

SPLENDID CHRISTMAS WEEK NUMBER—CRAMMED WITH SEASONABLE STORIES!

The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

EVERY MONDAY. SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

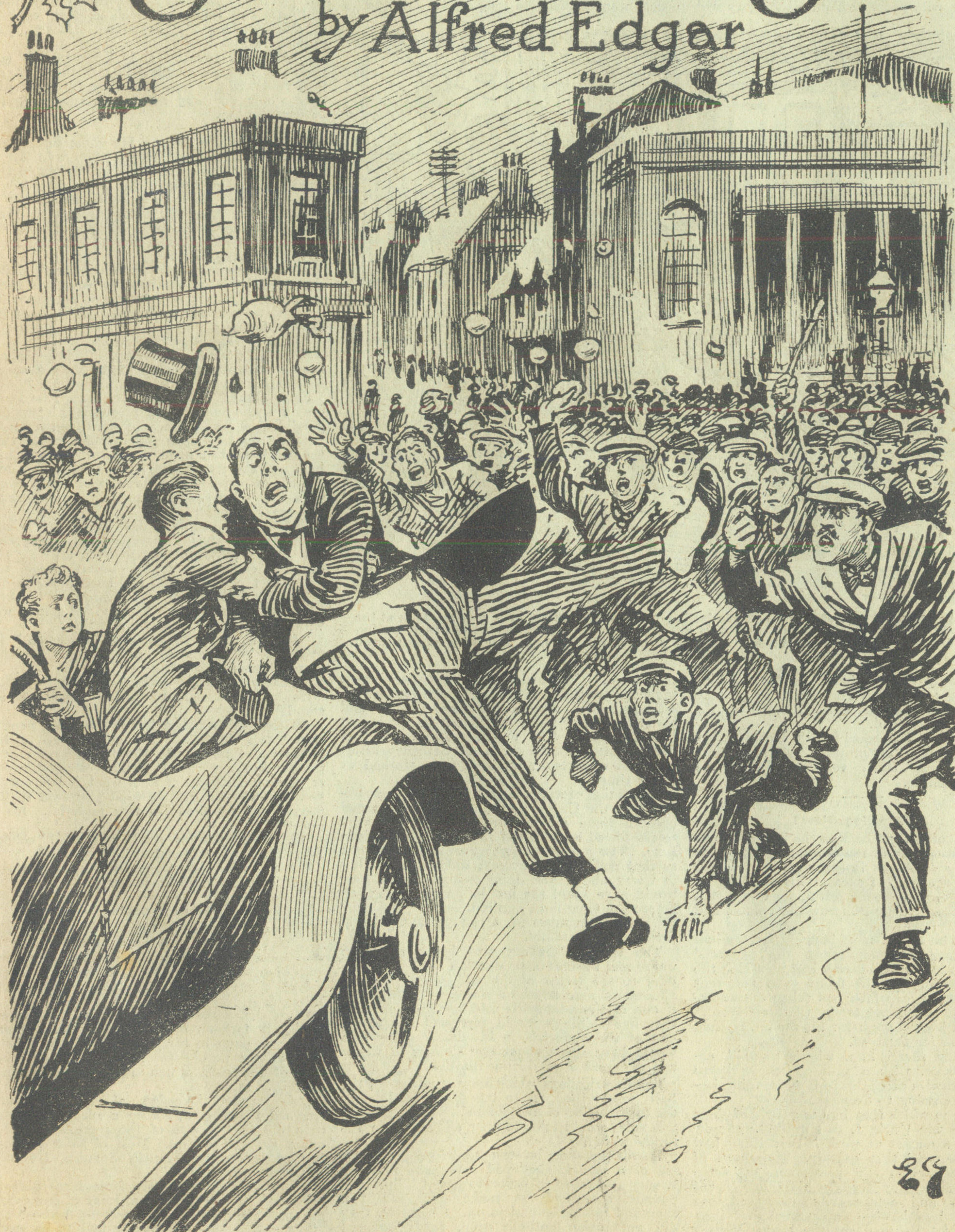
No. 1,281. Vol. XXVI.—New Series.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending December 26th, 1925.]

THE SPENDTHRIFT SPORTSMEN!

by Alfred Edgar



The 1st Chapter.

Saving An Enemy!

NO sooner have Bob and Rocky Holt come into a £200,000 legacy, left them by their Uncle Robert, than they hear from Mr. Buzzard, a crafty solicitor, that their Uncle Jasper John has willed them his entire fortune of £1,000,000, to be paid them on condition that, within six months, they spend Uncle Robert's money in furthering the interests of British sport. To the brothers the spending of the £200,000 appears an easy matter until their secretary, Jelks, a little man who was lately in the employ of Buzzard, puts them wise to certain clauses in Uncle Jasper's will. The brothers soon hit upon several stunts which they believe will entail vast expense and a dead loss, but, to their amazement, far from losing any of the £200,000 on their ventures, they make huge profits, and when but a matter of weeks remain in which to spend the money they find themselves in possession of some £300,000!

"We shall never do it," said Rocky gloomily. "We can't possibly spend all that money in the time—eight hundred thousand blessed quid! Confound old Buzzard, he's the cause of it!"

"And if we don't spend it, Buzzard will get Uncle J. J.'s million," Bob reminded him. "We're going to get rid of the money—somehow."

"Somehow's right!" Rocky exclaimed. "I can't think of anything fresh."

It was two days after the big fire at Northwick. Already a representative had called from the insurance company, preparatory to paying over £300,000 for which the four factories had been insured. The company did not dispute the claim in the slightest, and the brothers knew that inevitably the enormous sum of money would soon be paid into their bank.

"We've got to do something quick," Rocky went on, as he heaved himself out of his comfortable armchair. "If we— What's that?"

He jumped to the window as he spoke, and Bob followed him. The window of the hotel overlooked the main street of the town. Snow lay thick on the ground, and the silence of the street had been shattered suddenly by a chorus of hoarse shouts and cries.

A figure appeared in the middle of the street, running madly.

"Buzzard!" gasped Bob. He was flying over the snow, the tails of his frock-coat streaming out behind him; his top-hat was rammed firmly down on his head, and his pallid face was paler than ever.

"Gosh! Can't he move!" exclaimed Rocky. The rascally solicitor was certainly moving—there were flying snowballs, turnips, half-bricks, potatoes, and sundry other missiles urging him on. Behind him came a vast crowd of shouting men.

Down the street Buzzard pelted, past the hotel, with the huge crowd racing to overtake him. Their yells reached the brothers' ears.

"Stop 'im! Hold 'im!"

"He's th' one that set fire to t' factories!"

"Trip him oop!"

Bob and Rocky saw a man dash from a doorway. Buzzard bent as the fellow came at him: a moment later and the man went back as the solicitor's big fist caught him in the chest—and Buzzard raced on.

There was no laughter from the crowd that streaked after him. They were nearly all men—grim and purposeful. The brothers could see their faces—and it was only because Buzzard's fear lent him speed that he kept ahead of them.

(Continued overleaf.)

THE SPENDTHRIFT SPORTSMEN SAVE AN ENEMY FROM THE FURY OF THE CROWD!

**JIMMY SILVER & CO. RUN UP AGAINST TROUBLE ON THEIR
WAY TO LOVELL LODGE!**



**The 1st Chapter,
Off for Christmas.**

THE young ass!"

"It's all right, Lovell—" "It isn't all right!" "Oh!"

"The silly young ass!" went on Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Classical Fourth Form at Rookwood, wore a worried look.

His three comrades, on the other hand, looked merry and bright.

Rookwood School had broken up for the Christmas holidays, and the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form were in the train, speeding westward through a snowy landscape.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome did not see anything to worry about. So they did not worry.

The chums of the Fourth were bound for Lovell's home, in Somerset. They had a carriage to themselves. Somewhere on the train, also, was Lovell's young brother, Teddy of the Third.

Teddy Lovell was the cause of Arthur Edward's worried look.

Lovell, feeling the responsibility of an elder brother—feeling it a little too much in the opinion of his chums—had advised, warned, and commanded Teddy Lovell to keep in the carriage, under the guardianship of the elder-brotherly eye.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not yearn for the society of the Third-Former; but they were prepared to tolerate it for Lovell's sake.

But a Third Form man of Rookwood was not the fellow to take orders from a Fourth-Former, even when the Fourth-Former happened to be his elder brother.

Unfortunately, it was a corridor train. Teddy Lovell had taken the first opportunity of wandering along the corridor and vanishing from the sight of the elder-brotherly eye.

"The silly young owl!" continued Lovell. "We change at Templecombe, and he will be left on the train for a cert."

"Teddy knows how to change trains!" murmured Raby.

"There will be a row if I arrive home without him!" said Lovell crossly.

