

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### Jimmy Silver on the Track.

"SIX dozen jam-tarts."  
 "Yes, Master Pankley."  
 "Three dozen ginger-pop."  
 "Yes."

"Four cakes—two seed and two currant."  
 "Yes."

"Two whole pineapples."  
 "Yes."

Jimmy Silver started as he heard the voice from the tuckshop. Pankley was evidently "going it."

Jimmy Silver had been in deep thought when the voice of Cecil Pankley of Bagshot fell upon his ears.

Jimmy Silver was leaning against the front of the little tuckshop in the corner of the quadrangle at Rookwood. His hands were driven deep into his pockets, and there was a wrinkle on his boyish brow.

The leader of the Classical juniors at Rookwood had plenty of room for thought. Matters were indeed in a serious state. Since a dozen juniors of Bagshot School had been quartered on Rookwood, owing to an outbreak of influenza in their own school, the star of Jimmy Silver & Co. had been on the wane.

Little as the Co. were inclined to admit it, there was no doubt that Pankley & Co. of Bagshot had, on more than one occasion, done them quite "brown." Which was all the more rough on the Classical Fourth, because their old rivals on the Modern side, instead of sympathising with them, simply looked on and smirked.

The Modern juniors declared that if the Bagshot crowd had been quartered on them, they would have put Pankley & Co. in their place so rapidly that it would have taken their breath away. Whether that statement was correct or not, it was certain that the Classicals had not been able to do so.

And Jimmy Silver was thinking it out.

His chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, agreed that it was up to Jimmy Silver, and they cheerfully left it to him.

That knotty problem was exercising Jimmy Silver's brain when his deep reflections were interrupted as aforesaid.

He had hardly noticed Pankley going into the tuckshop, so deep was he in thought. But he could not fail to notice it when he heard Pankley's voice giving orders for so tremendous a supply of tuck.

Evidently Pankley was in funds, and equally evident he was making the money fly.

His voice went on:  
 "Three pounds of mixed biscuits, and three jars of jam."

"My only hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver in wonder. "Is he laying in provisions for a siege?"

"Two tins of condensed milk, and six jars of preserves—"

"I say, Panky," came Poole's voice, "you're going it, old man!"

"Well, it's going to be a topping picnic!" said Pankley. "There will be a dozen of us, you know. Nothing like having enough. We shall want some tea and sugar, too, and a few pounds of ham and tongue."

"We won't take that little lot to the study," chuckled Poole. "Those Rookwood fellows would raid it as likely as not."

"That's all right!" said Pankley. "They won't have the chance of raiding the tuck, or of raiding the picnic, either. They don't know that we're going to have a picnic this afternoon!"

Jimmy Silver grinned.

Pankley was apparently unaware that his voice was quite audible outside the tuckshop, and that Jimmy Silver was adorning the shop-front with his person.

"It's all going to be sent direct to Grubb's Farm," went on Pankley. "You've got my instructions about the stuff, sergeant, written down."

"Yes, Master Pankley," said Sergeant Kettle.

# UP AGAINST PANKLEY!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of JIMMY SILVER & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

... BY ...

## OWEN CONQUEST.

The old sergeant who kept the school shop at Rookwood was quite impressed by the enormous orders Pankley was giving.

"Well, that's about the lot," said Pankley. "Do as I've told you with the stuff, sergeant. I don't want it sent to the study. Come on, Poole!"

Pankley and Poole came out of the tuckshop.

"Hallo!" said Pankley, as he looked at Jimmy Silver.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver.

"The blessed worm has heard you giving your orders, Panky!" said Poole, with a shake of the head.

"So it's a picnic, is it?" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "A whacking picnic at Grubb's Farm? Rather chilly weather for a picnic, but thanks for the tip! We'll be there!"

"You jolly well won't be there!" said Pankley warmly.

Jimmy Silver chuckled. "Depend on us!" he said. "We'll come along in force. I'll bring a giddy army! But don't be alarmed; we'll let you have some of the stuff."

"You'll let us have some of our own stuff!" howled Pankley.

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes, if you're nice and civil."

"Why, you Rookwood ass—"

"You Bagshot bouncer!"

"Bump him!" said Poole. "Bump him for being a Rookwood fathead, and bump him for his cheek!"

"Here, hold on! Rescue!" bawled Jimmy Silver, as the two Bagshot fellows collared him.

Bump!

Jimmy Silver descended forcibly on the ground. But Lovell and Raby and Newcome came speeding to the rescue across the quad.

"Scot!" said Pankley.

But there was no chance for the Bagshot chums to scot. In catching Jimmy Silver, they had caught a Tartar. Jimmy held on to them, and though they let him go, he did not let them go. And

Lovell and Raby and Newcome arrived on the scene at top speed.

"Collar 'em!" roared Lovell.

"Give 'em socks!"

Pankley and Poole struggled in the grasp of the Fistical Four. But they struggled in vain. They were severally and collectively bumped on the hard, unsympathetic earth, and their yells were loud and wrathful.

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo!"

"Chuck it! Yaroop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bump! Bump! Bump!"

But for the fact that Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, hove in sight just then, the punishment of the Bagshot bounders would have been more severe. But as Bulkeley came along the Fistical Four dropped their victims as if they had become suddenly red-hot, and bolted round the old clock-tower.

"Hallo!" said Bulkeley, starting down at the two gasping and dusty juniors.

"What's the little game—eh?"

"Oh!" said Pankley. "Ah!"

"Groooh!" gasped Poole.

"What's the matter?" demanded Bulkeley.

"Nun-nun-nothing!" stuttered Pankley. "N-n-nothing at all! It's all right Bulkeley."

"You'd better go and brush yourselves down, I think," said Bulkeley, and he passed on, smiling.

Pankley and Poole certainly needed brushing down. But, dusty and rumped as they were, and damaged, they grinned as they strolled away to the School House.

"The astute Jimmy is on to it," murmured Pankley. "He knows all about the picnic now."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he will be puzzling his little brain for a dodge to raid that picnic—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a lot of trouble we're taking to make him happy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the two Bagshot juniors went in to brush themselves down, apparently in quite a contented frame of mind.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Watching the Enemy.

