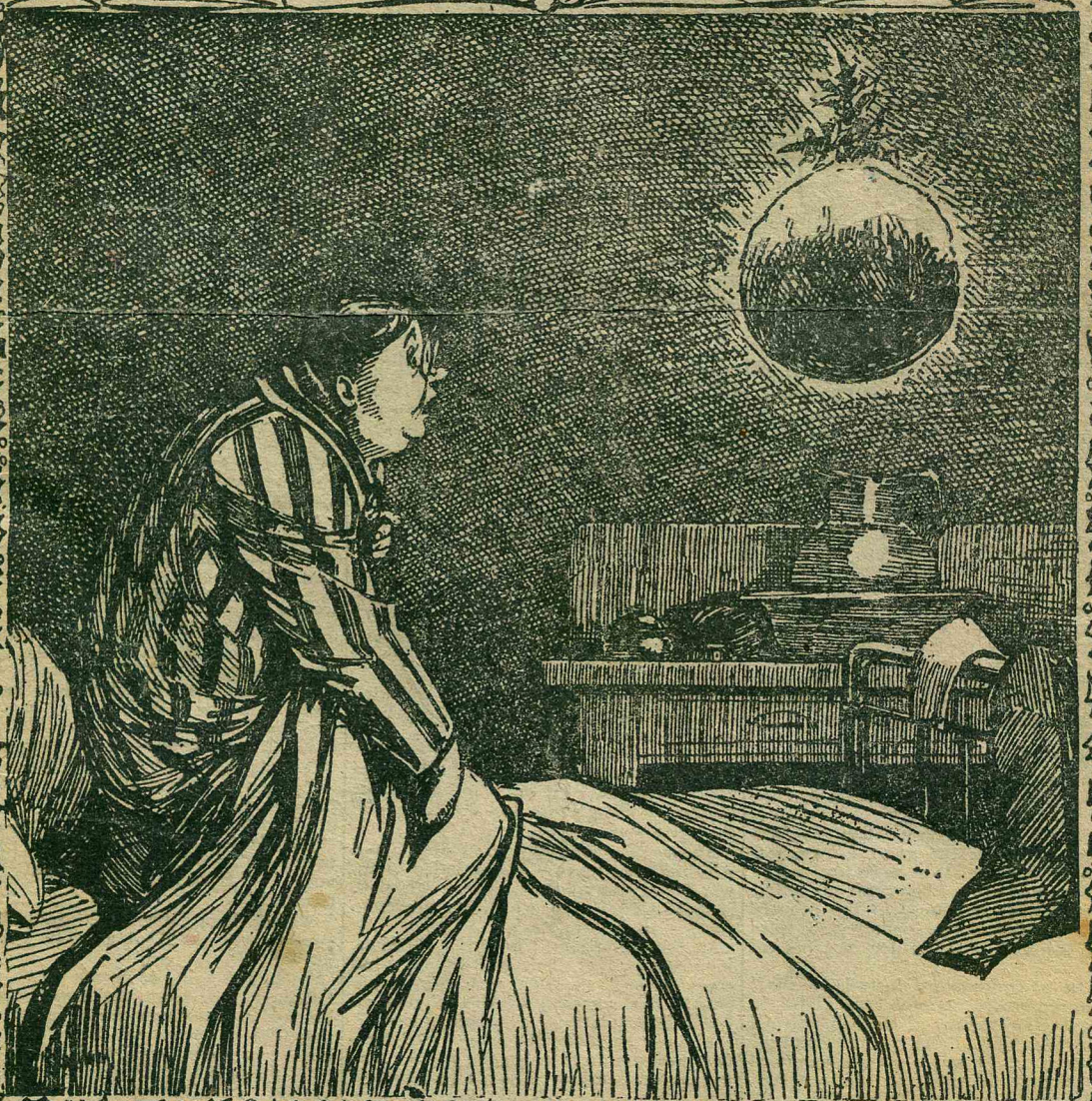


4 Long Complete School Stories!

**THE PENNY 2^d
POPULAR**

No. 269.

Special Christmas Number

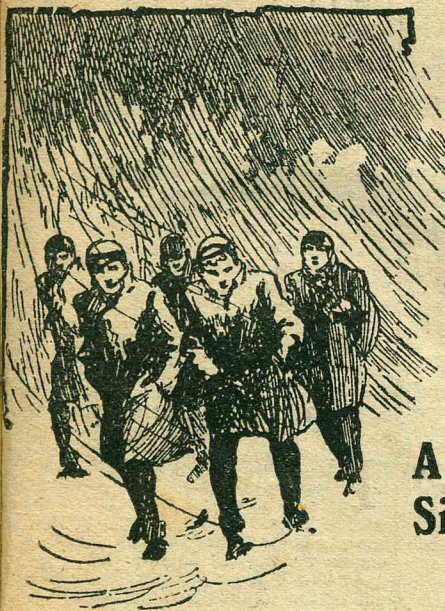


THE PHANTOM PUDDING!

*(A Great Incident from the Grand Long Complete Tale of Harry Wharton & Co.,
contained in this Issue.)*

Snowed Up!

A Grand Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.
By OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Caught in the Snow!

BY Jove! It's coming down!"
"You're right, old son! Nice half-holiday, this!"
"We'd better be getting back to Rookwood, kids."

