

Teddy Grace, the new boy at Rookwood, scores again! He brings off the greatest jape of his career!



A Screamingly Funny Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Collision on the Line.

"HERE he is!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell. Teddy Grace of the Fourth looked round quickly.

The new junior at Rookwood was sauntering down to the gates, after lessons, when Arthur Edward's dulcet tones fell upon his ears.

"Stop!" called out Jimmy Silver. The new junior stopped. He gave the Fistical Four a nod and a cheery smile as they came towards him, but his look was very wary.

For the expressions of Jimmy Silver & Co. boded trouble.

Trouble was not a new experience to Teddy Grace; indeed, he seemed to be born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, so to speak.

"Coming out for a run?" asked the new junior, as the Fistical Four came up.

"No!" grunted Lovell. "We've been looking for you," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, now you've found me." "Mind he doesn't dodge!" said Raby. Teddy Grace backed away a little.

Raby and Newcome moved round him to cut him off from the gateway, while Jimmy Silver and Lovell were evidently prepared to collar him if he tried to bolt.

"Anything the matter?" asked Teddy mildly.

"Lots!" answered Jimmy Silver. "You haven't been at Rookwood long, Teddy Grace. We thought you were rather soft when you first came—"

"I'm called Putty because I'm considered rather soft!" murmured the new junior meekly.

"But we know better now," continued the captain of the Fourth, unheeding. "And the fact is, Grace, you have too much nerve for a new kid, and you're too funny."

"Much too funny!" concurred Newcome. "We don't mind you playing your monkey-tricks on the Modern chaps," said Jimmy Silver, "and you can pull Mr. Bootles' leg, or play tricks on Carthew of the Sixth as much as you like; but when you begin on us it's time the stopper was put on. See?"

"Oh!" murmured Putty of the Fourth. "Tricks—on you! I really shouldn't have the nerve. Really important people like you chaps have to be treated with respect."

"None of your cheek!" roared Lovell. Putty raised his eyebrows. "But I'm only acknowledging your im-

portance, old man," he said. "Isn't that what you want?"

"Don't waste any chin-wag on him!" growled Lovell. "Bump him! That's what he's been asking for ever since he came."

"Wait a bit," said Jimmy Silver. "We had a pie in our study cupboard, Putty. We've just taken it out, and we've found that there's nothing but an old boot under the crust. We thought of you at once."

"Just one of your games!" said Raby. Putty of the Fourth looked more wary than ever.

"So kind of you to think of me," he murmured. "I really take that as friendly, Silver."

"So we looked for you," continued Jimmy. "We've decided that you are too funny, Master Putty, and that you've got to be reduced to a proper state of seriousness."

"Thank you so much!"

"The best method we can think of is to give you a jolly good ragging. You understand?"

Teddy Grace nodded. "I think I catch on!" he assented. "I thought I'd explain first," said Jimmy.

"Next time you can't resist being funny, you can select some other study. The end-study is taboo to practical jokers. See?"

"I see."

"And now bump him!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell impatiently. "I'm sorry, Putty," said Jimmy Silver, "but you've got to have your lesson. I really hope it will do you good."

"That's very kind of you."

The soft answer is said to turn away wrath, but Putty's soft answers seemed to have the reverse effect upon the Fistical Four of Rookwood.

"Nail him!" snapped Lovell. And he made a stride towards Teddy Grace.

That cheery youth made a sudden jump away at the same moment, in the direction of the gateway.

He collided with Raby and Newcome, who collared him at once; but the new junior slipped through their hands like an eel. Newcome staggered away, and George Raby sat down with a sudden bump.

And Putty of the Fourth was fleeing for the gates at top speed.

"Oh!" gasped Raby. "After him!" roared Lovell.

The Fistical Four rushed in pursuit. Putty's flight had been so sudden that he had gained a start, but Jimmy Silver & Co. rushed hotly after him.

Putty was quite as fleet of foot as the Fistical Four, however, and he kept his lead,

and reached the gateway well ahead of his pursuers. He went through the old stone gateway like a deer.