"It's a good way to Templecombe yet," said Newcome. "He will turn up all right, like a bad penny."

"Suppose he doesn't!" grunted Lovell. "Suppose we have to go on without him? What then?"

The looks of Jimmy Silver & Co. indicated that they would not regard the loss of Teddy's society as an irreparable misfortune.

Lovell gave a sniff, and rose from his seat. "I'd better look along the train for him," he said. "You fellows mayn't care if he gets lost. But he happens to be my brother, you see. I'll look for him and jolly well smack his head."

And with that brotherly intention, Arthur Edward Lovell quitted the carriage and tramped along the corridor in search of the elusive fag.

Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged smiles.

Lovell, as a matter of fact, was not in the best of tempers that day. Certain little incidents which had preceded breaking-up at Rookwood had annoyed him. Moreover, he had confided to his comrades that his Uncle Peter was coming to Lovell Lodge for Christmas. He had not seen his Uncle Peter for years and years and years, not since he had been quite a little chap, in fact; but he remembered him as a very crusty and sharp-tempered gentleman with a chronic dislike for boys.

Lovell's opinion was that his parents might very well have left Uncle Peter over for another occasion—saved him up for a rainy day, as it were—instead of asking him to the Lodge at the time Lovell was taking his school friends there. But Lovell's parents had not consulted him on the matter, as Arthur Edward apparently considered that they ought to have done.

Trouble On The Train!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

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

A surprise awaits the Fistical Four of Rookwood when they arrive at Lovell's place for the holidays!

On top of all this—putting the lid on, so to speak—Teddy Lovell was displaying his independence as a Third Form man who declined to take orders from any chap in the Rookwood Fourth, brother or not. Lovell was certain to be blamed, at home, if Lovell minor got left on the train, or changed into the wrong train, as the young scamp was well aware. Yet he had scuttled out of the carriage and disappeared from the brotherly supervision, and had failed to reappear.

"Bother these fags!" said Raby, as Arthur Edward went tramping down the corridor.

"Bless 'em!" said Newcome. "Lovell's like a hen with a chick about his blessed minor. Of course, the young sweep will turn up all right—and what does it matter if he doesn't?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"There he is!" he said. Arthur Edward Lovell had only been gone a couple of minutes when the cheeky face of Lovell minor looked into the carriage from the corridor.

Teddy Lovell grinned at the three Fourth-Formers.

"Arthur you go to look for me?" he asked.

"Yes, you young rascal," said Jimmy Silver.

"Good! Then I'll sit down."

The fag sat down in the corner seat, next to the corridor. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at him expressively.

The circumstance that his brother was hunting up and down the train for him did not seem to worry the cheeky Third-Former; rather it seemed to provide him with a little mild entertainment.

There was a heavy tramp of footsteps in the corridor about a quarter of an hour later, and Lovell, with a red face, tramped past.

"Lovell!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Lovell did not heed.

He tramped on and disappeared.

Having searched one end of the train for his elusive minor, he was now going to search the other end.

It did not occur to him that, in the meanwhile, Teddy might have returned to the carriage; he did not even look in as he passed, and he was too cross to heed the call of the captain of the Fourth.

Teddy chuckled. He sprawled comfortably on the seat, and drew Lovell's rug over him.

"The dear old chap's waxy," he remarked.

"He's looking for you," said Jimmy Silver.

"Why couldn't you call out to him, you young rascal?"

"What rot! This will keep him amused till we get to Templecombe, and save us all from his chin-wag!" yawned Teddy.

Ten minutes more passed, and then Lovell came tramping back along the corridor. The station was drawing near now, where the Rookwooders had to change trains.

Lovell tramped into the carriage, without noticing the fag curled up in the corner of the seat next to the corridor, with a rug pulled over him. Lovell had left his travelling-rug there, and it was of ample size, and nearly all of Teddy had disappeared under it.

"He's not on the train!" snorted Lovell.

"Eh?"

"I've looked in every carriage, from end to end. He must have got out at an earlier station," said Lovell. "Goodness knows where he is now."

"But—" began Jimmy Silver.

"No good butting—" "But—"

"I tell you it's no good butting, like a blinking billygoat!" roared Lovell. "The young ass isn't on the train, and he's lost somewhere on the way here from Hampshire—goodness knows where! I must say it's you fellows' fault."

"What!"

"Why couldn't you help me keep an eye on him, instead of chipping a fellow for looking after his young brother?" demanded Lovell.

"It's rotten! And you needn't grin; it's not a grinning matter, I can jolly well tell you!"

But Jimmy Silver & Co. really couldn't help grinning.

The fact that Teddy was curled up under the big plaid travelling-rug at Lovell's very elbow as he stood in the carriage, struck them as comic.

Only Teddy's face showed over the rug in the corner, and Lovell had his back to that, having come half across the carriage from the corridor with one wrathful stride.

Lovell did not think of looking round. He glared at his comrades.

The matter was serious. Grinning was quite out of place. Arthur Edward Lovell was intensely exasperated.

"Look here, you dummies, you can grin!" he bawled.

"Right-ho—we will!" agreed Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We shall be at Templecombe in a few minutes now. We can't take the next train without Teddy. If you think I'm going on home without my brother, you're jolly well mistaken."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses—"

"It's all right, old chap, we won't lose Teddy!" grinned Raby. "I'm sure he'll turn up."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Over the top edge of the rug Teddy Lovell winked at the three Fourth-Formers. Otherwise he gave no sign, and Arthur Edward remained in blissful ignorance of the fact that Teddy was there. Lest he should glance round, however, Teddy slipped his head under the edge of the rug, and was now quite invisible if Lovell did look round.

"Well, I call this rotten!" hooted Lovell.

"Here's my brother lost—gone off goodness knows where—and we've got to hunt for him up and down the railway; at least, I've got to hunt for him. And all you fellows can do is to grin like a lot of Cheshire cats, and cackle like a lot of chickens."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, I'm fed-up with this!" roared Lovell. "If you dummies can't see that it's a serious matter—"

"It's all right, old man!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "I'm sure Teddy's on the train!"

"He's not!" roared Lovell.

"I know he isn't far away," said Raby.

"You're a silly ass, Raby!"

"Thanks, old man. Same to you, and many of them."

"Look here, Lovell, old chap—" began Newcome.

"Oh, cheese it! I've no time for jaw with silly owls!" said Lovell, whose temper had obviously deteriorated during his search up and down the train for his minor.

"I was going to say—"

"Rats!"

"But—"

"For goodness' sake, ring off while I try to think out what's going to be done!" hooted Lovell. "Here we are at Templecombe."

The express rattled to a halt. Jimmy Silver & Co. gathered up rugs and bags and various impedimenta and jumped out on the platform. Lovell glared after them.

"Come on, Lovell."

"What about my brother? I'm not going on to the other platform without him!"

"Well, you don't want to stay in that train, anyhow," said Jimmy Silver. "Pick up your rug and hop out."

Lovell snorted, but he followed that advice. He grabbed up his travelling-rug from the seat.

Then he gave a yell of astonishment.

"Why—what—Teddy!"

The Rookwood fag yawned and sat up.

"Time to change train, what?" he asked.

"All serene! Don't leave anything in the carriage, Arthur. You know what an ass you are."

And Teddy Lovell coolly alighted from the train and joined the chuckling trio on the platform. Arthur Edward Lovell, with feelings too deep for expression in words, gathered up his rug and followed.

**The 2nd Chapter.
Not Wanted!**

HERE'S the jolly old train!" said Raby cheerily.

"Lots of time!"

"And here's an empty carriage—"

"Good!"

The train for Shepton, the next stop for the Rookwooders, was waiting in the station. Three cheery Fourth-Formers and one frowning Fourth-Former and a grinning fag arrived at the train and stopped at a carriage that had only one passenger in it. It was not a corridor train this time. Jimmy Silver jerked open the door and tossed in a bag.

There was the sound of an annoyed grunt in the carriage.

Only one passenger was there—a gentleman of middle age, wrapped warmly in a fur-lined overcoat with a big fur collar, and a silk hat. The gentleman's face was somewhat crusty in expression when in repose, and it grew much more crusty as the juniors stopped at the carriage. Doubtless the old gentleman had expected, or hoped, to have that carriage to himself, and was not pleased to see it invaded by a horde of schoolboys, in exuberant spirits, going home for Christmas.

Still, there were five empty places in the carriage, and the party numbered five, so the

old gentleman, howsoever much he desired to have the carriage to himself, really had no right whatever to interfere.

Probably he was an old gentleman of an interfering disposition. Possibly he was an old bachelor, unaccustomed to cheery and exuberant youth, and finding no pleasure in the contemplation of merry young faces.

Anyhow, he interfered.

As Jimmy Silver was following his bag into the carriage an arm was stretched across the entrance, barring his way.

