

"KNIGHTS OF THE WHEEL!"—A THRILLING MOTOR-RACING STORY IN THIS ISSUE!

The BOYS' FRIEND 2c

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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

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HERE'S ANOTHER RIPPING STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL, ON HOLIDAY!

Paying Guests!

By Owen Conquest.

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



A surprise awaits Jimmy Silver & Co. when they go on board the Silver Cloud!

The 1st Chapter. Lovell Knows Best.

"Rubbish!"
"But—"
"Rot!"
"Look here, Lovell—"
"Bosh!"
Arthur Edward Lovell was emphatic. Really, it was not of much use to argue with Lovell. He was rather an argumentative fellow. Generally he had an argument to inflict upon his friends. But listening to arguments from them was quite a different matter. Lovell was not in a listening mood now.

He sat on the corner of the table in the end study in the Fourth Form passage, swinging his legs, and stared indignantly and aggressively at Jimmy Silver & Co. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were trying to reason with Lovell. But such interjections as "Rubbish!" and "Rot!" were rather discouraging. "If you'd have a little sense, old chap—" said Jimmy Silver, with a sigh. "No good expecting that of Lovell," said Raby, with a shake of the head. "It's asking too much."

"Much too much!" agreed Newcome. "You're an ass, Raby." "Well, you're a silly ass!" said Raby. "Muffin's pulling your silly leg, and if we're duffers enough to take his rot seriously we shall be let down, of course." "Rubbish!" "Well—" "Rot!" Arthur Edward Lovell was growing excited. "It's no good talking," he said. "You're a set of obstinate asses, that's what you are! Ungrateful, too! We've never treated Tubby Muffin very well, and he comes along with a ripping invitation for the holidays. Don't you like the idea of August on the sea?"

"Top-hole," said Jimmy. "But it's all Muffin's gas." "Oh, ring off!" snorted Lovell. "I'm fed-up!" And to demonstrate beyond doubt the fact that he was fed-up, Lovell tramped out of the end study, and thus put an end to the discussion.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked at one another. They felt worried and troubled. And they were feeling exasperated with their hot-headed chum. "Well, what are we going to do about the vac.?" asked Newcome at last. "Rookwood breaks up to-morrow, and we've got to do something." "Jevver hear of such a silly ass!" exclaimed Raby. "Lovell's swallowed Tubby Muffin's piffle just because—just because he's made an ass of himself. He asked us home to his place, and then found that his people are going away for the summer. As if he couldn't have asked them first. And instead of telling us plainly what had happened, he takes up this bosh of Muffin's, and wants us to take it seriously, too. Muffin's uncle's yacht. If Muffin's got an uncle at Southampton, and he keeps anything, it's a fried fish shop, not a yacht."

Jimmy Silver smiled. "Poor old Lovell!" he said. "He thinks he's let us down for the vac. and he's jumped at this. Of course, we'd jolly well like a yachting trip if it was going. But—" "But it isn't." "Of course it isn't. I suppose there's something at the bottom of it."

and borrows a bob with the other. You know Tubby as well as we do." "Nobody's taken it on, excepting you!" added Newcome. "If Muffin's uncle has got any craft at all it's a coal barge, not a yacht." "Be reasonable, old fellow!" urged Jimmy Silver. "I've seen the letter from Muffin's uncle. He showed it to me!" snorted Lovell. "Muffin may have an uncle," admitted Raby, as if that was admitting a good deal. "But it's all gas about the yacht—just an echo of Smythe's swank. All the House has heard that Smythe of the Shell is going on a yachting trip this vac. and Muffin caught it from him, like measles."

Lovell glared. "Do you think Muffin could pull my leg?" he demanded. "I don't think, I know! He's done it." "Do you think he would have the neck to ask me on his uncle's yacht if there wasn't any yacht?" "He would offer anybody anything when he got his fat chin going. He asked us all to Muffin Manor last Easter!" growled Raby. "He had some yarn ready to spin at the last minute if anybody had been ass enough to take his gas seriously. You know he's always talking out of the back of his neck."

"You're an ass, Raby." "Well, you're a silly ass!" said Raby. "Muffin's pulling your silly leg, and if we're duffers enough to take his rot seriously we shall be let down, of course." "Rubbish!" "Well—" "Rot!" Arthur Edward Lovell was growing excited. "It's no good talking," he said. "You're a set of obstinate asses, that's what you are! Ungrateful, too! We've never treated Tubby Muffin very well, and he comes along with a ripping invitation for the holidays. Don't you like the idea of August on the sea?"

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Tubby generally has something to build on when he begins a thundering yarn. But he hasn't any uncle who keeps a yacht and can afford to take a party cruising for the summer. That's all bunkum.

and chatting with his pals, Howard and Tracy. The subject, of course, was the "hols." Rookwood, on the eve of breaking up for the summer, was thinking chiefly about the holidays. And all Rookwood had heard of Adolphus' plans for the vac. Adolphus lived and moved and had his being in swank, and it was quite impossible to live at Rookwood School without becoming aware of the fact that Adolphus' summer vacation was to be spent in a yachting cruise. If Adolphus had been going on a voyage round the world in a specially chartered Atlantic liner, he could hardly have talked more loftily about it. According to Morny of the Fourth, Adolphus was no gentleman; but at least the Smythe tribe had heaps of money, and that qualification was never hidden modestly from the public gaze.

Adolphus Smythe glanced at Jimmy, but did not trouble to answer. Fourth-Formers were very small fry, in the estimation of Adolphus, and Tubby Muffin was the most insignificant member of an insignificant Form. So, after a lofty, disdainful glance, Adolphus turned his lofty attention back to Howard and Tracy, and continued his observations as if the captain of the Fourth had not spoken.

"She's lyin' in Southampton



AFTER MUFFIN! As Tubby Muffin rolled into the saloon five juniors jumped up as if moved by the same spring and rushed at him. And sounds of woe and anguish rang through the Silver Cloud from stern to stern as Tubby fled frantically for his life.

"But what are we going to do?" asked Newcome. "Lovell seems to be set on it, and we don't want to give him the go-by for the hols. He's a silly owl, but we want him with us."

"That's so," Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows thoughtfully. "It's rather thick. He knows Muffin's gas as well as we do, but he's determined to believe this because he wants to. We'll go down to my place, of course, and Lovell will have to come. We'll make him. We might be able to make Muffin own up and open Lovell's silly eyes."

"Bump him!" suggested Newcome. "If we bump him hard enough we can bump the truth even out of Tubby." Jimmy Silver chuckled gleefully at the suggestion. "Good egg!" he said. "Let's go and look for him. We'll put it to him gently at first; and, if that's no good, we'll jolly well rag him till he owns up that he's been 'pulling Lovell's leg. Come on!"

And Jimmy Silver & Co. left the end study, and proceeded to look for Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth.

The 2nd Chapter. Own Up!