"ALL serene!" panted Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four had escaped round the clock-tower and through the archway into Little Quad. Then they slackened down, grinning. They had been very glad to escape a personal interview with Bulkeley. The captain of Rookwood was very down on the incessant rags and rows between the Classical Fourth and the Bagshot juniors, and he had given the Fistical Four solemn warning—just as if they were to blame, as Jimmy Silver had remarked.

"What was the row about?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"There's going to be a picnic," he remarked. "A Bagshot picnic—a whacking picnic—a regular break-the-record picnic. I heard Panky giving orders for stuff by the hundredweight—"

"Oh, draw it mild!" murmured Raby.

"By the ton!" said Jimmy Silver, firmly. "I tell you they're breaking the record this time. Panky must have had a whopping remittance from the motor-works. His pater's making tons of tin out of cars, you know. Jam-tarts, and cakes, and ginger-pop, and tongue, and preserves—blessed if I can remember all the list—and they're going to picnic on Grubb's Farm this afternoon."

"Oh!" said Lovell, rubbing his hands.

"This is where there's a raid," said Newcome. "No good leaving all that topping stuff to Bagshot bounders.

Panky can pay for it, and we'll scoff it, and that will be an equal division of labour."

"We're on in that scene!" said Raby emphatically.

"Exactly!" said Jimmy Silver. "You know old Grubb—grumpy old bounder, who complains when hares and hounds go over his land. What was his land made for, I'd like to know? He walloped a kid in the Third with a big stick once, you remember. But he's got a nice meadow by the river where it's ripping to have a picnic, and I don't see why we shouldn't picnic there. It's a fine day, even if it is a bit chilly!"

"Where's the tuck?" asked Lovell, in a business-like tone.

"That's the trouble. Sergeant Kettle is going to send it there direct. They're too cute to take it into the study. They know we'd dish them if we could. In fact, I've told 'em so—hence the trouble—"

"Hinc illæ lacrimæ!" murmured Raby classically.

"Oh, bow-wow—keep that for Bootles!" said Jimmy Silver. "I told the rotters they could come to the picnic—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But after their check, we won't let 'em come!" said Jimmy.

"After all, a picnic like that is too good for Bagshot bounders. What we've got to do is to spot that tuck doing its route-march to Grubb's Farm, and—"

"Nail it!"

"Exactly! We've got to scout, and keep an eye on the Bagshot bounders, and see when they start—also an eye on Sergeant Kettle's shop, in case he sends a kid with the goods. Those goods have got to be delivered to—"

"Us!" grinned the three.

"Precisely! By force or fraud, as Homer says—or, rather, doesn't say," said Jimmy Silver. "That's the campaign for this afternoon, my infants; we can cut footer practice for once. We don't need it so much as those Modern worms, anyway."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to "stalk" Pankley and Poole of Bagshot. They were "on" to that picnic. All the laws of war justified them in commanding the supplies of the enemy.

They found the Bagshot chums in the end study just finishing brushing themselves down. Lovell strolled in and took up a book, and appeared to read. Pankley and Poole grinned, and strolled out.

Raby strolled along the passage after them.

They went downstairs, and sauntered into the hall, and Newcome sauntered quite close at hand.

Then they strolled into the quadrangle, and found Jimmy Silver strolling there, and his stroll kept pace with theirs.

Pankley turned upon him at last. "Look here, Silver, what are you hanging about for?" he demanded.

"Information," said Silver calmly.

"If you're after our picnic—"

"Exactly!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter—"

"Peace, my infants," said Jimmy Silver. "I've offered once to let you come. I can't say fairer than that!"

Pankley and Poole walked off. But they could not escape the eagle eye of Jimmy Silver, even if they wished to. Pankley and Poole went into the tuckshop, and the Fistical Four, gathering together again, lined up outside the shop and adorned it with their graceful persons.

They heard a ginger-beer cork pop in the shop, and that was all. After about ten minutes, Jimmy Silver looked into the shop. It was empty.

"Hallo, sergeant! Where are those chaps?" he asked.

Sergeant Kettle grinned.

"They've gone through, Master Silver."

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver rejoined his chums.

"The rotters have dodged us!" he growled. "They've gone through old Kettle's place. Scatter, and look for 'em. I'll keep an eye on the gates, and whistle if they try to get out."

"Right-ho!"

Pankley and Poole had vanished. Lovell and Raby and Newcome proceeded to hunt for them. Jimmy Silver sat down on one of the old oak benches, under the big beeches in the quad, where he had a full view of the gates. So long as Jimmy Silver was on the watch, the Bagshot juniors could not get out unseen. It was a question of prestige now with the Fistical Four—they were determined to bag that picnic.

But Pankley and Poole did not come down to the gates. Jimmy Silver began to get impatient. Suddenly he gave a start. A voice, proceeding from the other side of the big beech against which he was leaning, came to his ears, speaking in a cautious whisper.

"We've dodged the rotters now, Poole. It's all right. Now, lend me your giddy ears, old chap, and I'll tell you what we'll do!"

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Spotted!

JIMMY SILVER grinned. Pankley and Poole had "dodged" the juniors who were hunting for them, and had taken cover behind the thick old beeches. Jimmy Silver sat tight. If Pankley and Poole chose to discuss their plans in his hearing, that was their own look out. If they hadn't sense enough to look round the tree before they began to talk, they could take the consequences. That was how Jimmy Silver looked at it. He was a scout, and it was not up to him to give the enemy warning of his presence. He sat tight.

"The rotters are after the tuck, Panky. We shall never get it away. Better put it off till Saturday."

"I tell you I've got a dodge," said Pankley.

"It's no good," persisted Poole. "They'll drop on us while we're going, and collar the tuck."

"They can't do that; the sergeant's sending it."

"Well, if they're going to follow us to the meadow, and drop on us there, it's just the same. You can depend on it some of them have got an eye on the gates now."

Jimmy Silver grinned. He had his eye on the gates, and his ear on Pankley and Poole.

"That's where my-dodge comes in," said Pankley. "I'm going to cut down to Grubb's on my bike—"

"What for?"

"To fix it with him. What about a password?"

"A—a what?"

"A password," said Pankley. "The rotters will never get on to that. We'll have the feed in old Grubb's garden, behind the farmhouse, instead of the meadow—"

"They can get there just the same."

"Not without coming through the farmhouse," said Pankley.

"Well, they can do that. Old Grubb wouldn't stop 'em. He doesn't know 'em by sight, nor us either, for that matter."

