



Two of these Guaranteed "Cymrec" Watches Offered
in Our New One-Week Picture Competition

See Page
531.

The

BOYS' FRIEND 2!

EVERY MONDAY.

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

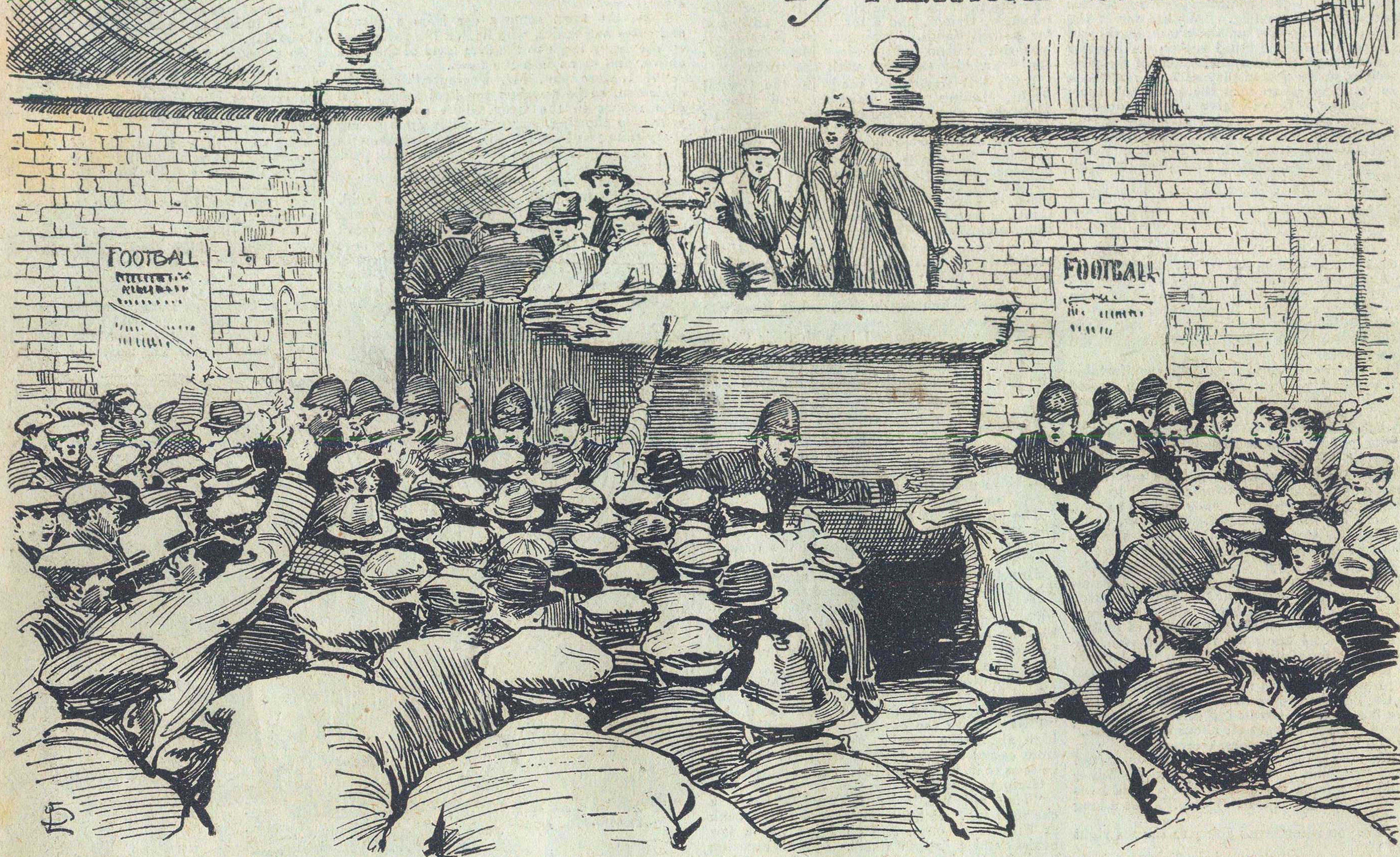
No. 1,289. Vol. XXVI.—New Series.]

THE FAVOURITE ALL-STORY PAPER!

[Week Ending February 20th, 1926.]

The Fifth Round!

By ARTHUR S. HARDY



The crowd rushes the gates in an endeavour to see the Rovers v. Rangers Cuptie!

The 1st Chapter.

The Luck of the Draw.

THE luck of the draw for the Fifth Round of the F.A. Cup, commonly known as the English Cup, had pitted the Rangers against the Rovers, the tie to be decided at Beaulieu Road Ground, the home of the Rovers, and unless a miracle happened the Rovers would have no ground on which to play the Cuptie!

Gale and fire, the work of an incendiary, had destroyed their great stand, had burnt down the garage and buildings adjoining the enclosure, and walls and fences had gone with the rest.

Such a tie had never been known in the town in all its football history, for usually the Rangers and the Rovers, the keenest of local rivals, had avoided each other in the great Cup fight, meeting only in the battles of the League. An ordinary League game, when these teams

met, would draw anything from 30,000 to 50,000 spectators, according to time of year and weather conditions.

Therefore, a conservative estimate, putting the Cuptie gate to come at 40,000 at the very least, even should the weather conditions be vile, was not likely to be far under the mark.

No sooner was the result of the Fifth Round draw made known than the management of the Rovers began to grapple with what was certainly a very awkward proposition.

Manager George Forsyth, the directors, including Harold Marston, all the players of the first team and reserves, trainer Joe Lowe, and Arthur Drayton, of the "County Times," had met at Chairman Bangle's house, since the clubhouse at Beaulieu Road, with its boarded windows and damaged condition, was not fit to be used. Billie, the chauffeur, was waiting in the hall to hear the result of the draw. Grainger, the Brooklands racing-man,

and now a playing member of the Rovers' team, was present in the big study, crammed with books and fitted with telephone, when the news came through.

Jim Gryce, of course, was there, and within a minute of the receipt of the thrilling news the chairman was busy.

Could the contractors guarantee the making good of the ground so that the Cuptie on February 20th could be played at Beaulieu Road? No, they could not, with the promise of a gate of 40,000 dimensions. They could erect a temporary stand, and rush work on the walls or fences so that ordinary League matches might be played there, but they would not guarantee to fit the ground for the playing of the tie. Very well, would they get on with their work at top speed, and the club would make other arrangements for the playing of their Fifth Round Tie.

Chairman Bangle put the telephone receiver

on its hook, and faced the elated yet rather grim-looking football crowd that packed his luxurious study.

"Boys," he cried, "what we have got to do now is to make up our minds to fight! And we shall have to fight harder to win this Fifth Round Tie than if we could play the match as drawn at Beaulieu Road. What we have to decide now is whether we shall seek a neutral ground with the consent of the Rangers' management, or whether we shall play the tie on the Rangers' pitch at Hill Side."

"Don't play the tie out of the town, sir, whether we win it or lose it," said Harold Marston bluntly. "Let us do the sporting thing. After all, the Rangers have treated us decently. The moment our stand was destroyed, and the Beaulieu Road Ground rendered unfit for the playing of our League games, they gave us the use of their own ground, playing

(Continued overleaf.)

THE CLASSICALS RECEIVE A SET-BACK AT THE HANDS OF
THE MODERNS!

Off His Game!

By Owen Conquest.



The 1st Chapter.
The High Hand.

"CHUCK it!"

It was not a polite remark. But Arthur Edward Lovell, of the Rookwood Fourth, did not always remember his manners when he was excited or exasperated.

Now he was both.