"Seen Muffin?" Smythe of the Shell glanced round loftily as Jimmy Silver asked him that question, coming out of the House.

Adolphus Smythe was adorning the House steps with his elegant person,

Waters now," he said. "We shall go direct on board—"

"Seen Muffin?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"She's a rippin' yacht, and we shall meet some decent fellows on board," went on Adolphus. "There's some chaps I know from Highcliffe School. My pater's arranged the thing—Oh! Ow! You cheeky cad!"

It was obvious that the lofty Adolphus was not going to answer Jimmy Silver's question. So Jimmy cheerily knocked his hat off, and walked down the steps with Raby and Newcome.

Smythe of the Shell plunged after his hat, crimson with indignation. "Seen Muffin?" asked Jimmy, as he met Valentine Mornington in the quad.

Morny grinned. "Yes; he's just asked me for the vac. I say, is it a fact that you fellows are goin' with him? Is there really a Muffin yacht?"

"Not that I know of. I know Muffin says there is; but he says such a lot of things. Lovell has taken it in."

"If there was anythin' in it, a fellow might do worse," said Mornington. "I don't want to go home to my jolly old guardian and my dear cousins. It would be a bit thick, puttin' up with a fat tick like Muffin; but if there really was a yacht—"

"There isn't!" grunted Raby.

"No; I suppose there isn't," agreed Morny. "I'd better make friends with Smythe, and get him to ask me. I wonder whether I could stand his

manners for weeks together? Is he better or worse than Muffin, do you think?"

"Give it up," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Where did you see Muffin?"

"In the tuckshop, of course. He's borrowed half-a-crown from somebody. I saw him talking to Lovell."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. headed for the school-shop. Apparently Tubby had extracted a loan from Arthur Edward on the strength of his munificent invitation for the holidays. Lovell was leaning on Sergeant Kettle's little shop, and he eyed his chums morosely as they came along, and did not speak to them. The three juniors passed into the shop, and there they found Reginald Muffin perched on a high stool at the counter, with a plate of tarts and a foaming glass of ginger-beer before him. Lovell's half-crown was going, if it was not already gone.

Tubby Muffin blinked cheerily at the Co. They eyed him rather grimly in return.

"Hallo, you chaps!" said Tubby, with his mouth full. "Jolly glad you're coming with me for the hols. We shall be on board the Silver Cloud this time to-morrow."

"Shall we?" grunted Raby.

"Oh, yes! It isn't a very long run to Southampton from here, you know. You'll be fixed up jolly comfortably on the Silver Cloud," went on Tubby brightly. "My uncle knows you're coming, of course, and he's fixing up state-rooms ready; two bunks in a room. A fellow can have a state-room to himself, if he likes; but that, of course, would be extra."

"Extra?" repeated Jimmy Silver, staring at the fat Classical.

"Yes. I—I mean," Tubby Muffin stammered, and, in his confusion, almost choked over a juicy tart. "I mean—"

"Well, what do you mean, if you mean anything?"

"Nothing!" gasped Tubby. "I mean—that is—nothing! I wonder what made me say extra, you know?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered, also. Really, there seemed no way of accounting for Reginald Muffin's peculiar remark, except on the theory that Reginald was wandering in his mind.

Muffin gobbled another tart.

"Look here, Muffin," said Jimmy Silver abruptly. "You've been stuffing Lovell with a tale of a yacht, and the silly ass has swallowed it. We want you to own up to him that it's all gammon."

"Eh? It isn't gammon."

"Don't give us that," said Jimmy patiently. "We're not duffers like old Lovell, and it won't wash. See?"

"But I give you my word, Silver, that—"

"Can it!" snapped Newcome.

"Do you think I'm asking you for the vac. meaning to let you down, then?" demanded Muffin indignantly. "Just that," said Raby. "You fat duffer, you hardly know what you're saying when you begin swanking! Look here, you've got to own up to Lovell that it's gammon—see?"

"I tell you—"

"Are you going to own up?"

"No!" bawled Tubby wrathfully. "It isn't gammon; and—and I'd jolly well drop you for the vac. after this cheek, if I hadn't told my uncle you were coming, and it means ten bob a time to me. But for that—"

Tubby Muffin broke off suddenly.

"Ten bob a time?" repeated Jimmy Silver blankly.

Really, Tubby Muffin's remarks were of a deeply mysterious nature. One might have supposed that the ginger-pop had got into his head.

"I mean—"

"Blessed if I think you're quite right in the roof!" said Jimmy Silver, in wonder. "Do you want us to believe that Captain Muffin is so keen on having guests on his yacht that he's tipping you ten bob for every one you bring? Are you potty, or do you think we are?"

"Yes—I mean, no—that is—"

Tubby Muffin, overwhelmed with inexplicable confusion, buried his fat face in the ginger-beer.

"What does the fat idiot mean?" asked Raby.

"Does he mean anything?" snorted Raby. "Bother him, anyhow, and his silly rot! Look here, Muffin, will you tell Lovell plainly that you've been pulling his leg, so that we can fix it up with him about the vac.?"

"No!" roared Tubby. "I jolly well won't!"

"Then we'll jolly well bump you till you do!" exclaimed the exasperated Raby. "Collar him!"

"Yaroooh!"

Bump!

(Continued overleaf.)

In our next number—"The Rookwood Yachtsmen!" another top-hole story of Jimmy Silver & Co., on Holiday. Be sure you read it, chums!



(Continued from previous page.)

In the grasp of three pairs of hands, Tubby Muffin descended from the high stool to the floor of the tuck-shop.

He smote the floor with his fat person, rather emphatically. A fiendish yell rang through Sergeant Kettle's little establishment.

"Bump him!"
"Yow-ow-owwoop!"
Bump, bump!
"Ow! Yow! Grooogh! Help!" roared Tubby Muffin.

There was a step in the doorway and Lovell rushed in. He rushed among his friends and shoved them right and left angrily. Tubby was left sprawling on the floor, roaring.

"Lovell!" gasped Raby. "You cheeky ass! You—" "Let him alone!" exclaimed Lovell. "I'm standing by Tubby, I can tell you. Let him alone!"

"Yaroooooh!" "We'll jolly well let him alone, and you, too!" exclaimed Newcome wrathfully. "You can go with Muffin for the vac., or you can go and eat coke; I'm fed up with you. When you get to Southampton you'll find that he's been stuffing you—if he doesn't own up in the train going."

"Ow—ow—ow—wow!" gasped Muffin. "I say—I tell you—"

Tubby Muffin sat up, gasping for breath. Lovell stood over him in the role of protector. His three chums eyed him wrathfully; it really looked as if the Fistical Four of Rookwood were on the verge of civil war. Lovell was evidently prepared to stand by Reginald Muffin with his hands.

"You'd better turn them down, Muffin," he said. "You can't very well take them along, after this. Drop them."

"I—I can't."
"Why can't you?" demanded Lovell.