"That's where the password comes in," said Pankley. "I've thought it out, you see. All our fellows have got to go; but instead of going all at once, we can stroll out one or two at a time, and meet at Grubb's place at four o'clock."

"And those rotters will just stroll out, too, and meet there as well," said Poole. "I tell you, you'd better put it off till Saturday."

"You don't see the point, you ass! I'm going to arrange a password with old Grubb, and he will know which are our fellows, and which are not, and then he'll keep those wasters out."

"Oh, I see!"

"Firstance, suppose I tell old Grubb that our fellows, when they come in, will say, 'Good-afternoon, have you used Snooks's Soap?' Well, he'll let every chap go in who puts it like that, and every chap who doesn't will get kicked out."

"But that wouldn't do for a password—old Grubb wouldn't like it. He doesn't look as if he uses much soap, anyway!"

"Fathead! I'm only putting a case!" said Pankley. "We can make up a good password. Lemme see—any old thing will do."

"Who goes there?" suggested Poole.

"No, that wouldn't do. Lemme see—I'll arrange for the chaps to say, 'Hallo! What's your price for corn?' The rotters wouldn't guess that in a month of Sundays, even if they suspected at all."

"Good!"

"All we've got to do is to cut down there and give old Grubb the tip. I'll warn him that every chap who doesn't give the password is a rotter coming to kick up a row, and ask him to kick 'em out. I'll tell him he needn't stand on ceremony with 'em, because they're a set of young ruffians who want to bone our picnic."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'll get down there now. When we come back, we'll call a meeting of the fellows in the end study, and whisper it to 'em, and then they can stroll out one at a time. Then, if those bounders follow us there, they'll find old Grubb ready for 'em with a big stick!"

"Harrah!"

"Come and get out the bikes. If those worms spot us, we shall have to run for it."

"Right-ho!"

"And, mind, not a word to any of the chaps. Giddy walls have ears, you know, and if Silver got on to it—"

"Mum's the word!" agreed Poole.

Jimmy Silver, sitting silent on the other side of the beech, indulged in a broad grin as the Bagshot juniors' footsteps died away.

He would have liked to utter a yell of laughter, but he restrained it with an effort.

Pankley's cunning device of a password was a "dodge" of which even Jimmy Silver would never have dreamed if the two plotters had not so kindly talked it over within range of his ears.

Jimmy Silver did not move till he judged that the two juniors had had time to get to the bike-shed. Then he rose, and scuttled away, looking for his chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome bore down on him from three different quarters.

"I've spotted 'em!" exclaimed Lovell. "They're making for the bike-shed!"

"That's all right," said Jimmy Silver.

"Come indoors!"

Lovell stared.

"What!"

"They'll get off!" said Raby.

"That's what I want 'em to do," said Jimmy Silver coolly.

"But—but—"

"I've made a giddy discovery. Come on—come up to the study!"

The Co., wondering, followed Jimmy Silver to the end study. Jimmy looked out of the window. Pankley and Poole were hurriedly wheeling their bikes down to the gates.

THE PENNY POPULAR—No. 43.

"They're off!" growled Lovell.

"Only those two!" said Raby. "What about the others? They're all in it!"

"Lend me your ears, as we say in the play," said Jimmy Silver. "I will a tale unfold—"

"Oh, cut the cackle, old chap!" said Lovell. "What's the little game?"

Jimmy Silver explained.

"My only hat!" gasped Lovell. "What a dodge—a giddy password! And they didn't see you! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Classical Four.

"They're going to arrange the giddy password now!" grinned Silver. "And when they come back, there's going to be a meeting in this study—"

"And we—What are you up to?" asked Lovell, as Jimmy Silver took the key out of the study door.

Jimmy slipped the key into his pocket. "When that meeting meets in this study, it's going to stay here," he remarked. "When they're all here, I'll lock 'em in—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then we'll walk down to Grubb's place—"

"And give the password—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And scoff the picnic!"

The Fistical Four yelled at the idea. Putter of Bagshot looked into the study. He glanced suspiciously at the Fistical Four, who were wiping away tears of merriment.

"Hallo! Where's Pankley?" he asked. "Echo answers where," said Lovell.

"What's the little joke?" demanded Putter.

"Quite above your comprehension, my dear," said Jimmy Silver affably. "Don't you worry your poor little brain about it. You go and think about the picnic."

Putter stared, and walked away down the passage, looking puzzled. The Fistical Four chuckled gleefully.

When Putter was gone, they ensconced themselves in the next study, to wait and watch for the meeting in the end study. They had some time to wait, and the rest of the Rookwood fellows were enjoying themselves on the football-ground. The Fourth-Form passage was quite deserted. But, as Jimmy Silver remarked, Pankley's panic was worth waiting for.

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Preparing Mr. Grubb.

PANKLEY and Poole pedalled away down the road, grinning.

They, as well as the Fistical Four, seemed to see something very humorous in the situation.

Indeed, Pankley was laughing so heartily as he rode down to Coombe that he came very near to falling off his bicycle, and narrowly escaped a collision with his chum.

"Look out, fathead!" said Poole.

"Ha, ha, ha!" gurgled Pankley.

"What do you think of it, Poole, old son? What do you think of the sweet and child-like innocence of Rookwood?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To think that Jimmy Silver—the cute Jimmy, the keen Jimmy—hadn't a single suspish that we knew he was outside the tuckshop, drinking in every word—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Poole.

"To think that he never dreamed that we spotted him on the seat under the tree—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To think that he swallowed it all whole, without a suspish—"

Poole gasped for breath.

"Such lamb-like innocence ought to be rewarded," said Pankley. "I should never have believed there was such dove-

like simplicity in the wide world, if I hadn't been to Rookwood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The two hilarious juniors rode through the old village of Coombe, and dismounted at a stile beyond. From the stile there was a footpath leading to Mr. Grubb's farm.

Mr. Grubb was an exceedingly testy old gentleman. His wrath had been roused by Rookwood juniors crossing his land, and he had a "down" on these enterprising young gentlemen. Mr. Grubb, who disliked public footpaths and rights-of-way across his fields, had taken the liberty of closing a footpath with barbed wire. Some cheery young person from Rookwood had paid his barbed wire a visit with a pair of wire-cutters, and Mr. Grubb had had all his trouble for nothing—to say nothing of the expense of the wire.

