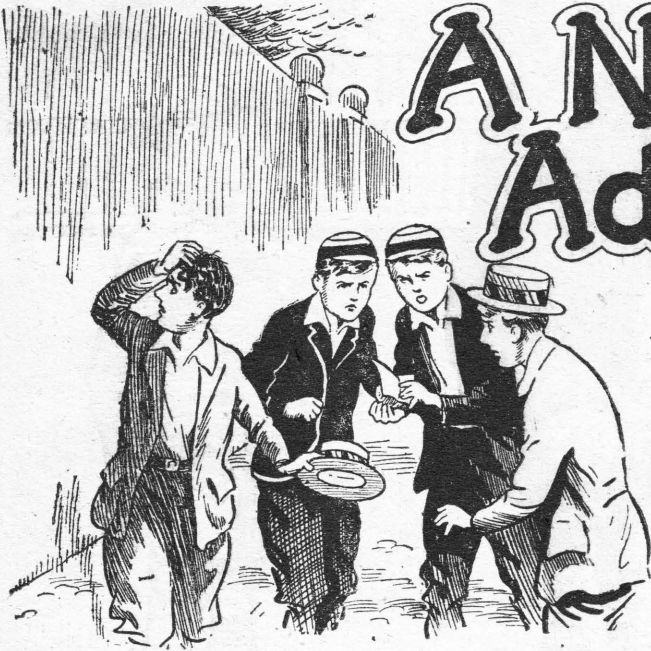


**HELP ME TO ESCAPE!**

An amazing appeal for help, thrown over a wall to fall at the feet of the Fistical Four, is the start of a very strange adventure in which Jimmy Silver & Co. become entangled!



# A Night Adventure!

A Thrilling Long Complete Story  
of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rook-  
wood, on holiday.

By  
**Owen Conquest.**

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

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Mysterious Message!

"YOOOOP!"  
Arthur Edward Lovell uttered that loud howl quite suddenly.

He was surprised, and he was hurt. Jimmy Silver & Co. were cycling at a leisurely pace along a country road in Berkshire, bordered on the left by a thick, dark wood; on the right by a high wall.

Suddenly, over the top of the wall, a heavy stone was tossed, and it fell among the Fistical Four.

Unfortunately for Lovell, his head was just in the line of fire, so to speak. The stone dropped on his hat with a crash.

It was no wonder that Lovell yelled. The hat broke the force of the impact; but it was a sudden and painful shock, all the same, and Lovell's bike went wildly swaying.

"Look out!" yelled Raby, as the rider nearly locked wheels with him. "Don't run into me!"

"Yow-ow! Oh, my napper!"

Lovell's right hand had gone to his head, and his left had a very uncertain grasp on his handlebar. Jimmy Silver jumped down and caught Lovell's machine and steadied it.

"Hurt, old chap?" he asked.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" gasped Lovell. "I'm nearly brained! Stop, you fellows! I'm going to get hold of the idiot who's chucking stones over the wall, and spifficate him! Ow, my napper!"

The chums of Rookwood dismounted, and leaned their machines against the high brick wall. Jimmy Silver looked up at the wall, but there was no sign of anyone looking over it.

Apparently the stone had been tossed over by someone in the garden within, who had doubtless heard the bicycles whirring by. It was an extraordinary, as well as a dangerous, trick, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were naturally wrathful.

Lovell removed his hat, and rubbed

his head. There was a bruise forming under his thick hair.

"Of all the dangerous maniacs!" he gasped. "Why, the fellow ought to be ragged, and scragged, and boiled in oil! I'm jolly well going in to see who did it!"

"Yes, rather," agreed Jimmy Silver. "Here's the stone," said Raby, picking it up. "Weights a good bit! Why, my only summer hat!"

Raby held up the stone, staring at it in blank astonishment.

"Look!" he ejaculated.

"What—"

"There's a note tied to it!"

"Great Scott!"

Even Lovell forgot, for a moment, the bruise on his hapless head, in his interest in this strange discovery.

Fastened to the stone, by a piece of tape, was a sheet of paper, which looked like the fly-leaf torn out of some volume.

It was closely written upon, in a small, neat hand; but at the top of the sheet, in large capital letters, was the word:

"HELP!"

"Well, that takes the bun!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, staring at the mysterious missive, and then up at the blank brick wall bordering the road. "What the merry dickens—"

"Let's look at it, and see what it says," said Newcome.

Raby cut through the tape with his penknife, and unfolded the note, handing it to Jimmy Silver to read out.

"Hallo, somebody's coming out!" murmured Newcome.