So he bade Jimmy Silver "chuck it," in a tone from which politeness was conspicuously absent.

Lovell's face was red and his brows were knitted. He was really angry. Lovell's temper was naturally warm—so warm by nature that very little was needed to bring it to boiling-point. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome bore with that little weakness of their chum, sometimes with patience—sometimes without. Life in the end study at Rookwood was not always "roses, roses, all the way."

Still, Lovell's little outbursts generally blew over fairly quickly. It was seldom that he let the sun go down upon his wrath.

Now, however, he was really deeply, seriously angry. And Jimmy Silver, captain of the Rookwood Fourth Form, sighed.

Lovell was a good fellow—one of the best. But he was a trial at times. This was one of the times!

"You see," murmured Jimmy, gently as the cooing dove.

"I don't!" said Lovell.

"In the circumstances—"

"Blow the circumstances!"

"Old chap—"

"Rot!"

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath. But it failed to produce that effect upon Lovell.

"Chuck it!" he repeated. "Have a little sense, Jimmy Silver! We've been friends a long time, and I don't want to row now."

"Friendship and football are two different matters," said Jimmy Silver.

"Not in this case. What do you know about footer?" demanded Lovell.

"Eh?"

"Deaf?" jeered Lovell.

"Look here, old man, as the fellows elected me junior captain, I must be supposed to know something about games," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "If I hadn't an eye to a fellow's form, I should be no good."

"Well, you haven't."

"Then I'm no good!" sighed Jimmy Silver. "Let it go at that, and for goodness' sake let the matter drop. Raby and Newcome will be coming in to tea in a minute—don't let's be ragging when they come in."

"Blow Raby and Newcome!"

"Blow the whole jolly universe, if you like," said the captain of the Fourth. "Blow all Rookwood, from the Head to the boot-boy. Blow away."

Lovell breathed hard.

He was angry, he was indignant, and Jimmy was treating his angry indignation in a flippant spirit, passing it by, as it were, like the idle wind which he regarded not. That was not good enough for Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell had a way of being quite curt with any fellow who put on "airs and graces"—he was very quickly fed-up

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

Thanks to Arthur Edward Lovell,
Jimmy Silver is placed in an
awkward position!

with anything of that kind. But somehow or other it seemed to him that great concessions ought to be made to his own personality.

"Put it plain, Jimmy Silver," said Lovell, between his teeth. "I'm keen on playing in the House game, and you know it. You're proposing to throw me over for Putty of the Fourth—a silly, japing ass who knows nothing else but playing silly practical jokes. He knows as much about Soccer as the housedame's cat."

"A little more than that, I think," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Do you mean to say that he's as good a half as I am?" roared Lovell.

"Not at all."

"But you want to leave me out and put him in?"

Another sigh from Jimmy Silver. He was worried, and he was trying hard not to be angry. But really, it was hard for a football captain to listen patiently to talk like this from a member of his team. No other fellow in the Classical junior eleven would have dreamed of speaking to Jimmy Silver in this style. Why the thump should Lovell be privileged to do so? Evidently Arthur Edward considered that he was, somehow, privileged.

"That ass!" said Lovell. "That japing fathead who thinks of nothing but japing! Rot!"

"But—"

"Oh, chuck it!" said Lovell contemptuously.

"Look here, Lovell, Putty is a good man, and he's entitled to a show in the matches."

"And you're going to chuck away a House match to give him a show?"

"I should be chucking away the match if I played you this time," said Jimmy Silver warmly. "You're a better man than Teddy Grace, as a rule; but you're off colour—"

"I'm not."

"You showed up rottenly in practice."

"I did not."

"Look here, Lovell—"

"I'm as fit as a fiddle."

"Every man has his ups and downs," said Jimmy Silver patiently. "Nobody is always at top-notch. You're at low-water mark now, as it happens, and I want you to stand out this time."

"I'm as good as ever I was."

"You're not, really, old chap."

"That's only your ignorance of the game."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That's that!" said Lovell. "The fact is, Jimmy Silver, the fellows were rather asses to make you football captain at all. The least you can do is to take advice from a fellow who knows."

"If I took advice from every fellow who wanted to figure in matches, I should play about forty chaps at a time—an old-fashioned Rugger team of Tom Brown's time!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Don't be an ass."

Jimmy Silver rose from his chair.

"Let's drop it, Lovell! Whether I ought to be football captain or not, that's what I happen to be. If the fellows can find a better man, I sha'n't stop them. Until then, I must really do what I think best."

"Think!" scoffed Lovell. "You can't think."

"Let it go at that."

"I'm not going to let it go at that! I'm going to play as usual in the House match on Wednesday."

"That's settled now, Lovell. I've put in Teddy Grace."

"Put him out again, then."

"Can't be did."

"Then I can jolly well tell you—" began Lovell, in a voice that resembled that of the Great Huge Bear.

He was interrupted. Raby and Newcome came into the end study.

"Hullo, what's the row?" asked Raby cheerily. "Lovell doing vocal exercises? You can be heard at the end of the passage, old bean."

"Farther," said Newcome. "I dare say the Head can hear in his study."

"Let's have tea," said Jimmy Silver.

"I want this matter settled before tea," said Lovell savagely. "You fellows, that ass says I'm not fit to play in the House match to-morrow."

"Well, you've been off colour a lot lately," said Raby. "You had a cold, you know, and you're a bit seedy still."

"I'm not."

"Oh, all right—you're not! Let's have tea."

"That cad Grace is butting into my place," said Lovell. "I'm not standing it."

"Putty isn't a cad, and you know it," said Raby. "He's a decent chap, and you ought to be jolly well ashamed of calling him names."

"I'll call him what I like!" roared Lovell.

"I'm monarch of all I survey, my right there is none to dispute!" sang Newcome sweetly.

"Ha, ha ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard and deep. He was wrathful—his wrath was deep and potent. And his comrades were laughing.

"Now, chuck it, old man!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "Let's have tea, Lovell—not a row. Keep smiling."

"Am I playing in the House match to-morrow?"

"I dare say you'll be in your old form by next week, and if you are, you play in the Latcham game," said Jimmy, in the same soothing tone. "That's a bigger game than a House match. And now—"

Lovell set his teeth.

"Am I playing in the House match to-morrow?" he repeated, just as if the captain of the Fourth had not spoken.

"No!"

"That's enough!"

Lovell strode out of the study.

"Look here, old man, don't play the goat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "I tell you, Lovell—"

Slam!

Lovell was gone.

The 2nd Chapter.
Just Like Lovell!

JIMMY SILVER drew a deep, deep breath.

It was seldom that Jimmy was angry—seldom or never with his chums. In the little tiffs and difficulties that sometimes cropped up in the end study, Jimmy's role was generally that of a peace-maker. The equanimity of "Uncle James" of Rookwood was quite proverbial in the Classical Fourth.

But he was angry now. There was a glint in his blue eyes, which showed that even the equable "Uncle James" had a temper, if he allowed it to "go." Lovell, really, had passed the limit. A Rookwood man did not hold his place in the football eleven by right divine; though Lovell seemed to think that he did. Any other fellow might have felt rather sore at being dropped out of a game, but no fellow certainly, had a right to think of dictating to his captain in this high-handed way.

Changes in the team, at times, were obviously inevitable; according to Lovell's view it seemed that he was a man who was never to be changed, except at his own sweet will and pleasure. And the actual fact was that Lovell was not up to his usual form—he was most decidedly off his game, and that was a fact patent to all eyes but his own.

Jimmy sat down to tea, with a rather set face; and Raby and Newcome exchanged uncomfortable glances.