"I've told my uncle they're coming," spluttered Tubby. "Captain Muffin will expect them. He's allotted the cabins, you see, and he would be no end annoyed if he was let down like this at the last minute."

"I don't see why he should mind; he doesn't know them yet, and he would be still less likely to want them, I should think, if he did know them, and knew their manners," said Lovell.

"You—you see—"
"Oh, don't be an ass, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver. "You're not pulling our leg like Lovell's. Why can't you own up that it's all gammon?"

"It isn't!" shrieked Muffin. "Nothing of the kind," said Lovell. "I've seen the letter from Captain Muffin, at the Hotel Royal in Southampton—"

"Oh, rats!"
"Easy does it, you chaps!" said a silky voice in the doorway, and Valentine Mornington looked in. "May a friend of all parties make a suggestion?"

Lovell glared at him, but Jimmy Silver nodded at once.

"What is it, Morny?"
"The Hotel Royal at Southampton is bound to be on the telephone. Ring up Captain Muffin and ask him."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.
To the astonishment of the Fourth-Formers, Reginald Muffin nodded his head eagerly.

"Good wheeze!" he exclaimed. "I'll give you the number—I've got it! And when you've spoken to my uncle I hope it will be all settled, what? I really want you fellows to come—you too, Morny. My uncle will be jolly glad to meet you."

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, almost dazedly. For the first time, it was borne in upon his mind that there must be something in Tubby Muffin's airy tale of a Muffin yacht and a Muffin cruise. Was it barely possible that Lovell had been right, and that his friends had been too distrustful? It was a rather discomfiting reflection.

Morny looked very curiously at Muffin.
"Well, let's try it on," he said. "We can bag one of the school telephones for a trunk call, somehow."

A word with Captain Muffin will be enough—and if there isn't any Captain Muffin—

"There isn't!" snapped Raby. "There is!" hooted Lovell. "Well, the hotel people will tell us whether there is or there isn't," said Mornington.

"That's so!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "Let's!"
The juniors moved towards the door. Tubby Muffin called after them:

"Look here, you chaps, it's understood that you're coming with me to-morrow, then, if my uncle tells you it's all right?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy. "It's up to you, after the way you've treated me," said Muffin. "In fact, I'm relying on you for the hols."

Jimmy stared at him. "Well, if you're telling the truth, Muffin, you're the most forgiving chap I've ever heard of," he said.

an instrument. Valentine Mornington coolly led the way into Mr. Dalton's room, took the receiver from the hooks, and asked for "Trunks." And the required number being given to "Trunks," the juniors waited for the call to come through.

Mornington sat down in Richard Dalton's armchair, stretched out his elegant legs, and rested his feet on Mr. Dalton's writing-table. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome loafed about the study. Arthur Edward Lovell, with a superior and indignant expression on his face, sat on the Form-master's table, and eyed his chums sarcastically. Lovell's opinion was absolutely fixed—not because there were any specially good grounds for it, but because it was his opinion. He fully expected the trunk call to Southampton to confirm Reginald Muffin's story. And his friends were beginning now to realise that possibly—more than possibly—Lovell was right for once. They didn't—they couldn't—believe in the Muffin yacht. Everybody at Rookwood who knew anything about Muffin at all knew that his people were short of that useful article, cash; it was known that his father was "something in the City," that he had an aunt who kept a hat-shop, and an uncle who was monarch of all he surveyed in a seaside boarding-house. These relations were no doubt quite worthy people, but it was utter "rot" to suppose that they were wealthy—they weren't. And it was odd, at the very least, if

master of the Fourth returned suddenly, and found his study crowded with Fourth-Form fellows round his telephone. Luckily, Mr. Dalton did not butt in.

The bell rang at last. Jimmy Silver took up the receiver, and his comrades gathered round him, to hear as much as possible.

"Hotel Royal, Southampton!"
"Can I speak to Captain Muffin?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Captain Muffin? Very good."
"Is he in the hotel now?" asked Jimmy.

"I think the gentleman is in the smoke-room now, sir! Hold on please, and I will call him."

Jimmy Silver glanced at his comrades.

"He's there!" he said.
"Phew!"

"What did I tell you?" grinned Lovell.

"Wait a bit," grunted Raby. "There may be a Captain Muffin; but I'll believe in the yacht when I see it."

"Look here, Raby—"
"Shurr-up!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "He's speaking!"

There was silence in Mr. Dalton's study. A fat voice, not unlike Tubby Muffin's own, came through on the wires.

"Captain Muffin speaking. Who is it?"

"Jimmy Silver speaking from Rookwood School," said the captain of the Fourth. "Is that Captain Muffin—uncle of Muffin of the Fourth-Form here?"

Certainly the guests on the Muffin yacht were not likely to complain of the food, even if it was not excellent. Muffin's uncle, the yachtsman, seemed to be talking in rather the style of Muffin's other uncle, the boarding-house keeper.

"Rely on me to see that you have a good time," said the fat voice, in quite hearty tones. "A cruise round the British Isles—"

"Oh, good!"
"And everything inclusive."
"Eh?"

"I'm quite sure you will be satisfied, Master Silver. I suppose Reginald has given you all particulars?"

"Yes, he's told us a lot about it," said Jimmy. "Thank you very much, Captain Muffin, for myself and my friends. This is really ripping of you!"

"Not at all—not at all!"
"Do you want another three minutes?" a feminine voice inquired gently from infinite space.

"No, thanks. Good-bye, Captain Muffin!"

"Good-bye, my boy!"
Jimmy Silver rang off.

There was deep silence in Mr. Dalton's study for some moments after the captain of the Fourth had jammed the receiver back on the hooks. The juniors looked at one another. Arthur Edward Lovell broke the silence:

"What did I tell you?"
Mornington whistled softly.

"I own up," said Jimmy Silver honestly. "I couldn't quite understand some of what Captain Muffin said, but it's all right. There really is a yacht Silver Cloud lying at Southampton, and Captain Muffin is expecting us to-morrow, along with Tubby, to go on board. It beats me, but there it is."

"And jolly decent of him!" said Lovell warmly.

"Admitted!"
"Well, Lovell seems to have been right," said Raby slowly. "I can't catch on to it. Fancy Lovell being right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You owe me an apology!" said Lovell loftily. "And Muffin another!"

"I'll pay up when I see the yacht!" grinned Raby. "I admit that it looks all right so far; but—but there's something underneath it—something that Muffin hasn't let on. Still, I suppose we're going to Southampton to-morrow."

"I know I am!" growled Mornington. "Tubby is a little tick, but I can stand him better than my Stacpoole cousins. I'm goin' to join up. You fellows don't mind my buttin' in?"

"The more the merrier," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "And the jolly old captain's hospitality seems to be unlimited. I can't understand it all, but there it is. We're going."

