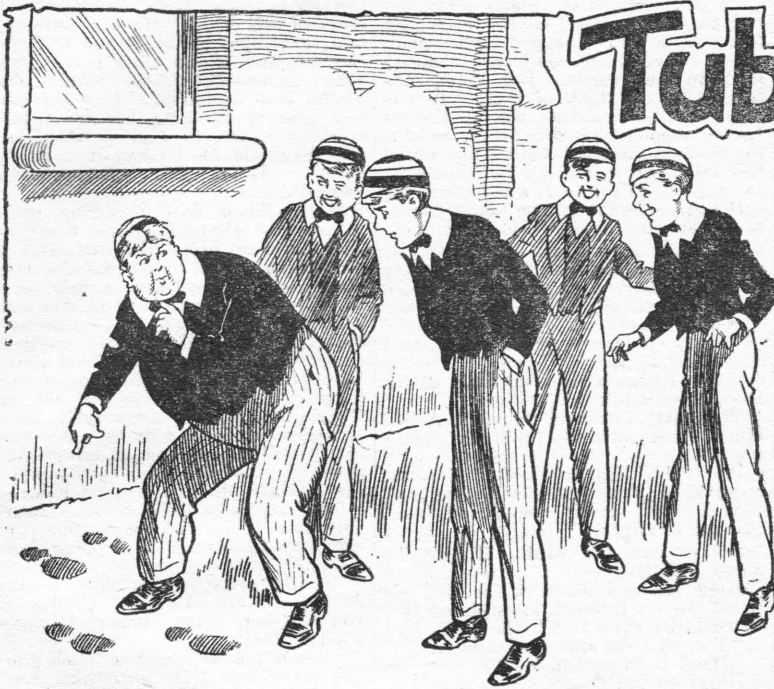


**TUBBY ON THE TRACK!** If it requires brains to become a detective he is well fitted for the job—that is what Tubby Muffin thinks. And his exploits as the Rookwood sleuth provide plenty of fun for his Form-fellows!



# Tubby the 'Tec'!

A Rollicking Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood, featuring Tubby Muffin of the Fourth.

By  
**OWEN CONQUEST.**

(Author of the famous tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every week.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Tubby Muffin's New Stunt!

**M**UFFIN!" Jimmy Silver put his head into Study No. 2 in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood, and called.

Tubby Muffin was there. He was seated in the armchair, leaning back in what a novelist would probably have called an attitude of unaffected grace, and reading.

He did not answer to his name.

Certainly he heard Jimmy Silver's call, but, like the celebrated dying gladiator, he heard it, but he heeded not. Apparently, Reginald Muffin was deeply interested in the book he was reading, which was sufficient evidence that the book was not a school-book. Only a salutary terror of Mr. Dalton's cane could force Tubby Muffin to read a school-book.

"Tubby!" shouted Jimmy Silver, "You're interrupting me, Silver," said Tubby Muffin, blinking at him at last. "I say, this is a jolly good book, Jevver hear of Ferrers Locke?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Some detective!" said Tubby Muffin. "I say, Jimmy, I've often thought—" "Rot! You can't think!" "I've often thought—" "What with?" inquired Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"I've often thought," roared Tubby Muffin, "that I should make a jolly good detective—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"You can cackle!" said Tubby Muffin disdainfully. "But I feel that I've got the gift. The way this chap Ferrers Locke does it is marvellous. He just looks at a chap, and knows the whole game from start to finish. It's a gift, of course. Now, you'd never make a detective, Jimmy."

"Blessed if I want to!" said Jimmy Silver. "I looked in to tell you—"

"But it's just about my mark," said Muffin. "Concentration of a powerful intellect, cool, cold, clear reasoning powers, and an inscrutable smile—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Give me a chance, that's all!" said Tubby Muffin loftily. "Just a chance to show my unusual powers, that's all I ask!"

"You howling ass—" began Jimmy Silver.

"F'rinstance," said Tubby, fixing his eyes upon the captain of the Fourth, "I'll give you a sample this minute. Like me to tell you what you've been doing this afternoon, Silver?"

"Go ahead!" grinned Jimmy. Tubby cocked his eye thoughtfully at Jimmy.

"You haven't been out of doors since lessons," he said. "You've been working at an imposition, and you've only just finished it. How's that?"

"Wonderful!" gasped Jimmy.

Tubby smiled complacently.

"Nothing to what I can do!" he said. "I don't mind explaining how I do it, Jimmy, same as Ferrers Locke does to his boy assistant, Drake. You see, it's been raining this afternoon, and your boots don't show the slightest sign of mud on them. Therefore, you haven't been out of doors since lessons. See?"