But Teddy Grace's luck was out. It was unfortunate for him that someone was about to enter the gates just as he sped out with full steam on. It really was a thing that could not be foreseen, especially in the hurry of the moment.

A tall gentleman, in a white hat and an eyeglass, was just turning in at the gates, and Putty saw him—too late!

Bump! Crash!

Right upon an ample white waistcoat the new junior crashed, a good deal like a battering-ram.

Jimmy Silver & Co. halted suddenly as they beheld that awful catastrophe.

"Mum-mum-my hat!" stammered Lovell. "That's Sir Leicester Stuckey! Oh crumbs!" "Hook it!" gasped Raby.

The Fistical Four "hooked it" at great speed.

Like the gentlemen in "Macbeth," they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

In a moment almost they had melted away from view.

Putty of the Fourth would have been glad to melt away, too; but he had no chance. He tottered dizzily from the shock upon the well-filled white waistcoat of Sir Leicester Stuckey, gasping for breath; what time Sir Leicester staggered back and sat down in the road.

Sir Leicester's white hat went in one direction, his eyeglass in another, and the baronet himself sat in the road and spluttered.

"Oh! Ah! Groogh! By gad! Hoop! Yoop! Begad! Ow!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured the dismayed Putty. "I—I—I'm sorry, sir—"

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

Teddy Grace recovered his breath, and dodged round the seated gentleman to flee. From the expression on Sir Leicester's face he judged correctly that a prolonged interview with him would be of a painful nature.

But the baronet was active for his years. As Teddy Grace dodged, Sir Leicester reached out with his walking-stick, and hooked him with the crook of the handle.

"Stop, you young rascal!" he panted. Teddy Grace had to stop, for his leg was hooked from under him, and he stopped on his hands and knees.

Sir Leicester Stuckey scrambled up, and gripped the junior by the back of the collar, jerking him to his feet. Still holding the unfortunate Putty in an iron grip, he collected up his hat and his eyeglass with the other hand. Putty wriggled painfully in his grasp.

"I—I'm really sorry, sir!" he gasped. "It was an accident—"
 "Ow! Oh! Begad! Ooooooh!"
 "I didn't see you, sir—"
 "You should have seen me!" roared Sir Leicester.

"I—I—I—"
 "Come with me, you young rascal! I shall take you to your headmaster!" thundered the baronet.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Putty. "I—I assure you, sir—"
 "Come!"

And Putty of the Fourth was marched in at the gates with a grasp like a vice on his collar.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
 Catching It!**

"MORE trouble!" grinned Mornington. "Putty again!" chuckled Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 From all directions the Rookwood fellows looked on as Putty of the Fourth was marched across the quadrangle, with Sir Leicester Stuckey's grip on his collar.

Sir Leicester was well known at Rookwood, though Putty, as a new fellow, had never seen him before.

He was a governor of the school, and his place, Stuckey Croft, was only a mile from Rookwood. He was a rather lofty gentleman, and was known to have a temper. Indeed, disrespectful Rookwooders had described him as an old Hun. Certainly he looked rather Hunnish as he marched Putty of the Fourth towards the School House.

Teddy Grace went quietly and meekly; there was nothing else to be done. But he was not feeling happy.

Sir Leicester did not heed the stares and grins on all sides as he progressed across the quad. The Rookwooders had never seen a Rookwood fellow marched along by the collar before, and they were interested.

"Putty's in for it, and no mistake!" remarked Mornington, as the baronet stalked into the House with his victim. "What on earth has he been up to, I wonder?"

"Some of his tricks!" grunted Higgs of the Fourth. "He's always up to something. A licking will do him good."

"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin. "He biffed into old Stuckey at the gates. I saw him. Knocked him over! He, he, he!"

"I—I say, sir," gasped Putty, as he entered the School House with his conductor, "I assure you it was an accident!"

"Nonsense!"
 "On my word, sir—"
 "Hold your tongue!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Putty.
 "Bless my soul! What is this?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, whisking out of his study.

The master of the Fourth blinked at the baronet and the junior over his glasses in great surprise.

Sir Leicester halted.
 "Is this boy in your Form, Mr. Bootles?" he demanded.