The juniors left Mr. Dalton's study. They were all in a state of surprise. Even Lovell was a little surprised by this complete confirmation of what he had been determined to believe. And he could not help rubbing it in a little. "I told you so!" is not a tactful remark at the best of times; but Arthur Edward Lovell never was celebrated for tact.

During the next ten minutes he mentioned at least six times that he had told his comrades so; and they had to admit that he had.

"All the same, I can't quite make it out," said Jimmy Silver. "I suppose it's all right."
"Right as rain!" said Lovell. "I told you so!"

"Captain Muffin mentioned that some other Rookwood fellows would be on the yacht. Is Muffin taking a whole army?"

"I believe he's asked a lot of fellows. Here he is!" said Lovell, as Reginald Muffin rolled up, shiny and sticky and happy. "It's all serene, Muffin—we've telephoned."

"Good!" said Tubby. "All right—what?"

"Right as rain!"

"You fellows are all coming?" asked Muffin. "You, too, Morny?"

"I have great pleasure in accepting your kind invitation, Reginald," said Mornington, with great solemnity. Tubby chuckled.

"That's all right—that makes five," he said. "I'll take Erroll, too, Morny, if you'd like him to come."

"I would, only Erroll's fixed for the hols," said Morny. "Who else is coming along from Rookwood, Tubby?"

"Only you lot," said Muffin. "Your uncle mentioned that there would be some other Rookwood



TUBBY MUFFIN'S CHAMPION! There was a step in the doorway of the tuck-shop and Lovell rushed in. He rushed among his friends and shoved them right and left angrily. Tubby Muffin was left sprawling on the floor, roaring. "Lovell!" gasped Raby. "You cheeky ass! You—" "Let him alone!" exclaimed Lovell. "I'm standing by Tubby, I can tell you. Let him alone!"

"If it's genuine, and you really want us to come—"

"Well, you're my pals, ain't you?" said Tubby. "And I've told my uncle you're coming, too, and he's made arrangements. It's a go, then."

"Yes," said Jimmy, and Raby and Newcome nodded. Undoubtedly the chums of the Fourth were prepared to accept an invitation to a holiday cruise in a yacht—if any. And undoubtedly, also, Muffin was showing a remarkable spirit of forgiveness, after the way he had been handled by these doubting Thomases. Really, it was rather difficult to know what to make of the whole affair.

Tubby Muffin climbed back on the high stool as the juniors left Mr. Kettle's shop. He was a little breathless, but he was ready to go on with the jam tarts. And he finished them to the last crumb and the last smudge of jam, in a happy and sticky state of satisfaction.

**The 3rd Chapter.
Right as Rain!**

Richard Dalton, master of the Fourth Form, had gone out for one of his long walks; a circumstance which would not have interested the juniors very much at any other time, but which happened very fortunately now. For there was a telephone in Mr. Dalton's study, and Jimmy Silver & Co. required the use of such

Tubby had one uncle who kept a seaside boarding-house and another who could afford to keep a yacht and take a numerous party on a summer cruise. It really was too "thick," and too much in keeping with Tubby's tales of Muffin Manor, for the juniors to believe in it.

But there was "something" in it, though what that "something" was the juniors could not yet surmise. For even the fatuous Tubby could scarcely have kept it up like this if there was nothing at all in it. If the trunk call to Southampton should reveal that there was no Captain Muffin in existence, he was likely to be severely handled by Arthur Edward Lovell, and he could have no delusions on that point, whatsoever other delusions he might be suffering from.

So Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather keen to hear from the Hotel Royal, Southampton, and to learn what really was at the bottom of Tubby's latest.

The trunk call was rather long in coming; and they could only hope that Richard Dalton was taking a good long walk. It would have been distinctly awkward had the

"That's right."
"Owner of the yacht Silver Cloud?" asked Jimmy.

"Exactly!"
Jimmy Silver paused.

"Muffin has asked us to join him in a cruise on the yacht this vacation," Jimmy went on. "I—I thought I'd ring you up—"

"Quite so. Glad to hear from you," said the fat voice. "Reginald told me that four of you were coming with him—perhaps five."

"That's so," assented Jimmy. "It's awfully kind of you, Captain Muffin!"

"Eh? Not at all. Glad to have you—and any other Rookwood boys who care to come on the same terms," said Captain Muffin. "I find that there are already some Rookwood boys on my list. No doubt friends of yours."
"Eh?"

"You'll find the Silver Cloud quite a comfortable craft," went on the voice from Southampton. "Of course, quarters will be a little close. You'll expect that, in the circumstances."

"Oh, yes!"

"The food provided will be excellent. There will be nothing to complain of on that score—you can take my word for it."

"That's very good of you, Captain Muffin," murmured Jimmy. Really, he hardly knew what to say.

ANSWERS
Every Saturday—PRICE 2.

fellows," said Jimmy Silver. "He said he had them on his list, whatever that means. I don't quite catch on to what he meant. Are there others besides us, then?"

"Very likely—only, I don't know who they are," said Tubby. "I dare say their people got into touch with my uncle direct. See?"

The juniors stared at Muffin. They did not quite "see."

"Oh! You mean your uncle knows them, and has asked them on his own, whoever they are?" asked Jimmy.

"Something like that," Tubby grinned. "The more the merrier, you know. It's going to be a ripping cruise, and every fellow will get his money's worth."

"His what?"

"I mean, every fellow will have a good time," said Tubby, as he rolled away, apparently not keen to go into further particulars.

Jimmy Silver glanced after him. "I'm blessed if I quite catch on to it all," he said. "There's something in it that I don't quite savvy."

"Rot!" said Lovell. "It's all right—and I told you so! You fellows can't deny that I told you so!"

And it was true—they couldn't! Anyhow, the matter was settled. Jimmy Silver & Co. were all going with Reginald Muffin for the holidays, and Valentine Mornington was going with them, as well as some—at present unknown—other Rookwood fellows. Arthur Edward Lovell had been saved from "letting down" his comrades for the vac. and he was feeling extremely cordial towards Reginald Muffin, who had come in so very useful for once.

The following day Rookwood School broke up for the summer holidays, and the grey old houses, the green old quad, slept peacefully under the summer sun, while their usual occupants were scattered far and wide by mount and stream and sea.

The 4th Chapter.
On Board the Silver Cloud.

Jimmy Silver wore a cheery smile as he sat in a crowded railway-carriage with his chums, though there still lingered deep in his breast a faint misgiving.

He was rather ashamed of that misgiving, for he felt that Muffin of the Fourth was entitled to genuine gratitude for having weighed in with such a real treat for the vacation. Nevertheless, he could not help it. It all seemed above suspicion now; and yet, somehow, there was something unconvincing about it all. Many times he glanced at Tubby Muffin, but he read only fat and happy satisfaction in Tubby's face. He noticed, too, that Raby and Newcome often glanced at the fat Classical, as if they shared some lingering doubt.

But the matter was very soon to be put to the test.

