'll buzz along after tea and let him know." And as soon as tea was over the captain of the Fourth quitted the end study, and made his way to Mr. Wilmot's quarters. The football coach had a couple of rooms in the School House, at some distance from the junior quarters. The sitting-room was a pleasant room on the south side of the building, with a balcony and steps to the ground. More than once Jimmy Silver had interviewed Mr. Wilmot in that room on the all-important subject of junior football. Jimmy tapped at the door, and turned the handle. There was no reply from within, and the door was evidently locked, for it did not open. The junior noticed that there was no light under the door. Apparently Mr. Wilmot was not in his quarters. Jimmy could not help being surprised. If Mr. Wilmot had gone, as he sometimes did, to Mr. Dalton's study for a chat, it was odd that he should have locked the door and taken the key away. It was odd, anyhow, that he should lock his sitting-room door, even if he had gone out. And certainly it was very unusual weather for taking a walk out of doors. Tupper, the page, came along the passage while Jimmy was standing at the door, and the junior called to him: "Do you know whether Mr. Wilmot is indoors, Tupper?" "Dunno, Master Silver," answered Tupper. "Ain't seed him this afternoon. But he generally goes in and out by the balcony, I believe. Never know when he's in his rooms or when he ain't." "The door's locked," said Jimmy. Tupper gave an audible sniff. "It generally is," he answered. "I dunno whether Mr. Wilmot thinks as anybody would poke into his room and look for his vallybles. Very careful gent, Mr. Wilmot, sir." And, with another audible sniff, Tupper went his way. Jimmy Silver hesitated. It was obviously necessary for some action to be taken without delay concerning the crackman's secret hiding-place at the cottage on the heath. If Mr. Wilmot was not available, Jimmy felt that he ought to go to his Form master or the Head. He resolved to wait a while, and give the young footballer a chance to return. If he was, after all, somewhere about the House, he was not likely to be long. Jimmy strolled along the passage, and stood looking out of the window at the end, which gave a view of the quad in the daylight. Now it was all dark, save for the light that fell from the School House windows. He could dimly make out the iron rail of the balcony outside Mr. Wilmot's room, and the curved iron stair that led down to the ground.

"I'll give him half an hour," murmured Jimmy.

But ten minutes had not elapsed when the junior, with a sudden start, noticed a moving shadow in the gloom before him, and someone wrapped in a raincoat ascended to the balcony of Mr. Wilmot's room.

Evidently it was the footballer; no one else had any business on that balcony, which gave admittance only to Wilmot's room.

Jimmy walked back along the passage to the door of the footballer's room.

He heard the sounds from within of the French windows opening, and the young man entering, before he reached the door.

Evidently Mr. Wilmot had been out in the rain, like the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver tapped at the door.

"Who is there?"

The voice came sharply from within. Light gleamed under the door; the young man had turned on the electric light just before Jimmy arrived there.

"It's Jimmy Silver."

"What do you want?"

"I should like to speak to you, Mr. Wilmot."

"Very well, Silver. Please excuse me for a few minutes—I am rather busy finishing a letter for the post."

"What!" stammered Jimmy.

"It's about the football, I suppose?"

"Yes, and—"

"Well, come back in ten minutes, if you don't mind, Silver. I really must get this letter finished."

"Oh, yes! Right!" gasped Jimmy.

"I—I thought you were gone out, sir!"

"In this weather!" The young man laughed. "No; I am only writing letters—saving up my correspondence for a rainy day, you know!"

"I—I'll come back!" gasped Jimmy.

He walked away with his brain in a whirl.

The 4th Chapter.
Strange Suspicions!

"Told Eric?"

Arthur Edward Lovell asked that question as Jimmy Silver came back into the end study. The Co. were chatting before the fire, glad enough of its warmth and ruddy light after their experiences on Coombe Heath that afternoon.

Jimmy shut the door.

The expression on his face startled his chums. They rose to their feet, looking at him inquiringly.

"What's the row?" asked Raby.

Jimmy breathed hard.

"I'm blessed if I know," he said. "There's something wrong—something awfully fishy! Did you fellows ever think that Eric Wilmot was a liar?"

"What rot!" grunted Lovell. "You know he isn't!"

"I'd have sworn to it," said Jimmy, with a nod. "But— Well, it beats me! Did you fellows know that Wilmot was out this afternoon?"

