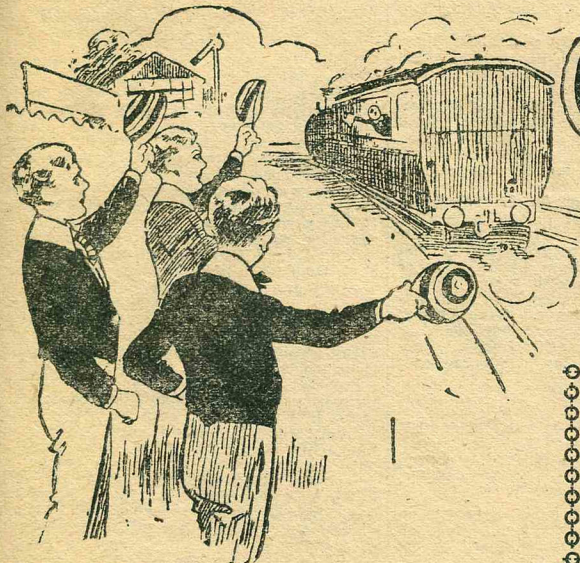


ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL LEAVES ROOKWOOD!

Jimmy Silver & Co., powerless to help their chum, watch Arthur Edward Lovell depart from Rookwood with heavy hearts. A big fight stares Lovell in the face, but he meets the prospect with a plucky front, whilst at Rookwood the chums await further developments!



Chums Divided!

A Splendid Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the famous tales of the Rookwood Chums now appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Last Day at Rookwood!

"I 'VE got to go to-morrow!"
"Leaving Rookwood?"
"Yes," muttered Lovell
Jimmy Silver & Co. were gathered in the end study in the Fourth Form passage. Tea was on the table, but it was hardly touched.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood had, as a rule, healthy, youthful appetites; but just now they had other things than tea to think about.

Jimmy Silver was sitting on the edge of the table, with a deeply worried look on his face. Raby and Newcome had an arm each of the armchair, and they looked worried, too. Arthur Edward Lovell was moving restlessly about the study, seemingly unable to keep at rest. His hands were driven deep into his pockets, and there was a wrinkle in his brow.

"But—" said Raby helplessly.

"But—" mumbled Newcome.

"I've got to go," said Lovell, trying to speak steadily. "It's all up with me here. You know my father came down this afternoon unexpectedly, while the Head was ragging us over that affair with the man at the bungalow. He told me—he's been keeping it back, but it's had to come out at last—we're ruined."

"Ruined?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"All the money's gone," said Lovell miserably. "My father's been robbed. His solicitor, Pilkington, has bolted with nearly all he had—and other people's, too, as well as my father's. He can't be found; and—the police have given him up now, father says. He's supposed to have got safe out of the country. And—and I'm done for here. I—I can't quite get used to the idea yet."

"What awful luck!" muttered Jimmy.

"A friend of the pater is going to give me a start in an office in the City," said Lovell.

"You!" said Jimmy.

His glance dwelt with almost tender compassion upon his troubled chum. He could not imagine Arthur Edward Lovell in an office in the City.

Poor Lovell had his gifts; he was a good cricketer, and he was good at football, and he barely contrived to keep his end up in class. His Latin verses, certainly, were not much better than Tubby Muffin's, and his French made Monsieur Monceau wring his hands. Lovell—starting in the City! Truly, he would be like an earthen jar among the

brass pots. Whatever gifts he had were not of the kind required for the City.

Lovell flushed a little. He was well enough aware of his shortcomings.

"Fancy me on a high stool, trying to keep books and—and things!" he muttered. "I'm no good—I know I'm no good. It ain't in my line, is it? I can keep a straight bat, and I can tell 'em how many forms of the definite article there are in Greek!" He laughed. "I don't think my governor in the City will be satisfied with that much."

"Poor old chap!" murmured Newcome.

"Can't something be done?" said Raby. "What about your young brother, Teddy of the Third? Is he going, too?"

Lovell shook his head.

"No; it can be managed about him—the pater hopes that one of my uncles will come to the rescue for Teddy, and keep him at Rookwood. He's not to know. I'm telling you fellows in confidence, of course. The pater is anxious to keep it all away from my young brother as long as possible. No need to worry that poor kid. The pater didn't really want me to tell anybody; but he's let me tell you chaps. I couldn't clear off without a word, could I?"

"I should jolly well think not," said Jimmy Silver warmly. "But look here, Lovell—"

"Something ought to be done," said Raby.

"Something—somehow!" muttered Newcome, rather vaguely. "You've got friends to stand by you, old chap."

"Nothing you fellows can do. I know you would; but there's nothing, unless you could find that beast who's bolted with the pater's money," said Lovell, with a faint smile.

"But your fees are paid for this term," said Jimmy.

"The Head's agreed to let that stand over for my young brother next term."

"Oh!"

"You—you see," muttered Lovell uncomfortably. "It's—it's rather important about poor old Teddy—he's too young to be bothered with anything of this kind, if it can be helped."

"You're not exactly a Methuselah yourself!" growled Raby.

"I can stand it better than Teddy. You fellows will be jolly careful not to say a word!" said Lovell anxiously.

"Oh, of course! But look here," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't leave Rookwood, Lovell. I'll speak to my father—"

"What about?"

"About your fees. I know he would play up. You know my pater, and he likes you, and—"

"Can't be done, old scout!" said Lovell.