At some distance along the high wall was a gate, and from the gate came the sound of a key turning in a lock.

The gate swung open, and a man looked out into the road.

At the sight of the four schoolboys he came out, closing the gate behind him and advancing towards them with a rather grim and surly expression on his hard-featured face.

Jimmy Silver slipped the note into his pocket at once.

"I wonder who this johnny is?" murmured Raby. "Not the merchant who chucked the stone over, I fancy."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"There's something going on on the other side of that wall!" he said in a low voice. "Not a word about the note, you fellows, till we know something more about it!"

"You bet!"

The Fistical Four waited quietly till the hard-featured man came up. His look was rather surly and inquiring.

"What are you boys doing about here?" he asked, staring at the group of Rookwood fellows.

"Admiring the view," said Jimmy Silver politely.

"What have you stopped for?"

"Because we haven't gone on!" answered Jimmy, still politely.

"You've no business hanging about 'ere."

"Does the high-road belong to you, by any chance?" inquired Newcome.

The man knitted his brows.

"Don't give me any cheek," he said.

"If you've been talking to anybody over that wall—"

He paused.

"The wall's rather too high to hold a conversation over, isn't it?" said Jimmy Silver. "But why shouldn't we talk to anybody over the wall, if we want to?"

"Because it ain't allowed!" said the man gruffly. "If Dr. Punter was to catch you at it—"

"Who the thump's Dr. Punter?" asked Raby.

The man did not answer the question. He stared up at the wall, and then eyed the Rookwooders suspiciously, evidently with the idea in his mind that they had been holding some sort of communication with someone over the wall, ten feet high as it was.

He turned away at last, and returned to the gate, but he did not go in. He stood leaning on the gate, watching the Rookwood fellows from that distance in a covert sort of way.

"Waiting for us to clear off," said Lovell. Arthur Edward rubbed his

head again. "Let's go, you fellows—there's something jolly fishy about this, and I want to read that note. Don't let him see it, Jimmy."

"No fear!"

The Fistical Four remounted their bicycles and pedalled on along the road, the man at the gate watching them till they were out of sight. Then he went in and locked the gate after him.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### A Strange Appeal!

"STOP here!" said Jimmy Silver. A quarter of a mile from the spot where the stone had fallen on Lovell's hat, the Rookwood juniors dismounted in a quiet lane that turned off the road.

They were keen and eager to read the mysterious note which had been conveyed to them in such a strange manner.

That there was something mysterious, and, indeed, very suspicious, about the establishment of "Dr. Punter," they had no doubt. The man who had spoken to them had every appearance of being some sort of a gaoler, and the strangely-conveyed appeal for help could only have come from a prisoner—someone detained in the high-walled establishment against his will. The chums of Rookwood felt that they were on the verge of a startling discovery.

Jimmy Silver took the note from his pocket, and the chums of the Rookwood Fourth put their heads together to read it.

Prepared as they were for something startling, the contents of the note fairly took their breath away:

"HELP!

"For mercy's sake, help me, if you can, whoever may find this note.

"I am kept a prisoner here, and shall never regain my liberty unless I receive help from outside.

"I have been kept a prisoner for three years, and this is my first chance of communicating with the outside world. I have been imprisoned here by one who is now enjoying my fortune. Whoever may find this letter, help me—help me! Once free, I shall have plenty of money to pay for aid.

"I am allowed to walk in the garden during the day; but a careful watch is kept. If I am to be helped, it must be at night. Do not think of going to the police; the villain Punter has succeeded in throwing dust into their eyes; and, besides, they could not help me if they made a search; I should be hidden away. Help me!

"I have found a means of getting out of my room secretly, and I will be by the wall at midnight, at the place where this note is thrown over. Bring a rope to help me over the wall, and I shall be saved.

"HELP!

"ALBERT STRANGWAYS."

"Well, my only hat!" said Lovell, when the chums of Rookwood had read that startling communication. "This takes the whole giddy biscuit, and no mistake!"

"It does—it do!" agreed Raby.

Lovell rubbed his head.

"I forgive him for catching me on the napper," he remarked. "The poor chap must have been waiting inside the wall, with the note ready on the stone, waiting for somebody to pass. He must have heard our bikes, and chucked the stone over, and—"

"And you caught it with your napper!" grinned Newcome. "Lucky it fell in a soft place!"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Newcome," said Lovell. "This is a jolly serious matter. It's the queerest thing we've happened on during our cycling tour."

Jimmy Silver's brow was very thoughtful.

He read the note through again, and then for the third time. It was explicit enough.

"What do you think, Jimmy?" demanded Lovell, as the captain of the Fourth remained silent.

