

ROUGH ON JIMMY SILVER!

An Amusing Long, Complete Story of the Chums of Rookwood School, and Their Old Rivals of Bagshot.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Hopping it!

"Ha, ha, ha!" Jimmy Silver was chatting with his chums—Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—under the old beeches in the quad at Rookwood. He looked round towards the school gates in surprise as he heard that sudden outburst of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" A crowd was gathering in the old gateway; fellows were running from all quarters to join it. Loud shouts of laughter rang across the quad.

"Something going on, it seems," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four hurried down to the gates. Something evidently was going on in the road outside—something that tickled the Rookwood fellows immensely, to judge by the roars of laughter.

"What's the row?" asked Lovell, as they came up, breathless.

"Ha, ha!" roared Oswald of the Fourth. "Look at the duffers! Look at them! Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. elbowed their way through the thickening crowd in the gateway. Then they had a view of the road, and they joined in the yell of merriment.

"They could not help it."

Three juniors were coming up the road. They were Rookwood juniors, and they belonged to the Modern side at the school, as the blue badge on their caps testified. But their features were quite unrecognisable, having been thickly daubed with whitewash. Their hands were tied down to their sides, and their right legs were bent, and tied up, so that they could only progress by hopping on their left legs. The sight of the three whitewashed juniors hopping on their left legs was too much for the Fistical Four. They shrieked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who are they?" gasped Lovell. "Moderns, of course! Classical chaps wouldn't let themselves be japed like that!"

"Who are you?" roared Raby.

"Silly asses!" came a panting voice from one of the whitewashed trio. "Gerrout of the way!"

"Tommy Dodd!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The three Tommies!" chuckled Lovell. "What a giddy sight! Anybody got a camera?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you bring a camera near me, and I'll bust it over your silly head!" bellowed Tommy Dodd.

"Hook it, Newcome, and get your camera!" Newcome bolted for the School House.

The three whitewashed juniors hopped painfully up to the gate. They were panting for breath. Such a mode of progress was decidedly laborious. Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle, the heroes of the Modern side at Rookwood, had never been seen in such a parlous strait before. Evidently they had been in the hands of the enemy, and had had the worst of it. They leaned against the gate, and panted.

"You thumping chumps!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "There's nothing to cackle at! This ain't funny!"

"It looks funny!" stammered Jimmy Silver. "Oh, my hat! Who tied you up like this?"

"The Bagshot beasts—"

"And you let 'em?" howled Lovell.

"How could we help it, when there were a dozen of them?" roared Tommy Dodd, in great exasperation. "There were Pankley and Poole and a dozen more. They collared us, and did this—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up with that camera, Newcome!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 101.

yelled Lovell. "We'll hang a picture of them in our Common-room."

"You—you Classical rotter!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Let us loose, you beasts! We can't hop into the place like this. There'll be a row if old Manders spots us!"

"Oh, get on as you are!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "You look simply ripping—a little pale, perhaps! Hop it!"

"Ha, ha! Hop it!" yelled the Classical juniors.

But several of the Modern fellows rushed to the aid of Tommy Dodd & Co. They were laughing, too; they couldn't help it. But they lent a willing hand. Jimmy Silver & Co. were almost in hysterics. There was always warfare between the Rookwood juniors and the fellows of Bagshot School, and Rookwood prided itself upon more than keeping its end up. But Bagshot had scored this time—there was no doubt about that.

"The awful duffers!" chuckled Lovell. "To let Bagshot bouncers handle them like that, and—"

"I tell you they were three or four to one!" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, rats! Why couldn't you lick 'em? Classical chaps would have licked 'em!" said Lovell.

"You silly ass—"

"Here comes Newcome! Got the camera?"

"Buck up, Towle!" howled Tommy Dodd, to the Modern junior who was cutting his bonds. "Some of you bump that idiot Newcome, and smash his camera!"

The Modern juniors loyally rushed to screen the unfortunate Tommies from the amateur photographer. The Classics rushed to clear them out of the way. That photograph would have been highly prized on the Classical side of Rookwood.

There was a scuffle in the gateway, and in the midst of it the three Tommies were cut loose at last. They bolted for the Modern side.

"Snap 'em, Newcome!" shouted Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Snap!

Newcome chanced it, and he snapped the heels of the trio as they vanished through the bushes. He shook his head regretfully.

"No go!" he said. "There's a jolly good picture wasted, all through these Modern asses!"

The Fistical Four sauntered away, chucking. They were as much "up against" Bagshot as the Moderns were, but the downfall of the great Tommy Dodd made them chuckle. But Jimmy Silver soon ceased to chuckle, and looked very serious.

"It won't do," he said. "It won't do at all, my infants! Of course, those Modern bouncers can't keep their end up; but we can't let Bagshot crow over Rookwood. It's up to us!"

"What's the game?" asked Lovell.

"We're going to down the Bagshot bouncers, and then perhaps those Modern worms will own up that we're top side of Rookwood."

"Bet you they won't!"

"Well, whether they do or not, it will be a fact, all the same. Pankley & Co. have got to die a giddy death!" said Jimmy Silver seriously. "Let's hold a pow-wow!"

And the Fistical Four held a pow-wow, debating the plan of campaign against their ancient rivals.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Great Wheeze!

"LETTER for you, Jimmy!" Dick Oswald called to Jimmy Silver as the Fistical Four came into the School House. The Classical chums had held the pow-wow. They had held it in the tuckshop, and stimulated their mental efforts with ginger-beer the while. But the outcome had not been satisfactory.

They were quite agreed that Bagshot had to be downed. About that there could be only one opinion. The Moderns couldn't tackle Pankley & Co., but the Classics could, and would. Thus declared Jimmy Silver and his chums cordially agreed. But further than that they did not seem able to proceed. Exactly how Bagshot was to be downed remained a problem.