"You're awfully good, Jimmy, and I know your pater's a brick; but I'm not sticking anybody for money. And—and, besides, my place is at home now. There's my sisters—they'll have to be provided for somehow. I've got to work at—something—somehow. I've got to get well off somehow!"

"Poor old chap!" murmured Jimmy.

His heart ached for his chum at that moment.

"I may get on in business," said Lovell, after a pause. "People do, you know. I may become quite successful, you know, and marry the governor's daughter when I grow up, like that chap—what was his name?"

"Dick Whittington," said Raby.

"That's it! He started lower down, you know, and he became Lord Mayor of London," said Lovell hopefully. "I—I dare say he may have been a cleverer chap than I am."

There really was not much doubt on that point; but Lovell's chums would not have told him so for worlds.

"Why not?" said Jimmy Silver, as heartily as he could. "Perhaps some day you'll be knighted by the King as Lord Mayor of London. Hem! Sir Arthur Lovell—"

"Sounds all right," said Newcome.

Lovell grinned.

"That's a long way off," he said. "I think I'll go and pack my box—as the first step towards becoming Sir Arthur Lovell, Lord Mayor of London."

"We'll come and help!" said Jimmy.

And the chums of the Fourth left the end study together, in the most dolorous mood they had ever experienced in their young lives.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Under the Shadow.

PUTTY GRACE of the Fourth dropped into the end study later in the evening, at the time usually supposed to be devoted to prep. There was a bright and cheerful grin upon the humorous countenance of Putty of the Fourth. No prep was going on in the end study. Lovell had none to do, and his chums were not in a humour for it. They had decided to "chance it" with Mr. Bootles in the morning. Their untasted tea had been turned into supper, and they were disposing of it dismally when Putty's cheery face dawned upon them in the doorway.

Putty did not observe the despondency that reigned in the study at first. His own spirits were always buoyant, and they seemed to be unusually buoyant now.

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Farewell to Rookwood.

"GOOD-BYE!"

It had come to that. Lovell sat in the train at Coombe Station, the morning sunshine glimmering on his troubled face; his chums, on the platform, were bidding him farewell.

Mr. Bootles had kindly given the three juniors leave from lessons, to see their chum off at the station. Mr. Bootles, indeed, had been very kind to Lovell, shaking hands warmly with him when he left, and expressing his good wishes for the future. Even the stately old Head had unbent a little, and shaken hands quite cordially with Lovell before he stepped into the station cab.

The Fourth Form were in class at Rookwood now as Lovell sat in the train that was to bear him away. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome were there to see him off, and perhaps Lovell would have liked Teddy of the Third to be there with them. But it had not occurred to Master Edwin to ask his Form-master for leave. True, Lovell minor did not know the serious state of affairs at home, and was far from guessing the heavy trouble that lay at his brother's heart.

"Good-bye, old fellow!"

"You'll write?"

"And we'll see you in the vac, old scout."

"Don't forget to write."

"You—you—" Lovell faltered. "I say, Jimmy, you—"

"Yes, old fellow?"

"You—you might keep a bit of an eye on Teddy sometimes—after I'm gone. He—he's rather a young ass, you know!" stammered Lovell. "I know you don't care for him much—"

"I will!" said Jimmy.

"He's rather a cheeky little scamp, I know, and he—he's liable to run himself into trouble. I've never been able to look after him as much as I wanted. You—you might speak to him sometimes, and—just see that he doesn't land himself in trouble—as far as you can, you know—"

"Stand back there!"

The train was moving. A last handshake through the window, and the juniors stepped back as the train glided on its way.

Arthur Edward Lovell's pale face was seen for a minute longer, and the chums waved their hands to him, and then the train disappeared down the line.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood watching the train till it vanished, and they looked in its direction for some time after it had gone from their sight.

They turned away at last with heavy hearts.

It was almost impossible to realise that Lovell was gone—gone for ever from old Rookwood and from the end study.

In dismal mood they left the station.

They came out into the sunny village street slowly.

"Oh, it's rotten!" muttered Raby. "Poor old Lovell! And—and there's nothing a fellow can do!"

"If I could get near that lawyer chap who bolted!" muttered Jimmy Silver, clenching his hand. "How I'd like to give him just one—"

"Wouldn't I just!" said Newcome.

"I'm not going back to Rookwood yet!" growled Jimmy. "Bootles has given us leave, anyhow. I couldn't stand classes this morning! Let's go for a stroll."

"Bootles will expect us for second lesson, won't he?"

"Better second lesson!"

"Oh, all right!"

The chums turned into the path to the heath. They felt a little cheered as they came out on the wide heath, with its rich gorse glimmering in the sunshine, and the keen breeze from the distant sea. They talked in a desultory way as they strolled, and their talk ran on poor Lovell and his disaster. That topic was likely to be an undying one in the end study.

What a good chap he was! That was the burden of their remarks. Raby and Newcome recalled, with deep compunction, the "jape" they had played on him the day his minor came to Rookwood, and Jimmy Silver remembered more than one hasty word he would have been glad now to recall. But, after all, they had been jolly good pals, and that they always would be while life lasted. The three were quite clear on that point.

"Hallo! We're breaking bounds!" Raby remarked suddenly.

He nodded towards the low, one-story building near the footpath they were following.

Unconsciously, their footsteps had led them by the lonely bungalow where the man in black had made their acquaintance.

The footpath was a public one; but since the trouble between Mr. Lasker and the Rookwooders the Head had placed it out of bounds for all junior boys at Rookwood.

"Bother!" said Jimmy crossly. "We're not turning back now; we're going on through the wood home!"

"Yes, rather!"