Naturally, Mr. Grubb was not pleased. Mr. Grubb was not only unpopular at Rookwood, but in the neighbourhood generally. It was whispered that Mr. Grubb was making fabulous sums by holding back his corn for rises in price, which naturally did not make him popular at a time when bread was dear.

"You first," said Poole, as the two juniors dismounted at the stile.

Pankley nodded, and vaulted over the stile, and walked along to the farmhouse.

Mr. Grubb could be seen in the yard, engaged in ragging a farm-hand, who had apparently incurred his lordly displeasure. He looked round as Pankley came up, with a frown on his rugged face. Mr. Grubb did not like boys; indeed, his secret opinion was that they ought, as a rule, to be drowned at birth like puppies. Mr. Grubb had long forgotten the dim and distant time when he had been a boy himself.

"Hallo!" he said gruffly.

Pankley raised his cap politely.

"Good-afternoon!" he said.

"Arternoon!" growled Mr. Grubb. "What do you want 'ere? You're one of them Rookwood pests, I s'pose?"

"Ahem! I've come about a rather important matter, Mr. Grubb. I want to ask you a question."

"Well?"

"What's your price for corn?" asked Pankley.

Mr. Grubb glared, and took a tighter grip on his whip. He knew, of course, that a schoolboy could not have come to buy corn, and he took the question as a reference to his hard-fisted dealings—as indeed it was.

"I've heard," went on Pankley cheerfully, "that you're selling your corn very dear, Mr. Grubb."

"You young raskil—"

"So I thought I ought to point out to you that it is very unpatriotic," said Pankley, with sublime coolness.

"Wot?"

"It's wrong to hold it back from market, to wait for a rise in price," said Pankley solemnly. "I thought, perhaps, that it hadn't occurred to you that it was wrong, Mr. Grubb, so I came along to tell you."

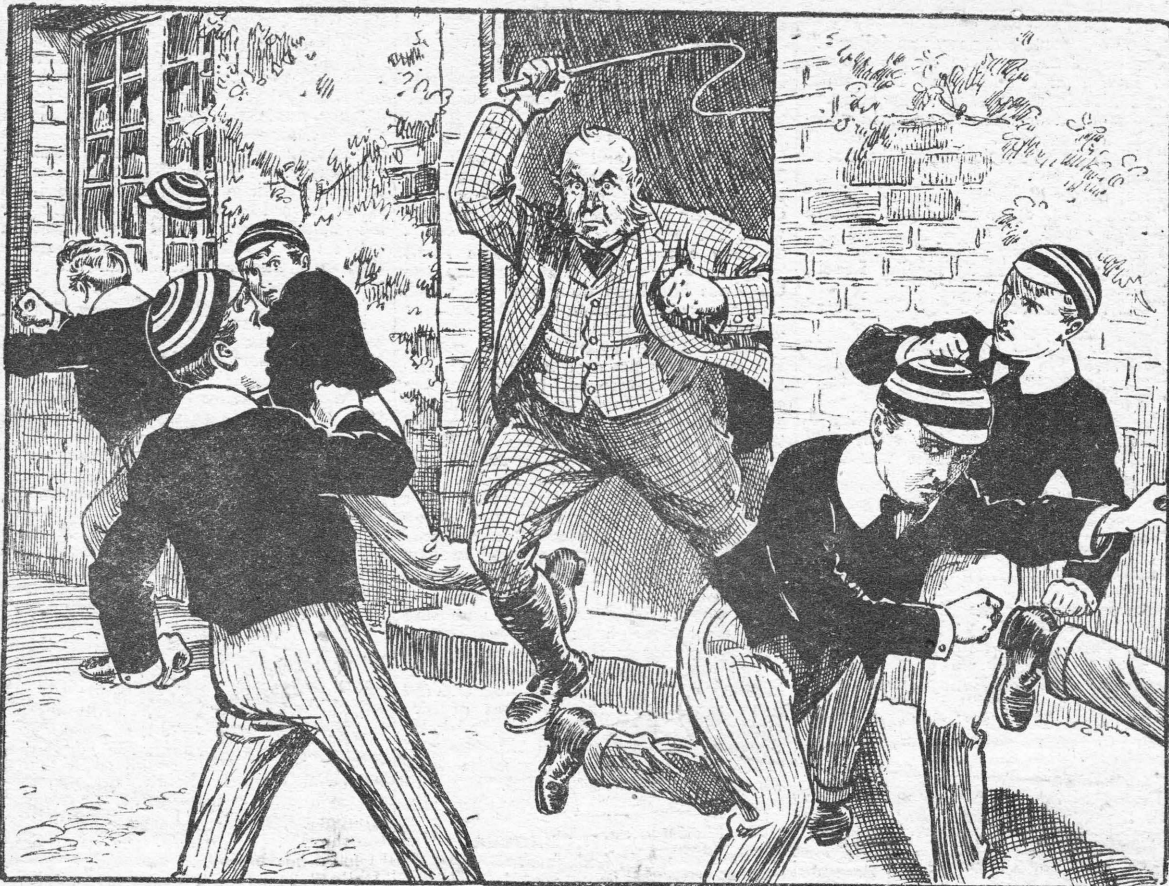
Mr. Grubb turned purple. He could hardly believe his ears. He had sometimes received "slang" from Rookwood juniors, but such astounding impertinence as this had never fallen upon his ears before.

He looked at Pankley as if he would eat him.

"Wot?" he gasped. "Wot? Why, you impudent young villain—"

"Don't be ratty, Mr. Grubb," said Pankley, and, keeping a wary eye on the whip. "Let me urge you, my young friend—I mean, my old friend—not to act like a skinflint—"

Pankley had no time to get further.



Mr. Grubb made a sudden bound out of the doorway, and lashed round him furiously with his big whip. "You young raskils!" he roared. "So that's it, is it? Wot's my price for corn—wot? I'll teach you wot's my price for corn!" (see page 13.)

Mr. Grubb made a jump at him like a kangaroo. Pankley had just time to dodge, and fled across the field, with Mr. Grubb racing in pursuit.

Pankley's young legs were swifter than Mr. Grubb's old ones, which was a very fortunate circumstance for Pankley. He cleared a hedge at a bound, and vanished.