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Newcome, and Raby, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood College—known in the school as the Fistical Four—were standing under a tree some three miles from the old school, looking with glum faces at the thick, whirling flakes of snow as they fell.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Rookwood, and the four chums had left the school in high spirits, and spent a couple of hours in strolling round the town of Latcham.

Just as they set out for the homeward walk the snow began to fall. The Fistical Four cared little for a fall of snow, and they turned up their trousers and their coat-collars, and tramped on determinedly. But the snow was coming down now, as Jimmy Silver expressed it, in sacks full.

Thicker and thicker it fell on the unprotected road, whirling in heavy flakes in the bitter wintry wind. And at last the four chums had drawn into the shelter of a tree, and there, shaking the snow from their coats and caps, they debated that was best to be done.

While in the town, Jimmy Silver, who had a keen eye to business, had improved his shining hour by making various purchases of comestibles, which could be obtained at a much cheaper rate in Latcham than in the village of Coombe, near the school.

The result was that each of the juniors had a good-sized parcel to carry, as well as having his pockets stuffed.

They set their packages down as they lited under the tree, glad to be relieved of them for a time. Raby was slapping his chest vigorously to keep himself warm, swinging his arms like the sails of a windmill. Lovell and Newcome stamped savagely on the ground.

"We'd better be getting on," said Jimmy Silver. "It's a bit thick, I know, but we can't do anything by stopping here, and—Ow! You utter ass!"

The back of Raby's right hand caught the leader full on the nose as Raby gave arms another wide swing. Jimmy

Silver staggered back, and clasped his damaged nose.

"I wish you wouldn't get in the way, fathead!" exclaimed Raby indignantly. "You've hurt my hand, and—"

"I'll hurt your fat head!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

But Lovell stepped between.

"Now, then, pax, you two asses!" he exclaimed. "You can leave all that till we're safe in the study at Rookwood."

"He's nearly flattened my nose—"

"He's hurt the back of my hand—"

"Oh, shut up, both of you! The question is, what's to be done?"

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose ruefully.

"I've said that we'd better be getting on," he replied. "It's no good waiting here for the snow to stop. It would be like the chap who sat down on the bank and waited for the river to flow past."

"You're right, old son! But we can't walk three miles through this beastly snow, you know!"

"We can't stay here."

"Wait, but there's another way. We can go home by train if we can find our way to Fernedge Station."

Jimmy Silver looked thoughtful. To go home by train would certainly be an improvement upon tramping three miles through a blinding snowstorm. Fernedge Station lay in a lane that led off from the high-road, but exactly where the leader of the Fistical Four did not know.

"It's a good idea," said Lovell instantly. "Fernedge Lane turns off to the right here somewhere. Let's look for it."

"Not the sort of weather to go wandering round in looking for it," Jimmy Silver remarked.

"Better than tramping three miles through this snow."

"Well, we'll see."

The chums of Rookwood picked up their packages once more, and shouldered them, and tramped on through the falling flakes.

The wintry wind blew hard and cold, and it was in their faces, dashing the snowflakes upon them as they tramped on. They bent their heads to the wind, and kept on doggedly. The snow was thick under their feet, and at every step their boots sank deep into it.

The going was hard and slow, and it

was borne in upon their minds that if they tried to finish the journey on foot, it would be something like midnight before they arrived at Rookwood.

"Hallo! I reckon this is the place!"

Through the blinding flakes the chums made out a turning to the right. But the discovery benefited them little, for a second glance disclosed two turnings branching off in different directions at the same spot from the high-road. And as there was no sign of a guide-post, it was a puzzle which turning to take.

One of them was doubtless Fernedge Lane, and would lead to the station they desired to reach, while the other was pretty certain to take them miles out of their way.

"I reckon," said Jimmy Silver, after a good look round, "that we're in a fix. I wish we had old Dobby with us now; he knows Fernedge Lane well."

Lovell grunted. It was useless to wish for Tommy Dodd just then. Tommy Dodd & Co., the Fistical Four's rivals in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, had spent the half-holiday in Latcham, and the Fistical Four had encountered them in the streets there, and exchanged volleys of more or less polite chaff.

After that they had lost sight of Tommy Dodd & Co., but at the present moment they would have given a great deal for Tommy Dodd's knowledge of the country.

"Well, you might as well wish for a finger-post, Jimmy," said Raby, "or for somebody to ask the way of."

"Hark!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, holding up his hand. "I think I heard somebody!"

"Not likely!"

"Shut up, while I listen!"

"Well, I tell you it's not likely that

"Quiet!"

"Yes, yes; but, all the same—"

Jimmy Silver seized Raby by the throat and ran him against a tree. Taken by surprise, Raby had no choice but to shut up. The sound of voices came floating through the dimness of the thickly-falling snow.

"I know we're on the track, Cookie!" Jimmy Silver gave a jump.

"My giddy aunt! It's Tommy Dodd & Co.!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Raiders.

THE Fistical Four stood quite still under the big tree at the corner of the lane. They were almost concealed by it, and the three youths coming on down the lane did not observe them.

Three juniors from Rookwood, buttoned up in great-coats, with mufflers, and with caps pulled down tightly on their heads! From under the caps escaped a lock or two of hair, which was easily recognisable as that of Tommy Dodd & Co.

The Fistical Four remained silent, even Raby keeping his mouth closed, as the Modern chums came nearer. Tommy Dodd was still speaking.

"I wonder if they turned this corner, Cookie!"