"I see."

"There are marks of ink on your fingers," continued Tubby Muffin. "That shows you've been at work with pen and ink. That means an imposition. The ink looks quite fresh, so you've only just finished. Follow me?"

Jimmy Silver seemed on the verge of an attack of hysterics.

"Is that all?" he gasped.

"That's all, and enough, too, as a sample of my wonderful detective powers," said Tubby Muffin warmly. "What I've told you is deduction."

"But it's a bit offside in places!" gurgled Jimmy Silver. "You see, I've

been at football practice this afternoon, and only came in ten minutes ago."

"Eh?"

"The fact that there is no mud on my boots is explained by the circumstance that I took off my football boots in the lobby, and put these on.

"And the ink on my fingers," resumed Jimmy Silver, "comes from mopping up a bottle of ink that that ass Lovell upset on the study table when he was clearing it."

"Wha-a-at?"

Detective Muffin's podgy jaw dropped. "Any more giddy deductions?" asked Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

Tubby coughed.

"Well, I deduce that you've got nothing for tea in the end study," he snapped.

"How do you make that out?"

"I deduce it from the fact that you've dropped in here," said Tubby victoriously. "It's tea-time, and you've dropped in to see if there's anything going. How's that?"

"Out!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "We've got sausages and chips for tea in the end study—"

"Eh?"

"And I've dropped in here to ask you to tea if you'd like to come and cook the sausages for us."

Tubby Muffin jumped up.

That appeal to the inner Tubby consoled him for the failure of his wonderful deductions.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Higgs is not Pleased

**M**R. DALTON, the master of the Fourth, glanced round the Form-room with a slight frown.

"Has anyone seen the chalk?" he inquired.

THE POPULAR.—No. 350.

There was no answer from the Fourth-Formers.

Mr. Dalton was about to illustrate an abstruse problem on the blackboard, and for that purpose the chalk was needed. Abstruse problems did not appeal to the Fourth, and there was hardly a fellow in the Form who did not feel pleased to learn that some enterprising youth had abstracted the chalk. They hoped that Mr. Dalton would be a long time finding it; or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, they hoped there was no further supply of chalk in the cupboard. There was a delightful prospect of missing quite a considerable portion of the lesson.

Mr. Dalton, who was far from sharing the feelings of his hopeful pupils on the subject, looked annoyed. Perhaps he guessed that the chalk had been taken away by a felonious hand. Indeed, he could not be expected to believe that the chalk, like riches, had taken unto itself wings, and flown away.

"Where is the chalk?" he snapped.

No answer.

The Fourth-Formers all looked as innocent as they could—especially Higgs, in whose trousers-pocket the chalk was reposing at that moment!

Up rose Reginald Muffin.

Tubby's fat face was a little flushed, and his round eyes had a gleam in them. It was a chance for the Rookwood detective!

Chances for an amateur detective did not happen very often at school. It was not to be expected that they would. Nobody was likely to "pinch" the Head's gold watch, or to burgle a Form-master's study, in order to give Muffin a chance. Tubby, indeed, had sighed deeply over the hopeless absence of any kind of crime at Rookwood. Without any crime, where was there a chance for a criminologist? Tubby did not exactly hope that a crime would be committed. But certainly a robbery or two would have afforded him some pleasure, and his fat mind even dwelt upon wilful murder with an unholy joy.

In the absence of robberies or murders, the case of the lost chalk was better than nothing. So Tubby jumped up, eager to offer his professional services.

"If you please, sir—" he jerked out. Mr. Dalton looked at him.

"Have you taken the chalk, Muffin?" Evidently the Form-master misunderstood.

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Tubby.

"Do you know where it is?"

"Not yet, sir. But I shall be very pleased to take the case—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"I—I mean, I shall be glad to investigate the mystery, sir—"

"What do you mean, Muffin?"

"I've got a lot of skill as a— a detective, sir—"

"I hope you are not out of your senses, Muffin?" said Mr. Dalton icily.

There was a grin along the ranks of the Fourth. Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"Nunno! Oh, no, sir!" gasped Muffin. "But—but I've studied the— the methods of Ferrers Locke, sir, and—and I think I could elucidate the mystery, sir—"

"Bless my soul!"

"And track down the dastard, sir—"

"The what?"

"I—I mean, the chap who's boned the chalk, sir!" stammered Tubby.

Mr. Dalton's lips twitched. He was frowning, but some of the Fourth were keen enough to see that he was trying hard not to laugh.