"Yes, certainly! What—what—"
 "Then, sir, I hand him over to you for punishment! He has assaulted me, sir—assaulted a governor of the school!" roared Sir Leicester, in great wrath and indignation.

"Bless my soul! Grace, what—what—"
 "It was an accident, sir!" faltered the unhappy Putty.

"It was not an accident!" thundered Sir Leicester. "The boy rushed at me, sir, like a mad bull—like a ferocious bull, sir! Look at my hat! Look at my waistcoat, sir! I have been rolled in the dust! I, sir, a governor of the school!"

And Sir Leicester spluttered.
 "Pray come into my study, sir!" gasped Mr. Bootles, with a glance at the crowd of Rookwooders gathering round.

"Boy, go into your master's study!"
 Putty cast a longing look at the doorway on the quad, but there was no escape for him. He walked meekly into Mr. Bootles' study, followed by Sir Leicester, who had released his collar at last.

Mr. Bootles whisked in after them in a state of great agitation. Mr. Bootles was a nervous little gentleman, and easily flustered; and he was very much flustered now by the wrath of so great a personage as Sir Leicester Stuckey.

Teddy Grace set his collar straight, and looked as meek as he could.

"Now, sir—" murmured Mr. Bootles.
 The baronet pointed a podgy forefinger at Teddy Grace.

"That boy, sir, rushed at me and knocked me spinning—me, sir! I demand the most severe punishment for his insolence! The most condign punishment, sir!"
 Mr. Bootles took up his cane.

"Have you anything to say, Grace?" he asked.
 "Yes, sir! I—"

"What does it matter what the boy says, sir?" snorted Sir Leicester. "I have told you what occurred!"

"Really, sir—"
 "The boy will speak untruthfully. He has done so already!"

"That's not true!" exclaimed Putty indignantly.
 "What—what!"

"I've told you the truth—it was an accident. I didn't see you before I biffed on you—I—I mean, before we collided."

"You should not have been rushing about at such a speed, Grace, as to collide with people you do not see!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles severely. "I shall certainly punish you—"

"I should think so!" exclaimed Sir Leicester. "Begad, I should think so, indeed!"

"But it was an accident, Mr. Bootles!" pleaded Putty.

"You should not have such accidents, Grace!"

"But, sir—"
 "Hold out your hand!"
 There was evidently nothing more to be said.

Swish, swish, swish!
 With Sir Leicester looking on, purple with indignation, his white moustache bristling with wrath, Mr. Bootles laid on the cane with unusual energy.

Swish, swish, swish!
 Putty of the Fourth had been caned before—not underserved—but he had never had anything like this.

Swish, swish!
 "Yow-ow-ow!"

Even Sir Leicester Stuckey was satisfied with the infliction, as he testified by a deep grunt, which was to be taken as a sign of approval.

His angry face cleared a little as he left the Form master's study and strode away to the Head's quarters.

Mr. Bootles laid down his cane.
 "You may go, Grace," he said quietly. "I warn you, my boy, not to play these foolish practical jokes—"

"Ow! But really, sir— Yow!"
 "You must learn, Grace, to restrain your unruly sense of humour," said Mr. Bootles severely. "Yesterday my cane in the Form-room was split. I suspect you of this outrage, Grace."

"Oh, sir!"
 "But this latest prank passes all bounds—an actual assault upon a governor of the school!"

"But I assure you, sir—"
 "You may go"
 "Yes, sir. But—"

"Leave my study, Grace!" snapped the master of the Fourth.

And Putty left it, rubbing his aching palms, and with a decidedly lugubrious expression on his face.

His unruly sense of humour, as Mr. Bootles called it, had landed him in trouble before, and was probably destined to do so again. Whenever a fellow found a boot in his pie, or gum in his inkpot, or ink in his slippers, he thought of Putty at once. Putty was not always guilty; it was a case of a dog with a bad name.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you?" Jimmy Silver came into the School House and discovered Putty of the Fourth going through what looked like a weird series of gymnastics. "Got a pain anywhere?"

"Yow-ow!" said Putty dismally. "It's all your fault! I've been licked! Ow-ow-ow!"

"For biffing old Stuckey?" grinned the captain of the Fourth.