"They'd be leaving the road to Rookwood, Doddy."

"Yes; but they might have made up their minds to go by train. It's a bit difficult to follow tracks when the snow's coming down so thick. But we've been right so far. You see, here are the tracks at the corner."

"Exactly!"

"We are close behind now, or the tracks would be nearly covered, with the snow coming down so thick," said Tommy Dodd sagely. "Mind, when we get in sight of one of them, Cookie, not to alarm the rotters! They're four, and we're only three, and so we shall have to take them by surprise if we're going to have a chance of raiding the grub."

"Quite so."

The hidden juniors exchanged a grin. Moved by the same thought, they stooped down to gather handfuls of snow, and commenced to knead snowballs. Tommy Dodd was stooping in the lane examining the tracks, and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle were watching him.

"Yes; they left the high-road here," said Tommy Dodd. "The question is, did they know the right way to Fernedge, or have they gone the other? But I'll soon see. They can't be far away now; in fact, I think we're pretty close to them."

"I reckon you're about right there!" remarked Jimmy Silver, as his right hand went up, and the snowball flew with deadly aim.

"Ow!" yelled Tommy Dodd, as the missile caught him behind the ear, and he went over in sudden surprise, and fell at full length in the snow.

Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle stared round in amazement, and as they stared, three snowballs came whirling from under the tree, and smote them simultaneously.

They each gave a gasp, and rolled over on the ground.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a roar of laughter, the Fistical Four rushed into view. Tommy Dodd & Co. were sitting up in the snow, looking dazed. They jumped to their feet at the sight of the Fistical Four.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "I reckon this is a case of 'the biter bit'! Are you going to raid that grub, Doddy?"

"Here it is, ready to be raided!" grinned Newcome.

"Oh, pax, you bounders!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, as Lovell took aim with another snowball. "We're going to have a snow-fight at Rookwood when we get in, and enough's as good as a feast. Sheer off!"

Lovell grinned, and dropped the snowball to the ground.

"Right you are, Doddy! As a matter of fact, we were just wishing for you, to show us the way to the station."

"Good! I can do that!"

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The Modern chums dusted some of the snow off their coats, and Tommy Dodd led the way. The lane was narrow, and the snow piled deep in it, but the juniors faced it briskly.

"My word!" said Tommy Dodd. "It's a long time since we've had snow like this near Rookwood. I don't remember a fall so heavy since I've been there!"

"It is a bit thick," panted Jimmy Silver. "How far is it to the station now, Doddy?"

"Only a few minutes more, I think."

Tommy Dodd was right. A few minutes later the station came in sight, its roof gleaming one sheet of white in the gloom of the winter's afternoon.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Lovell. "Put it on!"

The juniors "put it on," and came up to the station with a rush. They dashed under the sheltering porch, and plumped down their parcels with great relief. Then they shook off the thick layers of snow, and knocked their caps on the wall to clear them. Then Jimmy Silver went to the booking-office.

It was open, showing that some train or other was nearly due. Jimmy Silver rapped, and a sleepy-looking man came and stared at him.

"Next train to Coombe?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Nearly due, sir, if the snow doesn't stop it."

Jimmy Silver stared.

"My hat! I never thought of that! Is there likely to be a block on the line, then?"

"There have been some already," yawned the sleepy man. "I don't know whether there will be another. Single?"

"Yes, seven," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's a jolly prospect!" growled Tommy Dodd. "Fancy being snow-bound at a dead-and-alive hole like this! Ask the image if he has any foot-warmers to give away, young Silver."

"None at this station," said the man in the booking-office. "You can get them at Latham and at Coombe."

"Oh, rats!"

Jimmy Silver put the tickets in his pocket, and they went on the platform. There was a fire in the waiting-room, and nobody there but the solitary porter of Fernedge, who was sitting on a stool with his feet on the grate.

"Got any fire to give away?" asked Jimmy Silver.

The porter looked round and blinked, and rose. The fire was at its last gasp, and Jimmy Silver carefully poked it, and began to pile on coal. The porter watched him dumbfounded, as if the coal were some highly-prized possession of his own. Then, as a train-whistle was heard, he went slowly out upon the platform.

"You won't get much benefit from that fire, Silver!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "It will take about an hour to burn through."

"Never mind, it will be all right for the next comer," said Jimmy Silver. "A good action is its own reward. I know that's true, because I read it in a copy-book. Here's the train, so come on."

The seven juniors of Rookwood crowded out on the platform. The train had come in, and the carriage windows glimmered with yellow light through the mist. Jimmy Silver opened a carriage door, and they bundled in.

"Right away!"

The door slammed, and the train jerked into motion. In the midst of the whirling snow, the train ran out of the station.

Jimmy Silver glanced from the window as the train, leaving the station

behind, hummed on through the gleaming countryside.

Embankment and track, field and wood and roof, were white with spotless carpeting, while it made a dazzling glare under the winter sun.

"I reckon we're in for it," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Just our luck to get it like this on a half-holiday! Still, there's good in everything, and this will be all right for the snow fight in the quad at Rookwood."

"Rather!" said Tommy Dodd. "There was plenty of snow in the quad already, as a matter of fact, but the more the merrier. Ugh! Isn't it cold? I want a footwarmer! I say, Silver, would you mind lying down here for us to put our feet on?"

"Br-r-r!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Stopped on the Line.