The juniors glanced curiously at the lonely house as they passed.

Mr. Lasker was a rather mysterious tenant, and even now the bungalow did not look as if it was occupied.

There was no smoke from the chimney, which might be accounted for by the warmth of the weather. But the garden looked as neglected as of old; not a weed had been displaced, and the gaps in the fence were unrepaired. The paint on doors and windows was old and cracked, and had not been retouched. All the windows but one were covered by blinds, and the one that was not covered had a screen standing just within, which shut off all view of the apartment inside.

Probably Mr. Lasker was some misanthropic recluse, who did not love the society of his fellow-men; yet, even so, it was extraordinary that he should care for so solitary a life. Certainly he had shown a strong objection to having his solitude broken by schoolboys. The vindictive bitterness with which he had pursued the Rookwooders for their inadvertent trespass on his domain showed that he was determined not to risk a repetition of it.

"Queer beggar!" Jimmy Silver remarked. "I've got an idea that he knows Lovell's pater, and doesn't like him. You remember he was at Rookwood, complaining to the Head, when Mr. Lovell arrived, and he fairly dodged him. It struck me at the time."

"Same here!" said Newcome. "The Head noticed it, too, I think. I asked Lovell, and he said he'd never heard his father speak of anybody named Lasker."

"There's the johnny, I think," said Raby.

A figure came in sight over the ragged rhododendrons and laurels in the neglected garden. It was a man dressed in black, with a black, pointed beard and a foreign look. Undoubtedly it was Mr. Lasker, and the chums of Rookwood hurried their steps, conscious that they were out of bounds, though not within Mr. Lasker's dominions. The man in black was pacing the garden, apparently taking the air, but not coming outside his own fence.

The black figure stopped suddenly, and the dark, sharp face of the bungalow tenant peered at the juniors over the fence.

His eyes glittered at the sight of them.

Evidently he recognised the three juniors at a glance as easily as they recognised him. They hurried on.

The glance he had given them was angry and savage, and they would willingly have "chipped" him as they passed, in return for his incivility, but they wisely forbore. That small satisfaction was not worth another caning from the Head.

"Savage-looking beast!" remarked Raby, as they went on into the wood and the heath was left behind. "I'd like to make him sit up, if only because he got poor old Lovell a caning the day before he had to clear out of Rookwood."

"Putty was talking about a stunt," said Newcome.

"Oh, bother Putty and his stunts!" said Jimmy Silver. "I don't feel equal to stunts just at present."

And his comrades felt the same; indeed, they wondered whether they would ever recover their old cheery, careless spirit now that their chum was gone.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Grief of Tubby Muffin.

"YOU fellows have been taking it easy!"

Thus Reginald Muffin, as Jimmy Silver & Co. came back into the school gates after morning lessons were over at Rookwood.

Tubby Muffin looked, and felt, rather injured.

The fat youth had been in hot water with Mr. Bootles that morning, as he often was, chiefly owing to laziness. Tubby certainly

"Hallo! You chaps done prep?" he asked. "Cut it!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Well, I've cut it rather short, too," said Putty. "I've been thinking of a stunt."

No reply. The Fistical Four were not in a mood for stunts just then; prep would have been quite as welcome. But Putty, full of his own ideas, ran on, unheeding the silence.

"That fellow in black—Lasker's his name, I think—who lives at the bungalow on Coombe Heath," said Putty. "He came up to the school to-day and got you fellows a licking for trespassing in his silly garden."

"Bother him!" growled Jimmy.

"It was like his cheek, wasn't it?" said Putty. "You didn't know a new tenant had taken the bungalow when you went into the garden after Smythe. He laid into you with a stick, and then came and got you a caning from the Head—spiteful beast, I call him! Now there's a notice on the board, putting all that part of the heath out of bounds, as far as the cross-roads. That's a short cut to Latham barred to us. Don't you fellows think it's time for reprisals?"

"Grunt!" "You don't seem jolly enthusiastic about it," said Putty, with a stare. "I expected to find you keen to go on the war-path."

"Oh, bother the man!"

"Well, look here. That rotter is a rotter, you know—spiteful as a Prussian Hun. He's some sort of a recluse, or misanthrope, you know. He's so jolly malicious, just to make sure that no chap will ever go near his place. Don't you think so?"

"Very likely."

"Looks like it," said Raby, a little interested at last. "He came down so heavy because he doesn't want to be disturbed, I should say. Some sort of a beastly cynic—like some dashed old Diogenes—and don't like schoolboys kicking up a row near his show. Like his cheek!"

"Exactly. Now, my idea is to punish him for his cheek," said Putty. "I've thought of a stunt."

"Take it away and bury it!" "Don't you want to make Lasker sit up?" demanded Putty.

"Bother Lasker!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're not thinking about Lasker, old chap. Lovell's leaving to-morrow."

"Oh!" ejaculated Putty. "Lovell leaving! Is that why you're sitting around like a set of mouthing owls?"

"Fateh!"

"I'm sorry, though," said Putty, sincerely enough. "What the thump are you leaving for, Lovell, early in the term, too?"

"Oh, I'm going home!"

"I suppose so, if you're leaving. I didn't think you were running away to be a pirate," said Putty. "But why?"

"The pater says so."

"Going to another school?"

"N-no."

Lovell flushed uncomfortably, and Putty, after a rather curious glance at him, dropped the subject. He was not inquisitive, and he could see that Arthur Edward did not want to explain.

"Well, I suppose you don't want to be bothered with my cheery old stunts now," he said. "Ta-ta!"