Mr. Grubb was not equal to clearing hedges, and he had to stop, and he turned back towards the farmhouse breathless and growling.

He had just reached the farmhouse, when Poole came sauntering up. The farmer gave him a glare.

"Good-afternoon!" said Poole.

Mr. Grubb looked at him, and came a little closer, with a grip on his whip. He was quite prepared for another question about the price of corn, and if Poole uttered it he meant that Poole should not escape as Pankley had done.

Poole watched him rather nervously, and backed away as Mr. Grubb came closer.

He had to carry out his part of the programme, but it was not a safe business.

"I called to ask you a question," said Poole.

"Ho!" said Mr. Grubb, coming a little nearer.

"A lot of fellows are coming this afternoon to speak to you about it," said Poole, still backing away.

"Ho!" said Mr. Grubb. "Har they?"

"They har," said Poole humorously, and still backing, while the stout old gentleman followed him up with gleaming eyes. "What's your price for corn, Mr. Grubb— Oh, my hat!"

Poole bolted as the farmer rushed at him.

The whip snapped round his legs, and Poole gave a fiendish yell.

Then he was out of reach, and he fairly whizzed towards the stile, and cleared it without touching it.

Pankley was waiting for him there, and had the bikes ready.

"Jump on!" he yelled. "He's coming!"

Mr. Grubb came thumping up to the stile.

The two juniors jumped into their saddles and pedalled away for their lives as the infuriated Mr. Grubb reached the road.

The farmer stood in the road and brandished his whip after them. But they were safe out of reach, and they did not slacken down-till they were through the village.

Then Pankley free-wheeled and caught his breath, and chuckled.

"Worked like a charm!" he grinned.

"Yow!" said Poole.

"What's the matter with you, Poole?"

"Wow! The awful beast gave me a cut round the legs!" groaned Poole.

"Yow! I can tell you it hurts!"

"Never mind—"

"Fathead! I do mind!"

"Pooh! That's nothing!" said Pankley, who had not felt the weight of Mr. Grubb's whip. "That's all right!"

"Silly ass! Wow!"

"Think of those Rookwood chaps dropping in this afternoon and giving him the password!" chuckled Pankley. "Think of old Grubb's face when they call on

him and say: 'What's your price for—ha, ha!—corn?'"

And Poole gurgled with mirth.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Jimmy Silver Takes a Party.

"HERE they come!" whispered Jimmy Silver.

All Rookwood was busy on the football-field, with the exception of the Fistical Four of the Fourth.

They were lying low in Jones minor's study, waiting.

Their patience was rewarded at last. There was a sound of footsteps in the passage, and Jimmy Silver, peering out, the door being half an inch ajar, spotted three or four Bagshot fellows coming along to the end study.

Three or four more came along after them, then came Potter, and at last Pankley and Poole.

Evidently the meeting was coming off at last.

The Bagshot juniors passed into the end study, and the Fistical Four heard the door close.

Jimmy Silver stole out into the passage on tiptoe.

Cautiously—very cautiously—he stole along to the end study. There was a murmur of voices within—many voices.

With really wonderful caution Jimmy Silver inserted the key into the outside of the lock and turned it.

Click!

There was an exclamation in the study. "Hallo! What's that?"

"Somebody's locked the door!"

"My hat!"

"You can come out now, you fellows!" called out Jimmy Silver to his chums, and Lovell and Raby and Newcombe joined him in the passage, chuckling.

The study door was shaken from within. It did not open.

"Hallo! Who's locked us in?" shouted Pankley.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, open the door! We've got to go out!"

The Fistical Four yelled.

"Going to a picnic?" howled Lovell.

"Well, yes."

"Got the password all right?" shouted Raby.

"Eh? How did you know there was a password?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you rotters—"

The Fistical Four roared. Pankley & Co. were entrapped in the study and locked safely in. The coast was clear for the picnic raiders.

"Good-bye!" said Newcombe.

"Let us out, you rotters!"

"Sorry! We can't," said Jimmy Silver. "We're going to a picnic. You'd be rather in the way, you know, if we let you out."

"Look here!" came Pankley's voice through the keyhole. "You can't go! Grubb won't let you into 'his garden!'"

"Yes, he will, if we give him the password," chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, you rotter!"

"Sorry we haven't time to stay and listen to your sweet voice, Panky! Good-bye!"

"Look here—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not stay to look there. They walked down the passage, almost doubled up with mirth. Jimmy Silver had the key of the study in his pocket. The whole dozen Bagshot juniors were locked in the end study, and there was no help for them. They could not hammer on the door to attract attention, for that would have brought Mr. Bootles on the scene, and the Fistical Four knew that Pankley & Co. would play the game. In a similar situation Jimmy Silver & Co. would have depended on themselves, and would have been careful not to bring a master into the affair, and they expected as much of Pankley.

The Fistical Four sauntered, grinning, out of the School House. They were feeling exceedingly pleased with themselves. At last their prestige was to be restored, and the Bagshot bounders were to learn that they could not keep their end up against the Fistical Four.

"I say, this is too good to keep to ourselves," said Jimmy Silver. "Let's be hospitable. There's plenty for everybody, and we may as well take those Modern worms along. It will show 'em, too, that we can down the Bagshot bounders. They've been smirking at us long enough."

"Good idea!" agreed the Co.

Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern side, had just come off the football-field. They greeted the Fistical Four with suspicious looks.

"Wherefore the cackle?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Like to come to a picnic?" asked Jimmy Silver affably.

"Heaps of tuck!" said Lovell. "Six dozen jam-tarts—"

"Three dozen ginger-pop!" said Raby.

"Four cakes!" chuckled Newcome,

"and jam and preserves!"

"Been robbing a bank?" asked Tommy Dodd, in astonishment.

"No; we've been robbing a bounder," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "It's a raid, my sons. We're doing the Bagshot

bounders in the eye, and we're willing to share the loot."

"We're on!" said Tommy Dodd at once. "Where is it?"

"At Grubb's Farm."

"And where are the Bagshot chaps?"

"Locked up in my study."

"Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd and Tommy Cook and Tommy Doyle howled when Jimmy Silver explained. The idea of Pankley & Co. remaining locked up in the study while the Rookwooders scoffed the picnic was enough to make them howl. They even admitted that for once the Classicals had kept their end up, which was a great admission for the Modern heroes to make.