They were not unused to occasional bursts of excitement in the study; generally an outburst of Lovell's was about as important as a storm in a teacup. But it looked more serious this time. Lovell was deeply angry; but that was not a matter of the first importance. But if Jimmy was angry, too, that meant trouble. It looked as if the tie of comradeship that had so long united the Fistical Four was in danger.

"Lovell will come round, Jimmy," said Newcome, at length, breaking a silence that was full of discomfort.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"It never lasts, you know," said Raby.

Another nod.

Raby and Newcome glanced at one another again.

"Jimmy, old man," said Raby, after a pause, "don't you get your rag out and play the ox like old Lovell. We never expect him to have very much sense; but we do expect it of you."

Jimmy smiled.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll have as much sense as possible, old chap. Goodness knows I don't want to rag. But, you see, I can't play Lovell in the House match to-morrow."

"I know you can't! He's quite off his form," said Raby. "Queer that he can't see it. But, after all, Lovell never sees anything, does he?"

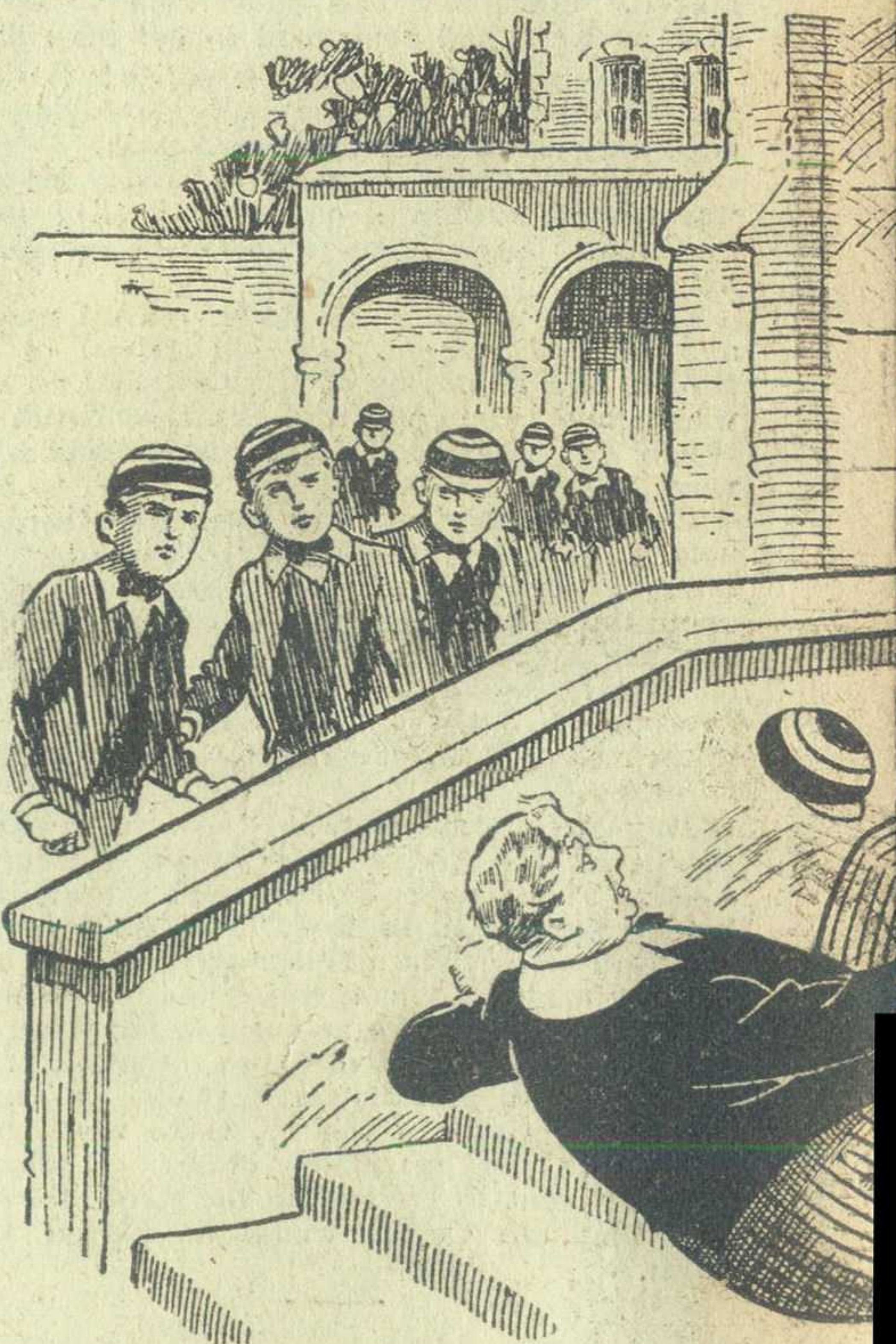
"Hardly ever!" grinned Newcome.

"He's too jolly unreasonable," said Jimmy Silver. "Other men have to stand out when they're not wanted; dash it all, I've stood out myself, and I'm skipper. Last House match I asked Morny to captain the team, because I'd crooked my knee. I suppose Lovell would have insisted on playing with a bad leg."

"Well, the old chap is a bit of an ass," said Raby. "But we always knew that, and we like him all the same. When he comes round, let it drop—he'll be all right when he's blown off steam."

"I think he blows off rather too much steam," said Jimmy. "Still, you're right; we don't want trouble in the study. I dare say he will be all serene by to-morrow."

The three juniors finished their tea, and left the end study. They wondered where Arthur Edward Lovell was "teasing." It



TROUBLE FOR TUBBY! On the steps Lovell chance of playing you? You don't look like it. He "Yaroooh!" Tubby Muffin's fat chuckle sudden

was late for tea in Hall; and they supposed that he had dropped in at some other study along the Classical Fourth passage.

Jimmy, as a matter of fact, was not specially anxious to meet him again in a hurry.

In personal matters, Jimmy was extremely patient, and he put up with a great deal of what the other fellows called nonsense from the hot-headed Arthur Edward. But football was a different affair. Jimmy had his duty to do as captain of football in the Lower School of Rookwood, and he would not have dreamed of accepting dictation on that subject from anyone.

On other points he would make concessions; on that he could make none. Lovell would have been the first to criticise him severely, for playing any man who was not up to the mark. Lovell was often unreasonable, but his unreasonableness on this occasion was altogether too "thick."

Jimmy did not want to have any more argument about his decision—and he did not mean to have any. So his view was that the less he saw of Lovell that evening, the better for their friendship.

Raby and Newcome did not share that point of view. They were anxious to see the breach healed before it went deeper. Mutual hostility in the end study was altogether too uncomfortable a state of affairs.

Mornington was loafing in the doorway of his study, and he smiled as he saw the

three. Jimmy guessed at once, from that rather sarcastic smile, that Morny had heard Lovell's bawling voice. Indeed, few fellows in the Classical Fourth passage could have been left in ignorance of Lovell's grievance.

"Seen Lovell, Morny?" asked Raby. "Yes, old bean," drawled Morny. "He went by me like a thundercloud. I spoke to him, but he didn't stop."

"Nothing serious, I hope?" said Erroll's voice, from the study.

"Oh no—only Lovell going off at the deep end, as he does sometimes!" said Newcome. "We're looking for him."

"You'll find him in the first study," said Mornington.

"Peele's study?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes; I think he's teeing with Peele."

"Oh!"
The Co. walked on, leaving Valentine Mornington smiling satirically. The door of the first study, by the head of the stairs, stood open. That room belonged to Peele, Gower, and Lattrey; the black sheep of the Classical Fourth; fellows with whom the Fistical Four were on anything but good terms.