"You are a ridiculous boy, Muffin!" he said. "You may sit down!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 350.

"Don't you want me to find the chalk, sir?"

"Certainly! You may find it if you are able to do so!" said Mr. Dalton.

"Very good, sir!"

Tubby Muffin blinked round.

He met with stony glares from the rest of the Fourth. Giving away the fellow who had "bagged" the chalk would have been considered "sneaking" in the Fourth. But Tubby was too excited to think of that. It was not called sneaking when Ferrers Locke denounced a delinquent, and for the moment the mantle of Ferrers Locke had fallen upon Tubby's fat shoulders, so to speak. Tubby was a detective now—Detective Muffin, and no longer Tubby of the Fourth, for the time being.

He raised a fat hand and pointed at Alfred Higgs. Higgs gave him a glare that might have withered a stone statue. But it had no effect on the enthusiastic Muffin.

"Higgs is the criminal, sir!" said Tubby. "I deduce it, sir, from the fact that he has a smear of chalk on his bags, sir—I mean, his trousers!"

There was a buzz in the class, Alfred Higgs' look became positively petrifying.

But Tubby did not heed. He was enjoying his triumph. Mr. Dalton gave him a very curious look, and then glanced at Higgs.

"Have you the chalk, Higgs?" he asked quietly.

Higgs glanced down at the tell-tale streak on his trousers, and decided that it would be wiser to tell the truth.

"Yes, sir," he answered sullenly.

"Hand it to me, please."

Higgs obeyed.

The next step was generally expected to be a caning. But Mr. Dalton seemed to have forgotten his cane.

"Kindly do not touch the chalk again, Higgs," he said.

"V-v-very well, sir!" stammered Higgs, astonished and relieved by his escape. And he sat down.

Mr. Dalton proceeded to use the chalk on the blackboard, and the incident closed. He did not seem to think it necessary to thank Detective Muffin for his professional aid. Tubby Muffin looked rather discontented. He had expected praise, at least.

But at least he had displayed his powers to the Fourth! On the whole, he felt complacent. But his complacency was rather disturbed by a fierce whisper from Higgs a little later.

"You fat sneak! Wait till after class!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Muffin.

It was very discouraging. Evidently there was no real opening for a youth with brilliant gifts.

After lessons that morning the Fourth Form were treated to the thrilling sight of Tubby Muffin racing down the corridor, with the vengeful Higgs chasing on his track.

They disappeared into the quadrangle, both going strong.

"And I deduce," said Jimmy Silver, with a chuckle, "without being a Sherlock Holmes or a Ferrers Locke—I deduce that Tubby Muffin is going to capture a record thumping!"

And Jimmy Silver's deductions proved to be well-founded!

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Detective Muffin Makes Discoveries!

"EUREKA!"

It was a Greek word, and Reginald Muffin was not strong on Greek. But he knew that familiar word, and he ejaculated it suddenly in tones of great satisfaction.

It was Wednesday afternoon, a half-holiday at Rookwood. Tubby Muffin was in the quadrangle, and he had stopped in a shady place, where one of the big beeches grew near the Sixth Form study windows. Tubby Muffin had no business under the august windows of the Sixth. He had retired to that quiet spot to think—and to escape the chipping of the other fellows, who were immensely tickled with Tubby Muffin as a detective. Like the love-lorn loon in the song, he fled from a mocking throng. And in that quiet spot Reginald Muffin had made a discovery. Hence his ejaculation of "Eureka!"

Jimmy Silver & Co., coming out of the School House, sighted him, and bore down on him. The Fistical Four were going to bike over to Latcham that afternoon. There was a sale on of Government stores at Latcham, and Jimmy had heard that wonderful telescopes were going cheap, and the chums of the end study agreed that it would be no end of fun to set up a telescope at the window of the end study. The sea was not very far away, and they would be able to watch ships that passed in the night, as Lovell put it poetically—at least, ships that passed in the daytime. But the Fistical Four had a few minutes to spare, before wheeling out their bikes, for the harmless and necessary amusement of chipping Tubby Muffin.

"Going strong, old top?" inquired Arthur Edward Lovell. "What are you rooting about under Carthew's window for?"

"Better not let Carthew catch you!" grinned Raby. "He may think you're trying to spot him smoking in his study. He does!"

"He does—he do!" grinned Newcome. "Better go and make discoveries somewhere else, Mr. Sherlock-Ferrers Muffin!"

"Eureka!" said Tubby, his fat face beaming. "I dare say you fellows know what that means. It means I've found it, you know."