"Blest if I know!" said Jimmy Silver frankly. "I—I should rather think it was a hoax, but—"

"What rot! Why should a fellow hoax perfect strangers in that way?"

"Besides, there was that surly chap!" exclaimed Newcome. "He looked a good bit like a prison warden, or something of the sort. The place isn't a prison, and they can't have any right to keep a man a prisoner there. It isn't a hoax, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"No," he admitted. "I should think it was, but for that fellow we spoke to. But he gave it away quite plainly that he was some sort of a watchman, and suspected us of getting into touch with somebody kept inside that high wall. I didn't like his looks, either."

"Who the thump can this man Strangeways be, though?" asked Raby. "It sounds like a newspaper serial—man kept a prisoner while some other johnny bags his fortune."

"Rather too much like a newspaper serial for my taste," confessed Jimmy Silver. "These things don't often happen in real life."

"But it's happened this time," said Lovell. "There's the letter to prove it."

"The question is," said Raby thoughtfully, "what are we going to do? We're on a holiday tour; but we can't very well bike away and take no notice of a thing like that."

"Impossible!" said Lovell decidedly.

"That would be pretty rotten!"

"There's the police!" said Jimmy Silver. "If a man's kept a prisoner, the police are the johnnies to look into it."

"That won't do," said Lovell, shaking his head. "Strangeways warns us against that; he says plainly he will be hidden away if they search for him. It will have to be done carefully."

"But—"

"We've got to take a hand in it,"

said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver pursed his lips thoughtfully.

The appeal for help from the unknown man touched his heart, and he was quite as chivalrously inclined as his more headstrong chum; but somehow he felt a vague misgiving.

Lovell looked at him very severely. Arthur Edward's chivalrous determination to help the hapless prisoner was all the more creditable to him, as his head was still aching from the impact of the stone to which the mysterious letter had been tied.

"Look here, Jimmy Silver," said Lovell. "We've got to chip in here. We can't leave that poor chap without help."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Right-ho!" he said. "We'll try it on! Now we'd better get along to somewhere where we can get some supper. If we're going to wedge into that place at midnight, we don't want to be seen hanging about."

"Come on, then!"

And the Fistical Four remounted their machines, and rode on, and did not halt till they reached a village three miles distant. There, at a quiet little inn, they had supper, and in low tones discussed their plans for the night's adventure.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Rookwood to the Rescue!

JIMMY SILVER was very thoughtful that evening.

It was Arthur Edward Lovell who was keenest on the subject of rescuing Dr. Punter's prisoner; Arthur Edward was quite determined on it. Raby and Newcome backed him up heartily. Strange to say, it was Jimmy Silver, generally the foremost in any adventure or escapade, who was least keen, and seemed to be troubled with doubts and hesitation.

But Jimmy Silver had given in his adhesion to the scheme, and he did not think of drawing back. Like many other great leaders, Uncle James of Rookwood was sometimes pushed on by his followers. And certainly he would never have dreamed of allowing Lovell & Co. to carry on the campaign unaided.

Lovell was a good fellow, with boundless pluck and plenty of determination. But Jimmy had no great faith in his gifts of judgment. There was little doubt—in Jimmy's mind, at least—that Lovell would make a "hash" of the affair if he took the lead. So Jimmy remained leader in the enterprise—though on this occasion it really was a case of the tail wagging the dog.

The Fistical Four had a good supper, and remained at the wayside inn till it closed. Then they pedalled away on their bicycles in the dusk. The evening had drawn in, and shadows lay over the woods and meadows and wide rivers of beautiful Berkshire. Lovell had gone shopping in the village, and purchased a long, strong rope, which he carried in a coil behind his saddle. That rope was to afford a means of escape to Dr. Punter's prisoner—the mysterious Albert Strangeways. Lovell had no doubt whatever that the hapless man would be found waiting within the high wall, as he had appointed in the letter; waiting with an aching heart, as Lovell put it poetically, in the hope of rescue coming. Neither did Jimmy Silver doubt that Mr. Strangeways would be there. His doubts were of a different kind—and rather too vague to be easily expressed. But certainly Uncle James of Rookwood had many misgivings.

The juniors dismounted a good mile from their destination, and put out their lamps. Then they wheeled their machines on.

They had plenty of time on their hands; it still wanted nearly two hours to midnight.

The bicycles were concealed in a cove by the road, a quarter of a mile from the high-walled establishment, which they approached on foot. As Lovell thoughtfully remarked, there might be trouble with the mysterious gaolers, and pursuit, and the bikes would be in the way. In case of a scrap and flight, it would be best to take to the woods. Lovell considered, and dodge away with the rescued man. Jimmy Silver agreed, but with such a lack of keenness that Lovell gave a snort.