It was amazing to Lovell's chums to hear that he was teeing with Peele & Co. Generally Lovell would not have touched Peele & Co., with a barge-pole, and would have told them so without the slightest hesitation.

"Come on," said Jimmy, as Raby and Newcome paused by the open doorway of Cyril Peele's study.

"Oh, let's speak to old Lovell," said Raby uneasily.

snapped Newcome. "Look here, Lovell, come along with your old pals."

"Come on, old chap," said Jimmy Silver.

Lovell's lip curled. "Are you giving me my place in the game to-morrow?" he asked.

"It's not your place, old chap; it's the place of the man who can fill it best," said Jimmy patiently. "But don't let's go into that before these fellows."

"Why not?" sneered Peele. "We're members of the club, I suppose. And though you may be a Great Panjandrum at Soccer, Silver, it's no good your telling me that Putty is a better half than Lovell. I know better."

"I don't intend to tell you anything," snapped Jimmy. "You have nothing to do with House matches, except making dirty bets on a game with other rank outsiders. Come on, Lovell!"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Very well, then," said Jimmy, compressing his lips.

"Staying for the smokes?" asked Raby, with angry sarcasm. "They generally have smokes in this study after tea, I believe."

Lovell crimsoned. In his intense anger and annoyance, he had accepted the insincere sympathy of Peele & Co., blind to the fact that they were pulling his leg and laughing in their sleeves at him. But certainly he had no intention of joining in the shady practices of that shady study. But Raby's rather unfortunate remark was quite enough for him.

He turned his back on the fellows in the doorway.

"Any smokes about, Peele?" he asked.

"Yes, old bean."

"You might give a fellow one."

"Delighted."

Three juniors, standing in the doorway, surveyed Lovell with angry disgust as he lighted a cigarette.

Peele & Co. grinned at one another almost ecstatically. Things were going excellently well from their peculiar point of view.

"So that's how you prove that you're fit to play in a football match, Lovell!" exclaimed the Captain of the Fourth.

"Didn't you say I wasn't wanted?" sneered Lovell. "If you don't like it, lump it! I suppose I'm my own master."

Jimmy Silver & Co. turned away without saying anything further. Jimmy's face was very set as he went down the staircase.

The moment they were gone, Lovell threw the scarcely-smoked cigarette into the fire.

"Don't care for that one?" asked Peele.

"Have another, old bean. I've got lots."

Lovell shook his head, and with a muttered word or two left the study. But he did not follow his friends.

The 3rd Chapter. Trouble!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL did not appear at "prep" in the end study.

Peele came in, with a cheeky grin, and fetched away his books, a proceeding which Jimmy Silver & Co. watched without comment. Lovell, apparently, was accepting the hospitality of the first study for prep, not caring to sit down at the table with his old friends. After Cyril Peele was gone with the books, the three chums exchanged glances; but they said nothing; there was nothing to be said. They devoted themselves to prep in a rather subdued and glum humour.

After prep, they went down to the junior Common-room, where a good many other Classical fellows were gathered. There was a good deal of grinning and chuckling going on among the Classicals, and Lovell, as the Co. soon discovered, was the topic. Lovell's attitude, in his own eyes, was one of lofty and wrathful dignity; in the eyes of the rest of the Form, it was the last syllable in absurdity. Lovell was, in fact, making a fool of himself, and was the only fellow in the Fourth who could not see it. Even on the Modern side, over in Manders' House, the story had been told, and Tommy Dodd and his friends were grinning over it. All the Fourth Form, Modern and Classical, agreed in looking on Lovell's attitude as that of a cheeky ass; and even his old friends had to look at it in the same light, though they derived no entertainment from it.

Putty of the Fourth came up to Jimmy Silver in the Common-room. Teddy Grace's usually careless and thoughtless face was rather serious.

"Sorry there's such a peck of trouble about putting me in the eleven for once, Jimmy," he said.

"That's all right," answered Jimmy. "It's not you personally—any other fellow taking Lovell's place would have put old Lovell's back up just the same. Can't be helped."

"Must be an ass to shout it out all over Rookwood as he's doing," said Putty. "All the fellows are chortling over it."

Jimmy made a restless movement.

Undoubtedly, Lovell was acting like an ass; but his pal did not want to be reminded of the fact, or to recognise it at all if he could avoid it.

"But to come to the point," went on Putty. "I'm rather keen on a House match, of course; but if it will do any good, I'm willing to stand out. I'd much rather not see trouble in your study, old bean."

Jimmy shook his head.

"Lovell's not up to House match form at present," he explained. "That's why he's left out, and that still holds good. If you stand out I shall play Oswald."

"Queer that Lovell can't see it."

"Obstinate ass!" put in Gunner of the Fourth.

"Oh, rats!" snapped Jimmy.

"Well, isn't he a silly, obstinate, fat-headed ass?" demanded Gunner. "Isn't he making himself the laughing-stock of the school? As if a fellow had never been dropped out of a football match before!"

"Cheese it!" said Jimmy.

"I've been left out, but I'm not giving a song and dance about it," said Gunner warmly.

"Well, you're no footballer; you're only a footling ass!" said the Captain of the Fourth, with brutal frankness. "Lovell's a first-rate man, anyhow, and he doesn't happen to see that he's off his game just now. That's all there is about it."

"I jolly well think—"

"You don't—you can't!"

Jimmy Silver walked across the room, leaving Gunner almost speechless with indignation.

Raby and Newcome glanced rather curiously at their chief. Generally, Jimmy Silver had a polite word for everybody, even for "footling" asses like Gunner, and shady outsiders like Peele. His mode of talking to Gunner on this occasion showed that the trouble in the end study was rather affecting his temper.

A little later Arthur Edward Lovell came in, and he was conscious at once of the fact that most eyes turned upon him and that there were smiles on all sides.

His face reddened with anger.

Lovell was wrathful, and he felt, like the ancient prophet, that he did well to be angry. It was bitterly annoying to him to find that most of the fellows regarded the situation as a humorous one, and Lovell himself as a bumptious ass who deserved to be sat upon. Putty of the Fourth murmured something to Jones minor, who laughed; and Lovell, with flushed cheeks, walked across to Putty.

Jimmy Silver's face grew anxious for a moment. Surely Lovell, ass as he was, would not be ass enough to pick a quarrel with the junior who was taking his place in the morrow's match. But really there

was no telling what Lovell might or might not do, when his temper was out of control.

"What was it you said, Putty?" he snapped.

Putty looked at him.

"I didn't speak to you," he answered.

"You spoke about me," said Lovell angrily.

"Did I?" smiled Putty.

"You jolly well know you did, you rotter!" exclaimed Lovell. "And if you're afraid to own up—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" yawned Putty. "You can't freeze a chap with the terror of your eye, you know. I'll tell you what I said to Jones if you like. I don't know if you'll like it, but if you won't be happy till you get it, here it is. I said:

"Here's Lovell, Let's grovel!"
Jones minor chuckled, and there was a chortle from a dozen fellows who heard Putty's ridiculous rhyme. Putty surveyed Arthur Edward blandly. He did not want any trouble with the dropped half-back; but Lovell's manner, though he did not realise it, savoured of bullying, and Putty of the Fourth was not a fellow to be hectorated.

Lovell's face grew a deep crimson as he heard the chuckling on all sides.

"You see, you're such a jolly important chap," explained Putty gravely. "Monarch of all you survey, and all that. It's up to us to tremble at your frown, isn't it?"

Lovell clenched his fists and made a rush at Putty.

The next moment he was pinned by several pairs of hands, and his rush was stopped. He glared round furiously at Jimmy Silver, whose grasp was on his shoulder.