Jimmy Silver took the letter Oswald tossed to him carelessly enough. He wasn't much interested in letters from anywhere at that moment. But his expression changed as he noted the postmark.

"This is from Bagshot!" he exclaimed. "Chuck it into the fire! It's only some cheek from those bouncers!"

"Most likely. But we'll see what particular kind of cheek it is."

Jimmy opened the letter.

"Cheeky ass!" he exclaimed, as he read it.

"What did I tell you?" said Lovell.

"Listen to this," said Jimmy wrathfully. And he read out:

"Dear Silver,—Having been amused very often by watching Rookwood footer, I feel that one good turn deserves another. If you Rookwood kids would like to see a good game, and pick up some tips how footer should be played, you can't do better than come over to Latcham to-morrow afternoon. We're playing Latcham Ramblers. I dare say you're aware that beginners can learn a lot by watching really good play. Our brake leaves here at two, and we'll pick you up on the Latcham road if you like.—Always yours,
"CECIL PANKLEY."

The Fistical Four looked at one another. "Swank!" growled Raby.

"We can beat 'em at footer!" snorted Newcome.

"Watch 'em, and pick up tips!" howled Lovell. "The cheeky ass! Of course, he knows we won't do anything of the kind."

"Fancy going over to Latcham to watch those duffers play!" exclaimed Oswald. "It's only swank, of course. Just one of Pankley's digs."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"We've only got footer practice on for to-morrow," he remarked. "We can get out in the afternoon."

"Why, you fathead," almost shouted Lovell, "are you thinking of going to Latcham to see those idiots play? If you do, you can jolly well go alone!"

"Pankley doesn't expect us to go," said Raby. "It's only one of his fatheaded jokes. I'm not going."

"Listen to your Uncle Jimmy!"

"Rats!" said Lovell. "I tell you we're not going, and if you go, Jimmy Silver, we'll jolly well serag you!"

"Will you dry up?" roared Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "I tell you we're going out to-morrow afternoon!"

"We're not!"

"We're going to meet their brake on the Latcham road."

"Rot!"

"And mop them up!"

"Oh!"

"Now do you understand?" said Jimmy Silver, with great severity. "Pankley's written this as a dig at us. Well, he's put the wheeze into my head with his blessed swank! We're going to ambush that brake on the Latcham road!"

"Good!"

"We'll take about twenty chaps, so that they won't have an earthly."

"Hurrah!"

"And if the Latcham chaps don't laugh 'em to death—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Classical juniors. Lovell thumped Jimmy Silver ecstatically on the back. It was a "wheeze" after his own heart.

Pankley of Bagshot had fairly played it to

their hands by sending that "swanky" letter to Jimmy Silver. The chopper was to come down upon the self-satisfied bounders of Bagshot at last.

Jimmy Silver & Co. discussed their plans that evening in the end study with great hilarity. They made all their preparations. They laid in a supply of cord for tying up the Bagshot "Bounders"; they laid in a supply of green and yellow paint for the faces of Pankley & Co.; they decided upon the exact spots where the ambush should be laid.

They took their comrades of the Classical Fourth into their confidence, and formed the party that was to waylay Bagshot on the morrow. Flynn and Hooker and Jones minor and the rest entered into the scheme with great heartiness. Even Townsend and Topham, the slackers of the Fourth, joined in. A strong force was required to deal with Pankley & Co., and Jimmy Silver meant the odds to be on the Rookwood side.

The triumph would be a double one—over Bagshot and over the Rookwood Moderns, who would have to hide their diminished heads when they saw how easily Jimmy Silver & Co. dealt with the enemy.

The next morning the Classical Fourth were full of suppressed excitement on the subject. Even in the Form-room Mr. Bootles noticed an unusual restiveness in his class. Glad were the Fourth-Formers when lessons were over, and they were free for the remainder of the day.

After dinner Jimmy Silver & Co. came out, with nearly all the Classical members of the Fourth Form, and some of the Third and the Shell.

The party numbered thirty in all. As they marched down to the gates they encountered the three Tommies, who were on their way to the footer-ground.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "You Classical bounders slacking, as usual? What about footer practice?"

"Something else on, my infant," said Jimmy Silver. "You run away and play footer, while we give Bagshot socks!"

"Bagshot will eat you!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully.

"Well, they ate you!" grinned Lovell. "It's up to us to wipe out that defeat. You Modern bounders can't do it!"

"You Classical ass—"

"You Modern duffer—"

"Come on!" rapped out Jimmy Silver. "No time to rag Modern duffers now. Follow your uncle!"

The Classical army marched off, and Tommy Dodd & Co. glared after them.

"Sure they'll make a muck of it!" said Tommy Doyle.

"Bound to!" said Tommy Cook.

Tommy Dodd growled.

"Lot of good those duffers tackling Bagshot!" he said. "They'll come home licked, you can bet your hat!"

The three Tommies went down to the footer. Jimmy Silver & Co. marched out of the gates of Rookwood, on the war-path!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Caught!

"HALT!" said Jimmy Silver. "Halt it is!" said Lovell. "This is the place."

The Rookwood crowd halted on the Latcham road. It was a country lane, between high banks clothed with grass and shaded by trees. The road made a deep dip, and even in the early afternoon it was a shadowy spot. On the rise following the dip in the road the Rookwooders stationed themselves.

The rise was a steep one, and, as Jimmy Silver sagely foresaw, the Bagshot brake would have to slow down there to a walking pace. Escape would be impossible when the Rookwooders attacked. The Bagshot Bounders would have to "scrap," and the Rookwooders had no doubt of the result. Even without the odds on their side, they would have had no doubt on that point.

Jimmy Silver looked at his watch.

"Quarter-past two!" he announced.

"They'll be along here in about a quarter of an hour. Get info cover. You take the other side of the road, Lovell, with fifteen chaps. We'll stay on this side. When I whistle, go for the bounders!"