In a very short time now the Rookwooders would arrive in Southampton, and repair to the Hotel Royal and meet Captain Muffin in the flesh. Hitherto he had been only a voice on the telephone to them. Yet Jimmy's vague misgiving lingered, though, really, it would have been hard to say upon what he based it. Somehow or other, the idea of a handsome yacht and an expensive yachting cruise seemed too entirely out of keeping with what was known of Muffin's people and their circumstances.

"Smythe's on this train," remarked Mornington, after glancing from a window when the express stopped at a station.

"Smythe of the Shell?"

"Yes; and Howard and Tracy."

"Bound for Southampton, too," remarked Lovell. "I dare say you've heard that Smythe is going yachting this vac.?"

There was a chuckle in the carriage. Everybody at Rookwood had heard that.

"I've been keepin' an eye open," said Morny. "I haven't seen any other Rookwooders on the train. I say, Muffin, is it possible that Smythe's crowd are the fellows your uncle mentioned on the phone?"

Tubby started, so suddenly that he almost swallowed a chunk of toffee.

"Grooogh! Oh!"

"That's not likely, surely?" said Jimmy Silver. "I understood that Smythe was going on a yacht belonging to some of his wealthy relations. He never said so, now I come to think of it. But it would be jolly odd if Muffin's uncle knows him well enough to invite him for the holidays, without Muffin knowing anything about it."

"He doesn't know him!" gasped Tubby. "But—"

"Then they can't be the chaps he mentioned."

"Well, they might be," said Tubby. "You see, it may have been fixed up without their knowing that it was my uncle's yacht at all. I've no doubt Smythe's pater arranged his holiday for him."

"I don't quite see—"

"You mean your uncle knows Smythe's pater?" asked Raby.

"Well, he must have met him, if Mr. Smythe has fixed it up for Smythe to go on the yacht, or it may have been done through the agents."

"The agents?"

"Yes, I—I mean—"

"What on earth do you mean, Muffin?"

"I fancy it was the agents, because if Smythe's going on my uncle's yacht, he doesn't know it's my uncle's, or he'd have let on," said Tubby.

"What agents?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "What have agents got to do with fixing up summer holidays?"

"Oh, nothing!"

"But you said—"

"I mean—the fact is—I'm rather sleepy," said Muffin. "Wake me up when we get to Southampton, will you?"

And Reginald Muffin leaned back in his corner, closed his eyes, and began to snore.

quickly at the Hotel Royal and asking for the captain. They were informed that Captain Muffin had gone on the Silver Cloud, but had left a message that he was expecting them, and they were to follow. A man belonging to the yacht was waiting for them, and he was to take them to the boat that was in readiness.

The juniors walked down to the boat, and the least observant of the party could have detected now a slight uneasiness in the manner of Reginald Muffin.

"I say, Jimmy—" the fat Classical murmured, as they walked along after the seaman.

"Yes?"

"I—I say—"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Tubby rolled on, but there was growing uneasiness in his fat face. He started again as the juniors were embarking in the boat.

"Jimmy, old man—"

"Well?"

"I—I suppose you've brought some ready cash with you?"

"Cash?" repeated Jimmy, staring at him.

"Yes, old chap."

"Of course, I've got some cash," said Jimmy. "But what does it matter? We sha'n't be spending much money at sea, I suppose?"

"We shall have to do some shopping in Southampton," put in Lovell.

ever for misgiving, for the seaman was already pointing out the yacht Silver Cloud, a palpable proof that that much-discussed craft had a real existence.

The Rookwooders all glanced at it with interest. It was not a specially graceful craft, not an airy clipper by any means; it looked substantial and roomy. But it was very bright and clean, newly-painted and with the brasses brightly polished.

A fat gentleman in a yachting-cap, standing on the deck, looked at the approaching boat.

His round and ample form, as well as his fat face, bore a family resemblance to Reginald Muffin.

This, evidently, was Captain Muffin, of that ilk.

The boat ranged up to the Silver Cloud, and the Rookwooders stepped on board.

"Here we are, uncle," said Tubby. "Glad to see you, Reginald. Glad to meet your friends," said Captain Muffin, in fat, hearty tones. "Mr. Smythe, I suppose?" he went on, as he shook hands with Jimmy Silver.

"No, that's Jimmy," said Tubby hastily, and he presented his friends one after another.

The mention of Smythe's name had settled one point. It was the Silver Cloud that was Adolphus' destination.

"You're the first of the Rookwood contingent," said Captain Muffin

Tubby Muffin had sneaked quietly away, not wishing, apparently, to be present at this business interview.

"Cash!" repeated Jimmy Silver blankly.

"In advance!" babbled Lovell.

"What—"

"What the dickens—"

"I suppose my nephew has explained the conditions of this cruise to you," said Captain Muffin, staring at the juniors. "Of course, if you have not yet fully settled the matter with your parents, I could receive cheques from them later. I trust you, of course. Nevertheless, my usual terms are cash in advance, in order to get all details of business settled before the cruise begins. A month in advance is usual; balance to be settled later, according to the length of the cruise."

The Rookwood juniors could only stare.

And there was a deep, deep silence in the saloon of the Silver Cloud yacht.

The 5th Chapter.
"Paying Guests!"

Captain Muffin blinked at the Rookwooders.

They blinked at him. They were astounded; and the worthy captain seemed to be rather astonished, also. Evidently there was a misunderstanding. Reginald Muffin could have cleared it up, but Reginald was not there.

The silence lasted a full minute. Jimmy Silver & Co. seemed to have lost their voices. They stared at Captain Muffin as if that gentleman's plump, rubicund face hypnotised them.

The skipper of the Silver Cloud broke the silence at last.

"Come, come!" he said. "I do not understand this. What objection can you possibly have to payment in advance? Reginald should have mentioned my terms in engaging berths for you for the cruise. It seems that he did not do so."

"No!" gasped Jimmy.

"Nunno!"

"Let's have this clear, captain," said Mornington in his silkiest tones. "Are we to understand that we are payin' for this cruise?"

Captain Muffin stared.

"Paying for it!" he repeated. "Naturally! I suppose I cannot afford to run a yacht for nothing."

"Oh, gad!"

"My terms are reasonable, I think," said the captain rather warmly. "I give you good accommodation, two berths to a state-room; good food and adequate attendance for a really nominal charge of four guineas a week. Do you think you could get the same cheaper elsewhere?"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I never charged less than three guineas a week in my boarding-house on shore!" exclaimed the captain warmly. "And here you have yachting accommodation and a cruise thrown in."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"So—so—you're Muffin's boarding-house uncle, after all?" said Lovell faintly.

"Eh—what? Yes! Last summer I ran the Sea View boarding-house at Brighton," said Captain Muffin.

"This summer I am doing yachting cruises at inclusive charges. With regard to payment in advance, it is usual in such matters, as you will find at any of the touring agencies. But never mind. If you have come direct from school, that detail can be left over—I know I am dealing with straightforward people. If your parents send the cheques on, I shall be perfectly satisfied."