"Let me go, you rotter!"

"Chuck it!" said Jimmy quietly.

"You're not going to row with Putty?"

"I'm going to hammer the cheeky cad!" roared Lovell.

"You're not!" said the Captain of the Fourth tersely. "You don't hammer one of my men the day before a football match, old scout. Keep your temper!"

"Oh, let him come on!" said Putty of the Fourth coolly.

"You shut up, Putty! And you jolly well keep the peace, Lovell, or you'll get a Form ragging!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

Lovell trembled with rage.

"I'd forgotten about the match—I'll hammer the cad after the match, and you, too, Jimmy Silver."

"Oh, rot!"

"And I can jolly well tell you," shouted Lovell, "that I'm fed-up with you, and I'm not going to be left out of the match, whether you like it or not."

"Can it!"

"You've dropped me from the Classical side—well, I'll jolly well play for the Moderns!" exclaimed Lovell. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it."

And Arthur Edward Lovell, in a towering rage, strode out of the common-room—not at all soothed by the outburst of laughter which followed him.

(Continued overleaf.)



came on Tubby Muffin, and Muffin gave him a fat grin. "Dodd say?" he chuckled. "Did he jump at the e, he!" Lovell gave him one glance. Then he smote, changed into a terrific yell, as he rolled down the steps.

"What's the good?"

"Well, let's."

"Oh, all right!"

George Raby looked in. Lovell was sitting at the table with Peele, Gower, and Lattrey; this four were finishing tea. To Jimmy Silver it was quite obvious that Peele, being aware of the trouble in the end study, had chipped in with the charitable intention of making matters worse if he could; but Lovell, full of his wrongs and grievances, did not think or care anything about that. He had a sympathetic audience in Peele's study, and that was all he cared about.

"Hallo! Coming down, Lovell?" asked Raby cheerily.

Lovell looked round.

"I'm teeing with these chaps," he answered curtly.

"How often do you tea with these chaps?" asked Newcome sarcastically. "They're not chaps I should care to tea with, for one."

"Thanks!" said Peele, with a grin.

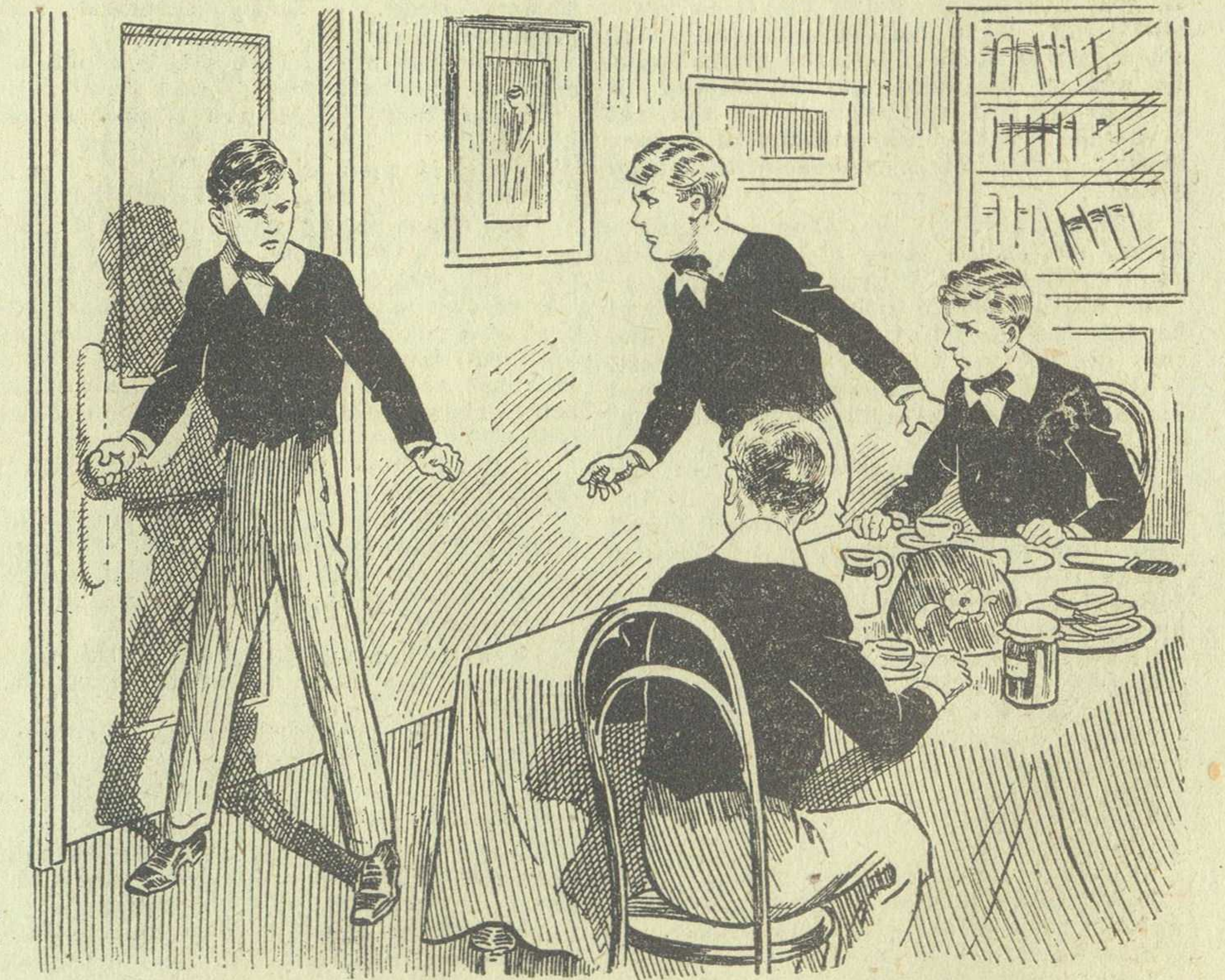
"Wait till I ask you."

"Can't Lovell tea with whom he likes?" inquired Gower. "You can turn him out of the football, Silver, but I suppose you can't turn him out of a fellow's study."

Lovell reddened.

"If you fellows don't like this study, you can keep clear of it, I suppose!" he exclaimed.

"You don't like it any more than we do, only you've got your silly back up!"



LOVELL GETS HIS BACK UP! Lovell set his teeth. "Am I playing in the House match to-morrow?" he asked. "No!" answered Jimmy Silver. "That's enough!" said Lovell. And he strode out of the study.

Better than ever—"Parted Pals!" Next Monday's stirring story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood School.

Off His Game!

By Owen Conquest.



(Continued from
previous page.)

The 4th Chapter. Turned Down.

JIMMY SILVER called out "good-night" to Lovell in the Classical Fourth dormitory that night and received no answer.

Raby and Newcome, who similarly extended the olive-branch to their hot-headed comrade, were left unanswered also.

They gave it up at that.

Lovell was nursing his wrath and resentment, and his comrades could only leave him to nurse it till he was tired of it. It was by no means the first time that Arthur Edward Lovell had adopted what he believed to be an attitude of lofty distance and dignity but which his friends characterised simply as "sulks." Whether it was lofty dignity or merely sulks, Lovell had to be left to it.

Arthur Edward was the last fellow to fall asleep in the Classical Fourth dormitory. Long he lay awake, with bitter thoughts in his mind.

He could not help realising that he had made himself rather ridiculous; but that did not make him at all inclined to recede from the position he had taken up. His view was that he could not recede from it, and that it was up to Jimmy Silver to make concessions. Certainly he could not now take his exclusion from the team amicably, without looking a fool, as he expressed it; but his face would be saved if Jimmy played him, after all. That would be an acknowledgment that Lovell had been right all the time, and that the junior captain had given in to his superior wisdom.