"Right-ho!"

"You collar the horse, Raby, to make sure, though they won't have much chance of bolting on this rise!"

"You bet!"

In the thick hedges on either side of the road the Rookwooders took cover, and watched eagerly for the Bagshot brake.

There was a rumble of wheels in the distance at last.

Jimmy Silver peered out eagerly from behind the trunk of a big tree.

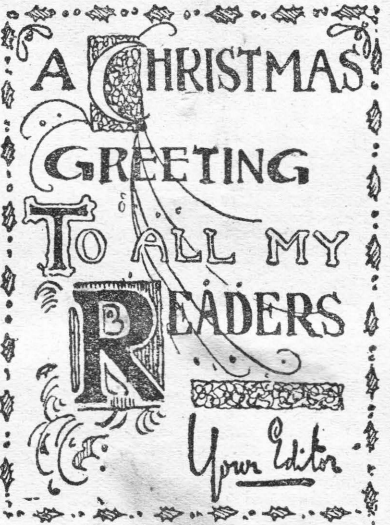
Only a couple of cyclists had passed so far. The road was a solitary one. But the rumble of wheels told of a large vehicle. Round a bend in the lane a big brake came in sight. It was crowded with Bagshot fellows.

Jimmy Silver recognised Pankley and Putter and Poole, of the Fourth Form at Bagshot. They were chatting cheerily in the front of the brake. There were ten other fellows, making thirteen in all. The brake came rumbling down into the dip in the road at a good speed, and slowed down as it took the rise on the opposite side of the dip. It was going very slowly as it approached the Rookwood ambush.

"Wait till they're right up to us," said Jimmy Silver, watching from behind the tree. "No hurry; we've got 'em safe enough. What the dickens is Pankley doing with that bugle?"

"We'll bugle him!"

Pankley of Bagshot had a bugle on his knee, apparently for the purpose of cheering the journey with sweet music. But he was not blowing it; he was chatting with Putter and Poole, and seemed to have no eyes for



the road or a possible enemy. As a rule, Pankley was as hard to catch napping as a weasel, but on this occasion he seemed to be falling blindly into the trap.

Jimmy Silver uttered a sudden, sharp whistle.

As it rang out over the road, the Rookwooders rushed out from their cover, on both sides of the brake. Raby ran to the head of the leading horse, and held on. The brake came to a sudden halt, surrounded by Rookwooders.

"My hat!" said Pankley.

"Caught!" roared Lovell.

"Fairly nailed!" chirruped Jimmy Silver.

"Now, then, jump out of that brake, you duffers!"

Ta-ra-ra-ra-ra!

Pankley put the bugle to his lips, and blew a cheery blast. It rang sharply through the frosty air.

"Chuck that!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"What are you up to?"

"Only celebrating the occasion," said Pankley. "It's such a pleasure to see your innocent faces!"

"Are you coming down?"

"No fear!"

"Then we'll jolly soon have you out!"

"Go for 'em!" roared Lovell.

With a rush on both sides and in the rear, the Rookwooders assailed the brake. The driver sat in his seat, blinking. He could not drive on, and he did not feel inclined to share in the scrap. He shrugged his shoulders, and sat tight.

The Rookwooders were over two to one, and the tussle was not in doubt from the start, determined as the resistance was.

In five minutes the Bagshot fellows were all down, and the victorious Rookwooders were sitting on them, panting.

"Got the rotters!" chirruped Jimmy Silver.

"You ain't dealing with Moderns this time, Panky! We've done you brown! Why, what—Hallo! Look out! Great Christopher Columbus!"

It was a yell of dismay from the Rookwood junior captain.

There was a whirl in the road—a whirl and rattle of many bicycles. Down the road came a swarm of cyclists on the track of the brake—Bagshot fellows, and apparently in myriads.

Jimmy Silver stared at them dumbfounded.

There were thirty fellows, at least, riding like the wind, and they swept up from the dip in the road in a yelling swarm, and jumped off their machines round the brake.

And there was a yell from Pankley:

"Rescue! Pile in, Bagshot!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Turning the Tables!

"GREAT Scott!"

"Back up!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Dismay had fallen upon the Rookwood raiders.

How on earth had thirty Bagshot cyclists arrived on the scene at that critical moment? It was the last thing the raiders had expected. But there they were, evidently ready for business.

The machines spun anywhere as the rescuers rushed on the brake from all sides.

Pankley & Co. were down, and sat upon. But the Rookwooders had to face the new enemy, and then Cecil Pankley and the rest "bucked up" with renewed vim. Jimmy Silver & Co. were attacked front and rear.

The odds were so tremendous that the Rookwooders had not the ghost of a chance from beginning to end.

But they fought hard.

Heavy as were the odds, and hopeless the struggle, they fought to a finish, and of all the party only Townsend and Topham jumped out of the brake and fled. And they did not flee far. Three or four Bagshot fellows rushed after them, and dragged them back.

In less than ten minutes it was all over.

The tables had been turned with a vengeance.

The Rookwood party were all on their backs, in the brake or in the road, with Bagshot juniors sitting on them.

The triumphant enemy were chortling with glee.

"Take it calmly, Silver, old chap!" advised Pankley, as Jimmy struggled wildly under Putter and Poole. "Keep smiling, you know!"

"Ow! You rotter!" gasped Jimmy.

"It was so jolly good of you to walk into a trap like this!" grinned Pankley. "This is what I like about you Rookwood chaps; you're so jolly innocent and unsuspecting! Such beautiful, childlike innocence—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bagshot, with one voice.

"You see, we anticipated this!" yawned Pankley. "That's why I wrote to you yesterday, Silver, dear boy. I thought it would put this idea into your head—I knew you wouldn't miss such a chance. I would have bet ten to one in jam-tarts that we should meet a Rookwood crowd on the road!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver simply writhed.