He stopped, with one foot on the step and one in the carriage, in astonishment.

Two sharp grey eyes stared at him over a pair of gold-rimmed glasses.

"Kindly find some other carriage," said the old gentleman.

"What?"

"There is, I believe, plenty of room on the train," said the crusty one. "I am, in fact, assured that the train is not at all crowded. Please go farther along."

"My hat!" said Teddy Lovell. "What a cheek!"

"My dear sir," said Jimmy Silver mildly. He was rather annoyed, but Jimmy was a good fellow, and always respectful to age and considerate to the little infirmities of temper which sometimes come with age. "Please let me pass."

"Find some other carriage!" snapped the old gentleman.

"But—"

"I tell you there is plenty of room on the train. Close that door at once—there is a draught."

Arthur Edward Lovell gave an angry snort. With great self-control he had refrained from punching the cheeky head of his minor. But he was not going to stand sheer cheek from a perfect stranger.

"Shove in, Jimmy!" he exclaimed.

"Sorry, sir!" said Jimmy politely. "There may be more room along the train, but we're a party of five, and we want to travel together. There are five seats here."

"Close that door!"

"You really can't expect to have six seats all to yourself, sir," urged the captain of the Rookwood Fourth.

"I should jolly well think not!" bawled Lovell.

"Shove in!" exclaimed Raby.

"Dash it all, the train will be going," said Newcome impatiently. "Don't play the giddy ox, old gentleman."

"What! What!"

"We've got to get in, sir," said Jimmy.

"Please let me pass."

"I decline to have this carriage crowded by a mob of noisy schoolboys!" hooted the unreasonable old gentleman. "I absolutely decline to submit to anything of the kind. Go farther along the train!"

There was a slamming of doors. The train was about to start. The Rookwood party had no intention of splitting themselves into several parties spread among two or three carriages to please this unreasonable old gentleman, but it was too late for even that now. They had to bolt into this carriage or be left behind.

Jimmy Silver, shoved on from behind by his comrades, pushed against the extended arm and pushed it aside.

He tramped across the carriage to the further seat, and his comrades followed him in and sat down, filling all the seats.



MORE TROUBLE! The angry gentleman grasped Arthur Edward and jumped back. Lovell just dodged the swipe of the umbrella. Whizz! A gentleman's silk hat. It flew from his head. "Give him rascals! Upon my word!" gasped

There are heaps more wonderful surprise stories on the way, chums. Look out for further announcements!

The gentleman in the fur coat glared at them.

He looked an expensive and wealthy old gentleman, and doubtless he had been accustomed to having his own way to an extent that was not good for him.

His eyes fairly glinted over his gold-rimmed glasses.

"You young rascals!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, can it, sir!" said Newcome cheerily. "Where's the damage? We're quite nice chaps when you get used to us."

"This impertinence—"

"Bow-wow!" said Lovell.

"What—what did you say?"

"Bow-wow!" repeated Arthur Edward Lovell independently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Slam, slam, slam! rang the doors as the guard hurried along the train. The fur-collared gentleman put his head from the window.

"Guard!"

"Yessir?"

"Turn these boys out!"

"Wot?"

"These noisy and disrespectful boys have crowded into my carriage!" snorted the old gentleman. "Turn them out."

The guard blinked in at the window.

He seemed surprised, as was natural in the circumstances.

"Wot?" he repeated. "Here, you young gents got first-class tickets?"

"Certainly!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

"Then what are you complaining of, sir?" asked the guard.

"I decline to have this carriage crowded by noisy and impertinent schoolboys!

There is room farther along the train."

"Oh, my eye!" said the guard. "Turn them out!"

"Have you engaged all the seats in this carriage, sir?"

"Eh! What? No!"

"Then what the blinking thump are you talking about, sir?" asked the guard rudely. And he went on his way, slamming doors.

The fur-collared gentleman's face was purple. He leaned from the window:

"Guard!"

Slam, slam, slam!

"Guard! I am a shareholder in this company! I shall report you!"

Slam, slam, slam!

"Guard!" shrieked the angry gentleman. The train started.

The fur-collared gentleman threw himself back into his corner seat. He gave the Rookwood party a glare, which was answered by Jimmy Silver & Co. with a polite smile, and by Teddy with a chuckle.

"Scandalous!" he ejaculated.

"Keep smiling, sir!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"What—what! Boy, you are impertinent!"

"Sorry, sir!" said Jimmy politely. "But isn't it rather cheeky of you to want to bag a whole carriage?"

"Silence!"

"Eh!"

"Be silent! If you are to crowd this carriage, at least be silent!" snapped the old gentleman. "Scandalous, scandalous!"

And the fur-collared gentleman unfolded his "Times" and disappeared behind it; and the Rookwooders grinned cheerily at one another.

Jimmy Silver grinned cheerily. He had come across ill-tempered and unreasonable gentlemen before; but this special old gentleman really seemed to take the cake. Even Mr. Manders at Rookwood, was not quite so savage-tempered and blind to sweet reasonableness as this old gentleman. Hitherto Jimmy had considered Mr. Manders the limit.

But the old gentleman ceased to snort at last, getting deeply interested in his paper, and apparently forgetting the existence of the obnoxious youths in the carriage.

Crash! Rattle! Jerk!

The train stopped in a station. It stopped rather suddenly, and the old gentleman, deeply absorbed in his paper, was not prepared for it. He lurched forward in his seat, and nearly fell across on Lovell's knees. His newspaper fell on Lovell.

"Oh, gad! Bless my soul!"

Lovell took hold of the newspaper, with a wink at his comrades.

"Thank you, sir!" he said demurely. "If you're done with it—"

"What—what?"

"Much news in it, sir?" asked Lovell affably.

The old gentleman righted himself, and glared at Lovell. He did not believe for a moment that Lovell really supposed that the newspaper was being offered to him, as done with by the owner.

"You young scamp! Give me my paper!"

"Not finished with it?" asked Lovell.

"No!" roared the old gentleman.

"Very well, here you are, sir!" Lovell tossed the paper back.

The "Times" is a fairly hefty publication; both in contents and in avoirdupois it is weighty. It cannoned on the ill-tempered old gentleman's chest with quite a heavy smite as Lovell tossed it to him.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

The 3rd Chapter.

Trouble on the Train!

"DISGUSTING!" It was the fur-collared gentleman who made that remark suddenly, popping it out like a pistol-shot. His head popped out from behind the paper, like the head of a tortoise from its shell, as he made it.

Really, it wasn't disgusting. Arthur Edward Lovell had sorted out a bag of jam-tarts. December weather made healthy fellows hungry, and jam-tarts, though not very solid, were grateful and comforting. Jam-tarts were handed along the carriage, and Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to dispose of them. Evidently the crusty old gentleman did not approve.

"Disgusting!" he repeated. The fur-collared gentleman was elderly; he had passed through most of the seven ages of man; and he had left the jam-tart age far behind. The sight of schoolboys tucking into jam-tarts had an irritating effect on him. He did not like it; and it was clear that he was a gentleman who never hesitated to make his likes and dislikes known.

Obviously he was an old gentleman who was given his head, without limit, by affectionate relatives, who, perhaps, were chiefly interested in the clauses in his last will and testament. Apparently he expected the same patient tolerance from the general public who were not in the least interested in his last will and testament. No doubt, with such an expectation, he met with many disappointments and painful shocks, which had not improved his temper.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at him. "Did you address me, sir?" asked Jimmy politely.

"I addressed you all!" snapped the old gentleman. "And I said, 'disgusting,' and I repeat, 'disgusting!'"

"You must excuse us for not offering you a jam-tart, sir," said Jimmy. "We did not think you would care for it."

"Eh?"

"But you are very welcome, sir."

"Certainly!" grinned Lovell, holding out the bag. "Please take one, sir."

"They're quite nice, sir!" said Raby.

"Tip-top!" said Newcome.

The fur-collared gentleman breathed hard and deep. He was quite certain that the Rookwooders had not really misunderstood him; and assuredly he did not want a jam-tart.

He smacked the bag in Lovell's hand, and it went to the floor and burst, and there was a scattering of tarts.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Look here!" roared Lovell. "You chuck it! This is too thick, sir, and I can jolly well tell you so! Haven't you got any manners?"

"What—what?"

Lovell and the others picked up the tarts. One of them was too dusty for human consumption, and Arthur Edward Lovell was powerfully inclined to hurl it at the angry face opposite him. The old gentleman was purple with bad temper by this time, and his purple countenance was a tempting target. But respect for age prevailed, and Lovell restrained his wrath.

"Disgusting!" repeated the fur-collared gentleman. "If you must crowd into my carriage, and cause me incessant annoyance with chattering and shuffling your feet, at least you need not indulge in a disgusting orgy under my eyes. Pah!"