And Putty left the study.

True enough, the Fistical Four were not giving much thought to Mr. Lasker, of Heath Bungalow, much as that unpleasant gentleman had annoyed them. The departure of Lovell from Rookwood occupied their minds to the exclusion of all other considerations.

They did not "show up" in the Common-room that evening.

Lovell wished to avoid the fellows as much as possible, in order to keep off the subject of his sudden departure; it was impossible to explain the circumstances, and he was a bad hand at keeping a secret.

By the time the Classical Fourth went to their dormitory, it was pretty generally known that Lovell was going in the morning. Several fellows asked him questions, rather out of friendliness than curiosity, but Lovell's replies were curt and vague. Tubby Muffin was the only inquisitive one, and to Tubby's queries Lovell did not vouchsafe a reply at all.

The Fistical Four were the last to sleep in the Classical Fourth dormitory that night.

The hard realities of life, of which they had known scarcely anything so far, had suddenly descended upon them. When they turned out at the clang of the rising-bell, four of usually the sunniest faces at Rookwood were dismally clouded.

was obtuse, and Mr. Bootles was lenient with him on that account; but when he added laziness to obtuseness, the Form-master not unnaturally lost patience. So Tubby had been hauled over the coals, which annoyed him; he had been given fifty lines, which annoyed him still more; and all this had happened while three members of the Form were out walking instead of slogging in the Form-room, which annoyed Tubby most of all. Tubby would have been perfectly willing to see Lovell off at the station instead of grinding at Latin conjugations and Greek declensions; indeed, Tubby would rather have seen his worst enemy off anywhere than have done any work of any kind. Tubby felt that he was an injured party.

"Nice for some fellows!" pursued Muffin, in a tone of cynical moroseness. "Some fellows get a nice walk in the morning, and some fellows have to stick to rotten dead languages, and it's quite fair play—I don't flink!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not look as if they had been enjoying their walk; but Tubby did not observe that. His thoughts were exclusively bestowed upon his own injuries.

"Ass!" grunted Jimmy. They walked on into the quad, and Tubby trotted with them. He was by no means finished with his grievances.

"Suppose I'd taken a morning off," he said, "Bootles would have raised Cain! You know he would! I call it favouritism!"

"Oh, dry up!"

"Well, isn't it rotten?" demanded Tubby. "I'd have seen Lovell off. After all, he was a pal of mine, too! The fact is, Lovell liked me better than he did you fellows!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"I'm sorry he's gone," said Tubby—"really sorry! I feel these things, you know, being a more sensitive chap than you fellows! He was rather rude last evening when I asked him to lend me a bob; but I forgive him!"

"Idiot!"

"It's all very well calling a fellow names, Jimmy Silver, but—"

Mr. Bootles appeared in the doorway as the chums came into the School House, and Tubby broke off.

Mr. Bootles gave the Co. a benignant look. He could see in their troubled faces how much they felt the loss of their chum. They were not fellows to wear their hearts upon their sleeves; but they simply could not help looking "down" when they felt so very down.

"You—hem!—saw Lovell off—what?" said Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir!"

"You did not—hem!—return in time for the next lesson," remarked Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy coloured.

"No doubt you have been delayed, however," added the little gentleman kindly.

"We—we could have got back for second lesson, sir," said Jimmy Silver honestly, "but—but we were feeling so rotten, sir! You see—"

"I understand, my dear boy. I excuse you," said Mr. Bootles. And he passed on.

"Good old sort!" murmured Newcombe, when the Form-master was out of hearing.

Snort from Tubby Muffin.

"Some fellows have all the luck!" he said bitterly. "Some fellows get into their Form-masters good graces! Some fellows are above that! Yah!"

Jimmy looked at him.

"Do you want your silly head banged on the doorpost, Muffin?" he inquired.

Tubby Muffin jumped back.

"Eh? No—nunno!"

"Then you'd better sheer off!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, kick him!" growled Raby.

"Yah!"

Reginald Muffin sheered off without waiting to be kicked.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not bother their heads about Tubby and his grievances; they had trouble enough of their own to think about. They tried to look as cheerful as usual, but even Jimmy himself could not "keep smiling."

In the Form-room that afternoon the three juniors felt inexpressibly bored and worried with lessons. They simply could not put their thoughts into their work. They thought of poor old Lovell, at home by this time, and under what conditions! A troubled and anxious father, probably in

a tart temper; a troubled mother whom he could not help in her trouble; his sisters probably downcast and worried. What a homecoming for poor old Lovell! It was difficult, with such thoughts in their minds, to take an interest in "hic, hæc, or hoc," or in "ho, he, ho." And the kind-hearted Mr. Bootles, who had been a boy himself at some much earlier stage in his career, took pity on them.

"Hem! Silver, Raby, Newcombe—"

"Yes, sir," mumbled Jimmy Silver, in dismal expectation of a lecture.

"You—hem—may take your books into the quadrangle, you three boys," said Mr. Bootles.

"Oh, thank you, sir!"

Gladly enough and, very grateful to Mr. Bootles, the three juniors left the Form-room.

They took their books with them, though those books were not likely to be much pored over that afternoon. Mr. Bootles knew that; he was, in fact, letting them off afternoon lessons in a tactful way.

Tubby Muffin fairly glared after the three as they went.

If Tubby had felt the morning's affair unjust to his estimable self, he was simply overwhelmed by this.

The other fellows did not seem to mind. Even Peele had lost his usual sneer on this occasion.