"Oh, you deep rotter!" he gasped.

Pankley chuckled.

"We knew we could depend on your delightfully simple nature, Silver, old scout, so we arranged for the bicycle brigade to follow us about a quarter of a mile behind, and to come on like steam if I blew the bugle. You didn't guess why I was bugling, dear boy? You wouldn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver would have been glad to sink through the bottom of the brake and into the earth. He was quite overwhelmed. He understood now how the astute Pankley had taken him in.

The letter had been written for the special purpose of putting it into his head to ambush the Bagshot brake.

And a crowd of Bagshot fellows, who had doubtless intended to cycle over to Latcham anyway to see the match, had biked a quarter of a mile behind the brake, instead of accompanying it, for the especial purpose of letting Rookwood make the attack, if they were indeed on the road.

Then Pankley's bugle had brought them swarming up.

It was very deep of Pankley; but Jimmy Silver could have kicked himself for not guessing the ulterior motive of that letter. But

it was rather too late to think about that now. The Rookwooders were in the hands of the Philistines.

Jimmy Silver relapsed into grim silence. He had to go through it now.

Pankley took a coil of rope from under a seat in the brake. Jimmy gritted his teeth as he saw that the Bagshot bounders were quite prepared. They had anticipated the attack—and the victory.

It was useless for the Rookwooders to resist. Two or three Bagshot fellows had hold of each of them.

Wriggling and gasping, the Rookwooders were planted in the road, in a long file, one behind the other.

Pankley did not need to give directions to his followers. The plan was evidently cut and dried already.

The Rookwooders' hands were tied to their sides, and then the rope was run along the file, knotted on each junior in turn. Jimmy Silver was placed at the head of that peculiar column. Lovell was behind him, then Raby, then Newcome, then Oswald, and so on till the whole party was secured.

The Rookwood party looked like a very queer kind of centipede when their triumphant foes had finished. Their looks were almost homicidal, their remarks almost Hunnish. But there was no help for it.

Jimmy Silver was thankful that the green and yellow paint had not come to light. Had Pankley suspected that, he would certainly have used it to decorate the faces of the Rookwood prisoners. Fortunately, he did not.

"There!" said Pankley, when the work was finished. "I think that's all right. Feel all right, Silver?"

"Br-r-r!"

"You comfy, Lovell?"

"Go and eat coke, you rotter!"

"Anything more I can do for you, Raby?"

Snort!

"They seem satisfied," said Pankley. "Get into the brake, you chaps! We've got to get to Latham by three."

Jimmy Silver writhed with rage. Pankley had even allowed time for this on the journey. They would not have needed to start at two o'clock—excepting to allow time for this. It was the last straw.

"Oh, you spoofing rotter!" gasped Jimmy. "We'll make you sit up for this!"

"My dear kid, you couldn't make a white rabbit sit up," said Pankley. "Now, goodbye! Wriggle off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You're not going to leave us like this!" gasped Lovell.

"Why not? You can wriggle home to Rookwood, I suppose. It's only about a mile. Now wriggle away, you worms!"

"We won't! We—"

"Anybody got a squirt?" said Pankley.

"There's some water in the ditch—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver did not wait for Poole to fill his squirt. He started. The rest of the file followed. Stumbling and kicking one another's heels, the Rookwood juniors limped up the road. Pankley & Co. and the brake rolled away. The cyclists, gurgling with merriment, followed it. The Bagshot Bounders departed in great glee for their football match at Latham. Jimmy Silver & Co. wriggled away painfully in the direction of Rookwood.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Painful Predicament!

"O H dear!"

"Jimmy Silver, you ass—"

"Jimmy, you fathead!"

"Oh, you burbling duffer!"

"You frabjous ass!"

Every fellow in the unhappy file had some remark to make to Jimmy Silver. Jimmy was feeling very bad himself. His followers were furious. They had been caught in a trap, and they put it all down to their leader. Jimmy was the leader, and he had led them into this.

Naturally they were wrathful.

From behind Jimmy, as he led the way, came remarks that ought to have made his hair curl.

Jimmy halted at last. The Bagshot brake was out of sight, rolling merrily away to Latham. The long column wriggled to a stumbling halt.

"We can't go back to Rookwood like this," gasped Jimmy; "we shall be laughed to death. The Modern asses will cackle themselves blind."

"Oh, you fathead!" gasped Hooker.

THE POPULAR.—No. 161.

"We won't dare to show our faces in the quad after this, by gad!" mumbled Townsend.

"It's no good ragging me!" growled Jimmy. "I couldn't help it. How was I to know they—"

"Sure, you're leader, ain't you?" howled Flynn. "Tain't a leader's business to lead us into this, is it intirely?"

"We want a new captain!" howled Topham.

"Cheese it!" roared Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "What's the good of ragging now? We've got to get out of this. Somebody will pass along the road soon, and we'll get them to untie us."

"Pretty idiots we shall look!" groaned Oswald.

"Better than wriggling home to Rookwood like a centipede."

"Oh, you ass!"

"Oh, you fathead!"

The whole party seemed unanimously agreed that it was all Jimmy Silver's fault. That was one of the pleasures of captaincy.

"Here comes a giddy cyclist," said Lovell hopefully. "Call to him—any chap would help us out of this."

"Let's hope it isn't a Rookwood chap," said Jimmy. "Oh, what rotten luck—it's Towle!"

"A rotten Modern! Oh dear!"

Towle of the Fourth was pedalling cheerily along the road from Rookwood. Towle nearly fell off his machine as he caught sight of the human centipede. His bike wobbled, and he jumped down just in time—gasping.

"What the merry thunder—" gasped Towle.

"Towle, old chap—"

"Come and help us! We—we're tied up."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Towle.

"What are you cackling at, you Modern idiot?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver ferociously. "Come and get us loose, you owl!"