Having thus delivered himself, the old gentleman retired behind the "Times" again, shutting out the offensive sight of schoolboys devouring tarts. Only an occasional snort from behind the newspaper indicated that he was still fuming.

Jimmy Silver grinned cheerily. He had come across ill-tempered and unreasonable gentlemen before; but this special old gentleman really seemed to take the cake. Even Mr. Manders at Rookwood, was not quite so savage-tempered and blind to sweet reasonableness as this old gentleman. Hitherto Jimmy had considered Mr. Manders the limit.

But the old gentleman ceased to snort at last, getting deeply interested in his paper, and apparently forgetting the existence of the obnoxious youths in the carriage.

Crash! Rattle! Jerk!

The train stopped in a station. It stopped rather suddenly, and the old gentleman, deeply absorbed in his paper, was not prepared for it. He lurched forward in his seat, and nearly fell across on Lovell's knees. His newspaper fell on Lovell.

"Oh, gad! Bless my soul!"

Lovell took hold of the newspaper, with a wink at his comrades.

"Thank you, sir!" he said demurely. "If you're done with it—"

"What—what?"

"Much news in it, sir?" asked Lovell affably.

The old gentleman righted himself, and glared at Lovell. He did not believe for a moment that Lovell really supposed that the newspaper was being offered to him, as done with by the owner.

"You young scamp! Give me my paper!"

"Not finished with it?" asked Lovell.

"No!" roared the old gentleman.

"Very well, here you are, sir!" Lovell tossed the paper back.

The "Times" is a fairly hefty publication; both in contents and in avoirdupois it is weighty. It cannoned on the ill-tempered old gentleman's chest with quite a heavy smite as Lovell tossed it to him.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.



LOVELL'S VICTIM! The old gentleman rose from his seat and looked at it. Jimmy traces were visible on the cushions, but the tart itself clung to the overcoat, and whisked round as the wearer whisked round. There was a howl of laughter in the carriage. The Rookwooders really could not help it. The sight of the old gentleman peering at the seat, while the tart was displayed to them sticking on the tail of his coat, was too funny. They roared. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you—you—" stuttered the irate gentleman. He looked, for a moment, as if he would box Arthur Edward's ears. Fortunately, he refrained. Boxing Rookwood ears was a perilous undertaking.

He jammed down the window, and put his head out to look at the name of the station. December mists hung rather thickly round the station, and the name, of course, was well hidden among prominent advertisements, as is customary in railway-stations. The old gentleman, with the aid of his gold-rimmed glasses, was able to ascertain that Squeecham's Pills were good for the digestion, that Day & Martin's blacking was excellent for boots, that a holiday in the Isle of Man could be had upon reasonable terms, and that Chipton's was the Establishment for Quality. But whether he had reached Wincanton, or Castle Cary, or Shepton Mall, or any other station on the line, was a matter of lesser importance, which he found it difficult to ascertain.

He was still leaning from the window when the train restarted after the interval, so to speak. Lovell, leaning across the bulky figure bundled in the fur-lined coat, deposited a jam-tart in the corner seat vacated by the gentleman at the window.

Jimmy Silver gave him a warning look. The other fellows grinned.

It was the tart that had collected so much dust that it was unfit for human consumption. Lovell did not see, therefore, why the old gentleman should not sit on it. There was no other use for it, and the irate passenger was welcome to it.

The fur-lined gentleman sat down again as the train rolled out of the station, still in blissful ignorance of the point on his journey that he had reached, though doubtless enlightened as to the invigorating qualities of Squeecham's Pills, Chipton's groceries, and holidays in the Isle of Man.

Squelch!

It was a large and juicy jam-tart. It was a large and heavy gentleman that sat on it. The tart was reduced, at one fell swoop, to the shape of a pancake, with a juicy squelch that was audible all through the carriage.

The fur-lined gentleman started.

"What—what—" he ejaculated.

He rose from his seat and looked at it. Jimmy traces were visible on the cushions, but the tart itself clung to the overcoat, and whisked round as the wearer whisked round.

There was a howl of laughter in the carriage. The Rookwooders really could not help it. The sight of the old gentleman peering at the seat, while the tart was displayed to them sticking on the tail of his coat, was too funny. They roared.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What—what—"

The fur-lined gentleman gave a suspicious glare round the carriage at the juniors, and glared again at the stickiness on the cushion. Then he groped round his voluminous coat, and the sticky tart came away in his hand. He held it up and stared at it blankly.

It was some moments before he seemed to understand what had happened. Then he understood, quite suddenly, and with equal suddenness he leaned over towards Arthur Edward Lovell, and surprised that youth with a terrific box on the ear.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Smack!

Loud and clear, almost like a pistol-shot, it rang through the carriage, and louder yet rang the surprised and enraged yell of Arthur Edward Lovell.

The 4th Chapter.

Only a False Alarm!

"YAROOOOOOOH!" "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

Lovell leaped up.

Certainly, he had placed a sticky tart for the irate gentleman to sit upon; but, equally certainly, the irate gentleman had asked for it. Rookwood ears were not to be boxed with impunity.

"You cheeky ass!" roared Lovell. "Laying your paws on me! By Jove, I'll jolly well hack your shins!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

He caught his excited chum by the shoulder in time.

"Let go!" roared Lovell.

"Chuck it, old chap—"

"I tell you— Whooooo!" roared Lovell, as the irate passenger smote again, this time on his other ear.

While Jimmy Silver was restraining Lovell, the enemy was carrying on the war, so to speak. He boxed Lovell's other ear, and even that did not satisfy him; he proceeded to grasp Lovell by the collar, and with his free hand groped for his umbrella.

"Chuck it, you old donkey!" exclaimed Raby.

Lovell wriggled in the old gentleman's grasp. Elderly as the gentleman was, his grasp was hefty. Lovell plunged along the carriage to get loose, and the irate gentleman plunged after him. Teddy Lovell put out a foot at the right moment, and the angry passenger stumbled over it, and fell on his knees, releasing Arthur Edward.

His wrath instantly turned on Teddy.

The fag was grasped by the collar, and jerked from his seat.

Shake, shake, shake!

"Whoop!" roared Lovell minor. "Stop him! Rescue, you chaps! Yaroooooh!"

"Let him go!" bawled Lovell.

Smack, smack, smack!

Having shaken Teddy, the angry gentleman was boxing his ears. It was really too "thick." Lovell jumped at him like a charging bull, and the angry gentleman staggered and sat down. Teddy was hurled flying across the carriage, and Lovell sprawled across the angry passenger. He sprawled over a purple face and a pair of dislodged, gold-rimmed glasses.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Newcome. "What a shindy! I say, that boulder ought to be given in charge!"

"Mmmmmmm!" came in a muffled roar from the irate passenger, gasping under the sprawling Lovell.

Teddy Lovell had staggered against the opposite door of the carriage. He turned the handle, and sent the door flying open.

"What—" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

The fag gave him a cheery wink, dived down, and squeezed under the seat. The angry passenger, who was struggling to shift Lovell off his purple face, saw nothing of what was happening.

"Groooh! Mmmmm! Will you gerroff?" he was spluttering.

For a second, Jimmy Silver stared after the fag who had squeezed under the seat and vanished from sight. Lovell blinked at him, not understanding. But Jimmy caught on at once.