"Go hon!" said Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"And what have you found?" said Lovell. "A cigarette-end, and deduced from it that Carthew smokes?"

"Footprints!" said Tubby Muffin mysteriously.

"Amazing!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "There's only about two hundred fellows at Rookwood—and you've really found footprints in the quad! This beats Ferrers Locke at his own game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you're silly owls!" said Muffin loftily. "You don't know how to draw deductions from ordinary circumstances. These footprints are not ordinary footprints. Chaps don't walk about close under study windows, and drive their heels deep into the ground, do they?"

"Not as a rule."

"Well, somebody's done that here. You see, the ground was soft from last night's rain, and it's kept the traces. Look!"

The Fistical Four looked.

There was a path about seven or eight feet from the study windows, and a bed of shrubbery bordered it. Right off the path, and close up under the window of Cardew of the Sixth, there were undoubted footprints. Someone had trod there very heavily, and the still damp earth retained the tracks with great distinctness.

The heel-marks were towards the building, which was rather remarkable. But the toes were driven much deeper in the soil than the heels.

"What do you make of that?"



demand Muffin triumphantly. "I came on it quite by chance. Ferrers Locke, you know, often drops on some of his most mysterious cases just by chance. This is attempted burglary, of course!"

"My hat! How do you make that out?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Nobody ever walks between the path and the wall here," said Muffin. "No reason why anybody should. But somebody did last night. Not a Rookwooder. But anybody else must have been a burglar, trying to get in. See? He stood here trying to climb to the window—"

"With his back to the wall?" grinned Lovell.

"Oh!"

Tubby Muffin was disconcerted for a moment. But only for a moment.

"This is deeper than I thought," he said. "The burglar must have got on the window-sill, and then he was alarmed, and jumped down. You see the toes are deeper marked than the heels. That's where he jumped."

"It's where somebody jumped!" grinned Lovell. "And as it's Carthew's study, I imagine it was Carthew."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin warmly. "Why should Carthew jump out of his own study window— Oh!"

The study window was thrown up. The face of Mark Carthew, the bully of the Sixth, appeared at it. He scowled angrily at the group of juniors.

"What do you young sweeps want rooting round my window?" he demanded.

"Nothing, old top!" answered Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Come on, you fellows! We'll be late at Latham at this rate, and we want to bag that telescope."

The Fistical Four walked quickly away. They did not want to have any dealings with Carthew of the Sixth if they could help it. But Tubby Muffin did not go. He was brimful of his new and amazing discovery.

"I say, Carthew—" he began.

"Clear off!" snapped the prefect.

"But I've made a discovery."

"You young idiot—"

"Somebody jumped from this window last night!" exclaimed Muffin excitedly.

Now, in the Fourth Form, Detective Muffin's detective work was treated with derision and laughter. No one dreamed of taking Muffin seriously. So it was all the more remarkable to observe the effect of his communication upon Carthew of the Sixth. Mark Carthew started back as if Muffin had punched his nose, and his face became quite pale.

"What?" he stuttered.

"It's just as I say!" exclaimed Tubby, delighted, as well as surprised, to watch the effect his words produced on the Sixth Form prefect. "Last night, after eleven—"

"You young rascal!" thundered Carthew. "What were you doing out of your dormitory at—"

"I—I wasn't! I—I deduced it from—"

"Wait till I come out to you!" fumed Carthew. And the prefect disappeared from the window, evidently in search of his cane.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Tubby. "He—he's waxy!"

The Rookwood detective could see no reason whatever why Carthew should be "waxy." Rather, Carthew ought to have been grateful to Tubby for watching over his safety like this, rendering him professional services for nothing, as it were. Yet it was clear that Carthew, so far from being grateful, was in a terrific "wax," and that he was coming out to look for Tubby with a cane! This was a mystery that even the Ferrers Locke of Rookwood could not solve, and he wisely decided not to be there when Carthew arrived.

He scudded off as fast as his fat little legs could carry him, and he had vanished when Carthew came round the School House with an ashplant in his hand. Carthew looked round for him in vain; and then, with a startled, guilty face, he proceeded to stir the earth very industriously with his stick, completely obliterating Detective Muffin's clue. The footprints vanished from existence, and Carthew returned to his study, looking relieved; which was certainly odd, if the footprints had been left there by a burglar overnight. But perhaps Carthew didn't think they had!

**THE FOURTH CHAPTER.  
Not a Deep Mystery!**

**B**ULKELEY

The captain of Rookwood was talking to Neville of the Sixth near the playing-fields, when Tubby Muffin came up and jerked at his sleeve.