The juniors looked at one another. They could not misunderstand further.

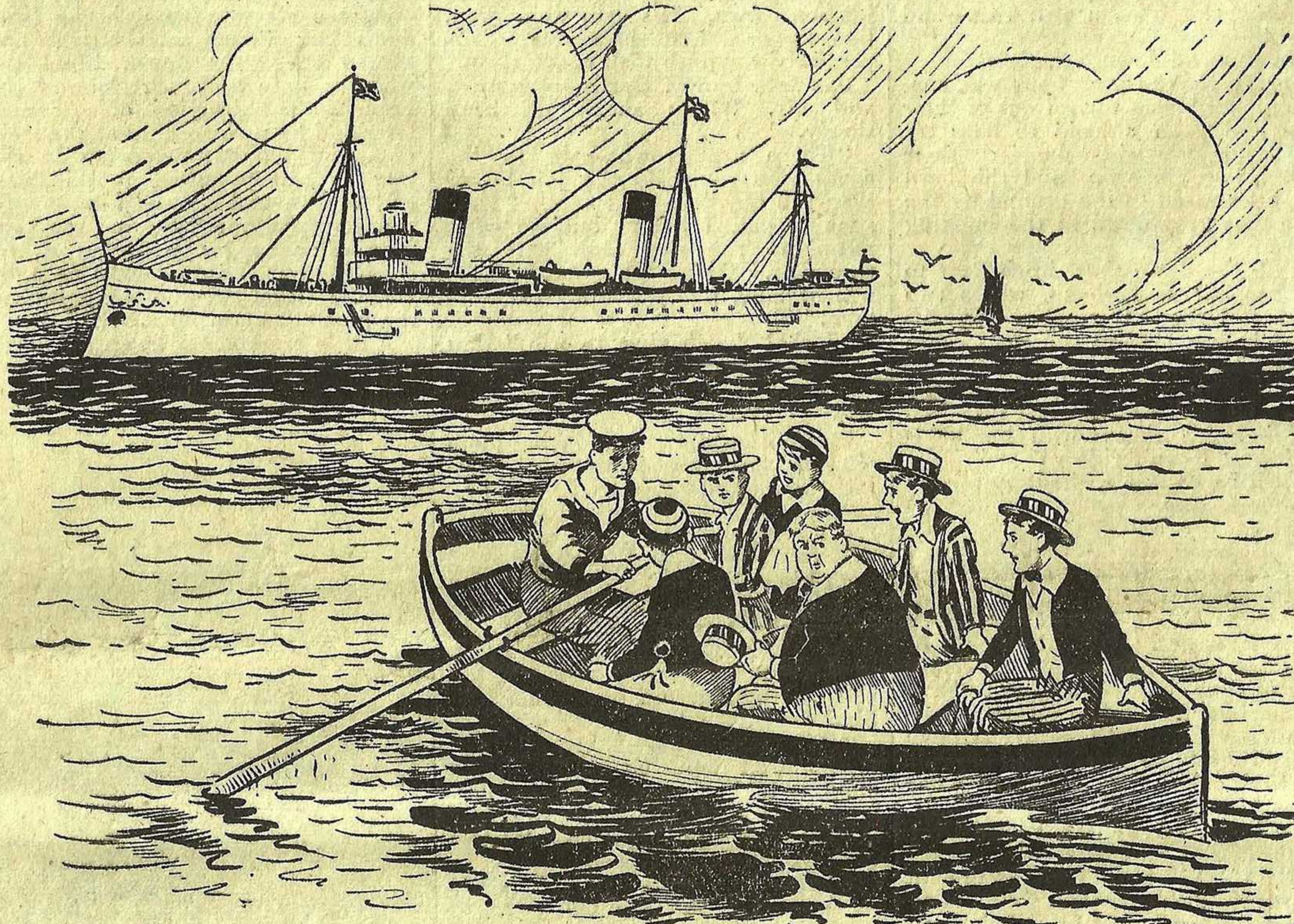
Captain Muffin was not to blame in the matter. He was a business man doing business on business lines. But at that moment they yearned to lynch Tubby Muffin—especially Lovell.

All Tubby's mysterious allusions were explained now. Jimmy Silver remembered his mysterious remark about "ten bob a time." Obviously, Muffin's uncle had been rather keen to secure paying guests from Rookwood, and had promised his hopeful nephew a commission of ten shillings a head on every guest secured.

Paying guests!

That was it! The worthy captain was running the yacht as a business speculation—a variation of his boarding-house business! Undoubtedly, he had supposed that his nephew would explain all that to the paying guests from Rookwood.

(Continued on page 80.)



OFF TO SEA! Tubby Muffin sat in the boat in unhappy silence as it was rowed out to the Silver Cloud. Jimmy Silver & Co., all glanced at the yacht with interest. It was not a specially graceful craft, not an airy clipper by any means; it looked substantial and roomy. But it was very bright and clean, newly painted and with the brasses brightly polished.

Jimmy Silver eyed him curiously, his misgiving intensified. He was beginning to be quite worried about the mystery that seemed to surround the Silver Cloud yacht. Even Arthur Edward Lovell seemed to have a feeling that all was not exactly as it should have been, and he was silent as the train rattled on.

Tubby Muffin snored while the train ran on from Winchester to Southampton, through the valley of the Itchen. Arthur Edward Lovell shook him by the shoulder, as the train stopped at last in a crowded, buzzing station.

"Here we are, Fatty!"

"Grooogh!"

The juniors turned out of the train with their bags. Along the platform they sighted Smythe, and Howard and Tracy of the Shell, attending to their baggage, which was rather considerable. The nuts of the Shell gave Jimmy Silver & Co. a glance as the juniors passed, but did not deign to speak to them.

Tubby Muffin gave Adolphus a curious blink. It was obvious that he was wondering whether Adolphus & Co. were going on board his uncle's yacht, and it was really very odd that he did not know. It was clear that Adolphus had no idea whatever that he was going to be Tubby's fellow-voyager, if such was really the case.

Really, it was very perplexing, and Jimmy Silver was more anxious than ever to get to the hotel and see Captain Muffin. The juniors lost no time, and they were very

"We shall want a good many things."

"Yes, but—"

"I—I mean—" stammered Tubby.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Tubby sat in the boat in unhappy silence. There was evidently a worry on his fat mind, and it seemed to have something to do with money, judging by his remarks. More and more did Jimmy feel a misgiving that all was not as it should be, and yet there seemed less grounds than

jovially. "Three more to come from your school. The Highcliffe boys will be here later in the day."

"Quite a large party, uncle, what?"

"Oh, quite," said Captain Muffin. "Every berth has been taken, as a matter of fact, with one or two exceptions. We could crowd in a couple more, perhaps. But quite a good party, quite. Steward!"

"Sir!"

"Serve tea to these young gentlemen in the saloon."

"Yes, sir."

