

Free Gift for Every Reader ^{See Inside!}

The POPULAR

2^o

EVERY
TUESDAY.

Week Ending
July 24th,
1926.
New Series.
No. 391.



This Grand
Stand-up
Figure of

W. BARDSLEY
AUSTRALIA

FREE
IN THIS ISSUE!

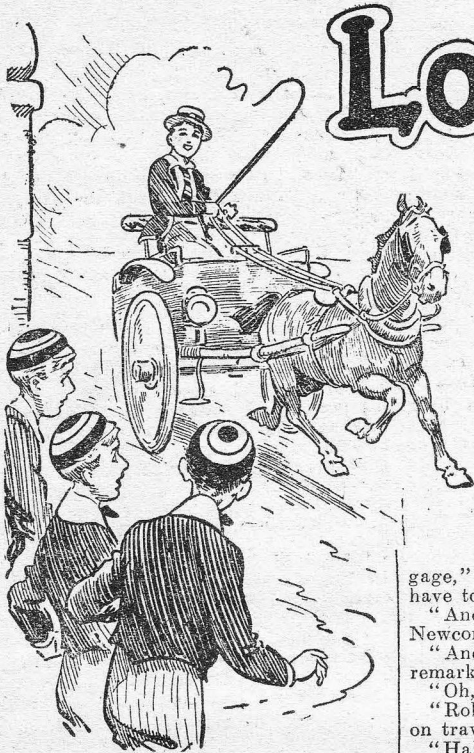
6 FINE STORIES *inside!*

"PATSY" HENDREN IS WRITING FOR THIS PAPER EVERY WEEK!

A BARGAIN'S A BARGAIN!

Rookwood with his own pony and trap—bought at a great bargain by himself. He has certainly great cause for satisfaction!

It is a proud moment for Arthur Edward Lovell when he rides up to



Lovell's Business Deal!

A Rollicking Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood School.
By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Putty is too Funny!

"If a chap had lots of money—"
Jimmy Silver spoke in regretful tones.

Raby and Newcome and Arthur Edward Lovell all answered together: "If!"

The Fistical Four of the Rookwood Fourth were discussing the holidays. Exactly what they were going to do with the holidays they were not sure, only that whatever they did, they were going to do it together.

That was a settled point. Also it was going to be something in the open air. That was another settled point.

"The open road, you know!" Arthur Edward Lovell had remarked when the subject first came up; a rather vague remark which seemed, however, to express the views of the chums of the end study.

The thought of open roads winding over rolling downs, and by sunny sands, was very attractive in a blazing July.

"If a chap had lots of money," continued Jimmy Silver thoughtfully, "what price a motor-caravan?"

"Topping!" said Newcome. "Shall we trot out this afternoon and see if we can pick one up for eighteenpence or so?"

"Come back to earth, old chap!" said Lovell. "The question is, Jimmy, not what we want, but what we can get."

"I suppose it is," said Jimmy Silver. "And if we're going to make a trip of it, we want motor-caravans and yachts; but what we can get is—"

"Shanks' pony!" said Raby. "That's about it!" assented Jimmy. "After all, you can't beat a walking tour for really seeing the country," argued Lovell.

"Well, there's the question of bag-

gage," said Jimmy Silver. "We should have to have a tent—"

"And some cooking things," said Newcome.

"And a change of collars, at least!" remarked Raby.

"Oh, we can manage!" said Lovell.

"Robert Louis Stevenson used to go on travels with a donkey," said Jimmy.

"Hallo! Talking over the holidays?" Putty Grace of the Fourth put his cheerful face into the doorway of the end study. "Just what I was going to speak to you about. I'm looking for recruits for a holiday tramp."

The Fistical Four eyed Putty Grace rather doubtfully.

They liked Putty—everybody liked Putty more or less—but they were not at all sure that they would enjoy Putty's company on a holiday tramp. Putty of the Fourth was an excessively humorous youth, and his humour was sometimes misdirected.

"No end of a lark, you know!" said Putty.

"Might be too larky with you in the crowd, old scout!" said Lovell. "There wouldn't be any room for your little jokes. If the tent came down suddenly on our heads, or we found glue in the teapot, we should slaughter you on the spot!"