The two great men of the Sixth were talking football, on the important topic of First Eleven matches, and, naturally, such an august conversation ought not to have been interrupted by a mere fag of the Fourth Form.

But Bulkeley of the Sixth was a good-tempered fellow. He only shook off Tubby's fat fingers, and said briefly:

"Cut!"

Reginald Muffin did not cut. He had important news to communicate, and Bulkeley was the fellow to hear it, as captain of the school. So Tubby stood his ground.

"I say, Bulkeley—"

"Don't bother!"

"It's important, Bulkeley. There was a burglar here last night!"

Bulkeley jumped.

"What? What's that?" he ejaculated. Tubby had succeeded in riveting his attention at last.

"Last night, after eleven o'clock, an attempt was made to enter Rookwood by one of the Sixth Form study windows," said Tubby, in quite the manner of Ferrers Locke at his best.

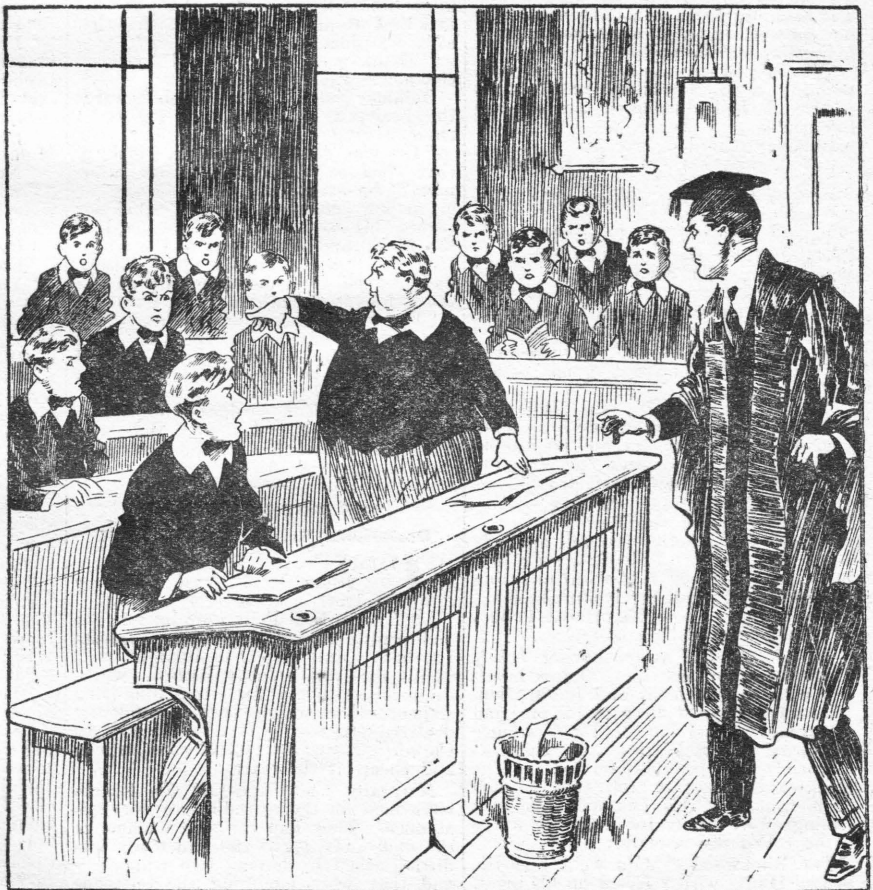
"And how do you know?" demanded Neville.

"I've got a lot of skill as a detective—"

"You young ass!"

"I can prove it!" howled Tubby. "Look here, Bulkeley, if you don't take the matter up, I shall have to go to Mr. Dalton, or the Head. The burglar may come again to-night."

Bulkeley stared at the fat Classical.



**SHOWING HIS SKILL!** "I will find out who's taken your chalk sir!" said Tubby Muffin. He rose to his feet and glanced round at the Form. Tubby felt that here was a chance of showing his skill as a detective. He raised his hand and pointed at Alfred Higgs. "Higgs is the criminal, sir!" he said. (See Chapter 3.)

Tubby's earnestness impressed him a little—a very little.

"Were you out of bed last night after eleven?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Then how can you know?"

"I've found the footprints under the window," said Tubby.

"How do you know they were made after eleven o'clock?" asked Neville, with a grin.

Tubby smiled—possibly an inscrutable smile, in the manner of the famous Baker Street detective.

"It didn't rain till after eleven," he said. "I heard Mr. Dalton say so this morning. And the footprints are deep in the damp earth. They wouldn't be so deep if it hadn't rained then."