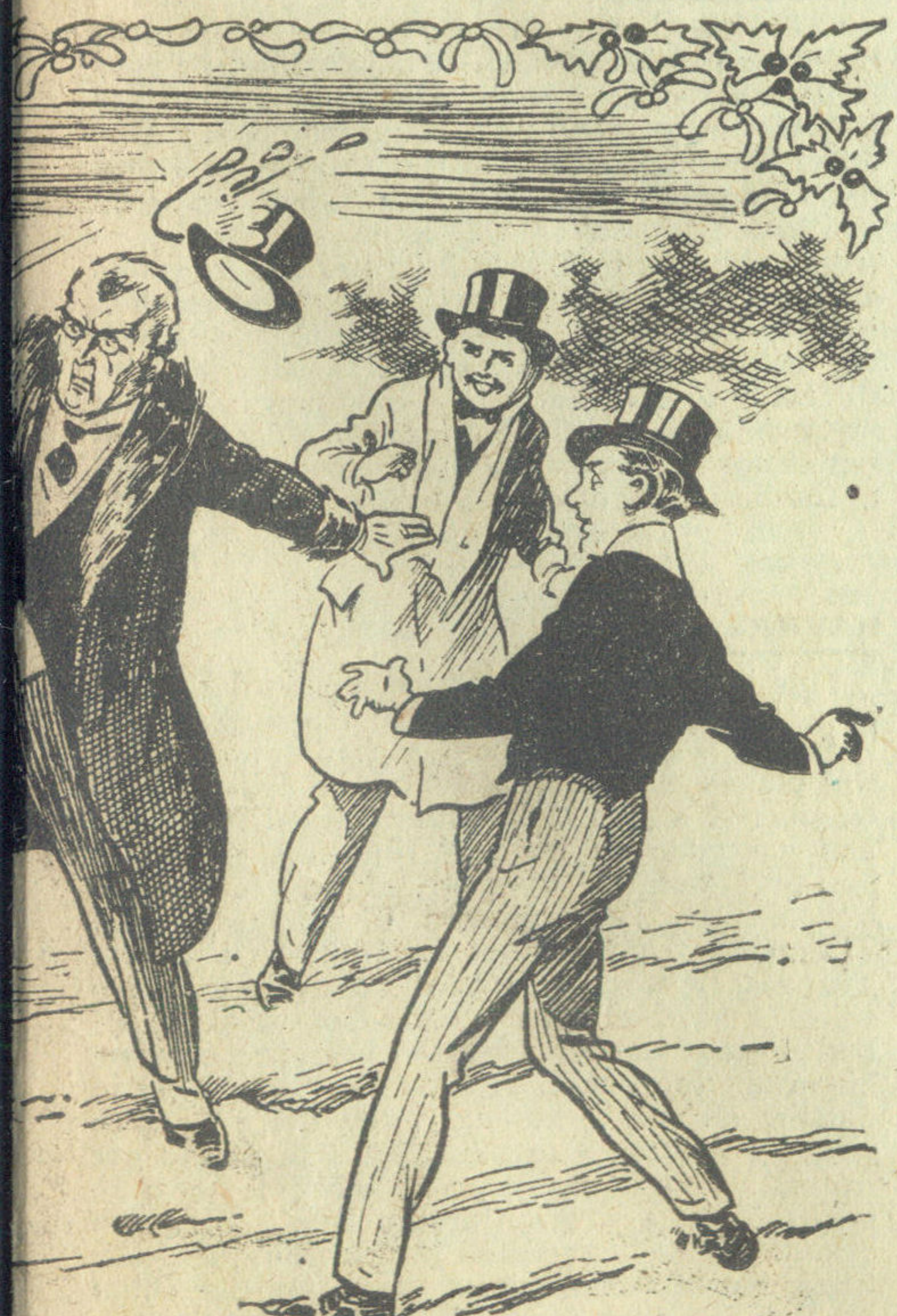
"Help! Stop the train!" he shouted. "He's gone!"

"He's gone!" yelled Raby and Newcome, playing up instantly.

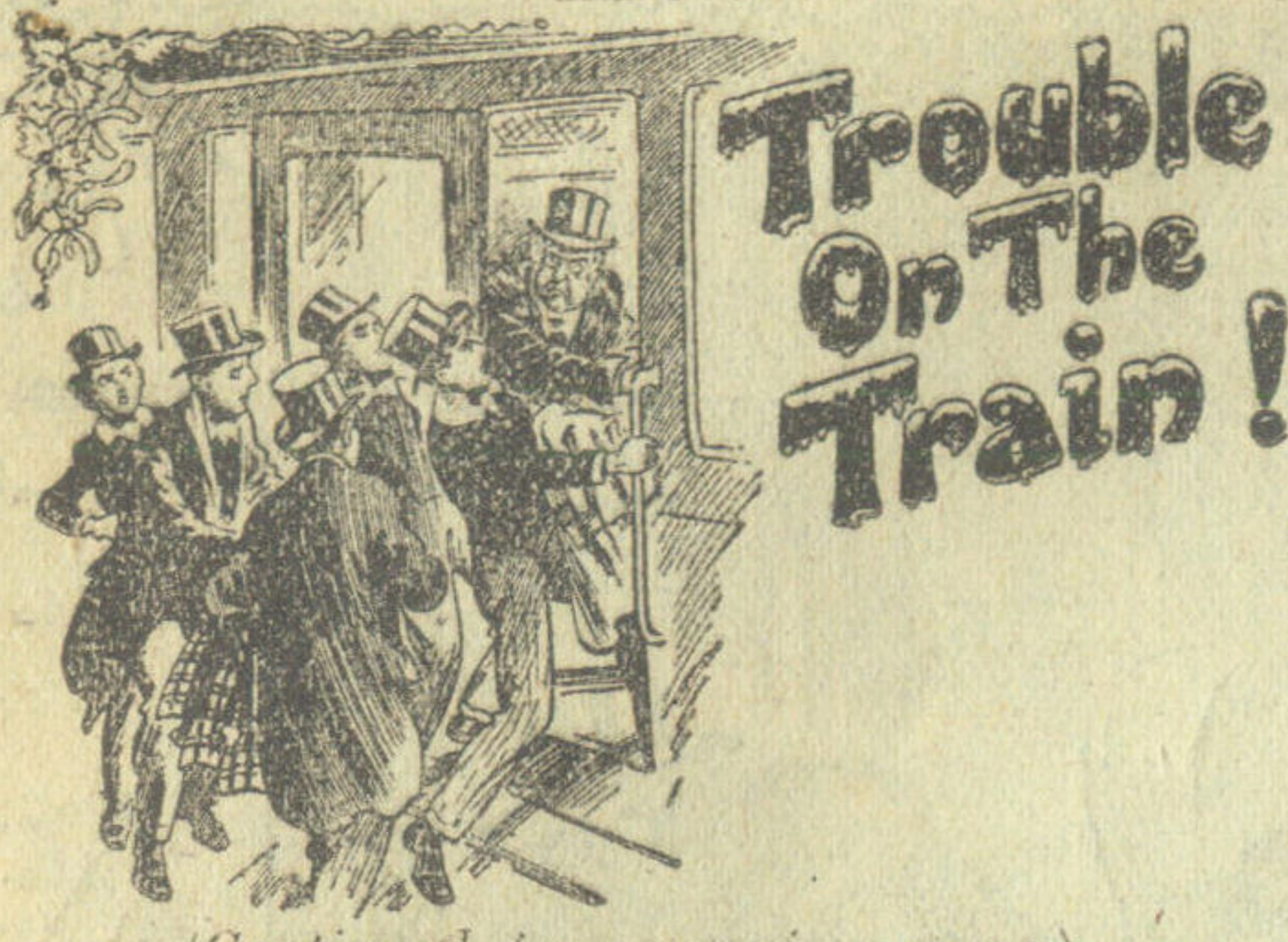
"My brother!" roared Lovell, catching on

(Continued overleaf.)

AL
NDAY!
O' THE
ANDS!
Wheway.
word story
ue Football.
ou read
ms!



ped his umbrella and made a stride at Lovell. "Look here, you old duffer!" he shouted. "Swipe! snowball, hurriedly collected by Teddy, smote the old another!" shouted Lovell. "Good gad! You young ped the angry gentleman.



(Continued from previous page.)

last of all. Arthur Edward was not quick on the uptake, but he caught on at last. "My brother! Stop the train! Pull the cord! Stop! Help! Murder!"

He scrambled up. The angry passenger sat up dizzily. He groped for his gold-rimmed glasses, and set them on his nose. He blinked at the juniors. "You young rascals—ruffians—scoundrels—villains—" he spluttered.

"Murder!" roared Lovell. "Manslaughter at least!" howled Raby. Jimmy Silver pointed to the open door of the carriage, flying in the wind of the train. The fur-lined gentleman stared round with a startled, scared look.

He knew that there had been five of the schoolboys, and now he saw only four, and the door of the carriage flying open. He knew that the missing one was the one he had hurled away when Lovell charged him over. His purple face became quite pale.

"Bless my soul! What has happened?" he stuttered, staggering to his feet. "You've killed him!" roared Lovell.

"Boy!" "It's murder! Stop the train!" "Has—has—has that boy fallen out of the carriage?" stuttered the fur-lined gentleman, in horror.

"He didn't fall out!" howled Newcome. "You flung him right against the carriage door, you know you did!"

"I—I threw him aside—" "We all saw him fall against the door!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "We shall all be witnesses—"

"At the inquest!" said Raby. "The—the inquest!" stuttered the fur-lined gentleman. That awful word seemed to take all the starch out of him, as it were. He collapsed into his seat, quite heedless now of sticky jam on the cushions.

He stared at the juniors with a chalky face.

He could not deny that he had hurled the Rookwood fag off, and that Teddy had fallen against the opposite door of the carriage. Perhaps at that moment he repented him of being such an extremely bad-tempered old gentleman. Certainly he had meant the poor boy no real harm.

"Oh dear! Goodness gracious! Bless my soul!" he articulated. "I—I never dreamed—I never supposed—I never intended—"

"You've done it now," said Raby. "Goodness gracious! If—if the boy has fallen upon the line, he—he must have been injured—"

Lovell gave a scornful snort. "Injured! Do you think a fellow could fall on the line from the train without being killed?"