"Ow! Yes. He marched me in to Bootles. Ow!"

"Why didn't you dodge him?"
 "Yow! I couldn't!"

"My dear chap, you're not so bright as you think you are!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"We dodged, and we thought you'd dodged."
 "He hooked me with his walking-stick—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at, you silly ass?" hooted Putty. "I've been jolly well skinned—"

"Wasn't it funny—old Stuckey hooking you with a walking-stick?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Yow! No, it wasn't! Ow!"
 "Ha, ha! That's the weakness of you merry humorists—you never see the humour when it's up against yourselves!" grinned Jimmy. "Think over it, old infant, and you'll see that it's quite funny!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" was Putty's reply.
 Possibly it was funny; but for the present, at least, the humour of it was quite lost on the humorist of the Fourth.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.
 Putty's Little Scheme.**

"WHOOOP!"
 "Putty again!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

It was the following day, which happened to be Wednesday, a half-holiday at Rookwood. The Fistical Four were strolling in the quad after dinner, discussing what was to be done with the afternoon, when they heard that loud and lamentable howl under the old beeches.

It was Putty of the Fourth—evidently in trouble again! He was wriggling in the grasp of Knowles of the Modern Sixth, and the Modern prefect was laying on his asphalt with considerable vigour.

"Whoop! Yoop! I didn't—I wasn't—"
 yelled Putty.

"That's for the gum in my slippers!" said Knowles. Whack! "That's for the oil in my ink-bottle!"

"I didn't—"
 Whack, whack!
 "And that's for being a cheeky young cad!"

"Yaroooh!"
 "Here, hold on, Knowles!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Moderns can't cane Classical chaps. Put the brake on!"

Knowles scowled at the captain of the Fourth, and bestowed another sounding whack on Putty, as if to show that he could cane Classics, in spite of Jimmy Silver's opinion to the contrary.

Then he tucked the asphalt under his arm and strode away.

"Ow, ow!" gasped Putty. "The beast! I've a jolly good mind to go to Bulkeley! Ow!"

"Bulkeley would give you another licking for playing tricks on a prefect!" grinned Ruby.

"I haven't!" roared Putty.
 "Bow-wow!"

"It's all put down to me!" gasped the unhappy humorist. "I haven't been near Knowles' study. Some silly Modern duffer has been playing tricks on him, and he thinks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "That's what comes of being such a jolly funny merchant. You get the benefit of the doubt."

Putty glared indignantly at the Fistical Four as they yelled. Again he failed to see the humour of the situation.

"I'm getting fed up!" he growled.
 "You cackling asses—"
 "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll jolly well make you all sit up somehow—"
 "You can't, old bean!" chuckled Lovell.

"Every time you let your giddy sense of humour get out of hand we shall know it was you, and you'll get it in the neck. And every time it isn't you, you'll get it, anyway. Serve you jolly well right, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
 The Fistical Four walked on, laughing. The woes of the humorist struck them as funny.

Putty wriggled painfully, and there was quite a thoughtful expression on his face as he moved away.

He was feeling very much injured.

But as he reflected the cloud left his face and a smile took its place.

The glimmer in his merry eyes showed that some new idea had come into his fertile brain, and that the trouble that had fallen upon him had not had much effect upon his cheery proclivities.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "What a wheeze! What a thumping wheeze! Bootles—and Knowles—and those silly asses—and old Stuckey! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo! Do you like being licked?" asked Tabby Muffin, joining him under the beeches. "You seem to be enjoying yourself, Putty."



"Young rascals, sweeps, scoundrels—take that—and that!" roared Sir Leicester. Whack! Whack! Crash! The juniors, scurrying in all directions, went down the drive as if they were on the cinder path.

(See Chapter 5.)

"Just thinking of you, old bean!" answered Putty cheerfully. "I want a chat with you, Tubby. You know everything, don't you?"

"I fancy I know most things that go on in Rookwood, anyway," said Tubby, with pride.

"You always will, old fellow, so long as they make keyholes to doors," agreed Putty.

"Look here, you ass—"

"About old Stuckey," said Putty. "I hear that he's a governor of Rookwood, and lives near the school?"