But Tubby sat in suppressed indignation. Jimmy and Raby and Newcombe were let off because Lovell was gone. He was their chum, and they missed him, and for that reason they were shown this undue favour, as Tubby regarded it. Indignation as Tubby felt was natural, but it was of no service. Mr. Bootles did not even know that he was indignant, and certainly Reginald Muffin would not have ventured to tell him.

But, as he suppressed his outraged feelings, a new idea came into Tubby's fat mind, and he smiled.

The Fourth Form was suddenly startled by an extraordinary sound from Reginald Muffin.

"Boo-hoo!"

Mr. Bootles jumped.

Every neck in the Classical Fourth moved as if by the same spring, and every eye was fixed on Muffin.

That fat youth had bowed his head over his desk, and was weeping loudly.

"Boo-hoo! Hoo!"

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles, in astonishment. "Muffin, what are you making that extraordinary noise for? How dare you, sir, make that ridiculous noise in the class-room?"

"I—I—I'm only c-c-crying, s-s-sir!" gasped Muffin.

"What? What are you crying for?"

"My—my grief, s-s-sir—"

"Your what?"

"Grief, s-s-sir—my fearful grief—"

"Are you out of your senses, Muffin?"

"Nunno, s-s-sir—not at all, s-s-sir! I—I'm stricken with grief, s-s-sir! It's awful! Boo-hoo!"

"What can you possibly mean, Muffin?" exclaimed the astonished Form master. "Have you had some bad news from your home?"

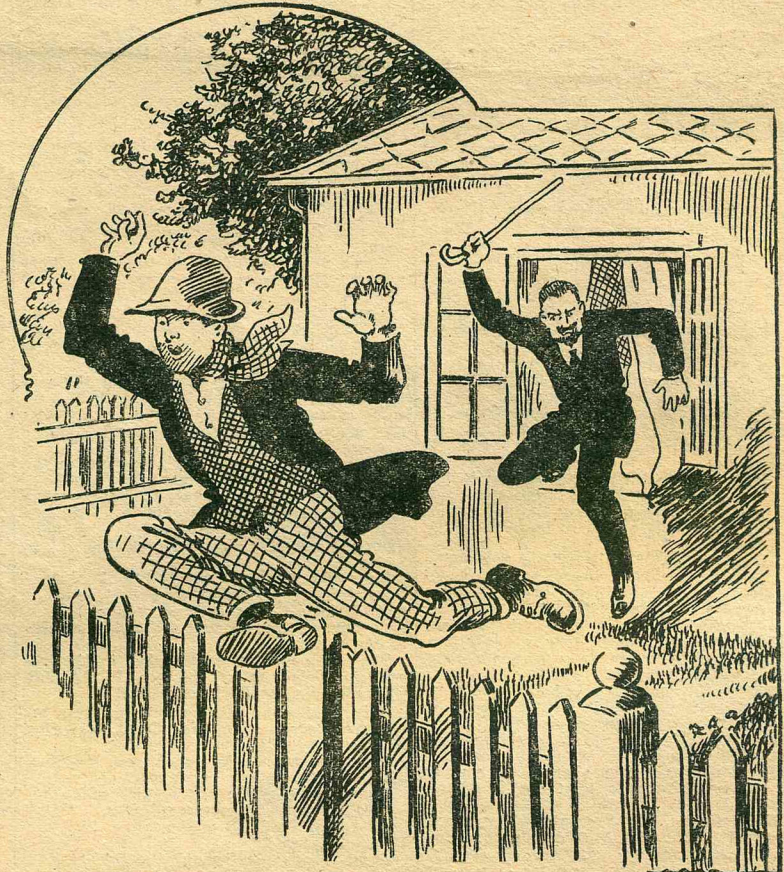
"Oh, no, s-s-sir!" wailed Tubby Muffin, knocking his round eyes industriously. "My dear old pal, s-s-sir—"

"Was Lovell a friend of yours, Muffin?"

"My very best pal, s-s-sir. We loved each other like brothers," groaned Muffin. "He—he cried at leaving me, s-s-sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

That sudden howl of merriment was simply irresistible. The whole Classical Fourth joined in it. The idea of anybody crying at parting with Tubby Muffin was too much for them.



RAGGING THE MAN IN BLACK! The second caller fled without finishing his speech about the "noo dye" as the man in black made a flying leap from the window, stick in hand. The stick brandished behind the boy as he fled, and he just escaped it as he leaped the garden fence to the footpath outside. (See Chapter 6.)

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles angrily.
 "Muffin—"
 "Boo-hoo!"
 "Boy!"
 "I-I c-c-can't help it, sir!" wept Tubby.
 "Mum-my heart is breaking, sir! I-I'm so grief-stricken, sir! C-c-can't I take my books out the quad, sir?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles.
 He understood now the cause of that sudden accession of grief on the part of Reginald Muffin.

"I-I think I could bear it better out of doors, sir," mumbled Tubby. "Oh! Boo-hoo! Hoo-hoo!"

He rose to his feet.
 If there was anything like justice to be had at Rookwood, Tubby felt that he was sure of an afternoon off now.

But justice, from Muffin's point of view, was not a commodity to be had so easily.

Instead of saying "Go at once, my poor dear boy!" Mr. Bootles only stepped to his desk, picked up a cane, and said:

"Come here, Muffin!"
 Muffin's weeping stopped suddenly. He eyed the cane with great uneasiness.

"C-c-can't I g-g-go out, sir?" he stammered.

"You may not, Muffin! You may come here!"

"Oh lor!"
 Muffin came out before the class very reluctantly.