THICKER and thicker the snow came down. The train had slowed down, and the juniors knew that there were masses of snow on the line, through which the engine was forcing its way.

At length Jimmy Silver put his head out of the window, and observed, to his amazement, that the train was at a standstill.

The guard was coming along the train.

"Hallo!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"What's the matter?"

"The train's stopped."

"Snowed up?"

"Yes."

"Whew!"

The Rookwood juniors gave a simultaneous whistle.

They did not look alarmed, however. On the contrary, it was clear enough that the untoward happening was by no means unwelcome to them.

To be snowed up in a train was an adventure which would make them the envy of all Rookwood, and as yet they thought nothing of the privation and danger it might entail.

"I'm jolly glad we took this train," said Jimmy Silver, rubbing his hands.

"It will make us late for the snow fight at Rookwood."

"Oh, so long as we get in before dark, that will be all right, I reckon."

"We may not get in before dark," said Lovell—"or before morning, either, for that matter, my son!"

"Oh, don't croak, kid!" said Tommy Dodd. "We're not hurt yet, anyway. I suppose they will try to back the train, but if the snow's too thick in front, it will be too thick behind, I should think."

"I reckon so."

"Keep your seats!" called out the guard.

"That's it; they're going to back the train."

With a jerk the train was set in motion again. It was going backwards now, but ere long it came to a stop with a sudden jerk. The juniors were prepared for it, and kept their footing.

"Stopped again!" said Tommy Dodd.

Again the train moved forward.

"Full steam on!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "But they won't get through the snow, I fancy!"

Tommy Dodd was right.

The speed slackened, and became slacker and slacker. Finally, the train came again to a halt, and it was evident that further progress was impossible.

Jimmy Silver opened the door, and the Rookwood juniors scrambled out. Other passengers were leaving the carriage. The guard was in consultation with the engine-driver. It was evident that they were helpless to deal with the matter.

"I reckon that train's fixed there for

bit!" Jimmy Silver remarked, and then he glanced up the line.

Snow had rolled down from the laden embankment into the cutting which lay before the train, and a huge mass of white rose to a height of several feet.

"That will want a lot of digging away, kids!"

"By Jove, rather!" said Tommy Dodd. "The question is, how to get help. It won't be easy for anybody to get away through this."

It was certainly true. Before and behind the train the cutting was blocked, and the heavy flakes coming steadily down added every moment to the depth of the pile.

On either side rose a steep embankment, crammed with snow, piled so thickly that it looked as if any moment masses of it might come tumbling down upon the track.

The faces of the juniors grew very grave.

The matter was more serious than they had imagined at first. If it was impossible to get away through the snow, it might be equally impossible for help to reach them.

That might mean imprisonment in the blocked train for days—perhaps longer. They had heard of snowbound passengers dying of hunger and cold, but never had they dreamed of such a peril being brought so terribly near to themselves.

"We shall have to get help," said Jimmy Silver resolutely. "I say, guard, what are you going to do?"

The guard shook his head helplessly. "They'll soon know at Coombe that we're blocked in," he said, "and they'll set a gang to work to clear away the snow."

"And when do you think we shall get away?"

"We may get away by morning," Jimmy Silver whistled.

"That's not good enough," he said coolly. "We've got a snow fight coming off at Rookwood this afternoon, and we've simply got to get in."

The guard shrugged his shoulders, and turned away.

"You're right, Jimmy!" said Lovell. "We're not going to stick here till the morning, if I know it! We should be giddy heroes, of course, by the time we got into Rookwood, but we should be too jolly cold and hungry to fully appreciate it."

"I should say so!"

"Well, what are we going to do?" asked Raby.

"Get out, somehow. I say, guard, I think you'd better go for help!"

"Can't get through the snow, you young idiot!" growled the guard, with scant courtesy.

"But somebody must go for help!"

"It can't be done, I tell you!"

"Well, if you can't do it, I can!"

"You can—eh?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, cheeze it!"

"My dear Silver—"

"Look here," said Jimmy, "we're not going to stick here all night, that's certain! Besides, we must have help. There's some women here, and we must get word to Coombe at once for help for them. Who's game to try?"

"All of us!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Hear, hear!"

"I'm with you!" said Raby. "As for the grub we've got left, it must be handed over to the ladies, in case the poor dears get hungry while they're waiting to be rescued."

"Good for you, Raby!"

The remains of the provisions were packed out of the carriage, and the quantity was still considerable, for the chopping had been extensive in Latcham. Jimmy Silver took the bundles to the guard, and explained to him.

The man gave him a puzzled look. "That's very kind of you, young gent, but you can't go through the snow!"

"I'm going to try!"

"But you can't, and I can't allow it!"

"My dear chap, I don't want you to allow it. I can manage it all right without that! The only difficulty is the snow. I can—"

"You mustn't go!" exclaimed the guard. "I am responsible—"

"I hereby, thusly, and therefore relieve you of all responsibility," said Jimmy Silver. "You see, you can't stop us! We're seven to one, and I suppose you don't want to have your head snowballed off, do you?"

"Exactly!" chimed in Lovell. "You see, we are circumstances over which you have no control. Come along, kids!"

And leaving the guard still puzzled and doubtful as to what he should do, the juniors marched off to make their forlorn attempt to get through the snow to Rookwood.

"It stands to reason we must lead the way, Doddy! We'll put it to the vote, though, if you like! Fair play's a jewel!"

"Why, you rotters, you're four to three!"