"That's so. I know all about him," answered Tubby Muffin. "His place is called Stuckey Croft, off the Coombe Road. He's a jolly old tartar, too! The Head doesn't really like him dropping in at the school the way he does; but he can't say so, as the old donkey is a governor. He, he, he!"

"Isn't he a nice man?"

"A regular Hun!" answered Tubby impressively.

"Doesn't he often ask the fellows to tea at his place, and all that?"

Tubby stared.

"No jolly fear! He's had Knowles of the Sixth there, I believe. Knowles is rather a sly chap, and he knows how to butter anybody. You have to pull old Stuckey's leg a lot to get on with him."

"Still, he'd be pleased if a fellow dropped in to tea, I should think."

Tubby Muffin chuckled.

"I shouldn't like to be the fellow!" he answered.

"Why not?"

"Well, it would be check—and old Stuckey's about the last man in the world to stand check. If a fellow walked in there without being asked, he would go out on his neck, I should think. It's a fine place, too!" said Tubby. "I've seen it through the gates. Old Stuckey's no end wealthy—funkeys, and all that, at Stuckey Croft. I'd go if he asked me."

"But he hasn't?"

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"Nunno. He's not a nice man."

"But if a chap came in there in a friendly way—suppose I did, for example—to have tea with him—"

"Don't you be such a silly ass, Putty," said Tubby Muffin warningly. "He would lay a stick about you as likely as not!"

"Oh! Then I jolly well sha'n't honour him with my company!" said Putty, laughing.

And he strolled away to the gates. He passed Carthew of the Sixth in the gateway, and Carthew gave him a scowl.

Putty was not on good terms with the bully of the Sixth.

"Hallo, Carthew! Have you lost something?" asked Putty, stopping suddenly.

Carthew stopped. "Lost something? Not that I know of. What—"

"I think you have, though."

"If you've found something that belongs to me you can hand it over!" said the Sixth-Former, staring at him. "What is it?"

"I haven't found it—but I think you've lost it."

"What is it?"

"Your temper, old bean."

Carthew made a jump towards the Fourth-Former, who scuttled out into the road and fled.

Putty did not drop into a walk till he was at a safe distance. His cheery face wore a happy smile as he sauntered on to Coombe.

Arrived in the village, he entered Lamson's, the establishment that supplied most of the Rookwooders with bats and balls and other paraphernalia of outdoor games. Putty was not in search of a new cricket-bat, however. He politely requested permission to use the telephone.

Lamson's telephone was not infrequently used by Rookwood fellows, and Putty's polite request was at once acceded to.

He was shown into a stuffy little office at the back of the shop, and left to his own devices there.

He sat down at the instrument after

seeing that the door into the shop was closed. He was very desirous that his little talk on the telephone should not be overheard.

Probably Mr. Lamson would not have been so obliging if he had known why, and to whom the humorist of Rookwood wished to talk on the telephone. Fortunately he did not know.

Putty removed the receiver from the hook and called up the exchange. And the number he gave was the Head's number at Rookwood, and the voice in which he spoke was remarkably unlike his usual tones. He had assumed for the occasion a deep, bass voice, which was astonishingly like the gruff tones of Sir Leicester Stuckey, of Stuckey Croft.

He asked for James Silver, and when it became apparent who was speaking at the other end of the line, James Silver was commanded to hasten to the telephone in the prefects' room.

Jimmy Silver's amazement when he heard that well-known gruff voice bid him and his friends attend Stuckey Croft for tea that afternoon knew no bounds. Before he had recovered from his astonishment, Jimmy was asked to extend the invitation to Knowles of the Sixth, who was wanted at half-past four o'clock.

Knowles was present in the room, and he came to the phone to thank the baronet for his kindly invitation.

"Rubbish!" said the gruff voice. "Don't waste my time, boy! Is Carthew there?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!" gasped Knowles, and called Carthew.

Carthew came like a shot.

His voice was as honey-sweet as he accepted the invitation.

"I shall expect you at four o'clock, then, Carthew!" came the deep, gruff voice on the wire.

"Certainly, sir—delighted, I'm sure—indeed—Hallo, he's rung off!"