"You absurd and unscrupulous boy!" said Mr. Bootles severely. "I believe you are capable of almost any deception in order to avoid the easiest of tasks. Hold out your hand, Muffin!"

"I—I—Ow—I—"
 "Your hand, sir!" thundered Mr. Bootles. "Oh dear!"

Swish!
 "Yaroooh!"

"Now go back to your place, Muffin. And if there is any more absurdity on your part this afternoon I shall send you in to the Head!"

"Ow!"
 Tubby Muffin went back to his place disillusioned. Evidently there was no such thing as justice at Rookwood for Reginald Muffin. He did not weep over Lovell's departure any more. His grief had vanished as suddenly as it had arisen. What grief Tubby felt now was entirely for himself and his smarting pain, and that was enough for him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. For Lovell's Sake.

"I T'S chiefly on Lovell's account," urged Putty of the Fourth.

"Oh, bother!" said Jimmy Silver.

It was Saturday afternoon, and Putty of the Fourth had run down the Fistical Three in the quad. The three were discussing—not very brightly—what was to be done with that half-holiday. A half-holiday without old Lovell did not seem quite like a half-holiday somehow. Putty of the Fourth was grinning genially as he came up, and it was clear that the Rookwood scapegrace had a "stunt" in his fertile mind.

"The rotter!" Putty was referring to the tenant of Heath Bungalow. "The awful cad got poor old Lovell a-licking the day before he left. We really owe it to Lovell to make him sit up."

"I'd like to," said Raby. "But you—"
 "Isn't he a malicious beast, anyhow?" demanded Putty.

"Right on the wicket there."
 "Well, instead of mooching about the quad, looking as if you were just going to the undertaker's to order your own funerals, come along with me and make him sit up."

"What's the game?" asked Jimmy Silver.
 "Remember the bungalow's out of bounds, and the Head's very waxy about it. And that cad would come up and report us at once."

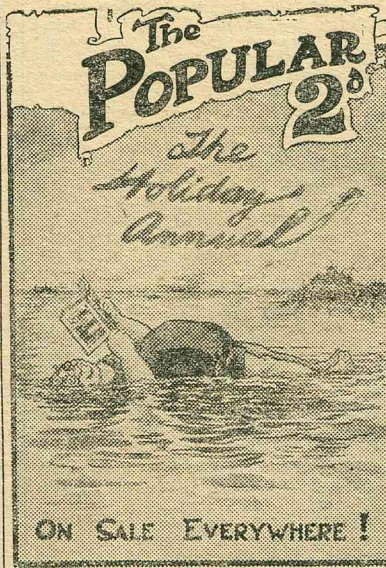
"He won't have the chance, of course. I'm not going out to hunt for a licking from the Head."

"Well, what's the programme?" yawned Newcome. "I'd like to give him one for Lovell's sake, and generally."

"Good!" said Putty. "Besides, it will cheer you up, you know, to keep your minds occupied, and you can't occupy them better than by making that ruffian sit up."

"Well, go ahead!"
 Putty of the Fourth proceeded to explain, and the Co. listened without much interest at first. But their interest awakened as

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Putty continued to expatiate upon his wonderful wheeze, and they were grinning before he had finished.

"You see, it will make him sit up no end," said Putty. "He's a merry misanthrope or something. He likes solitude. I shouldn't wonder if he's got some crime on his conscience. He looks like it. And we know he has his whiskers dyed—"

"No doubt about that."
 "Well, come on, then," said Putty brightly.

"We may as well take Morny and Conroy. The more the merrier."

"Right-ho!"
 Ten minutes later a little party left the gates of Rookwood, some of them carrying bags.

There were six fellows in the party, Conroy and Mornington having joined up as requested.

The juniors strolled carelessly away till they reached the wood, where it bordered Coombe Lane, and then they turned in among the trees.

There the bags were opened, and the contents turned out, the contents being six suits of exceedingly old clothes, the oldest the juniors had been able to annex for their purpose.

Changing clothes, in the recess under the trees, was the work of a very few minutes.

Then mud was scraped up from the pool in the wood, and faces were liberally rubbed with it, and the juniors ruffed their hair, and put on old caps without the school badge.

They did not look much like Rookwood fellows now. Indeed, they looked as dirty and disreputable a set of young tramps as could have been found within the borders of the county.

Their own clothes were packed in the bag and concealed in a thicket, to be left till called for, as Putty expressed it.

"My hat! You fellows look a lovely set of scarecrows," remarked Putty, surveying his comrades with a muddy grin.

"Same to you!" said Mornington, laughing.

"Hallo! Somebody's coming!"

There was a rustle in the thickets. "Mind your voices don't give you away if it's a Rookwood chap."

A fat form came through the thickets. It was Tubby Muffin.

Tubby was blinking round him, evidently in search of something, and he gave a jump at the sight of the half-dozen young tramps.

"Oh!" he ejaculated.

"Wotcher want 'ere, nar then?" demanded Putty of the Fourth, in a husky voice.

"N-no offence!" stuttered Tubby, in alarm. "I—I was looking for some fellows. You

haven't seen half a dozen fellows, I suppose, with some bags? They—they were going picnicking, I think, and—and they forgot to ask me. I mean—"

"Garn!"
 "I—I was looking for them. No offence, you know. They were going to leave me out of the picnic—I mean— Here, you keep off!" howled Tubby, in alarm, as one of the muddy-complexioned young ruffians made a rush at him.

"Nab 'em!"

"Down 'em!"
 "Strike me pink! Arter 'em!"
 Tubby Muffin fled for his life.