Towle heid on to his machine and roared. He almost doubled up over the bicycle. He laughed till the tears ran down his face, while the Classical juniors glared at him as if they would eat him. The situation did not strike them as in the smallest degree comic. But the Modern junior evidently saw something funny in it.

"When you've finished, perhaps you'll come and let us loose, Towle," said Lovell, in tones of concentrated fury.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Towle.

"You cackling fathead—"

"Ha, ha, ha! You've been tackling Bagshot!" shrieked Towle; "and this is what it's come to! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, you Classical mugs! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you let us loose?" howled Lovell.

"No jolly fear!" gasped Towle. "This is too good a joke to be spoiled. I'm jolly well going to fetch the chaps to see you!"

"Towle—"

"I say, Towle, be a good chap—"

"Towle—Towle, old fellow—"

Towle was deaf to entreaties. He jumped on his machine, and tore away towards Rookwood, gasping with laughter. He vanished in a moment or two round the bend in the lane. Jimmy Silver looked quite sickly.

"Now we'll have a crowd of Modern rotters coming to look at us!" groaned Lovell. "Oh, dear! Jimmy Silver, if ever you propose a jape on Bagshot again—"

"Oh, dry up!" Jimmy Silver scanned the road wildly in search of help. He would have given a term's pocket-money to be released from the ridiculous position before Towle could return with a crowd of mocking Moderns.

"There's a chap in the fields yonder," Lovell said. "Yeil to him!"

The Classics peered through a gap in the hedge. On the other side of the field a labourer was digging. He was at a good distance, but the juniors united their voices in a desperate yell.

"Hi!"

They yelled "Hi!" a dozen times with the full force of their lungs before the labourer glanced round.

"Hi! Hi! Help!"

The man laid down his fork at last, and came in a leisurely way across the field. He blinked through the hedge, and gave a jump at the sight of the human centipede.

"Law!" he gasped.

"We—we're tied up!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Come and cut us loose, and I'll stand you half-a-crown."

"Oh laws!"

The countryman came out into the road, his eyes open like saucers with astonishment. "Cut us loose!" snorted Lovell.

"I beant got no knife."

"There's one in my jacket pocket," said Jimmy Silver. "For goodness' sake buck up and get it out!"

"You be in a fix, zur."

"Yes, yes. Buck up!"

"Wot moight be the reason of this yere, zur?"

"It's a lark—a lark of some beasts. Get a move on!"

"Oh, law!"

The juniors were trembling with impatience. But the movements of the countryman were very leisurely. He was not in the habit of hurrying, and apparently he saw no reason for changing his habits now. However, he opened Jimmy Silver's knife at last, and sawed through the cord. As soon as he was free, Jimmy snatched the knife and cut rapidly through the rest of the bonds. The Rookwooders gasped with relief as they stood among fragments of rope. Towle and his friends were not in sight yet. It was a relief they were very thankful for.

"Thanks!" said Jimmy Silver. "Here's your half-crown! Come on, you chaps!"

In a disconsolate crowd, the juniors walked away to Rookwood. Half-way to the school they came upon a crowd of cyclists—all Moderns. Tommy Dodd & Co. had turned out in great force, to behold the wondrous sight described by Towle.

"Here they are!" shouted Towle. "Hallo! They've got loose!"

"Had a good time?" asked Tommy Dodd blandly. "Lemme see! You went out to lick the Bagshot bounders, didn't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What did you get loose for?" demanded Cook indignantly. "I've taken the trouble to bring a camera, and now—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not even answer. They were too dispirited for an argument with the Moderns. They marched on glumly, and the Moderns followed them, chuckling. Never had the Fistical Four been so glad to get out of sight into their own study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

In the Enemy's Camp!

JIMMY SILVER snorted.

It was not a sniff; it was a snort—an emphatic snort, like unto that of an angry war-horse.

Jimmy was fed-up.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome had been telling him what they thought of him and of his generalship. That was not the worst. It was not so bad to be slanged by his own pals. But the Modern juniors were persistently shrieking over the ludicrous ending of the raid on Bagshot. Even after Jimmy Silver justly considered that the fun was worn threadbare, the Moderns persisted in shrieking with delight over it.

Then the Classics, too, howled over it. All the fellows who had joined the raiding-party were furious. But all the rest howled with merriment over the story.

Jimmy Silver stood it with patience for some time. At last he gave that emphatic snort, a warning that his patience was running out.

"Nuff said!" he exclaimed.

"Well, you must admit you are an ass," said Lovell.

"And a howling duffer!" said Raby.

"And a silly goat!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver rose, and crossed to the door, with a determined expression on his face.

"Where are you going, fathead?" asked Lovell.

"To Bagshot."

"Bagshot!" howled the three together.

"Yes."

"Wha-a-at for?"

"Never mind what for," said Jimmy Silver coldly. "You stay here and grouse."

"You're jolly well not going to Bagshot!" said Lovell warmly. "They'll scalp you."

"Well, that won't worry you, will it?" said Jimmy Silver, with crushing irony.

"You can cackle over it, if they do."

"Look here, Jimmy, don't be an ass."

"Rats!"