"Quite so!"

"Well, someone must give in!" said Lovell. "The inferior party ought to do so, and so I call upon you to shut up, you Moderns!"

"I call upon you not to be a silly ass!"

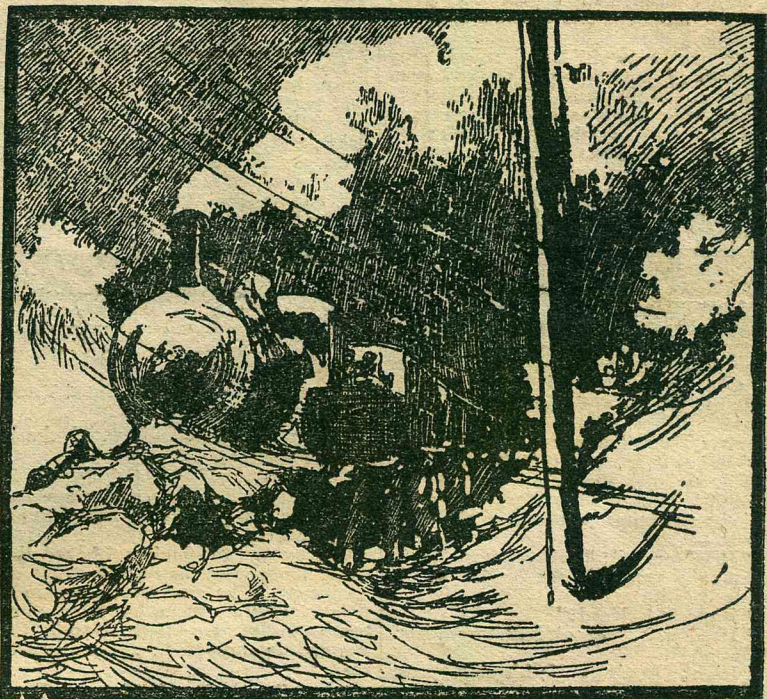
"You'll call upon me for a black eye if you don't take care, Doddy!"

"You're a set of silly idiots!" exclaimed Raby. "I'll lead the way. Here goes!"

And Raby scrambled up the bank.

The Rookwood juniors had been searching along the bank for some favourable spot to climb, and, after a long search, they had found one.

In this spot the embankment was less steep, and, under the snow, straggling bushes grew, which afforded some hold



"We shall have to get help," said Jimmy Silver resolutely. "I say, guard, what are you going to do?" "They'll soon know at Coombe that we're blocked in," replied the guard, "and they'll set a gang to work to clear away the snow." "That's not good enough," Jimmy Silver said coolly. "We've got a snow-fight coming off at Rookwood this afternoon, and we've simply got to get in."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Through the Snow.

"GIVE me a bunk up!"

"I think you'd better give me one!"

"Rats! Of course, a member of the Moderns is to lead the way!"

"My dear kid, the Fistical Four are always at the front. First in the field, first in the study, first in the—"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Now, look here, Doddy—"

"I'm looking, and I can see a conceited ass—"

"First time I knew my face answered the purpose of a looking-glass!" said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd had no reply quite ready for that, and Lovell struck in.

for hands and feet, and also held the snow more securely. The climb was certain to be a matter of difficulty, and might lead to an avalanche coming down.

"Here, come back, Raby!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I'm not coming back! I'll show you how to do the trick!"

And Raby went plunging up the steep bank. Perhaps he was in too great a hurry to be careful. At all events, he came rolling down the next moment in the midst of masses of snow.

He sat up, looking quite bewildered, amid the fallen snow, and stared round him. The juniors burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

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"If that's the way you're going to show us, Raby, you needn't trouble!"

"Well, I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The snow must have slipped!"

"Go on! Here, stand aside, and let me try!"

"Me, you mean!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Rats! Get out of the way!"

"No fear!"

"I'll jolly soon shift you if you don't!"

"I guess I'm ready to see you try!"

Tommy Dodd laid hold of the leader of the Fistical Four at once, and they staggered away and fell over Raby, who was getting up, jamming him down into the snow again.

"Now, then, you fatheads!" yelled Raby. "I'm getting crushed to death. Get off my chest, Silver, or I'll bite you!"

Lovell grinned, and, leaving the others to scramble up as they could, he tackled the ascent of the bank, followed by Newcome, Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle turning to their chum to help him rise.

Lovell clambered up the steep side, sending down showers of snow upon the juniors.

As the snow slid and rolled away under his feet, he grasped at the bushes growing under it, and held on. He was caked with snow and slush, wet and wringing from head to foot; but he stuck to it with dauntless pluck. Before the other juniors had sorted themselves out, so to speak, Lovell and Newcome had made good progress up the bank.

Jimmy Silver looked up after him. Lovell was half way to the top, and still going strong.

"I reckon that takes the cake!" exclaimed Jimmy. "But I'm next!"

And Jimmy Silver essayed to climb. Tommy Dodd reached out and grasped his ankle, and they went down together in a heap of snow.

Raby, giggling, followed Lovell and Newcome, and then Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle followed him.

"Make it pax, ass!" said Tommy Dodd, as he scrambled up. "We shall be left behind at this rate, and I don't enjoy your company enough to stay here for it."

"Head or tail?" said Jimmy Silver, clasping a penny in his hand. "First guess does it!"

"Right-ho! Head!"

"Head it is!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Get on!"