Jimmy Silver collected more guests. He was generous and hospitable. Besides, as he remarked, the picnic was coming cheap. Jones minor and Hooker and Flynn of the Classical side joined the party, and Towle and Lacy and Webb of the Modern side. Topham and Townsend, the dandies of the Fourth, condescended to join, and three or four Shell fellows came into the party. When Jimmy Silver & Co. started from Rookwood the whole party numbered twenty.

It was a numerous party for the picnic, but Jimmy Silver convinced them that there would be plenty for all in reciting the tremendous orders he had heard Pankley giving in the tuckshop.

The juniors started for Grubb's Farm in great spirits, and if anything cheered them more than the prospect of the picnic, it was the thought of a dozen Bagshot juniors crowded in the end study, cooling their heels while their whacking picnic was "scoffed."

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

### The Picnickers.

"HURRAH!"

Pankley and Poole watched from the window of the end study the merry party that started out with Jimmy Silver.

They howled with laughter as the Rookwood crowd disappeared out of the gates.

"Where does the blessed joke come in?" demanded Putter, who, like the rest of the Bagshot juniors, was getting impatient. "I don't see anything funny in being locked up in a study, for one!"

"Same here!" said Wilson. "Where does the merry joke come in? What did you let that bounder lock us up here for, Panky?"

"And what about the picnic?"

"What are you cackling at, you chumps?"

"If there's a joke on, tell us what it is, or we'll jolly well bump you through the blessed floor, you images!" exclaimed Putter, exasperated.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pankley and Poole.

"Oh, collar 'em!"

"How are we going to get out, you dummies?" howled Wilson. "I've a jolly good mind to hammer on the door and bring old Bootles here. I'm not going to be shut up here all the giddy afternoon!"

"Peace, my infants!" said Pankley, with a wave of the hand. "Listen while I breathe a whisper of enlightenment!"

"Well, buck up with it, or you'll get this ink down your neck!" growled Putter. "I don't see the fun myself in being locked up in a study without room to breathe. I may be dense."

"No 'may' about it, old chap," said Pankley. "You are dense!"

"Look here—"

"It's the jape of the season," said Pankley. "We've got a picnic on for the afternoon, and those bounders are on

the track. They've gone to Grubb's Farm for the picnic."

"Yes?"

"While we're locked up here!" shrieked Wilson.

"Exactly!"

"My hat! I'll bash that door down with a chair—"

"Peace, my child!" said Pankley soothingly. "Jimmy Silver has heard us lay our little plans, but those little plans were laid entirely and solely for his benefit, and those cheery youths won't find a picnic at Grubb's Farm—they will find old Grubb on the war-path!"

"Oh!"

Pankley, in an airy manner, proceeded to explain the deep-laid plot, and the Bagshot juniors simply gasped as they listened.

"Well, that takes the cake!" said Putter. "You mean to say they swallowed it all without a suspish—"

"Not the shadow of a suspish."

"Great Scott!"

"But where's the grub all the time?" demanded Wilson.

"The grub's in Sergeant Kettle's shop, my son," said Pankley. "I've given him strict instructions to keep it there till I come for it, and not to answer any questions those bounders may ask!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And while they're enjoying themselves at Grubb's Farm, we're going to enjoy our little selves with a picnic in the wood," said Pankley.

"But we're locked in!"

"Of course, we are! I expected Jimmy Silver would think of a dodge like that when he heard that we were going to hold a meeting in the study," chuckled Pankley. "I should have been disappointed in Jimmy if he hadn't thought of that!"

"And you let him do it?" gasped Putter.

"Certainly!"

"Well, you ass, we can't get out without making a row, and we can't do that without bringing Bootles into it."

"Shush!" said Pankley. "As soon as I came in, I noticed the key was gone, and I knew we were going to be locked in. It's all serene!"

"Going to crawl out through the key-hole?" asked a sarcastic voice.

"Or up the chimney?"

"Or jump out of the window?"

"We could get out of the window if we liked," said Pankley cheerfully. "I've got a coil of rope in my box. But it won't be necessary, as it happens, as we're only locked in."

"How can you unlock a door without a key?" demanded Wilson.

"With a screwdriver, my son!" said Pankley, taking that tool from his pocket. "I was only waiting for the Rookwood bounders to get clear."

"Oh, by gum!"

Pankley, with the admiring glances of the Bagshot juniors fixed upon him, proceeded calmly to unscrew the lock from the door. In five minutes the lock was removed, and the door, though still locked, came open.

Pankley laid the lock and the screwdriver on the table.

"Jimmy Silver can find those when he comes in," he remarked. "We'll tell him about the picnic afterwards."

"Oh, good!" chuckled Putter.

"And he can tell us how he got on with old Grubb—"

In a hilarious mood, the Bagshot crowd swarmed out of the study, and hurried down to Sergeant Kettle's shop in a body.

"Parcels ready, sergeant?" asked Pankley.

"Yesair!"

Sergeant Kettle lifted up three large bundles from the little counter, and passed them over to the Bagshot juniors.

"Thanks! Come on, you chaps!" Pankley and Poole and Putter carried the parcels, and the whole band, grinning with glee, walked out of the gates.

They did not take the direction of Grubb's Farm. That was a neighbourhood Pankley & Co. meant to keep away from very carefully.

They went down the road towards Coombe, and turned into the footpath through the wood, and came out on the bank of the shining river.

"Here we are!" said Pankley, plumping down his parcel.

"Hurrah!"

The cheerful Bagshot juniors set to work at once.

The big parcels were unfastened, and the good things unpacked, and a dozen pairs of eyes gleamed with satisfaction at the goodly array.

"My hat! This is something like!" said Putter. "And those bouncers thought they were going to bag a feed like this, by gum!"

"They're not quite up to our weight," said Pankley loftily. "I wonder how they've got on with old Grubb?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Bagshot crowd chuckled merrily as they proceeded with the picnic.

## THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

### An Astounding Reception.

JIMMY SILVER & CO., without the faintest suspicion of the manner in which the astute Pankley had pulled their legs, sauntered cheerily along the road to Grubb's Farm.

It was getting towards tea-time, and they had good healthy appetites. The memory of the long list of good things that Pankley had ordered in the sergeant's little shop at Rookwood made their mouths water.

Not a suspicion crossed their minds of the dreadful truth.