If that did not come about, Lovell was determined that he would abandon the side that had cast him out and play for the Modern eleven. By putting up a good game for Tommy Dodd's team he would prove that he had been right—that he was a good man wanted in the match. If, in the process of demonstrating that important fact, he helped to defeat his own House, that could not be helped—the fault would not be his. It would be proved to the satisfaction of all Rookwood that Jimmy Silver had been wrong, and Lovell had been right—and that was the important thing—more important than anything else in the wide universe, in Lovell's opinion.

That the Modern skipper might decline his services did not even occur to Lovell. He was a first-class junior player—a tower of strength as a half-back in any team, when he was in form. At the present time he was off his form, but he refused, or was unable, to realise it. He did not even take it into consideration that Tommy Dodd's opinion might coincide with Jimmy Silver's.

In the morning the Classical juniors turned out at the clang of the rising-bell, and Lovell dressed with a gloomy face.

He did not speak to his old friends and he left the dormitory very quickly, and they did not see him again till breakfast. After breakfast, however, he joined Jimmy Silver & Co. as they were going out of the House.

The three juniors nodded to him cheerily, repressing their feelings, having made up their minds to welcome Lovell back into the fold as soon as he chose to "make it up."

But Lovell was not bent on making it up, as they soon discovered.

"About the match this afternoon, Silver," said Lovell abruptly.

"Yes, old chap?"

"Are you playing me?"

Jimmy sighed.

"No, old fellow: I've told you I can't."

"That's settled?"

"Yes."

"That's enough, then."

Lovell turned his back on his friends and walked away towards Manders' House.

Raby drew a deep breath.

"It's getting too thick," he murmured. "Dash it all, does Lovell think the junior football club belongs to him and that he can carry it about in his trousers pocket?"

"Looks like it!" grunted Newcome.

Jimmy Silver did not speak, but his brow was clouded. Uncle James of Rookwood was deeply worried.

Headless of his friends, Arthur Edward Lovell bore down on three juniors who were strolling on the path outside Manders' House. They were Cook and Doyle and Dodd—the three Tommies of the Modern Fourth. Tommy Dodd, who was junior captain on the Modern side, eyed Lovell rather curiously as he came up. Lovell's dark and clouded face might have attracted a second glance anywhere just then.

"You're looking merry and bright this morning, old bean," remarked Tommy Cook, with a grin.

Lovell did not heed him.

"I want to speak to you, Dodd," he said.

"Fire away," said the Modern skipper cheerily.

"I'm not playing for the Classical football club any more."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I want to keep up my footer, of course," said Lovell. "No reason why I shouldn't play for Manders' House."

"Eh?"

"I'm offering you my services," said Lovell. "I'm a pretty good half-back, as you know."

"Quite good, I know that," said Tommy Dodd, staring at him. "One of the best—you've given us plenty to do, sometimes. But it's jolly unusual for a fellow to play for the other House."

"That doesn't matter," said Lovell.

quite sick at the thought of the utter ridicule that would fall upon him. He would have given all that he possessed to figure in the football, merely to save his face, and his soft words to Tommy Dodd contrasted strangely with his dictatorial manner to his own captain.

But it booted not, as a poet would say.

Tommy Dodd had some perception, probably, of how matters stood, and he was a kind-hearted fellow and would have done Lovell a service if he could. But playing a "dud" in a football team was not a thing that he could do. That was asking altogether too much of any fellow.

Lovell fairly hung on his words as he answered. He felt that he really dared not go back to the Classical side and let the fellows there know that he had been turned down by the Modern skipper.

But there was no hope. Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"Sorry!" he said. "But—"

"I don't often ask favours, Dodd," said Lovell, in a low and almost trembling voice. "But I'm asking you this."

"I wouldn't refuse if I could help it. It would be jolly unusual to put a Classical man in my team; but I'd do that. But you're not in form for a House match, Lovell."

"I've had that from Jimmy Silver," broke out Lovell passionately. "Don't give me any of that."

"Faith, and you've offered to play for us because your own skipper thinks you're not good enough for him!" exclaimed Tommy Doyle warmly.

"Ow!" gasped Gunner. "Oh—oh, my hat!"

Tubby Muffin found himself picked up at the bottom of the steps. Jimmy Silver had performed that service for him.

"Ow! I say—yaroooh!" spluttered Tubby. "I say, Jimmy—ow-wow! That beast Lovell— Oh crumbs! I'm hurt! I only asked him if Tommy Dodd had jumped at the chance of playing him, you know, and he— Yow-ow-ow! I'm hurt!"

"Serve you jolly well right!" said Jimmy unsympathetically, and he turned away, frowning.

Muffin blinked after him. "Why, you're as beastly a beast as Lovell!" he exclaimed indignantly. "I say, Raby—I say, Newcome, old chap—jevver hear such a cheeky beast? That rotter Lovell— Yaroooh!"

Tubby Muffin sat down again on the bottom step, with the assistance of Raby and Newcome. Then they walked away after their leader. Muffin sat and glared after them. There was a plentiful lack of sympathy for the injured youth, so far as Lovell's friends were concerned—even if they were no longer his friends.

The 5th Chapter.

He Who Hesitates is Lost!

JIMMY SILVER did not enjoy morning classes.

Mr. Dalton, for once, found the head boy of his Form a little inattentive; Jimmy's construe, for once, was almost as bad as Gunner's.

Jimmy was worried. Had any other fellow, not a member of the select circle of the Fistical Four, proceeded to make a public ass of himself, it would not have bothered Uncle James of Rookwood.

But to see his old pal "playing the goat" in this manner was deeply painful to Uncle James.

The Classical Fourth were taking it as a huge joke, and when it leaked out, in morning quarter, that Lovell had offered his services to the Modern skipper and had been turned down, the Classical fellows looked on that as the cream of the joke.

But it was no joke to Jimmy.

He had to blush for his friend, as it were; but friendship like Jimmy Silver's could stand a greater strain than that. Lovell undoubtedly felt the ridicule he had brought upon himself; but he did not feel it so keenly as Jimmy felt it. Every gibe at Arthur Edward was a blow to Jimmy—every jest at Lovell's expense gave him pain. There were few things Jimmy would not have done to save his old chum from the position in which he had placed himself, and Jimmy was already revolving in his mind whether, after all, he might not put Lovell into the Classical side for the House match.

It was against all his principles, as a football captain—House matches were House matches, and a captain had to play to win; the most devoted personal friendship could not come before that. Lovell was a first-rate man, and Jimmy wondered—or tried to wonder—whether after all he had been a little mistaken—whether the rotten form Lovell had shown of late had not, perhaps, been exaggerated in his mind, by his desire to put a winning team into the field. Lovell himself ought to know, and Lovell seemed quite convinced that he was quite up to the game.

At the bottom of his heart Jimmy knew that that was only due to Arthur Edward's hot-headed obstinacy. But he found himself trying to think otherwise.

At the dinner-table that day he looked at Lovell attentively. Lovell gave him one steely glance and turned his head away. His face was dark and gloomy; even Mr. Dalton, the Form master, noticed his sulky looks. Jimmy wondered—and wondered.

After dinner he consulted with Raby and Newcome.

"What about chancing it with Lovell in the team?" he asked abruptly. "Putty has offered to stand out."

Raby whistled.

"But you dropped him because he wasn't up to the mark," he said, "and, dash it all, Jimmy, he isn't."

"He isn't," said Newcome, shaking his head.

Jimmy shifted uncomfortably. His friends had sometimes told him that there was a soft streak in him, and undoubtedly Uncle James had a very kind heart and hated to cause pain to anybody.