Carthew gave the other seniors in the room a rather boastful look as he left the telephone. Whether it was a pleasure or not, it was a great distinction to be asked to tea by Sir Leicester Stuckey.

Carthew's satisfaction, like that of some other persons at Rookwood, would have been considerably diminished if he had seen the "baronet" at the other end of the wire.

Teddy Grace, with a sweet smile, rose from the stool in Lamson's office and put the receiver back on the hook. He had finished telephoning for that afternoon. With really noble self-denial he had resisted the inclination to ask the Head himself to tea at Stuckey Croft. Even Putty of the Fourth felt that that would be going a little too far.

He passed out through the shop, and thanked Mr. Lamson very sweetly, and sauntered down the village street with a smile upon his face which showed that he was placidly at peace with himself and all the world. He was feeling quite grateful to the inventor of that wonderful instrument, the telephone.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Visitors for Sir Leicester.

MARK CARTHEW, the first on the list of Sir Leicester Stuckey's distinguished guests, arrived in good time at Stuckey Croft. Carthew was looking very pleased with himself, and he was sporting his best tail-coat and his shiniest hat. He glanced at the extensive and well-kept grounds as he came up to the magnificent portal, and was still more pleased. Sir Leicester Stuckey was undoubtedly an acquaintance worth cultivating, even if it did require no inconsiderable amount of buttering to keep him in a good humour.

He gave his name to the footman who admitted him, and was rather surprised that he did not seem to be expected. His name was taken in to Sir Leicester, who was in the library, and the footman returned with a lurking grin of impertinence upon his smooth face.

"Sir Leicester is sorry that he cannot see you, sir."

Carthew stared and reddened.

"Sir Leicester is expecting me!" he exclaimed warmly. "My name is Carthew—Mark Carthew. Sir Leicester asked me to call at four o'clock."

"Sir Leicester's gout is bad to-day, sir, and he is not receiving anyone."

"There's some mistake," said Carthew. "Sir Leicester telephoned to me personally, asking me to call at four o'clock. Perhaps he has forgotten."

The footman gave him a doubtful look, but he returned to his master. A deep voice was heard from the open door of the library.

"Show him in!"
The voice did not sound agreeable, but Carthew was relieved. He had begun to feel very perplexed and uncomfortable. The footman showed him into the library, where Sir Leicester Stuckey sat by a huge fire, with one foot propped upon a cushioned stool. His red face was a little redder than usual, and his eyes had a far from hospitable glitter in them. Carthew, considerably abashed, approached him in some trepidation.

Sir Leicester fixed a glittering eye upon him.

"So—what is your name?"
"Carthew, Sir Leicester. You—you telephoned—"

"When did I telephone?"
"This afternoon, sir—"

"I did not telephone this afternoon!" snorted Sir Leicester. "I am not in a state to telephone this afternoon. Yow-ow!" That ejaculation, apparently, was due to a twinge in Sir Leicester's gouty leg. "What do you mean, boy, by coming here with a statement that I telephoned to you, when I did nothing of the sort?"

"But—but—but—" stammered the bewildered Carthew. "You—you did—"

"What?"
"At least, I—I—I—"
"James!" roared Sir Leicester. James appeared.

"Show this young gentleman out, James! As for you, Carthew, or whatever your name is, I shall mention this to your headmaster. Yow! A schoolboy joke, I presume—a joke—yow!—on me!"

"Oh, no, no!" gasped Carthew. He would as soon have thought of joking with a tiger in the jungle as with Sir Leicester Stuckey. "I—I was rung up—"

"Show him out!"
"I assure you, Sir Leicester, I—I—"
"Show him out!" roared Sir Leicester.

James touched Carthew on the elbow, and the prefect of Rookwood almost tottered out of the library. Sir Leicester gave a snort of angry contempt, followed by a yelp, as he caught another twinge from his leg.

The footman was grinning as he almost pushed the Rookwood prefect out of the door. Carthew wondered whether he was on his head or his heels as he almost limped away down the drive.

Sir Leicester Stuckey snorted and snorted again. His temper was never good, and when the gout had the upper hand it was worse than ever. He regretted that he had not laid his crutch about the Rookwooder who had disturbed his lofty repose that painful afternoon.