"We're thinking of a tramp, Putty," said Jimmy Silver, "but it's a question of carrying props. What's your idea?"

"Easy as winking!" said Putty cheerily. "Suppose you could get a little horse for nothing?"

"Eh! What? That would be ripping! But we couldn't."

"I know a way."

"Oh, good!"

The Fistical Four were all interested at once. If Putty of the Fourth could solve the difficulty of baggage, Putty was the right man in the right place.

"Well, go ahead," said Lovell, still unconvinced. "If you're trying to pull our leg there'll be ructions! What's the way?"

"Just trot down to the end of the passage—"

said Putty.

"What for?"

"There's a tap there—"

"What about the tap?"

"Turn it on!" said Putty.

"Turn on the tap?" repeated Arthur Edward Lovell, almost dazedly. "What good would that do?"

"Then put your head under it."

"Put my head under the tap?" roared Lovell.

"Yes. Then leave it wet—"

"Look here—"

"And in a couple of hours or so there you are!" said Putty, with a perfectly serious face.

"What—"

"You see, you would catch a cold—" explained Putty.

"I know I should!" hooted Lovell.

"And what—"

"That would make you a little hoarse!" said Putty.

"Wh-a-at?"

"A little hoarse. And that's what you want."

It was some seconds before Arthur Edward Lovell realised that this was a pun. When he realised it, he made a sudden spring from his chair, and grasped the humorous junior in the doorway.

Putty of the Fourth had probably been expecting a burst of laughter. Instead of which, he was suddenly seized and yanked headlong into the study.

Crash!

"Ow!" roared Putty—struggling. "You silly ass! Leggo!"

"Bump him!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four collared the struggling Putty, and he smote the study carpet, in the grasp of four pairs of hands.

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Ow! You silly asses—"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Whoop!" roared Putty.

Then the humorist of the Fourth was tossed into the passage, where he landed with another bump. The door of the end study closed on him.

Jimmy Silver & Co. resumed their discussion, without the assistance of Putty of the Fourth.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

"Some" Bargain!

"THE very thing!" Arthur Edward Lovell uttered that exclamation aloud. It was the "very thing," there was no mistake about that, and Lovell looked at it with great admiration.

It was two or three days since the discussion in the end study, and plans were not settled yet. Arthur Edward Lovell was taking a walk down the lane to Coombe, when he came upon the object that so excited his admiration. It was a light two-wheeled cart, nicely painted in dark green, drawn by a sturdy little pony. It struck Lovell at once that this was exactly what the Rookwood tramps wanted for their "walk," to carry the tent and the bags. It was the very thing; and Lovell, in his interest, stopped to look at it and survey it critically.

The pony was tethered to a tree by the wayside, and was cropping the grass in plump contentment. For a moment or two Lovell did not discern the owner. Then he spotted a pair of baggy knees that emerged from the long grass—all that could be seen of a gentleman who was lying on his back there. Apparently the owner had tied up the pony while he was taking a rest. So Lovell concluded, at all events.

"What a little beauty!" murmured Lovell, aloud. "Looks as if it's built for the very purpose—perhaps it was. Perhaps that chap is on a walking tour with it. Lucky bargee!"

The man in the grass seemed to become aware of Lovell's presence. He sat up. The baggy knees disappeared, and a round, red face, with a shabby cap over it, rose into view.

If this gentleman had been camping out, as Lovell supposed, he had obviously been roughing it. He was dusty, and his clothes were exceedingly well worn.

"Good-afternoon!" said Lovell politely.

"Eh? 'Afternoon!" said the gentleman sleepily. "Warm—what?"

"Yes, rather!" said Lovell. "I was looking at your little cart."

"My what?"

Lovell pointed to the handsome little turn-out.

"It's a little beauty!" he said. "Looks as if it was built to carry the baggage for a walking-party. Nice little pony!"

"Eh? Oh, yes!"

The man rubbed his eyes and blinked at Lovell. There was the dawn of a grin on his face, which needed a shave.