"I—I know," he muttered. "But—you chaps, I simply can't stand old Lovell being grieved like this."

"He asked for it."

"I know. But—"

Two Tip-top New Numbers of—



No. 21 contains an amusing long story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars School, by Frank Richards.

No. 22 gives a first-rate yarn of Tom Merry & Co., the popular chums of St. Jim's School, by Martin Clifford.



THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY
NOW ON SALE! PRICE 4d. EACH.
SECURE YOUR COPIES TO-DAY!

"You've a right to play any man who's willing to play for you, I suppose, so long as he's a Rookwood man."

"Yes, that's so. But—well, if you really mean it, I dare say we can fix it up," said Tommy Dodd, evidently surprised and perplexed.

"Right you are! Then you can put me down for this afternoon," said Lovell.

But at that the Modern skipper shook his head.

"Not this time, old man."

"Why not?" demanded Lovell hotly.

"You're one of the best, as a rule; but you're off colour now. I saw you in practice yesterday," said Tommy Dodd. "Your own skipper noticed it—I could see that. A man isn't always at the top of his form, Lovell, and you're at the bottom of yours at present. But you know that better than I can tell you—you're a footballer."

"I don't know anything of the kind!" snapped Lovell.

"Well, you know now I've told you," said Tommy Dodd good-humouredly. "I hear that you were laid up with a cold, and I suppose you're still feeling the effects of it."

"I'm not."

"Well, you're not, then," said Dodd, with a grin. "No need to argue about it, whether or no."

"I want to play in the game this afternoon," said Lovell, checking the hot words that rose to his lips. "I—I'd take it as a favour, Dodd—a really great favour."

The words came reluctantly to Lovell's lips; but he had to utter them. Only too clearly he realised what an utter ass he would look if Tommy Dodd turned him down—after his threat that he would play for the Moderns as a sort of punishment for the Classics. The Classics knew that he was making the offer—they would know that it had been declined—and Lovell felt

"Cheek!" said Cook.

"What do you say, Dodd?" asked Lovell, ignoring Cook and Doyle.

"Sorry; but there's nothing doing."

Lovell clenched his hands.

"You cheeky Modern cad! I've a jolly good mind to mop up the quad with you!" he breathed.

Tommy Dodd shrugged his shoulders.

"Go ahead with the mopping!" he answered.

Lovell suppressed his feelings. Even Lovell realised how ridiculous it would be to "scrap" with the Modern skipper for declining his services. He turned and strode away, choking with rage and chagrin.

He passed his chums as he strode back to the Head's House. The look on his face apprised them plainly enough of the outcome of the interview with the Modern skipper.

Lovell did not glance at them. He went straight on to the House. On the steps he came on Tubby Muffin, and Muffin gave him a fat grin.

"What did Tommy Dodd say?" he chuckled. "Did he jump at the chance? You don't look like it. He, he, he!"

Lovell gave him one glance.

Then he smote.

"Yarooooh!"

Tubby Muffin's fat chuckle suddenly changed into a terrific yell as he rolled down the steps. Lovell tramped into the House.

"Look here, that's a bit thick!" exclaimed Gunner in the doorway. "Thumping a chap for speaking to you. Look here, Lovell— Gunner laid a heavy hand on Lovell's shoulder.

The next moment he was spinning, and he sat down with a sudden heavy concussion.

Raby grinned. "If you're going to play him, better have played him, and chanced it, without all this bother," he said.

"I know," said Jimmy again. "But—" "You couldn't then, and you can't now." Jimmy was silent.

The opinion of his comrades coincided with his own; he knew too much about football, and about a man's form, to doubt. And yet—

"After all, a flaw in the armour doesn't necessarily give a game away," he said hesitating.

"That doesn't sound like your usual talk, old man. Besides, the Moderns are in great form," said Newcome. "One dud in the team may make all the difference. Lovell's a good man as a rule; but he's off colour now, and he's a dud to-day, and there's no getting round it. Dash it all, you can't be bullied into playing a man."

Jimmy coloured. "It isn't that. Lovell's high-handed rot doesn't count. But I can't stand seeing the old chap laughed at like this. He may pull round and play a good game."

"What was it you told me about football coming before friendship, when I was keen to play in the Greyfriars match?" grinned Newcome.

"Well, old man, you're not such an ass as old Lovell, and—we're told to suffer fools gladly," murmured Jimmy.

"Well, try it on," said Newcome doubtfully. "I'm afraid you'll be sorry for it, old man; but I'd be glad for the silly old chap to have a chance."

"Same here," agreed Raby.

"I—I'll think it over," muttered Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver thought it over; but thinking it over did not seem to get him any "farrarder," so to speak.

He really did not know how to decide.

It was the sight of Arthur Edward Lovell, "mooching" off by himself under the old Rookwood beeches that decided Jimmy. He hurried after his estranged chum.

"Lovell, old chap—"

Lovell turned on him with glinting eyes.

"You needn't speak to me," he said, between his teeth. "You've made me look the biggest fool at Rookwood—I shall be cackled to death this term. You've done enough, Jimmy Silver; and now you can let me alone. You won't see me in the end study again—I'm changing out."

"Lovell—"

"Keep your distance."

Lovell swung away. Jimmy Silver was tempted to take him at his word; but in Lovell's face, as well as anger, he read the signs of deep chagrin and humiliation. It was too much for Jimmy's loyal heart. He followed the angry junior under the beeches.

"Look here, Lovell, I want to play you this afternoon if it can be done. I've told you that in my opinion you're not up to the mark."

"What's your opinion worth?" sneered Lovell.

Jimmy gulped something down.

"You've consulted me about a fellow's form often enough," went on Lovell. "I suppose I know something about it."

"Yes. Look here, Lovell, it's possible I'm mistaken—"

"You jolly well are!"

"Give me your word, then, that you really think you're up to House match form, and I'll take it and play you," said Jimmy.

Lovell shrugged his shoulders.

"I've never been in better form in my life," he said. "But I don't know that I'm keen to play now. You'll have trouble with Putty, too, dropping him at the last minute like this."

"He's a good chap—he's offered to stand out."

"Well, I suppose he knows he's not up to my weight," said Lovell. "He knows I ought to have the place."

"I don't think he knows that," said Jimmy quietly. "I don't know it myself. But I'll take your word for it, Lovell, relying on you to do the straight thing."

Lovell grunted.

"I'm your man, then."

"Better get along to the changing-room—the fellows are going in to change," said Jimmy.

Lovell nodded and walked away.

Jimmy followed him more slowly.

The die was cast now. Jimmy had placated his estranged chum, but he was worried; the thought that, for friendship's sake, he had failed in his duty as captain of his team, was more than enough to worry him. If Lovell was right, Jimmy had been mistaken—and any fellow might be mistaken—Uncle James of Rookwood did not

set up to be infallible. Jimmy Silver could only hope, from the bottom of his heart, that he had been mistaken and that Lovell had been in the right all along.

At the door of the changing-room Jimmy met Putty of the Fourth. He coloured rather awkwardly.

"I'm taking you at your word, old chap," he said. "Lovell's playing right-half, after all. I know it's rather thick, at this time of day."

Putty made a grimace. Then he smiled. "All serene—I hope it will turn out well," he said. "I'll come along and cheer Lovell's goals."

"I hope he'll keep you shouting," said Jimmy, and he went into the changing-room—far from feeling the elastic spirits he generally enjoyed on the occasion of a football match.

The 6th Chapter. The House Match.

"LOVELL'S playing!" "Oh, my hat!" "What rot!" "There he is!"