"Right. Don't growl; it's only proper that I should go first, as head of the Fourth Form at Rookwood!"

"Rats! Get on!"

"Here goes!"

Jimmy Silver sprang up the bank. The chief of the Modern chums followed. By this time Lovell had nearly reached the top, but the higher he rose the more difficult he found the ascent.

And suddenly, as he was almost at the level, his foot slipped, a tendril he was grasping broke in his hand, and he fell. Away he slid down the way he had come, gathering snow and speed as he rolled down the slope.

"Ugh! You ass!" roared Raby, as Lovell rolled into him, and sent him flying, too.

Tommy Cook was the next to suffer. He had no time to get out of the way, and he went down with the other two, rolling and gasping.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd were a dozen feet from the start when the three flying juniors rolled into them, carrying them away as if they had been smitten by an avalanche.

Down they went, five juniors with flying legs and arms, amid a cloud of snow. It was fortunate for the Rook-

wood juniors that there was a deep carpet of snow in the cutting, or there might have been broken bones as the result of that wild slide. As it was, they plunged into the snow, nearly burying themselves, and lay there helplessly gasping for several minutes.

Jimmy Silver was the first to scramble up.

"My Panama hat!" he exclaimed. "What the dickens did you do that for, Lovell?"

Lovell spluttered the snow out of his mouth.

"Ass!" he ejaculated. "Do you think I did it on purpose?"

Tommy Dodd rubbed the snow out of his eyes.

"This is what comes of allowing one of you bouncers to lead the way!" he exclaimed. "I'm going first this time!"

And Tommy Dodd sprang up the bank.

"After him!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "He's not going to get ahead of us!"

And the juniors scrambled after Tommy Dodd.

The chief of the Modern chums was making good progress up the slope. As a matter of fact, the juniors, in rolling down, had almost cleared it of snow in that particular spot, and the bushes underneath were exposed to the falling flakes, and easy to hold.

Tommy Dodd was not long in reaching the spot where Lovell had lost his footing, and he here exercised great caution, feeling his way inch by inch.

Higher he rose and higher, till at last he stood breast-deep in the snow on the high level, which had already been reached by Newcome and Tommy Doyle. He waved his hand. He would have waved his cap, but it was buried somewhere in the deep snow of the cutting.

"Hurrah! It's done!"

"And we've done it!" shouted Tommy Doyle.

"Hurrah for the Moderns!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "There'll be another avalanche if you make that row, kids! Still, I'm glad we've got out."

One by one the juniors dragged their weary limbs upon the summit of the embankment. The snow was deep around them and before them, but after a brief pause to recover their breath they plunged on through it, and reached the road.

"A mile to Coombe!" said Jimmy Silver. "Here's for a long tramp! Come on!"

And the juniors, shivering and shuddering with the cold, were glad to get into rapid motion again to keep from freezing.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Welcome Home!

THE snow was thick on the road, and was still falling in heavy flakes. The seven juniors tramped on doggedly. Exactly how long that tramp took them they did not know, but the sun was sinking behind snowy clouds when they reached the village.

"The railway-station first!" said Jimmy Silver. "I dare say they don't know yet that there's anything wrong on the line; and, anyway, we can tell them exactly where the train is snowed up!"

And the wet and snowy juniors hurried to the station to report the mishap to the train there. In the stationmaster's room they were given something hot to drink, and they felt all the better for it

as they faced the snow again to tramp yet to Rookwood School.

It was useless to think of getting a vehicle, and, besides, they would have been frozen in their wet clothes had there remained still.

Fortunately, the walk to the school was not a long one. Rookwood College gate was surmounted with snow, rose into view at last, and the seven weary junior boys passed in.

It was very dark in the quadrangle, save for the glimmer of snow, with which the ground was carpeted.

They went into the House, and casted face to face with Bulkeley, the captain of the school.

Bulkeley stared at the woebegone juniors in amazement as they entered.

"Great Scott! Where have you been? What have you been doing?" he exclaimed.

"Snowed up!"

"Come into my study!" exclaimed Bulkeley, hurrying the juniors into his room. "Get those clothes off, quick! I'll get some towels and blankets!"

"I reckon—"

"Hurry!"

"Don't talk! Move!"

"Right-ho!"

Bulkeley did not allow them to waste a moment. They were stripped, and rubbed down with rough towels, and then they sat before a roaring fire, wrapped in blankets, while a change of clothing was brought to them. They had dressed, and by the time they were finished tea was ready in the captain's study.

Hot tea and muffins were grateful and comforting after their experiences in the snow. The juniors fell to with a hearty good will.

"My word!" said Tommy Dodd. "Bulkeley, old boy, you're a brick—a real, first-class, non-skidding brick, and no mistake!"

"Absolutely," said Jimmy Silver. "We're proud of you, Bulkeley, I can tell you! I don't know which to admire the most, your kindness or your—"

"Stuff!"

"Or your muffins," said Jimmy Silver serenely.

Bulkeley laughed heartily.

"You young rascals are always getting into some trouble," he remarked. "Now you are dry, you can tell me exactly how it happened."

"I'll tell you—"

"It was like this—"

"I think I can explain—"

"You see, Bulkeley—"

"Well, I'll—"

"No, I don't think I quite see," said the captain of Rookwood. "It's a bit difficult to do so, with all of you talking at once."