His manner was agreeable enough, and Lovell was encouraged to pursue the topic. If such a turn-out as this was within the means of the Rookwooders, certainly it could not be improved upon for their purpose. It would carry the tent, the bags, the cricket outfit, and a few more necessary things. It was, as Lovell had said, the very thing.

"On a walking tour, I suppose?" asked Lovell.

"Sort of," assented the sleepy gentleman.

"I wonder if you'd mind telling me how much a turn-out like that would run to?" said Lovell. "You see, we—my friends and I—are thinking of a walking tour this vac, and we want something to carry the props. Something like that would suit us to a 'T.'"

"Like that, eh?"

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"The very thing!" said Lovell. "I suppose it's pretty expensive?"

The drowsy gentleman looked at him, and looked at the pony and cart. He glanced up and down the sunny road, and seemed to reflect.

"Lookin' for a turn-out like that?" he asked.

"That's it!"

"Like to buy one cheap?"

Lovell's heart thumped.

"You bet!" he answered. "If you were selling yours—"

"Well, that depends," yawned the sleepy gentleman. "The fact of the matter is this: I'm fed-up with the business. My friends have gone home; that's how it is, and I don't care to carry on on my lonesome own. I'd just as soon sell that turn-out as not."

"Give us a chance, then!" said Lovell. "Of—of course, funds are limited—we're schoolboys. But we'd club together, and if the price was anything like reasonable—"

The man looked at him attentively.

"Well, how I look at the matter is this here," he said. "I'm gettin' back to London. Costs somethin' to get that turn-out home, you see, and I'm not walking it. Fed-up with that, I'd like to get it off my hands. I'd let it go for twenty pounds, blessed if I wouldn't!"

"My only hat!" said Lovell, his eyes gleaming.

He did not know in the least what the pony and cart were worth; but he knew that they must be worth very much more than twenty pounds.

"I mean it!" said the man, with another yawn. "And, mind, they're good stuff. The pony is a oner to go. Neddy, I call him. Neddy's a real corker! The cart—well, see for yourself, sir! You couldn't get that alone made for twenty pounds!"

"I agree!" said Lovell. "My hat, don't I jolly well wish I had twenty pounds! Look here"—he thought rapidly—"there's four of us—in fact, five—who are going on the tramp; among us we can raise the money—we can borrow some, as we shall be getting tips for the holidays. Will you trot along to Rookwood with me—that's our school—and we'll see what can be done?"

"I'm goin' to the railway-station, now I've had my rest," answered the man in the grass. "I'd rather not have the trouble of putting that pony and trap on the railway; but I'm starting now, anyhow. Sorry we can't do business!"

"Hold on, though!" said Lovell. "Look here, I know it's a bargain. I've got some tin about me—suppose I pay you a deposit on it?"

Lovell ran his hands through his pockets. Arthur Edward had received several handsome tips in anticipation of the holidays. His Uncle Arthur Edward, after whom he had been named, always came out well on such occasions. There was a crisp five-pound note in Lovell's pocket, and he was the happy possessor of three pound notes. He turned out his whole store—eight pounds in paper and ten shillings in silver.

The gentleman in the grass glanced at the money, and a glimmer came into his sleepy eyes.

"It's a go!" he said. "I can see you're a gentleman, and I can take your word. Hand over the deposit and send the balance to me by post."

"You'll trust me to do that?" asked Lovell, much flattered by this frank confidence on the part of a stranger.

"Certainly! I know a gentleman when I see one."

"Thank you very much!" said Lovell gratefully. "Of course, I'll send you the money at once; I know we can raise it by clubbing together. Will it do if I send a money-order to-morrow morning?"

"First-rate!"

"Then it's a bargain!" exclaimed Lovell eagerly. "You give me a receipt for eight-ten on account, to show the fellows."

The tired gentleman felt in his pockets.

"Got a bit of paper," he asked, "and a pencil?"

"Here is a fountain-pen," said Lovell. "Make the receipt to 'A. E. Lovell.'"

"Good!"

Lovell tore a leaf from his pocket-book, spread it on the cover, and handed it to the gentleman, with the fountain-pen. The sleepy gentleman scribbled on the sheet, and looked up.