Arthur Edward Lovell was in the field with the Classical footballers, and all eyes in the crowd round the ropes turned on him.

Lovell's air was rather lofty. He was far from realising the sacrifice

But now that he had gained his point, now that all had been conceded, and he was in the field with the Classical footballers, Lovell was conscious of something that had escaped his notice during his hours of anger and resentment and excitement. He was not, as a matter of fact, feeling his old keenness and freshness.

For several days he had "fumbled" in practice, and football had been rather a labour than an enjoyment, as it should have been. It crossed his mind now, rather uncomfortably, that perhaps he had not pulled round so completely as he had believed, since his late experience with a severe cold in the school sanatorium.

But he dismissed that thought from his mind. It was, indeed, rather late in the day to entertain it.

Hansom of the Fifth blew the whistle, and the ball rolled. The Moderns kicked off, and Tommy Dodd & Co. came up the field in great style.

Jimmy Silver, at centre-half, had an anxious eye on Lovell on his right.

But Lovell played up well.

Rawson, in goal, defeated the Modern attack, and the game swept away. It was hammer and tongs all the time; the Moderns were at the top of their form, and in a determined mood; and the Classics were equally resolute. It was towards the end of the first half that Lovell showed obvious signs of slacking down—his exertions were

the goal, roared out an inquiry as to whether he wanted an ambulance, and there was a shout of laughter.

"Goal!" Tommy Dodd had put in the pill. "Goal! Manders' House! Manders' House! Goal!" roared the Moderns.

But a few minutes later Mornington put in the ball for the Classics, and at half-time the score was level.

In the interval, Jimmy scanned Lovell, and could have kicked himself, and Lovell, with impartial satisfaction. Lovell was almost white, he was breathless and spent, and evidently had little left in him for the second half.

Jimmy Silver's judgment had been well-founded after all; as he had known that it was. Lovell was not up to a hard game, and he was now practically done—leaving his side a man short for the remainder of the match.

It was too late to complain and useless to grouse. But it was very hard for Jimmy Silver to "keep smiling" in the circumstances.

For the first time in his career as a football captain, he had played a "dud," and left a weak spot in his defence, a flaw in his armour; he had done it, and done it with his eyes open. If it led to defeat as very likely it would, it meant a defeat scored against the House in the School records—and a defeat that might have been saved. Jimmy Silver, football captain, had handled a House match as if it were a pick-up game—and he had to admit the fact to himself.

The whistle went and the game restarted. Loud shouts from the Classical fellows urged Lovell to "buck up."

He hardly heard them.

He was "done" to the wide; even upon his obstinate mind it was borne in that he was not fit for the game; that he had forced his way into a team in which he was now little more than a passenger.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were not likely to overlook a breach in the rampart. Lovell came in for a great deal of their attention.

The two Rookwood teams were so equally matched that one "rotter" on either side was enough to make all the difference.

The Classics fought hard; but the Moderns came through and scored again, and again they scored.

"Three to one!" said Putty of the Fourth, behind the goal. "Some game!"

"That ass Lovell—" growled Oswald.

Lovell was scarcely playing at all now. If he got in the way, he was pushed out of it. He was quite spent, and might as well have walked off the field. Indeed, it was only with difficulty that he kept on his pins until the final whistle went.

"Our win, old beans!" grinned Tommy Dodd, as the Moderns walked off victorious. "Three to one—what? What price Classics now?"

"What price a vote of thanks to Lovell?" asked Tommy Cook.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classics tramped off the field in a grim humour. Lovell's pale face had flushed now; he quite understood the glances that the footballers gave him. But Jimmy Silver was the recipient of grim looks, too; the blame was his, as he knew only too well.

Jimmy's feelings were too deep for words. Defeat mattered little, if the best had been done; but the best had not been done. He had thrown away that match and he knew it, and all the fellows knew it. Jimmy was too popular for the fellows to say what they thought, but he knew what they were thinking and he admitted the justice of their thoughts.

Lovell tapped him on the arm.

"Well, they've beaten us," he said.

"But—"

"They didn't beat us," said Jimmy curtly. "They were given the game—and I gave it to them. I'm going to resign the captaincy."

And he turned his back on Arthur Edward Lovell and walked off the field, leaving Arthur Edward biting his lip and staring.

THE END.

(You will enjoy "Parted Pals!" Owen Conquest's great story of Jimmy Silver & Co., for Monday next. Don't miss it whatever you do. Make sure of securing your copy of the BOYS' FRIEND by ordering it from your newsagent to-day!)



OFF HIS GAME! As a half, it was Lovell's duty to help "feed the forwards," but he was losing his grip of the game, and unfortunately he fed the Modern forwards. A rush of the Moderns up the field left several of the Classics on the ground, Lovell among them.

Jimmy Silver had made, or the stress of mind he was causing his old chum.

Lovell's view was that he had been done tardy justice. Justice was what he had contended for; and it had come tardily. Jimmy Silver's change of heart at the eleventh hour scarcely entitled him to Lovell's lofty forgiveness.

Lovell was going to put up the game of his life in the House match, if only to prove to Jimmy what an utter ass he had been.

telling on him all the more severely, because he spurred himself desperately on, determined not to fail.

As a half it was Lovell's duty to help "feed the forwards"; but he was losing his grip of the game, and, unfortunately, he fed the Modern forwards. A rush of the Moderns up the field left several of the Classics on the ground, Lovell among them; and it was a full minute before he picked himself up. Gunner, from behind

POPULAR BOOKS FOR READERS OF ALL AGES!

<p>THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY New Series.</p>	<p>No. 33.—THE ALL-STAR TEAM. A Superb Story of the Foster Field, introducing the Red Star Rovers. By ARTHUR S. HARDY.</p> <p>No. 34.—JIMMY MACK, MINOR. A Rippling New Yarn of School Life and Adventure at Haygarth, introducing the Four Maes. By JACK NORTH.</p> <p>No. 35.—DON DARRELL'S REPUBLIC. A Topping Tale of Fun and Adventure. By VICTOR NELSON.</p> <p>No. 36.—THE TWO-GUN SHERIFF. A Thrilling Wild West Yarn, introducing the Cowboy Tec. By JAKE DENVERS.</p>
<p>THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY New Series.</p>	<p>No. 33.—THE IMPERSONATORS. A Strange Story of WALDO THE WIZARD.</p> <p>No. 34.—THE WHITE DEATH; or, The Island of Sharks. A Fascinating Story of Detective Adventure in Ceylon and England. By the Author of "The Priest's Secret," etc., etc.</p> <p>No. 35.—THE CASE OF THE MUMMIFIED HAND. Introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, Prince Menes, The Black Eagle, Wu Ling, The Three Musketeers, Mathew Cardolak, Madame Goupils, Huxton Rymer, and Mary Trent.</p> <p>No. 36.—THE BLACKMAILED BARONET. A Tale of Thrilling Adventure and Detective Work. By the Author of "The Hunchback of Hatton Garden," etc., etc.</p>
<p>THE SCHOOL-BOYS' OWN LIBRARY</p>	<p>No. 21.—THE GREYFRIARS JOURNALISTS. A Rousing Story of Harry Wharton & Co. at Greyfriars. By FRANK RICHARDS.</p> <p>No. 22.—D'ARCY OF ST. JIM'S. Featuring the one and only "Gussy" and the Famous Schoolboy Characters—Tom Merry & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.</p>

NOW ON SALE!

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH.

Don't forget that "A Terror for His Size," by Edgar Sayers, is next Monday's great 15,000-word football story. Tell all your chums to read it, too!

ANSWERS
Every Saturday — PRICE 2!