"Oh dear!" "We're getting into a station now," said Jimmy Silver. "We shall be at Shepton in a few minutes. Keep round and see that he doesn't escape before the police arrive, you fellows."

"Yes, rather." "This is what comes of losing your temper for nothing, sir," said Jimmy Silver, very gravely. "I hope, sir, that it will be a warning to you—that is, of course, if you are not hanged."

"Wretched boy!" gasped the fur-lined gentleman. "You are well aware that it was an accident—a dreadful accident—"

"I don't believe there was an accident."

"I'm certain there wasn't," said Newcome. "Nothing of the kind," said Lovell. "We shall all be able to swear that there was no accident in the matter at all."

"Yes, rather." The angry gentleman gazed at the juniors speechlessly. He wondered dizzily whether the law would allow a mob of schoolboys to swear his life away in this manner.

"We're stopping," said Lovell. The train drew up at Shepton. "We change here," said Lovell. "We shall have to give this man in charge—"

"Good gad!" The guard was at the door as soon as the train stopped. He opened the other carriage door and stared in.

"What's this here?" he demanded gruffly. "That there door is flying open. What's this here?"

"An—an accident, guard," gasped the fur-lined gentleman. "A sheer accident. I scarcely touched the boy—"

"Wot boy?" "The—the unfortunate lad who has fallen out—"

"Wot!" stuttered the guard. He stared at the juniors, remembering that

there had been five of them. Now there were four. The guard's face assumed an expression of terrifying grimness.

"Wot's that?" he demanded. "You've shoved one of these here boys out of the train while it was going? Why, the young feller must have been killed."

"I scarcely touched him!" almost screamed the fur-lined gentleman. "I—I was boxing his ears for impertinence—"

"Do you mean you was assaulting him?" demanded the guard. "I—I merely flicked him—a mere touch. Then—then I was knocked over, and—and the boy—oh dear! It was a pure accident—I did not even see the boy fall. I never knew—"

"This here is a matter for the police," said the guard. "You stay where you are, the lot of you, till I've called a constable."

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'd better show up, Teddy—we shall lose the connection, at this rate."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Teddy Lovell, a little dusty but very merry and bright, crawled out from under the seat. The guard stared at him. The irate gentleman blinked at him, with eyes that seemed to bulge from his head.

"The—the—the boy did—did not—not fall out, after all?" stuttered the passenger blankly. "Not quite, sir," said Teddy cheerily.

"Look 'ere," bawled the guard, "what's this game? Pulling this old covey's leg, hey?" "He was so awfully excited," explained Teddy. "I thought I was safer under the seat till we got to a station, guard. He looked dangerous."

"Jolly dangerous!" agreed Lovell. "My belief is that he's been drinking." The guard burst into a chuckle.

"You young rips!" he said, and passed on. "Come on!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We change here, you know, and we've got a train to catch. Good-bye, sir—merry Christmas!"

"Good gad! Bless my soul!" The angry gentleman undoubtedly was relieved to see Teddy Lovell still in the land of the living, and to realise that his bad temper had not led him to the length of inadvertent manslaughter. He was relieved; but his temper was not improved by the discovery that the playful schoolboys had been pulling his irate leg.

"You young rascals!" he said. "Impudent young scoundrels! By Jove, if you were boys of mine—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather pleased that they were not boys of his. Undoubtedly they would have been booked for a rough time, had they been so unfortunate.

The Rookwooders crowded out of the carriage. The irate gentleman followed them out.

carriage. The irate gentleman followed them out.

"Hallo, the old bird's looking for more trouble!" said Lovell. "Let's bump him on the platform!"

"Fathead! Come on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Good-bye, sir, and a merry Christmas to you!"

And the Rookwooders marched away cheerily to catch their train, leaving the angry passenger glaring after them, with a glare that seemed almost potent enough to crack his glasses.

The 5th Chapter. Asking For It.

"CHUCK it!" said Teddy Lovell, in a tired voice. Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned.

In the local train, now drawing near to Lovell's home, Arthur Edward felt it incumbent upon him to talk to Teddy Lovell for his own good. Undoubtedly, Arthur Edward had been greatly entertained by the fag's extraordinary jape, and the fright it had given the fur-lined gentleman. But on reflection, Lovell realised that such tricks were dangerous, especially opening a carriage door while a train was in motion; and for a quarter of an hour Lovell told his brother so. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome fully concurred, but they felt a little tired; Teddy was tired and did not even concur. But his major seemed, like the little brook, likely to go on for ever.

Hence his suggestion that his dutiful elder brother should "chuck" it.

Lovell frowned wrathfully. Jimmy Silver interposed with tact. Between Arthur Edward's sense of brotherly duty, and Teddy Lovell's Third-Form cheek, a shindy always seemed to be imminent.

"Must be getting pretty near now," said Jimmy Silver. "What's the station for your place, did you say, Lovell?"

"Froode," said Lovell. Jimmy put his head out of the window as the train slowed.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated. From a carriage farther down the little local train another head was projected—a head crowned by a silk hat, surrounded by a fur collar, and adorned by a pair of gold-rimmed glasses on a beaky nose.

"That merchant!" exclaimed Jimmy. "He's on the train!"

"Not the old Hun?" asked Raby. "Yes."

"My hat!" said Lovell. "So he's going to our part of the world, is he? If we see him during the Christmas holidays, we'll jolly well snowball him."

(Continued on page 416.)

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.

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

THIS week's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND now in your hands contains so much to the point that you must forgive me if I devote a special word to the contents. It is the Christmas Week Number, and, of course, my best wishes to all chums go with it. Best of luck and happiness this festive season, and for the new year, which will be on us before we can look round. The number is chock-full of seasonable yarns by the most versatile authors. It is the wind up of 1925.

WHAT ABOUT IT!

These two years—namely, 1925 and 1926—will be lining up in a few days' time. There will be the usual evolutions. Then the old guard of 1925 will get "Dismiss!" Has it been a good year? The answer need scarcely call for hesitation. The old year has seen some ups and downs, like all other years. It has brought good news and bad, but on the whole, the record is rosy. And in the past twelve months the BOYS' FRIEND has boomed, gaining fresh partisans, until we have a sturdy phalanx of supporters calculated to cause satisfaction all round. The old year has seen new features added to the stunning programme of the old "Green 'Un." It has witnessed many an addition to its crowd of readers all over the world. It brought back Don Darrel, and in the past twelve months it saw Mr. Francis Warwick join up, with its splendid staff of writers.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

Just as the present issue is the grand finale with a real flourish, so next week's BOYS' FRIEND is extra special. This is the time when we are all of us making good resolutions. They come so jolly easy! We see 1926 footing it down the street, hear the newcomer rapping at the door, and we decide that in this new time we are not going to do that, and we are going to do the other thing. We shall cut ice—if there is any, and if it wants carving up. There are heaps of things in that line. What

I take the liberty of wishing my chums is that, say, seventy-five per cent of the merry new resolutions shall catch on to the coat-tails of fulfilment. Then we shall not be long. We dare not anticipate that all the big resolves will turn out to have been built on reinforced concrete, as it were. But a new year is, anyway, a time of fresh and brilliant adventure. You have a sporting chance, if you go grimly at the task, to nail the success which was denied last season. We will hope it. Great things come to the fellow who means business. So here's to good going in the days ahead!

A NEW YEAR NUMBER.

As is befitting, next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND is a real out-and-out New Year issue, with a tip-top budget of fiction, and other first-line features. It is a number that is a worthy kick-off. I am sure my many thousands of old-standing friends will be right down pleased. There is performance and splendid promise. For the numerous fresh-comers it will be an augury of what the old paper has for the future. For in the new year our "bill" will be a real bumper one, with school yarns, adventure stories, humorous ditto, and articles of the best.

"A LAD O' THE LOWLANDS!"

We start away with this fine story next Monday. It is the opening yarn in a grand new class of fifteen-thousand-word complete tales of sport. This feature will, I am convinced, constitute a record. John W. Wheway opens the ball—or, at least, administers the first kick. Mr. Wheway has done much rattling fine work for the BOYS' FRIEND in the past. His new long, complete story of Scottish League football is certainly his finest. He gets away with a slashing plot, and his characters are live as can be, and ready for any emergency. Next Monday, too, we get Owen Conquest's rousing Rookwood story, "Ambushing Uncle Peter!"

Like others, Jimmy Silver & Co. are on holiday, and the grass does not grow under their feet. Rookwood can be said to start 1926 with a flourish.

"THE DIGGER TEC!"