They clambered over the stile, and came in a body towards the farmhouse, the residence of the testy Mr. Grubb. That Mr. Grubb was a very testy and unpleasant old gentleman they knew. But they knew that picnic parties often came to the farm, which was picturesquely situated on the Coombe uplands, with a view of the wide moor, and the Channel in the distance. There was nothing surprising in Pankley having selected that spot for his picnic.

"I suppose it'll be all right," said Topham, as if struck by a sudden doubt, as they came near the farmhouse.

"Why shouldn't it?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, old Grubb is a sour old beggar, and he ain't fond of Rookwood chaps," said Topham. "If he guessed that we didn't belong to the party at all—"

"How could he guess, fathead? He must know that Pankley & Co. are at Rookwood, and if he recognises some of us, he won't know they haven't asked us. The password will settle it."

"He may be surprised that Pankley isn't with us," remarked Flynn.

"We'll mention that Pankley was detained at the last moment."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, it'll be all right!" said Tommy Dodd. "What beats me is that the silly ass should arrange a password, and all that, and then let you chaps spot it all!"

"They're not up to our weight," explained Jimmy Silver. "We can down Bagshot bouncers just as easily as we can down Moderns."

"Why, you Classical ass—" began Tommy Dodd warmly.

"Now, your Modern fathead—"

"Look here—"

"Peace, my children," said Lovell. "Let's get on to that picnic. We don't want to waste time; Pankley & Co. may get out."

"Yes, come on!" said Jimmy Silver. "You Modern chaps are such beggars for arguing. Here we are!"

The numerous party of expectant picnickers came up to the farmhouse.

Jimmy Silver knocked boldly at the door.

It was opened by Mr. Grubb himself. Mr. Grubb had spotted them from the window. There was a deep frown on his rugged face, but the juniors were not surprised at that; they never expected to see Mr. Grubb looking good-tempered.

Mr. Grubb was not looking, and not feeling, good-tempered. He remembered Poole's remark that more fellows were coming along that afternoon to ask him about the price of his corn. At the sight of the Rookwood crowd he had no doubt that they had come.

That was why he had opened the door himself. And that, too, was why he had taken the precaution to slip his big whip under his arm. Mr. Grubb was ready for business. If this crowd of young rascals had come to check him, Mr. Grubb was resolved that they should suffer for their sins and should certainly not get off so cheaply as the first two practical jokers had done.

"Well?" he rapped out.

Jimmy Silver raised his cap politely. He was always polite, though really politeness seemed wasted on Mr. Grubb.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. Grubb!" said Jimmy.

"What do you want?"

"We've come to the picnic."

"What!"

"The picnic," said Lovell. "In your garden, you know."

"Eh?"

"It's all right, Mr. Grubb," said Jimmy Silver. "We understand about the password."

"Wot!"

"What's your price for corn?" said Jimmy Silver affably.

"Ho!"

"What's your price for corn?" chorused all the juniors together.

What happened next seemed like an earthquake to the astounded juniors.

Mr. Grubb made a sudden bound out of the doorway, which brought him into the middle of the crowd of them.

Then he lashed round him furiously with his big whip.

"You young raskils!" roared Mr. Grubb. "So that's it, is it? Wot's my price for corn—wot? I'll teach you wot's my price for corn!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He's mad!"

"Great Scott!"

"Yarocooooo!"

"Help!"

"Oh! Ah! Oow! Wow!"

Lash, lash! Slash! Swish! Whack, whack, whack, whack!

The astounded juniors scattered in all directions. They were too astounded to run for the moment, and there was not much room for running in the farm garden. The long whip lashed and slashed round them and among them, doing great execution.

There were yells and shrieks of pain and wrath on all sides, and the juniors tumbled over one another in their efforts to escape the slashes of the infuriated Mr. Grubb.

"Wot's the price for corn—hey?" roared Mr. Grubb. "I'll show yer! Take that! I'll teach you manners, you young raskils! Take that, and that! The other young raskil told me you'd be coming—take that!—and I was ready for yer. Take that, and that, and that!"

"Yow! Ow! Ow!"

"Stop him, somebody!"

"Yarocoo!"

"Yow! Ow! Help! Murder!"

"Oh! Ow! Fire! Yah!"

Slash, slash, slash!

The juniors, convinced that Mr. Grubb had gone suddenly mad, scattered, and Mr. Grubb charged after them, still slashing away. Some of them escaped by the gate, with severe pains in their legs and backs. Jimmy Silver & Co. were cornered against a hedge, and they scrambled through the hedge with the whip lashing on them. They got through with torn clothes, and ran. Mr. Grubb charged Tommy Dodd & Co., who were desperately negotiating a fence.

"Here he comes!" shrieked Tommy Dodd. "Hop it!"

Lash, lash, lash!

"Yarocoo! Stoppit! Help!"

"Take that, and that, and that!" roared Mr. Grubb. "Wot's the price of my corn, you young raskils! I'll learn yer! I'll—"

"Yah! Oh! Yocooop!"

The three Tommies rolled over the fence, and fled, and Mr. Grubb glared round in search of new victims. But all the unhappy picnickers were out of reach now, and the farmer, breathing hard after his exertions, and somewhat satisfied with the punishment inflicted upon the supposed practical jokers, shook his whip after the fleeing juniors.

"Garge! Willyum! Tummies!" he roared. "Chase them young raskils off my land! You 'ear me? Garge! Willyum! Tummies!"

But the juniors did not need chasing. They were sprinting away as if on the cinder-path, heading for the river, and Garge and Willyum and Tummies had simply no chance of getting near them. Jimmy Silver & Co. were good runners—they had distinguished themselves on the footer-field, but it is safe to say that that afternoon they broke all records.

## THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

### The Picnic.

"Oh dear!"

"Wow, wow!"

"Ow! My legs!"

"Yow! My back!"

"Yocooooop! My shoulders!"

"Oh crumbs!"

It was a chorus of lamentation. The celebrated lamentations of Job were a joke to it. The voices of the Rookwood juniors were as the voice of Rachel of old, who mourned and would not be comforted.

The unhappy victims of Pankley's little joke had run and run, till they could run no farther. They were a mile by that time from Mr. Grubb's property, and quite safe from pursuit. They flung themselves down in the grass of the river-bank and groaned in chorus.