"I reckon so," said Jimmy Silver. "So, as head of the Fourth Form, I had better do the talking, kids—"

"Excuse me," said Tommy Dodd. "As head of the Fourth Form, I think I'll—"

"If you start that here," said Newcome. "I shall ask Bulkeley to sling you both out. Why can't you be quiet and—"

"Shut up, all of you!" said Bulkeley. "Tommy Cook can explain. He's about the only one that doesn't seem anxious to gloat on the sound of his own voice."

So Tommy Cook told the story.

"Well, you've had a rough time, and I hope the other passengers are safe on board of the snow by this time," said Bulkeley when Tommy Cook had finished. "You'd had all better stay before your fire to-night, and go to bed early."

Whereat the Fistical Four and the Modern chums exchanged a series of expressive winks.

The snow-fight in the quad had to com-

yet, but about that they did not think advisable to speak to Bulkeley just as they left the captain's study feeling perfectly fit after the rest and refreshment, and ready for anything.

"What a brick he is!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "I say, the moon's up to view the clock-tower, and it's left off junioring. Are you coming out?"

"Rather!"

"I should say so!"

"Come on, then!" said Tommy Dodd. and he led the way into the white-carpeted quad.

**THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Something Like a Fight!**

IGH over the tower of Rookwood soared the moon, and the light streamed down in a sheet of silver upon the snowy quad and gleaming white roofs of Rookwood. The snow had ceased to fall, but it was foot deep in the quad. It was bitterly cold out of doors, but little cared the juniors for that.

Jimmy Silver drew in a deep breath of keen air.

"It's cold!" he exclaimed. "All the better! We shall soon be warm enough! Let's go and look at the fort, and see if the kids have done it according to instructions."

"It's all right," said Hooker, joining the Fistical Four, with several other fourth-formers.

"Let's go and look, anyway. Get the rest of the Form together."

The Fistical Four and the Moderns walked over to the fives court and joined the snow fort.

Jimmy Silver had laid out the plan of the fort, and it had been constructed by the juniors during the afternoon, there being plenty of material at hand, as only snow was used.

Jimmy Silver looked at it with much satisfaction.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's all right! By Jove, this will be ripping fun. We had better separate the sheep from the goats."

The Fourth Form were nearly all in the fort, and they had already agreed as to their defence. The following of the Fistical Four were about equal to that of the Moderns.

The rivals had never been quite able to decide which was the head of the Form, and the question probably never would be settled. There were about fifteen juniors on either side ready for the fray.

Jimmy Silver examined the fort with a critical eye. It was really very well built. The walls, built of solid blocks of hardened snow, were high and thick, and there was only one entrance, which could be blocked up when the defenders were inside.

"Now, which side is to hold the fort?" asked Jimmy Silver. "As the attack will be on the more difficult part of the business, I think you had better have the fort, Tommy, our side being a cut above your side."

"Rats!" said Tommy Dodd. "We'll hold the attack, as it will need a better set than your set to carry the fort!"

"Toss up for it, and stop jawing!" suggested Hooker. "Chap who wins to hold the fort!"

"That's a good idea," said Newcome. "Curious that neither of you two fat-heads could think of it!"

"Here you are!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Best two out of three, or sudden death, Doddy?"

"Sudden death!" said Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver threw up the coin, and it fell to fall in the snow.

"Head!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Head it is!" exclaimed Raby. "You're to hold the fort, Doddy; but you won't hold it for long!"

"We'll hold it till Doomsday for anything you fellows can do to get us out!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully.

"Oh, shut up!" exclaimed Lovell. "Time we got to business. I saw Monsieur Friquet nosing round a while ago, and I shouldn't wonder if he comes bothering us. Time we started!"

"Sure, and you're right!" said Tommy Doyle. "If Jimmy Silver has done talking, we'll start!"

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver indignantly. "I reckon that—"

"If you like it, leave off grumbling, then. Come on!"

"Five minutes' grace to get ready for the defence," said Tommy Dodd. "Then you can come on as fast as you like."

"Agreed!"

The Fistical Four and their forces drew off, and Tommy Dodd and his merry men poured into the snow fort, and blocked up the opening with snow. Huge piles of snowballs had been arranged in convenient places for the defenders. It

"We're—we're just going to have a little game, sir! Would you mind standing on one side?" said Jimmy Silver; and as the Frenchman did not move he drew him by the arm. "If you'd like to look on, sir, it will be fun!"

"But vat—"

"Charge!" shouted Lovell.

"Hi!" roared Raby. "Come on!"

And away went the Fistical Four and their followers at top speed through the snow in the quad.

The little Frenchman gazed after them in stupefaction.

"Mon ciel!" he murmured. "I have often zought viz myself zat zere is madness in all ze English boys, and really I zink zat eet is true! Ciel!" he exclaimed aloud in his alarm, as a terrific uproar burst upon the wintry air. Then he ran in the direction the juniors had taken, convinced that something terrible was happening.

The Fistical Four had reached the snow fort.

Right up to the walls of snow they dashed, their followers close behind. They covered their advance with volleys



Biff! biff! came the whizzing snowballs from the fort, and Monsieur Friquet received as many as anybody. Thick and fast they fell, but the assailants were not to be denied. They swarmed around the snow walls, and fought a way through the defences, in spite of the efforts of the defenders within.

would certainly be no easy task to take the fort, with the defence Tommy Dodd meant to make.