It was eleven o'clock when the chums of Rookwood arrived once more within sight of the high brick wall on the road.

The moon was climbing over the trees, and shedding a faint and ghostly light on the high wall, the road, and the wood opposite. Keeping in the shadow, the juniors scouted along the wall. The gate was shut, and there was no sign of life about the place.

Lovell carefully sought for the precise spot where the cyclists had been when the stone had dropped on his head from over the wall.

He was satisfied that he had found the

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## A NIGHT ADVENTURE!

(Continued from page 13.)

exact spot at last, though it took some time.

"Here we are!" said Arthur Edward. "This is the place right enough. This is where we shall have to climb the wall."

"Looks like it!" agreed Raby.

"How are we getting up?" asked Newcome. "That wall's a good ten feet."

"I'm going to climb on your shoulders, and pull myself up to the top," explained Lovell.

"Are you?" said Newcome, his tone implying that Lovell certainly wasn't going to do anything of the kind.

"It's the only way."

"Your feet are too jolly big, old chap," said Newcome. "I'll climb on your shoulders, if you like."

"Now, look here, Newcome—"

"Both of you stand against the wall, and I'll climb on both your shoulders," suggested Raby. "I'm rather hefty at climbing."

"Leave it to me," said Lovell testily. "I sha'n't hurt you. If you're afraid of being hurt, you shouldn't have come on a job like this."

"Oh, rats!"

"No hurry, anyhow," said Jimmy Silver. "It's more than half an hour to twelve yet."

"I want to get a squint into the place, and see the lie of the land," said Lovell. "If Strangeways is seen and stopped, we may have to go in and help him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If you're nervy, I'll go in, and you can sit down and twiddle your thumbs!" said Lovell sardonically.

"Fathead!"

"Well, who's going to give me a bunk up?" demanded Lovell, beginning to show signs of excitement.

"Hush!" murmured Jimmy. "Don't shout, old chap, or they'll hear us, and all the fat will be in the fire."

"Who's shouting?" snorted Lovell. "I'm waiting for some silly owl to give me a bunk up that dashed wall!"

"Oh, here you are!" said Jimmy Silver resignedly. "Go it! Got the rope?"

"The—the rope?" stammered Lovell.

"Yes; you'll want the rope, won't you?"

"Oh!"

"Haven't you brought it?" demanded Raby.

"I—I tied it on the back of my bike," murmured Lovell. "I—I—I've left it on—on the jigger!"

"Well, of all the silly owls—"

"One of you fellows cut back and fetch it," said Lovell.

Lovell's three chums looked at him. Lovell seemed to be taking the lead in this enterprise; but Arthur Edward was not really one of those characters that are born to command. Nobody seemed anxious to "cut back" and get the rope which the leader had forgotten.

"Well?" snapped Lovell.

"Well?" murmured Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome in a sort of chorus.

"Who's fetching that rope?"

"The fellow who forgot it, I should think!" said Newcome mildly.

Snort from Lovell!

"Well, wait here for me!" he said. "Don't jaw and give the alarm, and don't let yourselves be seen, and don't go—"

"Cut the don't, and hike off!" suggested Raby.

Another snort from Lovell, and he de-

parted at a trot. Jimmy Silver & Co. sat down under the shadow of the trees, on the edge of the wood by the roadside, to wait for his return.

From the silence and stillness of the place it was pretty certain that Dr. Punter and his assistants had no suspicion that an escape or a rescue was to be attempted that night. The Rookwood juniors were reassured upon that point, at least.

The moon climbed higher in the sky, the dim light became a little clearer. Arthur Edward Lovell came tramping back at last, rather warm, and with the coil of rope looped over his arm.

"You fellows here?" he called out cautiously.

The three juniors emerged from the shadows.

"Here we are!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Bunk me up, then."

"Right-ho!"

Jimmy Silver glanced this way and that way, like Moses of old. But the country road was quite silent and deserted; there was no traffic at that late hour.

He braced himself against the wall, and Raby and Newcome helped Lovell to climb on his shoulders.

Lovell was not a light weight, and the grind of his boots on Jimmy's shoulders was not grateful or comforting. But Uncle James of Rookwood bore it with silent resignation.

Mounted on Jimmy's shoulders, Lovell just succeeded in reaching the top of the wall with his hands.