And when James—a little nervous himself—announced another visitor, at half-past four, Sir Leicester indulged in a snort that could be heard in the hall by Knowles of the Modern Sixth.

"Have I told you, James, that I cannot see anyone, or have I not?" he demanded.

"Master Knowles—"

"Another boy from Rookwood! What does he want?"

"Ahem! Master Knowles says you telephoned, Sir Leicester—"

Sir Leicester sat boldly upright, and yelped as his leg twinged.

"Telephoned!" he thundered.

"Ye-es, Sir Leicester—"

"Begad! Telephoned! Show the young rascal in!" gasped Sir Leicester. "This is a piece of concerted insolence—what they call, I believe, a rag! Begad, I'll rag them! Show the young scoundrel in!"

The young scoundrel was shown in. Knowles of the Sixth advanced towards the baronet with an insinuating smile upon his face; but the smile became a little frozen as he saw Sir Leicester's purple face and the expression upon it.

"So I telephoned to you, did I?" thundered Sir Leicester.

Knowles jumped.

"Ye-es, certainly—"

"You young rascal!"

"Wh-a-at?" stuttered Knowles.

"Telephoned! By gad! I shall certainly telephone to your headmaster and report this insolence!"

Knowles blinked at him.

"But you—you asked me to tea!" he stammered. "You—you telephoned to—to ask me—"

"How dare you stand before me and utter such falsehoods, boy!" thundered Sir Leicester. "I am very well acquainted with your motive. I am aware of what you call a rag. A rag, by gad! James, turn this fellow out!"

"B-b-b-but—" spluttered Knowles, in blank bewilderment.

"Kick him out!" roared Sir Leicester.

James took Knowles by the arm and led him away. He deposited Knowles, as it were, outside the great door, and closed it on him, leaving the unfortunate Rookwooder wondering whether he was dreaming. It was several minutes before Knowles recovered himself sufficiently to limp away.

Sir Leicester puffed and fumed in his chair. Excitement was decidedly not good for a gouty leg; but Sir Leicester's temper had a will of its own, and was not to be denied. And Sir Leicester had reason to be wrathful. He could only conclude that he was being made the victim of a concerted practical joke, which, in the case of so important a person as himself, almost amounted to sacrilege.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nice for the Fistical Four!

"HALLO! You fellows look in great form!"

Teddy Grace smiled cheerfully at the Fistical Four. The cheerful new junior was hanging about the lane, not far from the entrance to Stuckey Croft, when Jimmy Silver & Co. came along.

Certainly the Fistical Four looked unusually spick and span. Their jackets were nicely brushed, their trousers nicely creased, their ties nicely tied, and they wore their best hats and their best smiles. It was a distinguished occasion, and the chums of the Fourth were doing justice to it.

"We're going to make a rather special call, you see," explained Jimmy.

"Dropping in to see Sir Leicester Stuckey, you know," remarked Lovell negligently.

"Not really?" exclaimed Putty.

"Yes; he rang us up this afternoon," said Raby carelessly.

"Lucky bargees!" said Putty enviously.

"Could you take a pal in?"

"Not quite!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

And he walked on with his chums.

"Jolly decent place, this!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, as the Fistical Four walked up the drive. "Shouldn't mind coming here sometimes. Tea on the lawn would be all right, wouldn't it?"

"Topping!" said Newcome.

"Old Stuckey can't be such a bad sort," went on Lovell. "It's really decent of him to pick us out and ask us to tea. Well, here we are!"

Jimmy Silver rang.
He observed a rather peculiar expression on the well-shaven face of James, as that well-fed menial opened the door. James was positively getting fed up with visitors from Rookwood School.

"Sir Leicester is expecting us!" Jimmy Silver explained, as James showed a disposition not to open the door very wide.

"Sir Leicester cannot see anyone this afternoon," said James.

"He is expecting us. Take in our names!" answered Jimmy, rather sharply.

"Silver, Lovell, Raby, Newcome."

"Sir Leicester has given instructions for no one to be admitted—"

"What rot!" said Lovell. "He must be expecting us, as he telephoned—"

James gave a start.