But the Fistical Four were serenely confident of their own powers. They drew off for a distance to get room for a charge, and began making snowballs. A little fat figure looked up in the moonlight.

"Mes garçons"—it was the voice of M. Friquet, the French master of Rookwood—"are you not cold in ze open air in ze evening?"

"No fear, sir!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "And we're just going to have some exercise, sir, to keep us warm."

"Oui, oui; but I really zink—"

The school clock chimed out.

"Time!" said Lovell.

"Vat is eet zat you say viz yourself, Lovell?"

"Time, sir!"

"Time for vat?"

of snowballs, which fell thick among the defenders. But from within the fort came volleys in return.

And here Tommy Dodd and his men had the advantage, for they were secure behind walls, and had piles of snowballs ready to their hands.

The air seemed full of the frozen missiles as they flew. Thick and fast they fell among the oncoming juniors, bowling some of them right over on the slippery ground.

"Forward!" yelled Jimmy Silver. And he made a spring at the snow wall.

He dropped with his chest right upon it, but in a moment he was collared from within, and dragged into the fort, where two or three juniors sat on him, and held him a helpless prisoner.

"Rescue!" Jimmy Silver bawled. And his chums came gallantly on.

"They've got Silver!" shouted Lovell.
 "Come on! Rescue!"
 "Rescue!"

But on the snow-wall the assailants broke like a wave, and back they went surging, battered right and left with the snowballs from within.

Tommy Dodd gave a yell of glee.
 "Beaten! Hallo, Silver! How do you like 'em done?"

Jimmy Silver grunted under the weight of three Moderns.

"Will you give your parole?" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Otherwise, we shall have to tie you up; and you'll find that rather chilly lying there in the snow."

"I'll give it," growled Jimmy Silver—"till I'm rescued, of course!"

"Of course; that's understood. But if those wasters are able to rescue you, Silver, I'll eat a snowball!"

"I'll remind you of that!"

"Ha, ha! It won't be necessary! Let him go, kids!"

Jimmy Silver was allowed to rise to his feet. He shook off the snow, and gasped for breath.

The defenders of the fort turned their attention to the enemy, and did not bestow a glance now on Jimmy Silver. They knew he would keep his word.

The assailing party had gone back with a rush, and collided with the French master, who was coming on at top speed.

Monsieur Friquet staggered back as Lovell ran into him, and clutched at Raby for support. He caught hold of Raby's hair, as it happened, and Raby gave a yell.

"Grrrr! You're scalping me!"

"Mille pardons!" gasped Monsieur Friquet. "Vat is ze maitair? Vat do you cry out for and run viz yourselves? Is it zat zere is anything wrong?"

"Yes!" growled Lovell. "Tommy Dodd is holding the fort, and he's captured Silver, and we are going to rescue him!"

"That's a fact we are, as sure as—"

"Oh, rats! Come on!"

"Stop! You vill hurt yourselves viz zis rough play. I will not allow—"

But no one took any notice of Monsieur Friquet. He remonstrated to the desert air, while the juniors, having recovered their breath, dashed forward to the attack again.

"Stop! Stop! Zis is too—"

But no one heeded.

In a body the Fistical Four swept up to the snow fort, the bewildered little Frenchman in the forefront.

"Stop! Ciel! It is horrible! I am lifeless! I am keel—"

Biff! Biff! came the whizzing snowballs from the fort, and Monsieur Friquet received as many as anybody. Thick and fast they fell, but the assailants were not to be denied. They swarmed round the snow walls, and fought a way through the defences, in spite of the efforts of the defenders within.

"Ciel! Eet is terreeble! Mon bleu!"

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT.

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Messageries HACHETTE et Cie.,
 111, Rue Reaumur,
 PARIS.

The little Frenchman had completely lost his head now. He rushed to and fro, waving his arms and shouting and gasping, while the Fistical Four pressed the attack.

Assailants and defenders were hand to hand now, Lovell and Raby being over the wall, and their followers pouring on to back them up.

"Stand fast!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Sock it into them!"

"Come on!"

"Hurry up, you rotters!"

"Hurrah! Throw them out!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

The next moment he was rolling in the snow, with Raby's grip on him.

Tommy Cook rushed to the rescue and Monsieur Friquet came blind between, and rolled over in the grip Tommy Cook.

"Ciel! I am assault—I am knocked down!" gasped the unfortunate Frenchman. "Mercy! I shall never see a muzzer any more! Mercy!"

Lovell rolled Tommy Cook over and collared him, unfortunately with Moss underneath them.

The fall of the leaders discouraged the defenders, and as the Fistical Four's followers dashed on, Tommy Dodd's defeated party poured out of the other side of the fort.

"Hurrah!" roared Lovell. "They beaten!"

"Fight it out!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Rats, old chap! They're gone! You can get up! We've captured the fort."

Give your parole, and you can get up. The Modern chums reluctantly gave up, and were helped to their feet. It was victory to the Fistical Four this time with a vengeance.

Tommy Dodd grinned as he rubbed the snow out of his hair.

"Well, you've done us!" he exclaimed.

"You'd better come and feed in the study, as we left your grub in the tin way train. We've got a good fire going there, and it won't take long to get the grub ready."

The suggestion was too good to be adopted. Half an hour later the Fistical Four and the Modern chums were enjoying a ripping tea in the cheery, little study, as if such a thing as rivalry had never been heard of in the Four Form at Rookwood.

THE END.

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