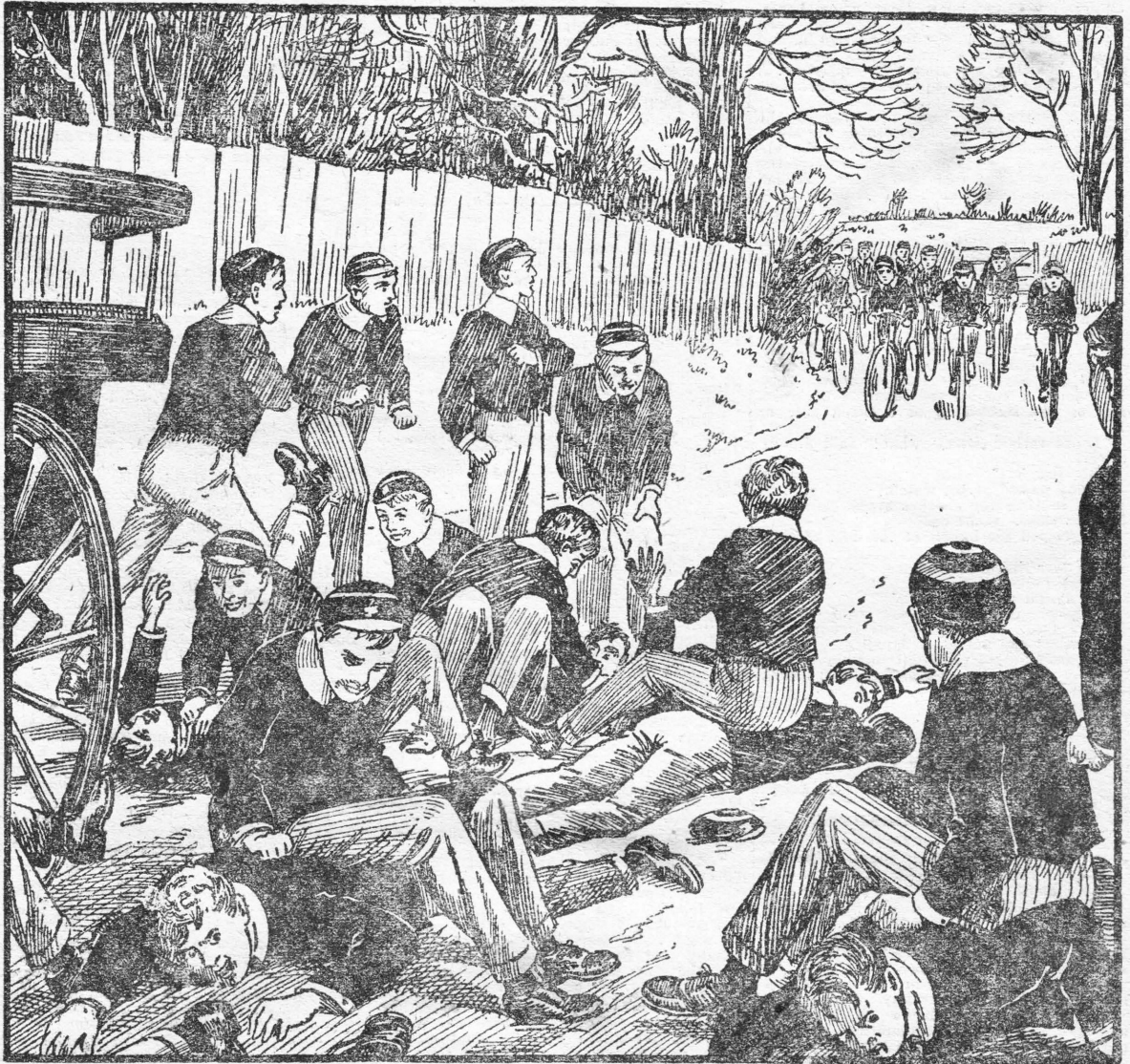
Jimmy Silver walked out of the study. Lovell and Raby and Newcome hurried after him at once. Critical as they were of their unfortunate leader, they did not mean to let him tackle the enemy without backing him up.

"Jimmy, old man!" said Raby.

Jimmy walked on morosely.

"I say, Jimmy!" murmured Newcome.

Jimmy strode out of the School House. His anxious chums followed him to the bike-shed. Jimmy wheeled out his machine,



There was a whirr in the road, and a rattle of many bicycles. "My hat!" cried Jimmy Silver. "Bagshot bounders!" (See Chapter 3.)

Lovell grabbed him by the shoulder as he was wheeling it away.

"Look here, you chump!" roared Lovell. "Tell us what the little game is, and we'll back you up, if there's anything in it."

"Now you're talking," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to Bagshot."

"But they'll slaughter you."

"They're at Latcham, fathead! That worm Pankley said they were to kick off at three. So they can't finish the match at the earliest till half-past four. Then they've got to get home from Latcham. It's a long drive. I don't suppose they'll hurry; either. Well, it's barely half-past four yet. They're still playing at Latcham, and most of the Fourth are there watching them. See? We shall find the coast clear."

"There will be lots of Bagshot fellows at home."

"We will chance them, as Pankley & Co. are away. We're going to ride over, hide our bikes outside, and sneak in—"

"My hat!"

"And rag their show," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "That's a thing they could never do to us. We'll rag their studies, rag their dorm, rag everything we can lay our hands on, and leave a written notice telling 'em who's done it, for them to see when they come home. That'll level up a bit."

"It's too jolly risky, you duffer!"

"We shall be spotted, and—"

"You're a fathead, Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders and wheeled his bike away. Lovell and Raby and Newcome exchanged glances, and then wheeled out their machines. Jimmy Silver had made up his mind, and they were not going to leave him in the lurch.

The four juniors mounted in the road and pedalled away for Bagshot.

"So you're coming!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Yes, we're coming!" grunted Lovell. "But we think you're an ass, all the same. We shall be spotted and ragged."

"Bow-wow!"

"Oh, let's chance it," said Raby. "The fellows can't cackle at us more than they are doing already, that's one comfort."

"Bow-wow!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four covered the ground quickly. They soon arrived in sight of Bagshot School. Four bicycles were concealed behind a hedge, and the Rookwood four strolled in coolly at the gates.

A senior match was going on on the football-ground, and a crowd of fellows were watching it. The quadrangle was almost deserted. The Fistical Four sauntered across to the big red-brick School House, a modern structure which they compared very unfavourably with the grey old pile of Rookwood. With as much coolness as if the place belonged to them, they sauntered in at the big doorway. A Bagshot junior was in the hall, and he stared at them.