"Telephoned!" he repeated.

"Yes, to Rookwood!"

"If this is a joke, young gentlemen—"

began James.

"I don't see any joke!" said Jimmy Silver, surprised, and not pleased by the footman's manner. "Take in our names to Sir Leicester at once!"

"I'm afraid I cannot—"

"I tell you Sir Leicester telephoned to us to come at half-past five!" exclaimed Jimmy angrily. "Come on, you chaps!"

And as James showed no disposition to grant a passage, the Fistical Four pushed him aside and entered. The man's conduct was really amazing, and they could not help suspecting that he was not quite sober.

"Now, show us in at once!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I tell you, young gentlemen—"

"Where is Sir Leicester?"

"In the library, sir. But—"

"Well, we want to see him. It's an appointment, man! Don't you understand?" snapped Jimmy.

James stood nonplussed. He could see that the juniors were there in good faith, but he simply dared not announce them to his irascible master. A bell rang, and James hurried to the library.

"What is it, James? Is it some more of them?" came a gruff, ferocious voice, which made Jimmy Silver & Co. blink at one another.

"Yes, Sir Leicester!" gasped James. "Four young gentlemen from Rookwood—"

"Begad!"

"They—they say you telephoned, Sir Leicester—"

"Telephoned!"

It was a roar, in a voice like unto the voice of the bull of Bashan.

"Show them in! Telephoned! Begad! I'll give them telephone! Show them in!"

James made a sign to the amazed juniors, who entered the library.

Sir Leicester Stuckey was standing by the hearth, leaning on his crutch, his face purple.

"So—so you have come to—to see me?" he gasped, with a glare at the Fistical Four.

(Concluded on page 28.)

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"Yes, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver, in dismay. "We—we—we've come to tea, sir—"

"You have come to tea! You—you have come to—tea! I—I presume I telephoned—what?"

"Yes," answered Jimmy Silver. "You telephoned to Rookwood—"

"By gad!"

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

Headless of the twinges in his gouty leg, the angry gentleman strode forward towards them, grasping his crutch.

"Telephoned," he spluttered. "Telephoned, by gad! T-t-tut-telephoned—"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, my hat!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Yoooop!"

The juniors jumped right and left, with yells of astonishment and anguish, as Sir Leicester started in with the crutch.

Whack, whack! Biff!

"Yarooop!"

"Help!"

"Run for it!" shrieked Lovell. "He's mad! Run for your lives!"

"Oh crumbs!"

Helter-skelter the juniors scattered into the hall. Behind them came Sir Leicester, raging, with brandished crutch.

"Telephoned! I'll give you telephone! By gad! Young rascals, swineeps, scoundrels, take that—and that! Telephoned! Take that!"

Whack, whack! Crash!

"Run for it!"

How the unfortunate juniors got out of the door they never knew; but they got out, and went down the drive as if they were on the Cinder-path. Lovell's hat remained in the hall, Baby's on the doorstep, and Newcome's on the drive. But they did not stop for their hats. They would not have stopped for the treasures of Golconda.

They ran!

The lodgekeeper stared at them as they came whooping down the drive. They bolted frantically out into the road.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Lovell, pausing to gasp for breath at last. "What—what—what the thunder—"

"Ow!"

"Oh!"

"Yow-ow! I'm hurt!"

"Oh dear!"

The chums of the Fourth had not enjoyed their visit to Stuckey Croft; but Teddy Grace, to judge by his look when they passed him again, was enjoying himself.

The mystery of the telephone remained a mystery. After a visit from Sir Leicester Stuckey, the following day, the Head made a stern inquiry. Nothing came to light—officially. But unofficially Jimmy Silver & Co. came to a conclusion on the subject which caused them to pay a visit to Putty's study, and without stopping to ask questions, fall upon that youth and smite him hip and thigh, which was some solace to the victims who had been sold again!

THE END.

(There is another grand story of Rookwood in next week's POPULAR. It is entitled "Lovell's Visitor!" The only other paper publishing stories of Rookwood is the BOYS' FRIEND. Now on sale.)

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