"This way," said Captain Muffin.

In the saloon Captain Muffin bestowed a genial smile on his guests, and took out a business-like looking pocket-book and a fountain-pen.

"Now, it's always best in these matters to get business details over and done with at the start," he remarked. "What?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Business details?"

The juniors blinked at the captain. They were prepared to like Captain Muffin, but they all had to admit that he looked more like an hotel-keeper than a yachting skipper, in spite of his yachting clothes. What he was driving at was a mystery to them and they were puzzled, and the captain seemed a little surprised at their perplexity.

"Exactly," he said. "My terms, of course, are cash in advance."

"Eh?"

"What?"

Jimmy Silver & Co. gasped.

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Paying Guests!



By
Owen
Conquest.

(Continued from page 71.)

But that was where Tubby's swank came in.

Instead of rounding-up customers for his uncle's floating hotel, for that was what it amounted to, Tubby had fairly spread himself—he had not been able to resist the temptation. He had asked his schoolfellows on a holiday cruise, with never a hint of the "paying guest" side to the affair!

Puzzled as they had been, the juniors had not dreamed of guessing anything of the sort. Really, it would have been very difficult to guess the true explanation of Tubby's airy swank on the subject of yachting cruises.

Jimmy Silver & Co. understood now, and they felt fairly flabbergasted. It was an overwhelming discovery.

Lovell's face was crimson. This was what he had landed his comrades in, in his usual style of knowing best much better than other fellows.

"Well, well, well!" said Captain Muffin, breaking another long and painful silence. "What are we going to do? Shall I leave this little matter over till your parents send along the cheques?"

"I—I—" gasped Jimmy.

"You—you see—" stuttered Lovell.

"I do not quite see," said the captain coldly. He scrutinised the red and confused faces of the Rookwooders, and a new idea seemed to come into his mind. "I suppose it isn't possible that—Reginald did not explain to you—" He broke off, staring.

"The fat villain!" bawled Lovell.

"What?"

"The podgy scoundrel—"

"Oh?"

"He never told us a word about this!" roared Lovell. "He invited us for a yachting cruise, and we supposed we were coming as guests."

"Yes—paying guests," said Captain Muffin.

"Nothing of the sort."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Captain Muffin. "Do you mean to say that my nephew deceived you—that he did not tell you that this was a matter of business?"

"Not a word!" howled Lovell.

"Surely you must have understood him," said the captain. "However, if you came here under a mis-

take, I am sorry you have wasted your time, but there is no great harm done. I cannot afford, of course, to take guests on a cruise for nothing; but the boat is there to take you ashore if you wish."

"Oh!"

"But think over it," said the captain genially. "It's rather late in the day to make fresh arrangements for your holidays; and you will scarcely do the thing cheaper elsewhere. I am offering you good accommodation on a good yacht at inclusive charge—"

"Oh dear!"

Lovell gave his comrades an almost haggard look.

"I—I never dreamed of this, you fellows," he said. "Muffin was pulling my leg, after all. Oh dear! Look here, if you'd like the cruise, you'll come as my guests. My father will pay the bill. He offered to stand me a trip to Switzerland if I liked; and he wouldn't grumble. Let's go for the cruise all the same, and—and—and we'll chuck Tubby overboard at the first chance we get."

"Think it over," said the captain jovially. "There's no hurry! Here comes the steward with the tea. Order anything you like."

Captain Muffin returned to the deck.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at one another. They sat down to tea; tea, at least, was welcome, and the steward was attentive.

Valentine Mornington broke into a chuckle.

"After all, it's rather a lark," he said, "and I'm dashed if I wouldn't rather pay my way than be Tubby's guest. My guardian will have to shell out—he will get rid of me cheaply for the vac. at four guineas a week. I'm stayin' on, for one."

"I'll massacre that villain Muffin!" muttered Lovell. "He was pulling my leg all the time."

"Didn't we tell you so?" grunted Raby.

"Oh, rats!"

"I told you so!" grinned Newcome. Really, it was quite a pleasant change to be able to make that remark to Lovell.

Arthur Edward snorted.

"Look here, you chaps," he said. "My pater will pay the bill for the four of us. You're my guests, just as if you'd come home with me as we arranged originally. Tubby's a fat tick; but the cruise will be all

right; and, as Morny says, I'd rather pay my way than be under any obligation to that fat scoundrel. Let's stick to it."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I hardly know what else we can do, at this time of day," he said. "The old Johnny is right enough; we shouldn't do it cheaper elsewhere, unless we go home. After all, it may be a jolly cruise."

"And we can make Muffin's life not worth living all the time!" said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where is the fat brute now?"

"Keeping out of sight," chuckled Jimmy. "He went while the going was good. I say, this isn't bad tea, and it isn't bad cake. Look here, you chaps, let's make a go of it."

"Let's!" assented Raby. And Newcome nodded.

"And Tubby will get his ten job a time!" chuckled Mornington. "My hat! I never quite swallowed his gas, but I never dreamed that he was doing a commercial traveller stunt at Rookwood, bagging customers for his jolly old uncle. Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver's face broke into a grin.

"And Smythe?" he said.

"What about Smythe?"

"Don't you see? Smythe wasn't taken in as we were. He doesn't even know that it's Muffin's uncle's yacht. His father fixed up the trip for him through a touring agency, of course. This is the jolly old yachting cruise that Smythe has been swanking about all over Rookwood—paying guest in a floating boarding-house!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared as they realised that that was the solid foundation of Smythe's airy swank. Adolphus had kept the paying-guest side of the business as dark as Tubby had done. He did not even know that the skipper of the Silver Cloud was named Muffin, or had any relation at Rookwood School. He was likely to meet with the surprise of his life when he came on board the Silver Cloud and found Jimmy Silver & Co. there.

"It will be worth while to watch his face when he comes on board and sees us here!" chuckled Raby. And the juniors roared again.