He got a grip and pulled himself up, and Jimmy was relieved of his weight. A couple of minutes more, and Arthur Edward Lovell was seated astride of the high wall, staring into the moonlit gardens beyond, and watched anxiously by his chums from the road. And Lovell started and felt a thrill at the sight of a dark figure below him in the garden, crouching against the inner side of the wall. A pair of gleaming, burning eyes stared up at him from the shadow. From somewhere in the distance twelve strokes boomed out faintly into the night.

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### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

#### The Rescued Man!

"**I**s he there, Lovell?" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes."

"Oh, good!"

Lovell bent over the high wall, staring down at the shadowy figure below. In the distance, through openings of the trees and shrubberies, he could discern a large square building in the moonlight, not a window of which was lighted. Dr. Punter's mysterious establishment was apparently buried in repose.

"Are you Mr. Strangeways?" called out Lovell cautiously to the crouching figure below.

"Yes."

"Good! I picked up your note."

"The note I threw out on the stone?"

"Yes."

"Then you have come to save me?"

"That's it."

"At last—at last!" breathed the shadowy figure. "Have you a rope?"

"Yes; wait a minute," Lovell, sitting astride of the wall, began to uncoil the rope in haste.

"Hurry, hurry!" breathed Strangeways. "They may discover my absence at any moment."

"Here you are!"

Lovell tossed the end of the rope into the garden. He threw the other end into the road.

"Hold on to that, you fellows!" he called.

"Right-ho!"

Three pairs of hands gripped the end of the rope, to hold it taut, while the prisoner climbed up.

The man in the garden grasped his end of the rope and began to climb.

He looked like a middle-aged man, very plump and rather breathless, and the moonlight gleamed on a bald circle on his head, which was hatless.

He was not a romantic-looking figure; far from it, and perhaps Lovell was a little disappointed as he saw him more closely. But, after all, the man was a prisoner, a victim of cruel wrong, even if he was middle-aged, and stout, and bald, and puffed and blew as he clambered up the rope. Lovell did not repent of his chivalry.

As the man's head came within reach, Lovell stretched down his hand to seize him and help him up.

The man ducked his head quickly.

"Don't touch me!" he breathed.

"Eh? Why not?" asked the astonished Lovell.

"You might do terrible damage if you did."

"What?"

"Keep clear while I climb over!"

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell, too astonished to say anything more.

The man climbed to the top of the wall. He plumped upon it, and sat astride, gasping for breath. The moonlight glinted on his eyes, which were very bright, and seemed to be constantly changing in their light and expression.

Lovell felt that there was something queer, something almost uncanny in the strange, shifting brightness of those eyes.

"Jump down now!" he said hurriedly. "Impossible!"

"It's not very far, if you hold on to the wall with your hands and drop!" urged Lovell.

"Too dangerous!" said the bald man, shaking his head. "Hark! Did you hear anything?"

Lovell started.

From the direction of the house, fifty yards away across the gardens, there came the sound of an opening door and a buzz of voices. A light flashed out into the gardens.

It was evidently the alarm.

"You've been missed!" exclaimed Lovell breathlessly. "For goodness' sake jump down and let's get clear!"

"It's impossible for me to jump. I should smash to pieces on the road. Hold the rope."

"I'll do my best!" said Lovell.

He gripped the rope and threw his weight on it on the inner side, while Jimmy Silver & Co. were waiting.

Jimmy put up a hand and grasped the man as he descended, to help him on his feet.

There was a shriek of alarm from the escaping prisoner:

"Don't touch me!"

"Why, what—" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Hands off!" shouted the prisoner, regardless of being heard within the gardens. "Don't touch me! Can't you see I'm made of glass?"

Jimmy Silver staggered.

Raby and Newcome, in their amazement, let go the rope, and jumped away from Mr. Strangeways.

"Hold on!" shrieked Lovell on the other side of the wall.

Jimmy Silver, utterly astounded and dazed as he was, fortunately grasped the rope before it slithered over the wall, and held on.

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" he gasped.

"Oh dear!" murmured Raby. "What—what—what the thump! Who—What—How—"

"Hold on!"

There was a shout in the gardens. Lovell, clambering desperately up the rope and over the wall, had been seen.

"There he is!"

Lovell's head came over the wall. He pitched down the rope, and clambered over, and hung by his hands, and dropped into the road breathlessly.

"You silly idiots, why did you let the rope go?" he breathed. "I jolly nearly got landed!"

"I—I say—t-h-a-t—t-h-a-t chap—" babbled Newcome. "He—he—he's queer! He—he—he says he's made of glass!"

"What?"