"Not likely!" said Lovell. "Only a fellow like you, Jimmy, is idiot enough to start for a long tramp on a day like this!"

"Well, he was out, and his door locked," said Jimmy. "I waited for him, and happened to see him, from the window, coming in by the balcony."

"What about it, ass? He can go out if he likes, I suppose?"

"No reason why he should keep it dark, if he does," said Jimmy quietly. "When I knocked at his door he told me he was writing letters—had a letter to finish."

"Wha-a-at?"

"And he had only just come in and turned on the light," said Jimmy. "He doesn't want anyone to know he was out in the rain. If he'd opened the door, I should have seen him streaming wet, as we were when we came in. And he said he was writing letters—a barefaced lie!" Jimmy Silver knitted his brows. "Wilmot, as we knew him before he was arrested and taken away, never seemed that sort."

"He seems different in a good many ways since he came back," said Raby. "Nothing you can specially put your finger on, but he seemed different, somehow."

"The way he had forgotten fellows' names," remarked Newcome. "He never struck me as absent-minded before he went away. But in less than a week he seemed to forget a lot of things."

"I can't understand it," said Lovell. "Wilmot's as straight as a string. He wouldn't tell lies."

"He's just done so," said Jimmy Silver. "Why should he want to keep it dark that he was out?" demanded Lovell. "I suppose he's not been anywhere that he can't explain?"

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

"I don't know!" he said slowly. "But there's something fishy about this. I believed in Wilmot, and stood by him. But since he was away he doesn't seem the chap he was before."

"Tubby Muffin likes him better!" grinned Raby. "He's forgotten all about the special exercises he set Tubby to bring his fat down!"

"And he doesn't harry the slackers like he used to," said Newcome. "Peele and Gower and their gang have been taking it much easier."

"I've noticed that," said Jimmy. "And I've noticed he's not so keen on footer himself; and I've heard some of the seniors remark that his knowledge of the game isn't what they thought it was at first. But—"

Jimmy was silent.

Vaguely, a strange and terrible suspicion was in the back of his mind—but it was so vague, and so wild, that he hardly dared to formulate it even to himself.

The captain of the Fourth glanced at the study clock. Ten minutes had more than elapsed.

"I've got to see him again," said Jimmy. "I told him I'd come back."

And he left the end study, and returned to Mr. Wilmot's room. But he was not now thinking of informing Mr. Wilmot of

the discovery at the cottage on the heath.

He tapped at Wilmot's door.

"Come in!" called out a cheery voice.

Jimmy entered the room. The football coach was seated at his table, pen in hand, addressing an envelope.

He nodded pleasantly to the junior.

There was no sign about him of having been out in the rainstorm. Yet he had been out in it; Jimmy knew that. Undoubtedly he had changed in the adjoining bed-room with great rapidity. Jimmy Silver had no doubt whatever that if he could have looked into that room he would have seen wet boots and raincoat. But the communicating door was closed.

"Sit down, my boy!" said the footballer. "Rotten weather for our game, what? No play to-day!"

"No, sir!" said Jimmy.

"How have you been getting through this wretched afternoon?"

"We went for a tramp, Mr. Wilmot," answered Jimmy, his heart beating a little faster.

Why did the man want to know where he had been that afternoon?

"In this weather?" said the footballer.

"Well, we went out early, and were caught in it coming back," said Jimmy.

The voice of Dandy Jim was still ringing in his ears, with the words he had heard the cracksman utter at the lonely cottage. Dandy Jim had fancied that it was a Rookwooder's voice at the door. How did Dandy Jim know a Rookwood

"Then it was not near Rookwood?"

"A couple of miles away," said Jimmy. "It was rather rotten; the man refused to let us in out of the rain, and we had to tramp back to Rookwood in it."

"The fellow must have been a rotter!" remarked Wilmot, his eyes still keenly on the junior. "In such a case, I think I should have been tempted to push in, in spite of such an inhospitable character. Wasn't there a barn or a shed you could have got into?"

Jimmy Silver wondered at his own coolness in keeping composed and giving no sign of his suppressed excitement. The man was coming very close in his inquiries now.

"Well, that would have been trespass," said Jimmy calmly. "Might have set a dog on us. After all, we didn't get much wetter tramping home. Lucky we didn't catch colds, though."