Otherwise, the sleuth of Australia. This story will be found large as life in our next. It is from the pen of Hamilton Teed, and Mr. Teed knows all about the little island down South. There they are always making history. Lots of my chums have moved off to Australia these recent months. They will welcome a yarn of their new land. So will readers at home, and there will be a welcome both sides of the sea for John Rufford, the explorer, and his boy assistant, Bob Spurlock. Here's another "plum." Alfred Edgar starts next week a fascinating series of motoring yarns. Look out for No. 1—to wit, "Garage Jim." Here is a story with a punch, and some useful suggestions to boot—all welcome, for lots of my chums have their eyes on motoring as a career. A good one, too!

HERE AND THERE!

"Goalie" will weigh in with the Football News and Gossip, also some well-considered forecasts, in our next. Keep on the qui vive for these tips. And just take a note, too, of those two scrumptious numbers of the "Schoolboys' Own Library," namely, Nos. 17 and 18. I might point out, also, that the "Holiday Annual" makes the best Christmas present imaginable. It may still be had. By the way, here's another important point. In two weeks' time Arthur S. Hardy gives his grandest football story. This is called "The Substitute Centre-Forwards!" a perfect nailer, of fifteen thousand words.

A WRINKLE.

It's no good offering advice when the time has gone by. That's why I am putting in a word here for a 1926 diary. Diaries are cheap, but a blank-paged diary at the end of the year is a blank business. Get your diary for this new fledgling of a year and jot down facts as the days glide away. You will find it a real help in lots of ways. This is a wheeze which brings encouragement. Most of us make notes of facts we want to remember. Then why not get those facts into line. Make them form up on parade, so that you know where to find them. In some things a diary which is not forgotten will do for you what no chum could. You can put down what progress you make in work or in sport. But don't get fed-up with

it and chuck it aside, or allow the little notebook to get dusty on the shelf in your den. That's N. G. Treat a diary with respect. Liven up its spirits with the funny story you heard. Dash in a fancy thumbnail portrait of a pal who has distinguished himself by coming a smeller on the ice or on the sports ground. Stick more to facts than feelings. If you pay attention your diary will be a bumper boon. It will act as a spur and a tactful reminder of some of the things you ought to have done. Lots of us forget those things until it is too late. I'll back a diary for helping any fellow on the way to success.

WHY WORRY?

Care killed the cat. Whether it was over cossetting or getting nervy about trifles, I never could make out. Possibly the feline animal had its whiskers pinched by a radio merchant! One never knows, does one? But the pal who sent me a complaint from Crewe was not vexed by whiskers. It was his moustache. He is troubled by hair on his upper lip, and he wants a cure. I asked Mr. Percy Longhurst to deal with this problem. There is a cure, but what's the matter with a moustache? It adds considerably to the charm of the scenery. Besides, my good chum of Crewe can go in for a morning shave if he persists in his rooted objection to the bushy bit of decoration beneath the nose.

HAVING IT OUT!

This is not about moustaches, nothing whatever to do with them. A Hastings correspondent is troubled about a shady trick which was played on him by a fellow he had hitherto considered a pal. The latter gained his point, and has gone on his way rejoicing. I should not half wonder, however, if he feels a bit irksome the remembrance of what he did. Things like that are not forgotten in a hurry. The reader who is puzzled about it asks me whether he should have a red-hot row over it, and so clear the air. He has been brooding on his injury for weeks. I think he was wrong in putting off the reckoning. You don't want to save up a thing like that. It is bound to get worse. It is doing yourself tons of harm to meditate on a wrong, for the whole miserable business gets exaggerated in your mind and the whole world seems out of joint. As my chum has let the matter stand so long, I think he had better take his grievance out and bury it. Life's too short for banking grudges.

Your Editor.

Don't miss the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. in the "Popular." Out every Tuesday!



(Continued from
page 410.)

The train stopped in a little wayside station. Jimmy Silver & Co. alighted, at the same time as the fur-lined gentleman, who stared at the juniors with a grim stare, turned his back on them, and marched away with a frowning brow.

There was snow on the Mendip Hills, glimmering through the dusk of the December afternoon. The juniors came out of the little station in a cheery crowd. Outside a rather ancient-looking horse-omnibus was waiting.

"This takes us a couple of miles," said Lovell. "We drop off right at the gates of my place. But look here, what about shoving the bags on the bus and walking? I'd like to stretch my legs a little after the train."

"Good idea!" said Jimmy Silver. "Perhaps you'd better get on the bus, Teddy."

"Perhaps I hadn't, Arthur."

"Look here—"

"Look here—"

"Better decide first and argue afterwards," suggested Raby, with a grin. "The bus seems to be going."

"Shove on the bags, then!" grunted Lovell, giving up his argument with his cheerful minor. Teddy Lovell evidently had a full share of his elder brother's obstinacy. The baggage having been disposed of, Jimmy Silver & Co. started walking up a hilly road. The omnibus rolled off and passed them, and disappeared ahead, while the juniors sauntered on at a leisurely rate. They had forgotten the fur-collared gentleman, but they were suddenly reminded of him by the sight of a silk hat and a fur collar ahead of them on the road.

"My only summer hat!" exclaimed Newcome. "If it isn't that old merchant again! He's haunting us like a giddy Christmas ghost!"

"There's some snow in the hedges," said Teddy Lovell, with a grin. "Let's give him a few in passing."

Arthur Edward Lovell was about to make the same suggestion. But when the suggestion came from his minor, Arthur Edward felt bound to frown upon it.

"You behave yourself, you young sweep!" he said severely. "Haven't you kids got any manners at all in the Third Form?"

"Oh, can it, old bean!" said Teddy derisively.

"The old johnny's looking round," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "He's seen us. He doesn't look pleased, somehow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fur-lined gentleman, glancing round, started at the sight of the Rookwood party. He frowned deeply, and halted in the road, waiting for them to come up.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed as they drew near. "How dare you follow me?"

"Follow you!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "My dear sir, have you bought up the King's highway as well as the railway-trains?"

"You impertinent young scamp—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell. "We happen to be following this road to get home. See?"

"Nonsense! I do not believe a word of it! You are following me from sheer impudence!" snorted the angry gentleman.

"Bow-wow!"

Really, it was an odd coincidence that the Rookwooders, after making a long journey by train with the old gentleman, should be following the same country road on foot on the slopes of the Mendip hills. But there it was—it could not be helped. They were no more pleased to see the fur-lined gentleman than he was to see them; but there was only one road to Lovell Lodge, and they had to follow it.

"Go back at once!"

"Eh?"

"I order you to go back instantly, and cease this impudent persecution!" snorted the unreasonable old gentleman.

"Rats!" retorted Lovell.

The angry gentleman grasped his umbrella and made a stride at Lovell. Arthur Edward jumped back.

"Look here, you old duffer—" he shouted. "Swipe!"

Lovell just dodged the swipe of the umbrella. Whiz!

A snowball hurriedly collected by Teddy from under the hedge, smote the old gentleman's silk hat. It flew from his head.

"Give him another!" shouted Lovell.

"Good gad! You young rascals! Upon my word!" gasped the angry gentleman, and he rushed at the juniors, brandishing his umbrella.

But he might as well have rushed at a party of mosquitoes. The juniors were much too active for him. They scattered at once, with laughing faces, and gathered up snow with active hands. Snowballs fairly rained on the angry gentleman as he charged first after one junior and then after another, without reaching any of them.

He stopped at last, breathless, feebly waving the umbrella.

"Give him a few more!" gasped Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Let him rip!"

Arthur Edward Lovell planted a final snowball on the angry gentleman's chin, and then the juniors went on their way at a trot.

Looking back at a little distance, they discerned the angry gentleman groping for his hat under a hedge, and then dabbing snow from his coat with a handkerchief, his face crimson with wrath.

"Well, we've seen the last of him," said Lovell. "Trot's the word."

And the juniors trotted, and a quarter of an hour later they reached the gates of Lovell Lodge, and were glad enough to see the lights of the house shining hospitably through the December dusk.

The 6th Chapter. Uncle Peter.

"YOU fellows all right?"

"Right as rain."

"Then we'll go down to tea," said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were very bright and cheery. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome had a large room with three beds in it, with a big window that looked over the Mendip Hills, and a roaring log fire in the grate. It was very cheerful and comfortable, and they had had a warm welcome from Lovell's father and mother, and they were ready for tea—an ample West Country high-tea for which their long journey had given them good appetites.

Lovell looked in at their door with a cheery face. The juniors had removed the signs of travel, and had made themselves look very nice, and a credit to the Classical Fourth Form of Rookwood.

"By the way," went on Lovell, "I told you my Uncle Peter was coming for Christmas—"

"You did, old man," said Jimmy. "Rely on us! We're going to be nice to him."

Lovell grinned rather ruefully.