Lovell spun round towards Mr. Strangeways. That gentleman was wiping his forehead, his exertions having made him perspire freely. It was noticeable that he touched himself very carefully and gently, as if fearing a breakage.

Lovell blinked at him.

"Come on, Mr. Strangeways!" he said. "They'll be after you in a minute! I can hear them at the gate now! This way!"

He seized the man's arm to lead him into the wood.

A loud shriek of alarm rang along the silent road.

"Let go—let go!"

"I—I say—"

"You will break my arm!" yelled Mr. Strangeways.

"Eh? How can I break your arm by holding it?" ejaculated Lovell blankly.

"It's made of glass."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Glass!"

"Gig-gig-gig-glass?" babbled Lovell.

"Yes! Don't touch me! I'm made of glass, and a touch might break me!" said the bald gentleman in a thrilling whisper. "That's why they've been keeping me there—because I'm made of glass!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. backed away. Lovell had let go the bald gentleman's arm as if it were not only made of glass, but red-hot glass. They gazed at the man they had rescued with horror and dread. For they understood at last—even Arthur Edward Lovell understood at last. Dr. Punter's mysterious establishment was a private lunatic asylum; the surly man they had taken for a gaoler was a keeper, and the man they had rescued was a babbling lunatic!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Light at Last!

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

"A—a—a—a blessed lunatic!" babbled Lovell. "He—he—he's off his chump! Oh crumbs!"

There was a crash along the road as the gate was flung open. Out into the road rushed the surly man, and a stout, red-faced gentleman in a black frock-coat, with a silk hat jammed on the back of his head, and gold-rimmed glasses glittering on his beaky nose. The dismayed juniors could guess that this was Dr. Punter. "There he is, sir!" shouted the keeper. "Somebody's helped him over the wall!"

"Quick—quick, Rogers!"

panted the doctor. "Quick—before he escapes! He may do himself some mischief!"

The two men came racing down the road.

"Hook it!" gasped Raby. "We'd better get out of this! They can have their blessed lunatic! I don't want him, for one!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Lovell.

Mr. Strangeways did not seem at all dangerous. Doubtless he was a harmless gentleman enough in his own way, only needing to be kept under detention because of his remarkable delusion. He was now feeling along his arm where Lovell had grasped it, carefully and gingerly, evidently in search of a possible crack or breakage. Lovell's grasp must have been very disconcerting to a gentleman who believed that he was made of glass.

The doctor and the keeper came up with a rush.

The keeper pinioned Mr. Strangeways at once; but he did it quite gently, evidently making a concession to the poor gentleman's belief in his brittleness.

"Got him, sir!"

"Take him in, Rogers."

"Yessir!"

"Be careful, Rogers," said Mr. Strangeways, with perfect calmness.

"Mind your knuckles don't touch my neck. You know what the result would be."

"I know, sir," grinned Rogers. "You come along o' me. I'll be werry careful of your neck."

"Thank you, Rogers. You would understand how necessary it is to be careful if you were made of glass yourself."

"Course I should, sir," chuckled Rogers. "Come along!"

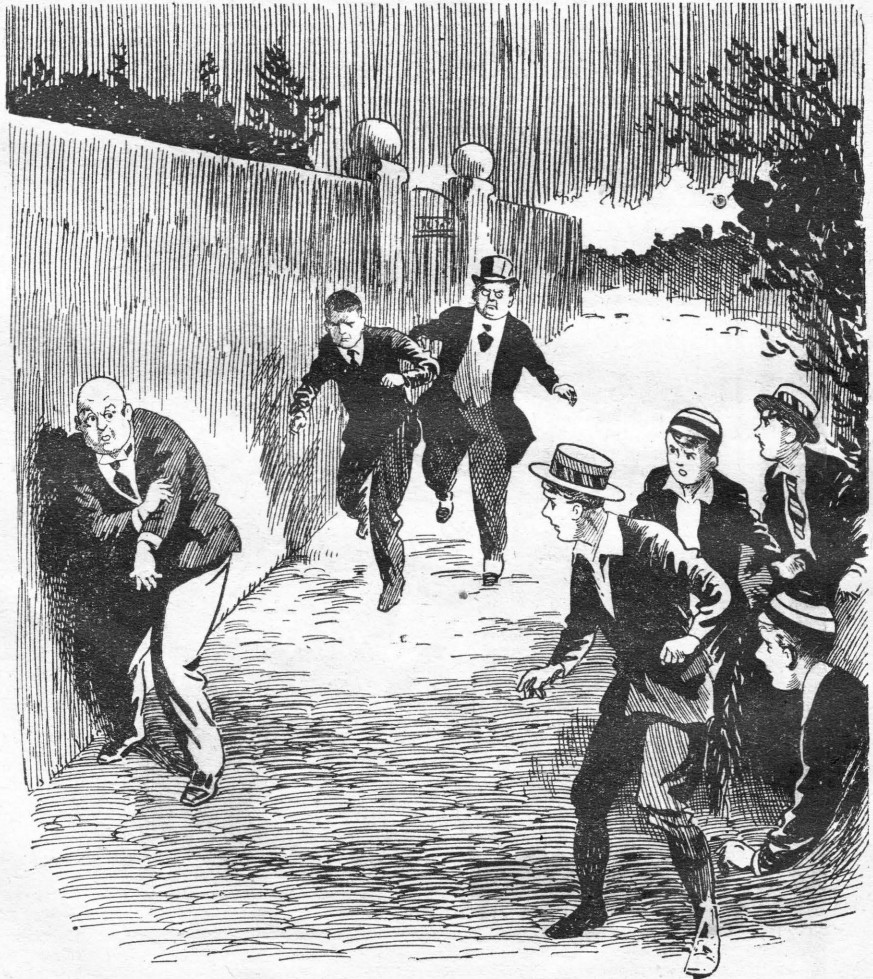
And the keeper marched the unfortunate gentleman in at the gate, and he disappeared from the sight of the chums of Rookwood. The Fistical Four had come there to rescue him, but they were not thinking of rescue now. To rescue a man who was made of glass, and let him loose on the world in that brittle state, was evidently out of the question.