"Got a tuppenny stamp?" he asked. "This ain't legal without a stamp."

Lovell groped an old stamp out of his pocket. He was glad to see the man so business-like. The stamp was affixed to the sheet, and the tired gentleman signed over it. He handed the paper to Lovell. The junior read it carefully. Arthur Edward was somewhat methodical in business matters.

"Received from A. E. Lovell, Esq., £3 10s. on acct. of £20 for pony and cart."

"H. WALKER."

"Your address—for sending on the balance?" asked Lovell.

Mr. Walker had forgotten that important item.

"Oh—oh—yes!" said Mr. Walker. "Better send it to my club—just address it to the 'Idlers, Piccadilly.'"

"Right-ho!" said Lovell. "And I can drive away the pony and cart now?"

"Certainly! They're yours!"

Mr. Walker detached himself from the grass.

"Jolly glad I met you this afternoon, Mr. Lovell!" he said. "You've saved me a lot of trouble. Good-afternoon!"

"Good-bye, and many thanks!" said Lovell.

The baggy-kneed gentleman nodded, and walked away up the shady lane at quite a good pace, considering how tired he looked. Arthur Edward Lovell, fairly bubbling over with satisfaction, unfastened the pony, mounted into the little cart, and drove away to Rookwood in triumph.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Glory for Arthur Edward!

"LOVELL—" "What the merry thump—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly shouted in their surprise. The three chums had gone down to the school gates to look for Lovell, expecting him in to tea. Lovell arrived, driving a pony, in a handsome little green cart. He came in at the gateway with a flourish, the juniors jumping aside out of the way.

Lovell jumped down, and smiled at the astonishment of his comrades.

"Like the look of it?" he asked.

"Oh, yes—jolly!" said Jimmy Silver. "But what—Somebody lent it to you?"

"Not at all. I've bought it," said Lovell, with studied carelessness.

There was a yell from three juniors at once.

"Bought it?"
 "Just that!" smiled Lovell.
 "Gammon!" said Raby. "You jolly well couldn't bag a thing like that for your uncle's fiveer. It's worth fifty or sixty pounds at least."
 "All that, I fancy," assented Lovell. "I happen to have got it at a bargain. Some fellows have an eye to a bargain. Some fellows know how to manage, you know, when they're given a chance."

Perhaps a little swank was excusable in Arthur Edward Lovell at that proud moment.

Jimmy Silver eyed the pony and the handsome cart, and then eyed his chum.

"You've really bought it, Lovell?" he asked.

"Twenty pounds. I've paid Mr. Walker eight-ten on account, and we've got to send the rest on."

"He trusted you with it?"

"Looks like it!" said Lovell coolly. "Of course, we're all buying this together—it's going Co. Four of us whack out five pounds each—or five of us four pounds each. After the vac. we can easily get our money back—that thing would sell for more than twenty pounds at any time, anywhere."

"I'm jolly sure that it would," said Jimmy Silver. "Blessed if I can understand a man selling it so cheap!"

"He was fed-up with his walking tour, and his friends had left him," Lovell explained. "He was glad to get it off his hands. Of course, he knew he was selling cheap. Still, he saved the expense of getting it back to London by rail—and that's a consideration in these days, when the railways stick you so steep for freights. Anyhow, I suppose he knew his own business."

"I suppose so," assented Jimmy, still in wonder.

He felt a new respect for Arthur Edward. Much as he liked that cheery youth, Jimmy had never given him credit for unusual abilities. But a fellow who could bag a bargain like this was most certainly an able youth.

The chums of the Fourth surrounded the cart, and peered into it, and patted the pony and caressed him in unbounded satisfaction. The handsome turn-out was their very own.

"Of course, we shall have to speak to the Head about having it put up here for a day or two," said Lovell. "But that will be all right."

"No doubt about that," said Jimmy. "My hat! What a beauty! This cart must have been made for the purpose. Look at it! Lockers in it! And there's a couple of ground-sheets there! They go with the cart, I suppose?"

Quite a number of juniors were gathering round the turn-out now. There was great admiration on all sides.

Old Mack was routed out of his lodge at last, and requested to take temporary charge of the turn-out, which half-a-crown, slipped into his horny hand, induced him to do with a good grace.