"Quite a detective!" grinned Neville.

"I don't want to brag," said Tubby modestly. "But you ask the fellows in the Fourth. They'll tell you about my wonderful powers—"

"Tell me what you think you've found out, you thundering young ass!" said Bulkeley brusquely.

Tubby Muffin explained in minute detail. The two Sixth-Formers listened quietly, exchanging a very odd look. Tubby Muffin noticed that look, though he could not guess what it implied.

"And the footprints are still there?" asked Bulkeley.

"Yes."

"I'll come and see them."

"It's for you to look into, old man, not me," remarked Neville and he left his chum, and strolled away towards the football-ground.

Bulkeley followed Tubby Muffin, who was beaming again now. His wonderful powers were receiving their due acknowledgment at last.

"There you are, Bulkeley!" he said, pointing a fat forefinger to the spot where he had discovered the tell-tale footprints.

Bulkeley stared.

"Well, what's there?" he snapped.

"The footprints, of course!"

"There's no footprints there."

"Eh?"

Tubby Muffin blinked at the spot. Certainly there were no footprints to be seen now. The earth had a newly-stirred look; and the traces of the midnight marauder had completely vanished. Reginald Muffin's little round eyes almost started from his head.

"They—they—they're gone!" he babbled.

"You young ass!" said Bulkeley. "The best thing you can do is to mind your own business, and not go around nosing into what doesn't concern you. Did you tell Carthew about this?"

"Yes; and he was in a wax—"

Bulkeley smiled slightly. "Well, you'd better not tell anybody else," he said. "There wasn't any burglar; and if you talk about anything of the kind I shall cane you, Muffin."

"Oh! But—but—" stuttered Tubby. "That's enough."

Bulkeley walked away, leaving Tubby Muffin staring after him, almost bursting with astonishment and indignation. This was a sorry ending to his amazing discovery! And he could not adduce any proof now of his discovery, since his footprints had been obliterated. The Rookwood detective felt that he had been robbed of his triumph; and his feelings were really too deep for words as he rolled disconsolately away.

The Rookwood captain went into the School House with a frown on his brow. He knocked at the door of Mark Carthew's study, and entered.

Carthew gave him a rather startled look.

"Muffin has just been spinning me

a yarn, Carthew," said the Rookwood captain, coming to the point at once.

"The young ass!" said Carthew, with a laugh. "I hear that he's playing detective, and he's spun me a yarn of finding a burglar's footprints, or something."

"The footprints have been raked out now."

"I don't suppose they were ever there."

Bulkeley looked at him quietly. "There's been talk, Carthew, of fellows getting out of the school after lights out, and playing the goat at a certain quarter in the village," he said.

Carthew raised his eyebrows.

"I hope you don't suspect me, a prefect, of anything of the kind, Bulkeley?"

"The marks, as Muffin described them, showed that somebody jumped from your window-sill after the rain last night."

"Sheer imagination!" yawned Carthew. "That young ass ought really to be in a home for idiots!"

"You have not seen the footprints, then?"

"Certainly not."

"Then you did not obliterate them while Muffin was looking for me?"

"Really, Bulkeley—"

"Did you or did you not?" snapped the Rookwood captain.

"No!" said Carthew, with a deep breath.

Bulkeley was silent for a moment.

"You're a prefect, Carthew," he said.

"But if I found you disgracing the school in such a way, I should report you to the Head at once; and you know what it would mean for you—the sack! I think you'd better take that as a warning."

"Thank you for nothing!" yawned Carthew.

Bulkeley jerked his thumb towards the prefect's ashplant that lay on a chair.

"Do you generally get the end of that stick so muddy on a fine afternoon?" he asked scornfully.

Carthew changed colour. Bulkeley turned his back on the blackguard of the Sixth, and walked out of the study. Carthew hastily grabbed up a duster, and cleaned the mud from the end of the ashplant, breathing very hard.

"By Jove!" he murmured. "That was a close shave! But the brute can't prove anything, anyhow! But—but I shall have to be jolly careful! And as for Muffin—"

Carthew took a businesslike grip on the ashplant. It looked as if there was more trouble in store for the Rookwood detective!

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

### Professional Services not Required!

"JIMMY!"

"Buzz off!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were busy in the end study. They had returned from Latham; and they had brought with them the wonderful telescope, which Jimmy had secured for ten shillings and sixpence, and which Lovell confidently declared was worth pounds and pounds. Certainly it was a very handsome article, and cheap at the price.