The chums of Rookwood were, indeed, only anxious to get clear away from the spot. They had had quite enough of their adventure with Dr. Punter's peculiar patient.

But the doctor followed them up as they backed away.

"What does this mean?" he demanded angrily. "You have been attempting to help a lunatic to escape from my care—"

"Oh dear!" groaned Lovell. Arthur Edward seemed quite dispirited.



JIMMY SILVER & CO'S MISTAKE! There was a crash along the road as the gate was thrown open, and two men came running out. The dismayed juniors could guess that the first man was Dr. Punter. "Oh crumbs!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "We'd better get out of this! Fancy rescuing a lunatic. Oh dear!" (See Chapter 5.)

"I require your names and addresses," said Dr. Punter. "You will be prosecuted for this."  
 "Oh!"  
 "It—it was all a mistake, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "We—we—we didn't know it was a lunatic-asylum!"  
 "You brought this rope here?"  
 "Yes. But—"

"Then you must have come deliberately to enable this man to escape from my keeping!"  
 "You—you see—"  
 "The utmost rigour of the law—" began the doctor portentously.

Jimmy Silver jerked from his pocket the mysterious missive, and held it out to the exasperated mental specialist.  
 "Look at that, sir!"  
 "What—what—"  
 "That's why—"

Dr. Punter took the note and glanced at it, and fairly jumped. Jimmy Silver, in halting tones, explained how the note had come into the possession of the Rookwood juniors.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Punter. "A more careful watch must be kept on that unhappy man. But is it possible that you boys were so incredibly stupid as to believe that this note could possibly be genuine?"  
 "Oh dear!"  
 "Be off with you!" snapped the doctor.

And he turned round and whisked

in at the gate, which was slammed and locked behind him.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

Their looks were more eloquent than words could have been.

"I knew there was something queer about it all along!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "You ass, Lovell!"

"No good jawing now!" said Lovell hurriedly. "Let's cut!"

"You fathead!" said Raby.  
 "Look here—"

"You frabjous dummy!" said Newcome.

"You crass ass!"  
 "You burbling duffer!"  
 "You silly jabberwock!"

Arthur Edward was quite relieved when he was in the saddle again, and was able to grind at the pedals and get away from the personal remarks that were showered on him by his chums.

Jimmy Silver & Co. rode on in the moonlight, glad to put as many miles as possible between themselves and Dr. Punter's establishment. But three members of the Co. were convinced—and stated their conviction with candour—that Arthur Edward Lovell ought to have been left in the care of Dr. Punter.

THE END.

(Now look out for "The Boy Who Borrowed A Name!"—next week's grand story of Jimmy Silver & Co.)

UNDER SUSPICION!  
 (Continued from page 11.)

Mr. Slimmey angrily. "You know perfectly well why I have followed you!"

Frank Richards flushed.

"I know nothing of the kind, sir," he answered very quietly. "I haven't the faintest idea. Neither has Bob."

"Lawless is not concerned in the matter," said Mr. Slimmey. "I am certain—and so is Miss Meadows—that he was not your confederate."