"Yes, you've been lucky," assented Mr. Wilmot.

"About footer practice on Saturday—" began Jimmy.

And the talk turned to football. But when Jimmy Silver left Mr. Wilmot's room, his heart was beating almost to suffocation. That vague, wild suspicion had taken form in his mind now—he knew, as well as if he had seen it, that Dandy Jim had looked into the shed, and seen the beam of light from the hole in the cottage wall; and had been startled and scared by the possibility that the applicants for shelter had seen and heard. And Mr. Wilmot had concealed the fact

Wilmot had wanted to discover whether Jimmy had taken refuge in the shed, and seen or heard anything that had passed in the cottage!

And the conclusion that Jimmy was driven to draw was that the man he had just seen was not Eric Wilmot, the football coach at all, but was the man he had seen a few hours earlier at the lonely cottage! And that conclusion was so startling, so amazing, that Jimmy Silver resolved not to tell it even to his chums—not till he was sure!

The 5th Chapter.
Put to the Proof!

"Jimmy!"

"Well?"

"What are we going to do about it?"

It was the following day, after morning lessons. Jimmy Silver had been in a very thoughtful mood that morning; and his chums in a very puzzled frame of mind.

So far nothing had been said of the discovery at the cottage on the heath. The Co. were accustomed to following the lead of Uncle James of Rookwood, and they had followed his lead in this. But they were seriously uneasy.

Jimmy Silver had told them that he wanted to think it out. That was all very well, as Arthur Edward Lovell remarked; but duty was duty, and in this case the duty of the juniors was plain. They had seen a criminal who was wanted by the police, in a secret

"Topping!" said Lovell.

"There was a little matter I wanted to mention to you, Mr. Wilmot, if you don't mind," said Jimmy Silver diffidently.

"Yes?"

"You remember the day before you went away—before you were taken away, I mean," said Jimmy, "you borrowed my penknife."

"Yes, Master Silver."

"Well, you didn't return it to me, Mr. Wilmot," said Jimmy, with a smile. "I—I thought perhaps you had forgotten borrowing it."

"Not at all; I remember perfectly. But I'm sorry to say that I must have lost it," said the footballer. "You see, things were rather in confusion just then; it was a rather startling experience for me."

"Yes, rather!" said Lovell warmly. "That inspector chap was a silly owl, sir! All the fellows agreed that he was a silly owl, and we were jolly glad when you came back safe and sound, Mr. Wilmot!"

"Thank you, Master Lovell!"

"But that penknife—" said Jimmy Silver.

"Bother your silly old penknife, Jimmy!" said Lovell in a stage whisper. "Chuck it!"

"But—"

"I am sorry I appear to have lost your knife, Silver," said the footballer. "I shall certainly purchase another in its place."

"Oh, no, Mr. Wilmot; not at all!" said Jimmy Silver. "I merely thought that if it had slipped your memory—"

"Not at all, Master Silver. I will look through all my pockets, and I may possibly find it," said the footballer, with a smile. "Otherwise, I shall insist upon giving you a new one."

"Oh, no!" said Jimmy. "I don't want that. But if you could find the same knife, I'd be glad. You remember it—a pearl-handled one, with my initials cut on the handle?"

"I remember," assented Mr. Wilmot. "I will look for it, and do my best."

"Thank you very much!"

With a nod to the juniors, the young man walked away towards the house. Arthur Edward Lovell glared at his chum, and as soon as the footballer was out of hearing, he burst out emphatically:

"Well, you crass ass! What a thumping lot of fuss about a silly old penknife! What do you want to worry the chap like that for about a dashed old penknife?"

"He remembers my lending it to him the day before he went!" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Naturally he would."

"He remembers that it was a pearl-handled knife, with my initials cut on it."

"Why shouldn't he?" snapped Lovell. "Well, it's odd, to say the least!"

"How is it odd, you ass?"

"Because," said Jimmy Silver deliberately, "I never lent Mr. Wilmot a penknife the day before he went away!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I've never possessed a pearl-handled penknife, and so certainly I've never lent one to Mr. Wilmot, and so he cannot possibly remember my doing so!" said Jimmy Silver in a low, quiet voice. "Catch on now?"