"Hallo, Rookwood bounders!" he exclaimed.

"Pankley at home?" asked Jimmy Silver calmly.

"No; he's over at Latcham with the team," said the Bagshot fellow, Higgs of the Fourth.

"Thanks! We'll wait."

Jimmy Silver sat down on a settee in the hall, with a grave and patient expression. The Co. followed his example. The Bagshot junior stared at them and strolled away after a few minutes. A master passed through the hall and glanced at the four waiting juniors, but passed on without remark. Higgs had disappeared.

Then Jimmy Silver rose quickly to his feet, beckoned to his chums, and ran lightly up the stairs, taking advantage of the moment when the coast was clear. In a minute or less the juniors were among the Fourth Form studies. Nearly all the Fourth were at Latcham with Pankley, and the passage was quite deserted.

"What price this?" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Coast's clear," agreed Lovell. "That fellow Higgs looked rather suspicious, I thought."

"He's gone out, anyway. Don't imagine trouble, old chap."

"Oh, rats! Where's Panky's study? We'll start there."

The Fistical Four had been to Bagshot

before, and they knew their whereabouts. Jimmy Silver opened the door of Cecil Pankley's study, and the four hurried in, and the door was closed again. The room was empty, as they expected. The quarters of the Bagshot junior captain were at their mercy.

With methodical care they ragged the study. The table was overturned, the study carpet yanked up and draped over the up-ended legs of the table, and the rest of the furniture was piled upon it in a heap. Fender and fireirons were added, and as much ashes as they could collect from the grate and all the soot they could persuade down the chimney. Then the study cupboard was opened, and Pankley's provisions dragged out. Jam and marmalade streamed liberally round the study, followed by pickles and ginger-beer. Pankley had a large supply of good things—probably intending a good spread when the footballers came home. It was a spread of a very different kind that was taking place.

The Fistical Four chuckled as they surveyed the havoc they had wrought. They had made a considerable amount of noise, but no one seemed to have taken note of it.

"Looks rather cheery—what!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy looked at his watch.

"We've time for another study before we have to clear. Come on!"

He grasped the handle of the door to open it.

The door did not open.

Jimmy pulled at it.

Still it did not budge.

A queer expression came over Jimmy Silver's face. He grasped the handle with both hands and pulled, and pulled.

The door did not yield half an inch.

"Why don't you open it?" exclaimed Lovell.

"I—I can't!"

"But—"

"It's fastened!"

"Fastened!" yelled the three.

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"Yes—fastened outside!"

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"Black—But Not Comely!"

"FASTENED outside!" breathed Lovell. The Fistical Four looked at one another with sickly expressions.

While they had been busy wrecking the study somebody—probably the iniquitous Higgs—had stolen a march on them. The door was fastened on the outside, and they were prisoners!

Jimmy Silver threw open the window and looked out almost desperately.

There was a yell below as his head appeared. There was the iniquitous Higgs of the Fourth, and half a dozen Bagshot juniors were with him.

"Here he is!" yelled Higgs.

"Ha, ha, ha! Caught again!"

Jimmy Silver glared down at the merry Bagshot fellows. He shook his fist at Higgs, who yelled with laughter.

"Wanted to wait for Panky!" chuckled Higgs. "And never expected me to smell a rat—oh, no! Sneaked upstairs to Panky's study, and never guessed that I had an eye open—oh, no! Ragged the study like thunder, and never heard me come up—oh, no! Never knew I'd fastened a dog-chain to the door-handle—oh, no! Never heard me screw it to the doorpost—oh, no! No! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" echoed the crowd.

Jimmy Silver drew his head in and looked at his chums.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome gave him eloquent looks, but they said no word.

"There's a—a dog-chain fastening the door outside—screwed in!" said Jimmy Silver faintly. "We—we can't break that!"

"Oh, no!" said Lovell, in imitation of the humorous Higgs. "And you never expected anything of the kind—oh, no!"

Jimmy Silver stood dumb. For once even his fertile brain was at a loss. He cudgelled his brains, but without result.

There was a shout in the quad a little later, and Jimmy looked from the window.

A brake had arrived, and he saw Pankley & Co. descend in coats and mufflers. Higgs rushed away to join them, and the roar of laughter from the footballers told that Higgs had explained the predicament of Jimmy Silver & Co.

Pankley and his comrades disappeared into the House. There were swarming footsteps in the passage, loud voices and laughter. Then a thump on the door.

THE POPULAR.—No. 10L

"Hallo, you Rookwood bounders! Caught again!" yelled Pankley.

The Fistical Four were silent.

"Get that screw out, young Higgs! Let's get at the cheeky rotters! We'll soot 'em from head to foot, and put glue in their hair! We'll teach 'em a lesson about ragging chaps' studies! Buck up with that screw-driver!"

"Soot!" murmured Lovell. "Glue! Oh, Jimmy, you chump, you've landed us this time!"

Jimmy Silver sprang to the door, and turned the key in the lock.

Click!

"Locking themselves in, by gum!" came Pankley's voice. "Hallo, you Rookwood duffers! Do you want to stay there all night?"

"What's the good, Jimmy?" mumbled Raby. "We can't stay here! We've got to get back to Rookwood for call-over!"

"Let's rush 'em!" said Lovell desperately.

"Rush fifty chaps!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Don't be an ass! We couldn't get two yards! I've got an idea!"

"More ideas!" snorted Lovell.

"Do you know a way out?" demanded Jimmy.

"Of course I don't, fathead! There isn't any way out!"

"Then follow your uncle!"

Jimmy Silver stooped, put his head over the grate, and squinted up the chimney. He withdrew his head quickly as a fragment of soot landed in his eye.

"Yow!"