He was looking for picnickers, with a view to sharing a picnic, and he had fallen among thieves, like the gentleman in the parable; or, at least, he supposed he had.

Never had Reginald Muffin exerted himself as he did during the next few minutes.

He was scratched by bramble and briar, and streaming with perspiration when he rolled out into Coombe Lane at last, and there he did not venture to stop. As fast as his tubby legs could carry him Reginald Muffin sprinted for Rookwood.

And the half-dozen juniors, chuckling, took their path through the wood towards the heath and the lonely bungalow.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Many Callers.

KNOCK!
 A dirty-looking youth, in shabby clothes stained with mud, knocked at the door of Heath Bungalow.

There was hardly a sign of life about the place.

A stranger passing it would certainly have supposed it to be uninhabited. The knock at the door echoed through the low building, as though an empty house. And the echo was all that followed. No one came to the door. It did not open.

Knock, knock, knock!
 Five minutes passed, and during those minutes there was an active solo performed on the door-knocker.

A window near the door opened at last.

A dark, angry, bearded face looked out. The man in black had been roused at last.

"What do you want?" he shouted.

"Oh, you're at 'ome, sir!" said the visitor. "I been a-knockin' 'ere for nigh on 'arf a nower, sir."

"What do you want?"
 "Please, I've brought the noo dye for your whiskers!"

"What?"
 "The noo dye for your whiskers, sir."

The man in black glared from the window, as if transfixed. The muddy youth nodded to him cheerfully.

"I'm a-waitin', sir," he said. "I s'pose it's 'igh time you 'ad the noo dye, sir; that there's coming 'ere."

"I—I—" stuttered the astounded and enraged occupant of the bungalow. "I—I—"

"Yessir; been waiting for the noo dye, sir?"

"How dare you come here? Go away at once!" spluttered the gentleman in black.

"I'm awaitin' for you to hopen the door, sir."

The man in black disappeared from the window, and hurried footsteps were heard approaching the door. Then the muddy youth wisely put the length of the weedy garden-path between him and the door, and waited outside the gate.

The door flew open, and the enraged tenant of the bungalow appeared with a big stick in his hand.

"Good-bye, old bird!" called out the muddy youth. "Keep your wool on, and mind the step!"

And he scudded off.

The man in black made a step out after him, but, doubtless, he realised that he could never overtake the practical joker on the open heath. He retired into the house again, and slammed the door.

A quarter of an hour later another stranger stopped at the bungalow, and knocked at the door.

This time the tenant looked out of the window at once.

"Who is it?" he asked harshly.

"The noo dye for your 'air, sir."

"What?"
 "The noo dye— Oh, my hat!"

The second caller fled without finishing his speech, as the man in black made a flying leap from the window, stick in hand.

The stick brandished behind him as he fled, and he just escaped it as he leaped the garden gate to the footpath outside.

"Oh crumbs!" he gasped, in quite a

different voice from that he had used at the door.

He ran his hardest, and the man in black, after brandishing the stick fiercely over the gate, returned to the house.

Door and window were closed, and the bungalow resumed its silent and deserted appearance.

But not for long. A third muddy youth came looting along the footpath, entered the gate, and knocked at the door.

The door opened, and the tenant appeared, stick in hand. Evidently he had been waiting.

"Now——" he began.

"Skuse me, sir!" said the stranger civilly.

"Does Mr. Jones live 'ere?"

"No!"

"You're sure of that there, sir?"

"Certainly!"

The door shut in the inquirer's face.

Knock, knock!

The door opened again and the tenant glared at the stranger.

"Skuse me, sir! Can you tell me where Mr. Jones do live?" asked the youth innocently.

"No, I cannot."

"Stranger 'ere yourself, maybe, sir?"

"Mind your own business!"

Slam!

Knock, knock!

The door flew open once more, and the man in black flew out. He had no further doubt that this apparently innocent inquirer was in league with the previous practical jokers.

"'Ere, 'old on!" howled the hapless youth, as the gentleman in black collared him.

"Wotcher playin' at?"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh, crumbs! Yaroooooh!"

"You impudent young rascal!" panted the tenant of the bungalow. "I will teach you to come playing tricks here! Take that, and that, and that!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crumbs! Rescue!" roared the victim, struggling vainly to release himself from Mr. Lasker's savage grip.

If Mr. Lasker had ever heard Putty Grace speak before—which, fortunately, he hadn't—he would have recognised the voice of the scapegrace of Rookwood.

He did not know that he was dealing with a Rookwooder at all. He supposed it was some mischievous village boy, and he intended to give that mischievous village boy a lesson.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Rescue!" bawled Putty.

There was a rush of feet on the heath outside the garden. Putty, having unfortunately fallen into the hands of the Amalekite, had rather disarranged the scheme. But his comrades could not hear his yell for help unmoved. Jimmy Silver threw open the garden gate, and five muddy, shabby youths rushed up the path.

Whack, whack!

"Pile in!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Oh! Ah, ah! Oh!" spluttered the man in black, as he was collared and wrenched away from his victim.

Putty staggered away, gasping for breath.

"Rag the rotter!" he panted. "Ow, ow! Oh! I'm hurt! Rag him! Ow-wow!"

The gentleman in black with the dyed whiskers struggled furiously in the grasp of the excited juniors. They rushed him back into the house, and rolled him on the floor of the narrow hall.

He yelled as he rolled, uttering savage execrations that rather startled the ears of the Rookwooders.

"Hook it!" gasped Raby.