Raby and Newcome whistled. Arthur Edward Lovell looked blank.

"So you were pulling his leg?" said Lovell at last.

"Yes; catching him."

"Why should he tell lies about it?" demanded Lovell gruffly. "There's a mistake somewhere. Why should he pretend to remember it if it never happened?"

"Because he doesn't dare not to remember anything that's referred to as having happened to Eric Wilmot!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "Because, if he did, the fellows would tumble to what I've tumbled to."

"And what's that?"

"That that man is not Eric Wilmot at all!"

"What!" gasped Lovell.

"Jimmy!"

"Draw it mild!"

"I knew it," said Jimmy. "But I wanted to prove it to you fellows, so I put it to the test. If that man had been Eric Wilmot, he would have answered at once that I was mistaken—that I never lent him the penknife. He is not Eric Wilmot."

"Then—then—then who is he?" stammered Lovell.

"Dandy Jim!"

"What!"

"Dandy Jim, the cracksman!" said Jimmy Silver. "Dandy Jim, who has come here in Eric Wilmot's name and in his likeness—Dandy Jim, the cracksman, whom we are going to expose and hand over to the police!"

OUR £10 EVERY-WEEK COMPETITION!

"HISTORIES." SOUTHAMPTON.

FIRST PRIZE £5, SECOND PRIZE £2 10s., and TEN PRIZES OF 5s.

"HISTORIES."—No. 3.

INSTRUCTIONS.

Here is a splendid new competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of Southampton Football Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve this 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. 3" Competition, BOYS' FRIEND Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, November 9th.

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 "Magnat," and the "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

I enter "HISTORIES" Competition No. 3, and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name.....
Address.....

voice when he heard it? Jimmy Silver had come into contact with the rascal twice—on each occasion only for a few minutes, and then hardly a word had been spoken. How did the cracksman, then, know that it was a Rookwooder asking for admission at the lonely cottage? And why did the cracksman's double want to know where Jimmy Silver had been that afternoon? Jimmy, with beating heart, waited for the footballer to continue—wondering almost breathlessly whether the man would approach the subject of the lonely cottage in his inquiries.

"You must have got wet," said the young man, with a smile.

"We did, and no mistake!" said Jimmy.

"You see, we were caught in the storm right out on the heath."

"Couldn't you get any shelter?"

The young man spoke carelessly enough, but his eyes were very keenly on the junior's face as he spoke, and Jimmy was aware of it.

"We tried, but had no luck," said Jimmy.

"You do not mean to say that you were refused shelter in such weather?"

"We were," said Jimmy, with a nod. His suspicions were well founded. Mr. Wilmot wanted to know whether it was indeed Jimmy Silver who had knocked at the cottage door that afternoon. How did he know anything about the matter?

"Upon my word," said the young man, "you surprise me! Who could have been so inhospitable?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy. "The man we asked for shelter was a stranger to us, you see."

that he had been out in the rain that afternoon, and had questioned Jimmy Silver closely.

Because Dandy Jim had recognised Jimmy's voice at the cottage door, Eric

hiding-place, and their plain duty was to inform the authorities. And if Uncle James of Rookwood persisted in his policy of silence, it was pretty certain that his comrades would take the bit between their teeth, as it were.

"We've got to do something," said Lovell. "That scoundrel is wanted for a dozen crimes, and we're not letting him go, if we can help to get him landed. I don't understand you, Jimmy!"

"You wouldn't, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Look here—" roared Lovell.

"Shush! Leave your uncle to think it out," said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "My dear chap, I've been having a big think, and I'm going to surprise you soon."

"That's all very well!" grunted Lovell. "But I want to know what we're going to do."

"We're going to have a little chat with Mr. Wilmot before dinner," said Jimmy cheerily. "There he is, under the beeches. Strike the iron while it's hot!"

"You're going to tell him, after all—"

"No, you ass! Not a word!" said Jimmy hastily. "If you breathe a whisper to him, it will spoil everything. Just come along with me, and listen while I talk to him. I've got a reason."

"Blessed if I see it!" growled Lovell.

"You will—soon!"

The Fistical Four strolled towards the old Rookwood beeches, where the football coach was to be seen sauntering. The young man gave the juniors a pleasant nod.

"A very pleasant day after yesterday's rain!" he remarked,

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