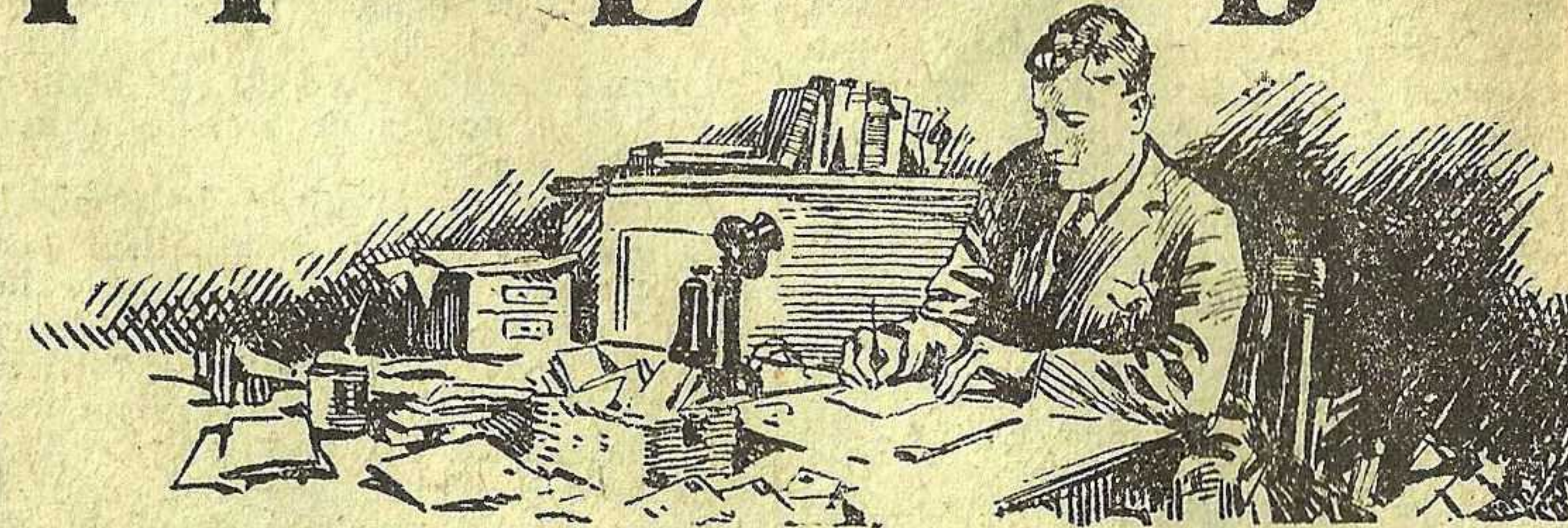
Good humour was quite restored. The sound of laughter in the saloon reached Reginald Muffin, and induced him to emerge from his place of safe concealment, hoping that all was well. But all was not quite well for Reginald. As he rolled into the saloon, five juniors jumped up as if moved by the same spring and rushed at Tubby Muffin.

And sounds of woe and anguish rang through the Silver Cloud from stem to stern as Tubby Muffin fled frantically for his life.

THE END.

"The Rookwood Yachtsmen!" is next week's magnificent long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. on holiday. Don't miss it on any account, chums. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance and avoid disappointment!

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers upon any subject. Address your letters to: Editor, "Boys' Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

JOT THIS DOWN!

The next number of the BOYS' FRIEND will be on sale everywhere on Saturday, August 1st, owing to the following Monday being a Bank Holiday. This is one more fact to the credit of that splendid holiday, the first Monday in August. It brings the BOYS' FRIEND on the scene two days earlier than usual.

NEXT WEEK'S BUMPER NUMBER!

This is a specially prime one, notable for many good reasons. It will contain a magnificent long instalment of our amazing mystery and adventure story, "The Three Gold Feathers!" and there will be more about "Knights of the Wheel!" This is a topping racing yarn, with the champions zipping along on their high-power machines. Look out, too, for "The Rookwood Yachtsmen!" and likewise a Bombay Castle rousing story called "Surprising the Pirates!" These are all right in the front line. You will have a higher opinion than ever of Owen Conquest after reading the fresh adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. Other first-line features will be "A Forced Confession!" by Arthur S. Hardy, bringing in Jim Gryce and Harold Marston, and a capital cricket article by "Mid-Off."

SPECIAL!

Nos. 9 and 10 of the "Schoolboys' Own Library" will be published on Friday, August 7th.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT!

A frank admission of failure is always something to the good; but I hope a chum at Southampton, who sends me his tale of woe, will pull up his socks and not make a habit of failing. He lost a job, and a good job at that, simply through dilly-dallying and not jumping to it. That is the whole story. Quick decisions seldom bring regret. It is all well enough to look before you leap, but don't spend the live-long day looking. It is as bad as hanging about in the cold air before taking a plunge into the warmer water. I strongly counsel "Southampton Joe" to lay this business to heart, and go like lightning bang for the next berth on offer. A job in the hand is worth a brace of promised ones. One knows this is so. Just watch the career of the fellow who is rising. He knows his own mind; he never hangs about in uncertainty.

A SHORTHAND QUERY!

"Puzzled," of Birmingham, inquires if there is another system of shorthand other than Pitman, which ranks tolerably high. Yes, undoubtedly there are several. Gurney's method is in use in numerous official quarters, and maintains its splendid position as ever.

WHAT IS HE FOR?

My advice, given in the most friendly spirit to A. B., who writes to me from Liverpool, is not to worry his jolly old head over difficult questions about life and the reason for it. He has been reading a lot of very serious books, and he tells me that the whole problem of the world worries him. If he plugs

onward like a good one, doing his bit and trusting that things are all for the best, he will find the answer to some of the riddles which are troubling him coming to his understanding. Wait for the answers, my chum. They will come, just as soon as you are fitted to grasp them, and as life unfolds.

BROADENING THE SHOULDERS.

Maxton, of Coventry, asks me how in the world he is to make his shoulders broad. This question should really have been addressed to our clever Health and Sport Expert and Adviser-in-Chief, Mr. Percy Longhurst. He will always reply by return of post. But to broaden the shoulders, one way is to go in for skipping. Another way is to lie full length, face downwards, elbow into the hips, and hands resting flat on the floor just level with the shoulders. Then press upon the floor with the hands, thus raising the chest from the ground, and keeping the body rigid. Then bend the arms, slowly lowering the body to the floor once more. Repeat this movement several times. It is tedious, but effective. You may never get the burden bearing shoulders of old Atlas, but you will improve the physique.

ROMAN ROADS!

An archæologically-minded chum asks for a tip or two about the old trackways left by the Romans. Where are they to be found? The reply is, pretty well all over the country. I have a friend who has a cheery little section of a Roman road in his back garden. Down this the centurions and the gladiators and the rest of the bunch of martial warriors swung along in the year dot and go one. It is a fascinating study, and a real eye-opener. I came upon a bit of an ancient Roman highway only last week in an upland district about sixty miles from London Town.

CARTHEW, THE COCKSURE!

As you all know, we have been hearing plenty about Carthew of late. A reader who considers Mr. Owen Conquest the best writer going asks me a very interesting question about the real inner workings of the mind of a bully and cad. Does the liar really sense what sort of a detestable figure he is cutting? Not a doubt but he does. The truth is there, a bit blurred, maybe, by his own conceit; but there was never a wrongdoer yet who did not know he was an outsider. When Master Mark, for instance, has a merry tete-a-tete with Carthew, the prefect, nobody else being around, the pair of them get right plump up against the truth, and mighty unpleasant it is!

A FOOL'S GAME!

Don't make a jest of another fellow's sport. A correspondent sends me a regular growl about the contempt hurled at the honest old game of marbles. He says it is a great game, and worthy of better things. He is quite right. Marbles has been scoffed at as the limit, but the fact is marbles, in time and season, is a jolly little pastime. It is a fool's game to jeer at it.

Your Editor.

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