"Well, I haven't seen him for donkeys' years," he said. "But I remember that he was frightfully sharp-tempered. He's a wealthy old johnny, you know, and people suck up to him for his money. I'm afraid you men will find him a bit of a trial when he comes; but we'll try to give him a wide berth. If he forgets his manners take it as patiently as you can."

"Rely on us, old man."

"The mater says she's expecting him to-day, but he hasn't turned up yet," said Lovell. "He's her brother, you know, and she seems to like him somehow. No accounting for tastes. The pater stands him nobly, I believe. He's had twenty years in India, long, long ago, and he's got an idea that he can treat everybody as if they were coolies. Do your best to stand him."

"We will," said the Co. solemnly. "We'll back you up, old man."

"Butter shan't melt in our mouths when we meet Uncle Peter," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll make him love us before we've done with him."

Lovell chuckled.

"Well, let's go down," he said. "Hallo! I dare say that's my uncle at the door now. Somebody's banging as if he wanted to knock the door through. That's his style."

"What a nice man!" murmured Raby.

The juniors went down the old staircase. The hall below, hung with holly and mistletoe, was brightly lighted. There was a sound of voices, and the juniors paused on the stairs. One of the voices from the hall seemed familiar to their ears.

"No, I have not had a pleasant journey!" said Uncle Peter, in reply to a question from Mrs. Lovell. "I have had anything but a pleasant journey. I have had a very unpleasant journey indeed!"

The juniors started, and looked at one another. They stopped at the bend of the staircase. An extraordinary expression came over the face of Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I was pestered in the train by a mob of unruly, disagreeable, disrespectful schoolboys,"

went on the voice. "Yes, help me off with my coat. Thank you! I was pestered—in fact, persecuted!—by a mob of young ruffians. What the schools are coming to in these days I can hardly imagine. They do not flog the boys sufficiently. Mabel, that is the root of the trouble. In my day we were soundly flogged."

Mrs. Lovell's voice was heard murmuring something gently in response. There was a snort from her formidable brother.

"We live in namby-pamby times, Mabel, that is the trouble. Boys are not thrashed sufficiently. Five young rascals—I might say scoundrels—yes, scoundrels! I was pestered, worried, persecuted! I have had a most unpleasant and uncomfortable journey."

"My dear Peter—"

"And that was not all," said Uncle Peter. "These boys—these young ruffians—happened to get out at the same station, and they followed me along the road, and actually assaulted me with snowballs! Look at my hat!"

"Shocking!" said Mrs. Lovell.

"Shocking? Outrageous, you mean! I suppose you mean outrageous, Mabel."

In silent horror, Jimmy Silver & Co. gazed at one another on the staircase. Well they knew the rasping voice of the fur-lined gentleman. The fur-lined gentleman and Lovell's Uncle Peter were one and the same!

Mr. Lovell came along the hall to greet his visitor. The horrified juniors, peering over the banisters, saw him shake hands with the grumpy gentleman. Mr. Lovell had a ruddy, cheerful face and a pleasant eye, and he bore his brother-in-law, as Arthur Edward had said, nobly.

"Welcome, my dear Peter!" he said. "It's really good of you to give us a few days at Christmas—really good! My sons are home from school to-day, and they will be very glad to see their uncle—very glad indeed, after so many years!"

Grunt, from Uncle Peter.

"Let me take you to your room, my dear fellow," said Mr. Lovell. And his kind and hearty manner had a very pleasant effect, even on the fur-lined gentleman.

Uncle Peter grunted again, but it was a more amiable grunt.

"So you haven't had a very pleasant journey down to Somerset?" said Mr. Lovell, as he piloted his formidable guest to the staircase.

"Far from it—far from it! A mob of disrespectful young scoundrels insisted upon crowding into my carriage, though I ordered them out and actually called the guard! The guard was impertinent. I shall report him to the company. They followed me, sir—followed me on this very road, and attacked me with snowballs, sir!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Lovell.

"Such an outrage, sir—"

At the bend of the staircase Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in a horrified group. As Mr. Lovell mounted with his guest they had wild ideas of fleeing upstairs again. What was going to happen when the fur-lined gentleman recognised them they could not even guess. If only they had known in time that the terrible old gentleman was Lovell's Uncle Peter! But, of course, they had not known that, or ever dreamed of it.

"Why, here are the boys!" said Mr. Lovell unsuspectingly. "Arthur, this is your Uncle Peter, whom you have not seen for so long. My son's school friends—introduce your friends to your uncle, Arthur!"

But Lovell was speechless.

Two gleaming, glinting eyes were turned upon him over a pair of gold-rimmed glasses.

The fur-lined gentleman recognised Jimmy Silver & Co.

"You!" he stuttered.

"Oh dear!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"You!" roared Uncle Peter.

Mr. Lovell looked perplexed, and rather alarmed.

"What—" he began.

"These young rascals—"

"What?"

"These are the young scoundrels I told you of. This one"—Uncle Peter pointed an accusing finger at Lovell. "This one was the worst."

"Goodness gracious! But—"

Lovell and his comrades scuttled down the stairs. The angry grunt of Uncle Peter, the astonished voice of Mr. Lovell, followed them. But they did not heed.

In the hall below, they looked at one another blankly, in silence.

"Well," said Lovell, at last. "This is a go!"

And his chums agreed that it was.

THE END.

(Fun galore in "Ambushing Uncle Peter!" next Monday's long complete holiday story of the chums of Rookwood School. Be sure you read it. Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND in advance and thus make certain of securing it!)

The Christmas Day Match!

By ARTHUR S. HARDY



(Continued from
page 412.)

The man struggled, gripping Jim's wrists fiercely, trying to trip him.

He was a big man, but Jim, though still a boy, was too strong for him.

"You can't get away!" he cried. "I'm going to hold you till the police come."

Hallows ceased to struggle, then began to whine.

"Have pity on me!" he grated. "I'd rather die than go back to prison! I won't go back! It's Christmas Day! You won't send me back, Gryce? I have money and friends. I'll keep away. I only came into the town to-day because I thought it would be safe in the fog. I wanted to visit old familiar scenes. I saw the light in Bangley's windows, and they fascinated me. Please let me go!"

"That you may plot to injure me and harm the Rovers," said Jim. "No, never!"

With a sudden wrench Hallows jerked his throat free, dashed his clenched fist into Jim's face, and, with a mocking laugh, sprang into the road. He escaped being run down by the wheels of a car by a hair's-breadth.

The car stopped at the gate. Harold Marston beamed at Jim over the steering-wheel.

"Who was that, Jim?" he asked.

"Hallows, the convict!" returned Jim. "I caught him, but he tricked me, and he's got away."

They searched up and down the road, but soon gave up the quest as hopeless. Then when Marston had parked his car they entered the house. Jim immediately used the telephone, and informed the police that Hallows, the convict, was in the town.

That done, he and Marston joined the happy party, and Jim told Chairman Bangley the news.

"H'm!" he cried. "I expect the rascal has engineered all the troubles and trials we have suffered since he escaped from prison. And we may expect still more if we go any distance in the big Cup fight. But it's Christmas night. Leave him to the police, my lad, and come and enjoy yourself."

It was the only thing left to be done, and, passing into the big room where the dance was in progress, Jim and Harold joined the laughing, chatting, dancing throng.

THE END.

(Don't forget that "A Lad o' the Lowlands," a powerful 15,000-word story of Scottish League Football, by John W. Wheway, appears in our next issue. Order your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND to-day and thus make certain of obtaining it!)

Here's a Topping Xmas Gift!

The CHAMPION ANNUAL is a wonderful big budget of the most thrilling, nerve tingling adventure yarns you've ever read. There is a superb entertainment supplement, a one act play and a host of useful hints as well. Make sure you get it for Xmas!

6/- net



DISGUISE

Original and Instructive pocket size Make-Up-Box Invaluable to Amateur Actors, Detectives, and others

3/- EACH Post Free

MILTON, 128, BEULAH HILL, LONDON, S.E.19.

BICYCLE FREE to Stamp Collectors only. Ask for particulars, approvals, and 100 UNUSED STAMPS FREE. Send postage. WATKINS (Dept. F), Granville Road, BARNET.

WHEN ANSWERING ADVERTISEMENTS PLEASE MENTION THIS PAPER

THE JAZZOPHONE

The most fascinating Musical Instrument ever invented. Exactly imitates the Cornet, Clarinet, Saxophone, etc. Sounds splendid by itself or when accompanied by the Piano, Gramophone, or Wireless, and several played together have the same effect as an Orchestra. Also imitates animals and other weird sounds. So simple that anyone can play it at once without the slightest practice. Causes endless fun and amusement. With full instructions, post free, 1/3, per Postal Order, or three for 3/-. Obtainable only direct from—

THE IMPERIAL CO. (L. Dept.), 9-15, OXFORD STREET, LONDON, W.1.

All applications for Advertisement Space in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4