Naturally the chums of the Fourth were bent on trying their new purchase at once. They had the side window of the end study open—the end study was distinguished by having two windows—and they were mounting the telescope there, pulled out to full length. Needless to say, they were not prepared to be bothered by Tubby Muffin just then.

But Tubby was not to be denied. He rolled into the study quite determined to say what he had come to say.

"Leave off playing with that plaything!" he said loftily. "I've got something to tell you fellows. My services are required by Carthew of the Sixth—a Sixth Form prefect! What do you think of that?"

"A little higher," said Lovell. "Shove Liddell and Scott under it."

"Do you hear me?" snorted Muffin.

"Carthew was in rather a wax when I told him about my discovery this afternoon. Bulkeley simply declined to take any notice of it. Bulkeley is rather an ass, you know. But now Carthew's sent for me."

"That's about right!" said Jimmy, peering through the telescope, and apparently deaf to Muffin. "I can see the beeches in the quad now—"

"Jealous, of course!" hooted Muffin.

"I suppose you don't believe in the burglar at all, like that ass Bulkeley?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Not quite, Tubby," he answered.

"And I recommend you to keep as far away from Carthew's study as you can."

"He's sent Snooks of the Second to say he wants me specially," said Tubby Muffin importantly. "Of course, he wants me to look into the matter. Now that he's thought it over he can see that it's a serious thing, and he wants me to act as a detective—"

"Fathead! More likely he wants to lick you!"

"You're an ass, Jimmy! You don't like being put in the shade by a cleverer fellow than yourself," said Muffin.

"That's what's the matter with you. Would you care to come with me, and see me at work professionally, and hear my deductions, and so on?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"I'm willing to make you my boy assistant, and treat you as Ferrers Locke does Jack Drake, you know!" said Tubby Muffin eagerly.

"Ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, will you come?" snapped Muffin.

"No jolly fear!" chuckled Jimmy.

"I'm going to give Carthew's study a wide berth, and advise you to do the same, Muffin."

"Rats!" said Muffin contemptuously.

"Look here, Muffin—"

"Yah!"

With that contemptuous rejoinder Reginald Muffin rolled out of the study.

He proceeded to make his way to Carthew's quarters, feeling very considerably elated. The long overdue recognition of his wonderful criminological powers was coming at last; he felt that. He was going to feel something else when he arrived in Carthew's study! But his wonderful deductive powers did not warn him.

"Silly ass!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now about that giddy telescope: What are you looking at, Lovell?" Arthur Edward Lovell had his eye on the telescope now.

"Old Manders' window," said Lovell.

"You can see Manders' house from here. There's the old codger at his window. Looks near enough to punch his nose. Wish he was, really!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's have a look?" said Jimmy Silver.

Lovell jerked his head away, and it was replaced by Jimmy Silver's. The telescope brought the Modern side wonderfully near, and Jimmy had a view of the sour face of Mr. Manders looking from his window. But that view was not particularly attractive, and Jimmy turned the telescope to take a wider survey.

"Hallo, there's old Bulkeley!" he ejaculated. "In his study! I say, we can see some of the Sixth-Form windows from here."

"Three or four, I think," said Lovell.

"That's the best of having a side



window. I say, turn it on Carthew's study, and let's see whether the cad is smoking."

"There's a tree in the way," said Jimmy, moving the telescope slightly and very carefully. "No; it's all right. My hat! Carthew's window's open, and I can see right into the study. Carthew's standing by the table. He's got his cane in his hand and—"

"Not smoking?" grinned Lovell.

"Ha ha! No!"

"He wouldn't be now, as he's just sent for Tubby to go to his study," remarked Newcome.

"Can you see Tubby there?" asked Raby.

The Fistical Four were all keenly interested in the powers of their new possession. It struck them as rather interesting to behold the interview between Carthew and Reginald Muffin. Certainly they did not believe that the Sixth-Form bully had sent for Tubby to request him to exercise his detective ability on the case of the mysterious footprints. Those footprints were not at all mysterious to the Fistical Four; they had a pretty shrewd guess at the facts.

"The door's just opened," said Jimmy, with his eye to the telescope. "That's Tubby coming into Carthew's room. He's smirking no end. Oh, my hat!" Jimmy went off into a yell.

"What's up?" gasped Lovell.

"Oh, dear! Carthew's got him by the collar—"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"He's laying into him with the ash-plant—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can almost hear the whacks!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "This is a splendid telescope—plain as anything. Carthew's given him about a dozen now—"

"Poor old Tubby!"