"The—the chimney!" gasped Lovell.

"Shush! They'll hear you!"

"But—but what about our clothes?"

"Hang your clothes! What will your clothes be like, anyway, when they've sooted and glued us?"

"But—but we can't—"

"We can—and we're going to!" whispered Jimmy. "It's a wide chimney; and I know there is a box-room over this study, with the same chimney and a big grate. We can get out there and hook it."

"But—but think of the state we shall be in!" spluttered Lovell. "We—we couldn't go back to Rookwood in such a state—"

"What state shall we be in if they collar us? And we can't stay here, can we?"

"Oh, my hat! What a raid!" groaned Lovell. "I suppose you were born to catch Tartars, Jimmy Silver! Shall we chance it, you fellows? It's about the only thing we can do. They'll simply mop us up when they see what we've done to the study!"

Raby and Newcome assented grimly. It was the only way—though a decidedly disagreeable way.

Jimmy Silver led. He squeezed himself into the chimney. Once inside, there was plenty of room. Judging by the amount of soot there, it was a considerable time since the chimney-sweep had visited Pankley's study.

Jimmy wedged himself desperately against the bricks, and climbed. It was not a difficult climb to an active junior; but the atmosphere in the chimney was simply awful as Jimmy's movements stirred up the soot.

It descended round him in clouds. Lovell, looking up to see how he was progressing, received a shower in his eyes and nose and mouth, and Lovell's remarks were positively Humnish.

It seemed about a century to Jimmy Silver before he clambered out into the open, wide grate in the box-room above. He was simply reeking with soot. Face and hands and clothes were as black as the ace of spades.

He coughed and sneezed as if for a wager.

Lovell came next. In about ten minutes he emerged from the chimney gasping and sneezing, and black as a Hottentot.

Jimmy Silver could not help grinning at the sight of him.

"Wow, wow, wow!" gasped Lovell.

Raby came next, and then Newcome. They stood in a sea of soot in the box-room, smothered, swamped with soot, utterly unrecognisable.

"Groooh!"

"Yooogh!"

"Gurrrrg!"

Such were their remarks.

"When you've finished, we'll bunk!" said Jimmy Silver politely. "Keep smiling, you know."

"Oh, slaughter him!" mumbled Raby. Jimmy Silver opened the box-room door, and crept out into the passage.

Quite unexpectedly the four Rookwooders found the passage clear.

"Come on!" panted Jimmy Silver.

Like lightning the Fistical Four rushed down the lower stairs. In the hall below

they passed several fellows who yelled and dodged as they came near. In a few seconds they were in the quad, and streaked for their bicycles. In a few moments they were mounted and pedalling away desperately for Rookwood.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Nice for Jimmy Silver.

OLD Mack, the porter at Rookwood, had the shock of his life when he went down to lock the school gates.

Just as he was about to close the gates, four black and unrecognisable cyclists shot up, and dashed in. Old Mack staggered back with a yell of alarm.

"My heye! Wot the—"

Four bikes were pitched against the lodge and four sooty juniors streaked through the dusk across the quad, leaving old Mack rubbing his eyes.

"Get round the back," panted Jimmy Silver. "We can get a scraps down under the pump before we go in. We can't be seen like this—"

"Hallo, hallo!" roared a voice. "What the merry thunder— Here, what are you sweeps doing here?"

It was Tommy Dodd. He stopped, and stared at the four. For the moment he did not recognise them.

"Bump the modern worm!" howled Jimmy Silver. Jimmy was longing to bump somebody.

"Jimmy Silver!" shrieked Tommy Dodd, recognising the voice. "Oh crumbs! Another raid on Bagshot—what! Ha, ha, ha!"

The sooty four rushed at him, and Tommy Dodd dodged and fled, yelling.

"After him!" roared Lovell.

"Fathead! Let's go and get clean; it's call-over in ten minutes!"

The Classical Four rushed for the pump. But Tommy Dodd had spread the news. Fellows came pouring out from all sides—Classicals and Moderns. There was a roar of laughter as they sighted the Fistical Four. Fifty fellows at least crowded round them, shrieking.

"Black, but not comely!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Look at their complexions!"

"By gad, ain't they shockin'!" chuckled Smythe of the Shell. "Oh, by gad, what a sight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, you silly asses!" bellowed Lovell.

"We—we've had rather bad luck, but there's nothing to cackle at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver swished on the pump. Hurriedly the Fistical Four cleansed themselves under the streaming water. It was the best they could do. The water, blackened by the soot, ran round them in inky streams. As they performed those hurried ablutions they were surrounded by a yelling crowd, almost in hysterics. Classicals and Moderns were almost doubled up with merriment.

"There goes the bell!" gasped Lovell. "Oh, what a state we're in!"

"Booties will like you like that!" shrieked Flynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no help for it; the Fistical Four had to go in to call-over. They were about half-cleaned, but still decidedly grimy. Mr. Booties' eye fixed upon them very severely when they answered their names.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Booties. "You are—er—in a disgusting condition, Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome! Dear me! What is the meaning of this? What—what?"

"We—we've had rather an accident, sir," mumbled Jimmy Silver. "We—we—"

"Go and change your clothes at once, and take two hundred lines each," said Mr. Booties majestically. "Boys, there is nothing to laugh at in this occurrence! Pray cease this untimely merriment immediately."

But it was very difficult for the Rookwood fellows to cease that untimely merriment.

The Fistical Four crawled disconsolately away. In Jimmy Silver's breast burned a fierce desire for vengeance on the Bagshot Bounders. He vowed inwardly that he would "make them sit up" in the near future—somehow! But in the meantime he had to hide his diminished head, and bear the reproaches of his chums as best he could. It was undoubtedly very rough on Jimmy Silver!

(Next week's story of the Rookwood chums is entitled "Jimmy Silver's Revenge!" Don't miss it!)