"My—my confederate!" ejaculated Frank Richards.

Mr. Lawless broke in.

"What has happened at the school, Mr. Slimmey?" he demanded. "I am assured that my nephew is speaking the truth so far as he knows it. Tell me at once what has happened."

"A—a most unpleasant happening, Mr. Lawless," stammered Mr. Slimmey. "I—I am sorry to be the bearer of news which will be a great shock to you, I fear. There has been a theft at the school—"

"A theft!" exclaimed the rancher.

Frank Richards' face was flooded with colour. His eyes blazed at Mr. Slimmey.

"A theft!" he ejaculated.

"You know it, Richards."

"I did not know it!" exclaimed Frank Richards fiercely. "And who dares to connect me with anything of the kind?"

"Richards, this bravado—"

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Frank, his temper blazing out. "You must be mad to accuse me of it, Mr. Slimmey! Uncle, you will not believe it, I know! Either Mr. Slimmey has gone mad or he is drunk!"

"Richards!" gasped the Cedar Creek master.

"That is not the way to speak to Mr. Slimmey, Frank!" rapped out the rancher.

"It is the way to speak to anyone who dares to call me a thief!" said Frank Richards savagely. "It is a lie—a rotten lie! And Mr. Slimmey must be out of his senses, I think!"

"Mr. Lawless, I have Miss Meadows' order to take Richards back to the school at once—"

"He shall come!" said the rancher. "I will come, too—and you, Bob! The sooner this nonsense is thrashed out the better! Come!"

Mr. Slimmey wheeled his horse, and the rancher and his son and nephew followed his example. They rode together up the trail, back to Cedar Creek, in gloomy silence, Frank Richards' face still burning with anger and indignation.

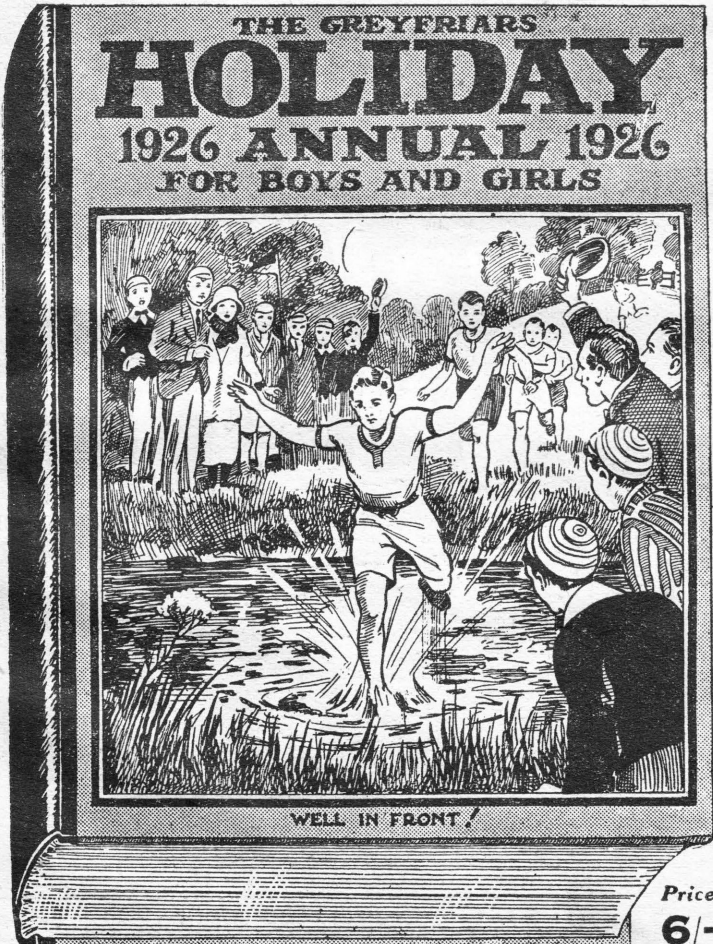
And this indignation was perfectly justified. Frank Richards was a name which stood for everything that was right and manly to the inhabitants of the Thompson Valley. There was not one of them who would not have trusted him with their last cent, and to have Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master at Cedar Creek School, who had hitherto regarded Frank in the same admiring light, accuse him of a common burglary, and apparently to believe in the accusation, taking his guilt as a foregone conclusion, was naturally a bitter blow to the young schoolboy.

The first thing to be done was plainly to find the real culprit in the robbery at Cedar Creek.

THE END.

(Will Frank prove his innocence? Mind you read "Frank Takes the Trail"—next week's topping yarn of the chums of the School in the Backwoods.)

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