The juniors scudded away down the weedy path to the gate. Forth from the bungalow came the man in black in pursuit, his stick in his hand again. His whiskered face was white with rage.

"Put it on!" gasped Conroy. "He's after us!"

They ran into the trees breathlessly, with the pursuer close behind. Conroy caught a lash of the stick over his shoulders, and yelled. Then it caught Mornington on the head, and Morny staggered. He was hurt.

Mornington spun round on his pursuer, his eyes glittering.

The infuriated man was coming on with uplifted stick, evidently careless of the damage he did in his rage. Morny dodged the stick, ran in, and hit out from the shoulder.

His knuckles caught Mr. Lasker on his bearded chin, and the bungalow tenant went to grass with a bump and a yell.

"Hook it!" panted Putty.

The juniors vanished into the trees.

They were far beyond the reach of pursuit when the bungalow tenant staggered to his feet, nursing his chin. They were still running when he started back to the bungalow. They stopped at last in the shady glade where the boys had been left.

"Safe now!" gasped Jimmy Silver, throwing himself into the grass to rest. "My hat! What an afternoon!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Putty.

"I've got a lump on my napper!" mumbled Mornington. "Still, I gave him one as good. Ow!"

There was not one of the half-dozen that had not suffered severely from the stick. It was some time before the juniors felt energy enough to change their clothes and wash their faces in the pool.

"We shall have to be jolly careful to keep this dark!" Jimmy Silver remarked. "If the Head knew——"

"Phew!"

"Floggin' all round!" said Mornington. "But the Head won't know. Lasker never knew us from Adam. Ow, my napper!"

"What a jape!" groaned Newcome.

"Putty, you ass——"

"Putty, you chump——"

"It was a jolly good jape!" said Putty dolorously. "If he hadn't caught me at the door——"

"He never caught me!" growled Raby.

"Or me!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're an ass, Putty; and if this gets out it means a flogging all round. The rotter would call it a case of assault, though we only meant to keep him hopping round his front door for the afternoon. Oh dear! Let's get in!"

The juniors, restored to their proper persons and their usual cleanliness, made their way through the wood, and came out into the lane.

They tramped home to Rookwood, not quite satisfied with the results of the rag. Certainly, they had made the man in black "sit up"; but after getting to close quarters, the man in black had made them sit up very seriously indeed.

"Never mind," said Putty, when they reached the school. "Another time——"

"Oh, bump him!" said Newcome.

And as Putty of the Fourth sat down forcibly in the gateway, it was borne in upon his mind that stunts, for the present at least, were unpopular.

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"FERRERS LOCKE'S WARD!"
(Continued from page 17.)

directly. "I believe Sydney. He found Snaith going through my desk."

"Oh rot!" said Hobson. "What should Snaith do that for?"

"That's what I want to know," said Harry. "I've got no doubt about it. Let Snaith explain what he was doing in my study at all."

"I've already told Hobson," said Snaith disdainfully. "I don't mind explaining to you, as that young cad seems to have taken you in. I was going through the passage to get to the upper box-room, when I passed your door. It was partly open, and I saw him as I passed. He was going through your desk. I stopped to speak to him, and told him what I thought of him, and he started on me. We had a row. That's it, in a nutshell."

Wharton looked hard at Snaith. The cad of the Shell told his story coolly and consistently enough. But for his knowledge that Ceel Snaith was very far from being "straight," Wharton would have been in great doubt. But he had a good opinion of Paul Sydney; and he knew that Snaith was a fellow who chummed with bookmakers, betted on horses, smoked, and gambled, and was a blackguard and for that reason he was not in doubt.

"Now you understand," said Hobson, who, naturally enough, put his faith in his study-mate, especially as he had heard Snaith's version first.

Wharton's lip curled.

"Yes, now I understand," he said—"I understand that Snaith knew that Sydney would warn me, and that he got this yarn all ready for me. I believe that he is telling lies from beginning to end, and that Sydney is as straight as a die. I believe every word Sydney has told me, and I don't believe a word that Snaith has said!"

"You can believe as you like," said Snaith. "I've got nothing more to say. You'll find the fellow out yourself some day, I dare say!"

Wharton clenched his hands.

"You've told rotten lies about my study-mate, Snaith," he said. "You're not in a fit state to put up your hands now. But if I hear that you've said another word against Sydney, you'll have to back it up with your fists. That's all!"

And Wharton strode out of the study, doubtless thinking that that was the end. But it was not by any means.

There were troublous times ahead for the chums of the Remove.

THE END.

(Next Tuesday's Grand Greyfriars Story is entitled: "A Rogue Revealed!" Do not miss it!)

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Jimmy Silver & Co. felt a little uneasy the following day. There was something like fear mingled with their dislike of the bungalow tenant, and they wondered whether, after all, he might guess their identity.

But nothing was heard that day from the man in black, and on Monday they felt easier in their minds. On Monday, too, came a letter from Arthur Edward Lovell—

a letter the chums were glad to receive, though it was not a happy letter.

Lovell was facing his new difficulties with courage and constancy, but it was easy to see that they weighed heavily upon him; and his chums, who would have stopped at little to help him, were powerless to aid. That was the bitterest of all.

Yet, little as Jimmy Silver & Co. guessed it then, it was from his chums at Rookwood that help was to come for Lovell, when the clouds, dark as they looked, were to roll by at last.

THE END.

(There will be another fine story of Rookwood, entitled: "The Mystery Man" by Owen Conquest, in the POPULAR next Tuesday. Order to-day.)