Rough handling was not a new experience to the Rookwood juniors, but never in all their experience had they come upon such terrific handling as they had received that afternoon.

Every fellow had had at least two or three lashes of Mr. Grubb's big whip, some of them as many as a dozen, and they were scratched and torn and bumped through scrambling over fences and hedges and thorns.

It was a pitiable scene on the green bank of the river, and the sounds that rose from the dishevelled juniors would have touched the heart of a Prussian Hun.

For a quarter of an hour, at least, there were no sounds but the sounds of lamentation.

Jimmy Silver groaned in bitterness of spirit. He could see it all now, of course. Mr. Grubb's conduct showed that there was no picnic there, and his fury when he heard the password and his mention of another "young raskil" who had said they would be coming more than enlightened Jimmy Silver.

He could see it all now, and he simply blushed as he realised that that little talk under the beech in the quad at Rookwood must have been planned by Pankley and Poole for his especial benefit, and they must have known he was there all the time, and had deliberately taken them in. The whole thing was a gigantic jape. But it had been schemed so astutely and played up to the very end so cleverly that even the keen-witted Jimmy Silver hadn't had the faintest suspicion.

He had been so hopelessly "done" that he had no defence to make.

"It's no good moaning over it," said Tommy Dodd, taking pity on his old rival in his hour of defeat and humiliation. "But you have had your leg pulled, Silver, and no mistake. They've simply done you in the eye."

"Rub it in!"

"Duck the silly idiot in the river!" moaned Topham.

"Oh, shut up!" said Tommy Dodd. "Don't go for a chap when he's down. It's only natural for a Classical duffer to be taken in. Well, I vote we get off; no good sticking here and groaning. I want a wash and a brush-up!"

The unhappy victims picked themselves up wearily. Their injuries were not hurting them so much now; it was the defeat, the knowledge that they had been so thoroughly done by the Bagshot bounders that rankled.

"Still, those rotters are shut up in the study," said Newcome hopefully. "They've got to stay there, anyway, till we let them out."

Tommy Dodd laughed scoffingly.

"You ass! Pankley must have known you were shutting him up there! Bet you he had some dodge ready for getting out! Had it all fixed up, of course. Bet you they didn't stay there ten minutes after they saw us clear off!"

"Oh!"

"And they're having the picnic somewhere now!" moaned Lovell. "Oh, I shall never get over this! Jimmy, you'll turn my hair grey this time!"

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver. "Rub it in!"

"No, I won't, old chap," said Lovell affectionately. "You couldn't help it. We ought to have smelt a mouse, too. It was all too jolly good to be true, you know—if we'd only thought of it!"

"If!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

The picnickers—they did not feel much like picnickers now—tramped down the path beside the river, to take the short cut through the wood home. They tramped on in glum silence, broken only by an occasional groan, for some time.

But all of a sudden Jimmy Silver halted.

"Great Scott!" he panted.

"Wharrer marrer with you?" mumbled Raby.

Jimmy caught his arm.

"Look!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip!"

In an instant the Rookwood juniors forgot their pains and their aches, their scratches and their bumps. Their eyes fairly blazed at the scene before them.

It was a happy and peaceful scene—nothing less than a picnic-party of a dozen fellows, seated among piles of good things, on a grassy slope, beside the shining river.

"Pankley & Co.!"

"Oh, what luck!"

"Our luck's in, after all!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, I brought you out this afternoon to a picnic. The programme has been a little—a little disarranged. But there's the picnic!"

A chuckle ran through the ranks of the Rookwooders.

There was the picnic!

Pankley & Co., enjoying themselves, had not observed the dusty band in the distance. They were laughing and chatting as they discussed the mountain of good things.

"Cover!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwooders did not need telling twice. They glided into the cover of the wood. Even Topham and Townsend, the slackers, were keen for once. There was the picnic, and signal vengeance for their manifold wrongs. There were twenty of them, and the Bagshot bounders hadn't a ghostly.

They disappeared into the wood, and with infinite caution they picked their way among the trees and thickets, approaching the Bagshot camp with the stealth of Red Indians on the war-path.

Closer and closer, keeping in cover till they reached the edge of the glade, and this time it was Pankley & Co. who had suspicion. Pankley's voice could be heard as they approached.

"I wonder how those kids have got on with Grubb?"

"I wonder how they've got off!" said Poole.

And there was a howl of laughter from the Bagshot crowd.

"Poor little dears!" said Pankley.

"They can't keep their end up against us, you know. That ass Silver—quite an ass, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And that duffer, Tommy Dodd, too—quite a duffer!"

"Oh, quite!"

"If they could see us now!" grinned Poole.

"Ha, ha! Pass the jam!"

"If they could only see us!" chuckled Putter. "Why—hallo—what—who—which—My only hat!"

"Go for 'em!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

With a rush the Rookwood crowd came out into the glade.

Pankley & Co. leaped to their feet.

"Jimmy Silver!" gasped Pankley. "Oh, thunder! Line up—back up, Bag-shot!"

"Give 'em socks!"

"Mop 'em up!"

"Hurrah!"

The Rookwood rush simply swept Pankley & Co. off their feet. They were hurled in all directions. They were rolled and bumped over, squashed in the grass, pitched into the thickets.

They simply hadn't a chance. Pankley and Poole and Putter put up a great fight, but they were rolled over, plastered with their own jam-tarts and condensed milk, and were glad to wriggle away and run for it. In three minutes the picnickers, dusty and dishevelled, jammy and milky and sticky, were in full flight, and the victorious Rookwooders remained in possession of the camp—and the picnic.

"Hurrah for us!" chortled Lovell. "Now, you Modern bounders, what have you got to say? Haven't we brought you out to a ripping picnic?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Tophole!" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "We let those bounders off lightly! I wish they'd come back!"

"Ha, ha! They won't come back!" said Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen, here is the picnic! Pile in!"

"Hurrah!"

The Rookwooders piled in. All their woes were forgotten now; victory was theirs at last. And while the Bagshot fellows, in a very sticky and dishevelled state, were retreating disconsolately through the wood, Jimmy Silver & Co. settled down with great enjoyment to Pankley's picnic. In spite of all they had been through, he felt satisfied. At last they had scared a point "Up Against Pankley!"

THE END.

(Another long complete story of the chums of Rookwood next week, entitled "The Jape of the Season!" By Owen Conquest.)



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