"Now he's booting him out of the study—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And slamming the door after him!" Jimmy Silver quitted the telescope and chortled. He had witnessed quite an exciting scene in Carthew's study. He was still chortling when footsteps came along the Fourth-Form passage, and the Fistical Four looked out of the end study and beheld Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical was limping along,

groaning. But he pulled himself together as he saw the chums of the Fourth, and grinned feebly.

"Well, you have taken on the case?" chuckled Lovell.

"Yes."

"What?" yelled the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Carthew was very civil," said Tubby. "He—he asked me to look into the—the mystery. I—I told him I would when I got time. What are you fellows blinking at?"

"Well, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "Of all the merry Ananases—"

"Of all the giddy George Washingtons!" stuttered Raby.

"I'm telling you the exact facts, of course, you fellows—"

"My dear old barrel," said Jimmy Silver, "I'll show you how to do deductions! From the colour of your eyelashes, and the way you do your back hair, I can tell you exactly what happened in Carthew's study. When you got there you found him standing by the table—"

"How—how do you know?" gasped Tubby in amazement.

"He had an ashplant in his paw and—"

"I say—"

"He took you by the back of the collar—"

"Oh!"

"And gave you over a dozen wallops—"

Tubby simply gasped.

"And then booted you out of the study, and slammed the door after you!" concluded Jimmy Silver. "How's that for deduction?"

"How do you know?" spluttered Tubby.

"Deduction, my dear fellow!" said Jimmy Silver loftily. "Nothing to what we can do in the end study when we try. Come in, you fellows; it's tea-time."

And the Fistical Four went in to tea, leaving Tubby Muffin rooted to the passage floor with sheer amazement.

THE END.

(If you want another long laugh, read: "The Tale of a Tenner!" by Owen Conquest—next week's splendid long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, featuring the fat and fatuous Tubby Muffin of the Fourth.)



(Continued from page 11.)

again I'll turn my back on you, and leave you on your own. Now get out of the room! I'm going to bolt the door on you before I go to sleep again."

"Where am I to sleep, then?" blustered Mr. Penrose.

"Where you like! Either you get out, or I do—and if I do I'm going to have nothing more to do with you."

Mr. Penrose scrambled limply to his feet.

"Jest one dollar, Richards, to get one little drink!" he pleaded.

"There's plenty of water—"

"Groooh!"

"Not a red cent! Are you going?"

"Oh Jerusalem!" groaned Mr. Penrose.

He limped out of the room, and Frank bolted the door before he returned to his plank-bed. He was not disturbed again till morning.

After breakfast they joined the supply wagon on for Siskoo, and started up the trail into the mountains.

Mr. Penrose, with a sort of hopeless expression on his face, lent a hand at unloading the baggage when they reached the cabin. While Frank was getting things to rights in the room used as an office, Mr. Penrose hung about the cabin dolefully. He quitted it at last, when the sun set, and limped away up the trail to the camp, doubtless with the forlorn hope of picking up a stray drink from some hospitable lumberman at the Golden West Hotel. Apparently he was successful, for when he returned it was nearly midnight, and he was singing in a cracked voice as he came down the trail.

Frank looked out of the window. Mr. Penrose was holding on to a tree. He blinked gravely at Frank.

"Ain't you letting me in?" he stutted.

"No. Not till you're sober."

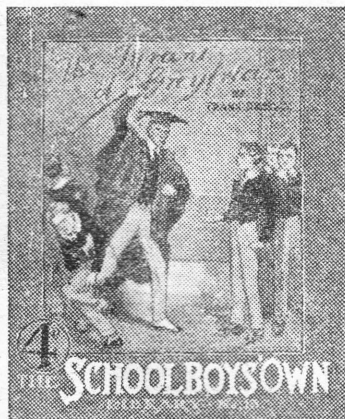
"Shober as judgsh!" stuttered Mr. Penrose.

"Go and eat coke!"

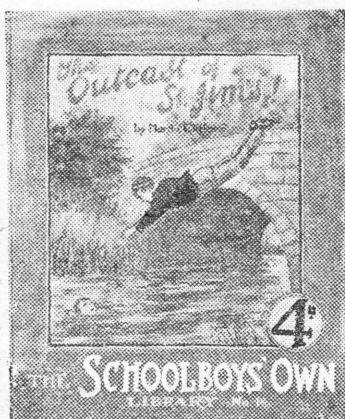
Heedless of the thumping on the door, Frank went to sleep. The hammering continued for some time, till Mr. Penrose gave it up as a bad job, and departed in search of other quarters, possibly not wholly satisfied with his new state of affairs as Frank Richards' partner!

THE END.

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