Then the Fistical Four went into the School House to tea in great spirits.

There was a little more consequence than usual in Arthur Edward Lovell's manner as he walked with his chums.

Lovell had always had a secret opinion that the brains of the end study were, for the greater part, concentrated in his own skull. This secret opinion sometimes transpired in Lovell's conversation. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome, on the other hand, had never been willing to admit that Lovell had even a fourth part—his fair share—of

the brains of the study. Indeed, more than once it had been averred that on the occasion when brains were handed out, Lovell had been entirely overlooked!

All that was changed now. Lovell, for the time, was a shining light in the end study—a fellow whose gift for bargain-hunting, at least, his chums were delighted to honour.

What Arthur Edward had always thought of himself, it now appeared that his chums thought of him—and he could not have been held in higher estimation than that.

After tea, Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled into the quad, and Conroy of the Fourth sauntered along.

"Something's up!" he remarked.

policeman and wondering what might be his business at Rookwood School.

Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered on in the summer sunset under the old beeches, discussing the holidays and the walking tour, in a happy mood. Bulkeley of the Sixth came out of the School House and went down to the porter's lodge. He came back, after speaking to old Mack, and looked round, evidently in search of someone. He spotted the Fistical Four under the beeches, and came over to them.

"Come with me, Lovell!" he said brusquely. "You're wanted!"

"What's up?" asked Lovell.

"The Head wants you. Come at once!"

"Boggy is with the Head, isn't he?"



THE DEAL! "Hold on!" said Lovell. "I've got some tin on me—suppose I pay you a deposit on the pony and trap?" Lovell ran his hands through his pockets. He was, at the moment, well supplied with pocket-money. He turned out his whole store—eight pounds in paper and ten shillings in silver. The gentleman in the grass glanced at the money. "It's a go!" he said. (See Chapter 2.)

"What's that?" asked Jimmy Silver. Conroy gave a nod towards the gates.

A young man with a sun-browned face, in dusty Norfolks, had entered, and by his side was the well-known portly form of Mr. Boggs, the village constable of Coombe.

Mr. Boggs' fat face wore an expression of the most portentous solemnity. He marched ponderously towards the School House, the tall young man in Norfolks striding by his side.

"What on earth can the bobby want?" said Lovell.

"Something's up!" repeated Conroy. "Boggy looks as if he's come to arrest the whole school for highway robbery or petty larceny."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Boggs and his companion disappeared into the School House, a good many fellows glancing after the village

Bulkeley nodded, and signed to Lovell to follow him.

Arthur Edward looked restive. "Look here, is it a row, Bulkeley?" he asked.

"I'm afraid so, you young ass!" said the captain of Rookwood. "I hope you'll be able to explain to the Head, anyhow."

"I've not done anything that I know of," said Lovell. "If it's about knocking off Smythe's topper this morning—"

"It's more serious than that. Do you mean to say you don't know what you're charged with?" exclaimed Bulkeley, eyeing the junior keenly.

"Charged! What do you mean? Charged? My hat! And what am I charged with, then?"

"Stealing a pony and cart!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Come!" said Bulkeley. "The Head's waiting!"

He led Lovell away—dazed. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome blinked after them, and blinked at one another.

"Stealing——" said Jimmy faintly.

"A pony——" murmured Newcome.

"And cart——" breathed Raby.

And then there fell a silence—a silence that could almost be felt!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

In the Cart!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL staggered rather than walked into the Head's study.

He was not quite sure whether he was on his head or on his heels, as he entered that august presence.

Arthur Edward blinked dizzily round the study. He seemed to see in a kind of mist the stern, awful face of Dr. Chisholm; still more mistily the fat, perspiring face of P.-c. Boggs. He hardly noticed the sunburnt young man in Norfolk, who was eyeing him very curiously.

Lovell tried to pull himself together. He did not understand—he couldn't understand! How could he possibly be charged with stealing a pony and cart? He had never had any dealings with a pony and cart in his life—excepting the turn-out he had purchased from Mr. Walker for hard cash.

What did it mean—what could it mean? The awful face of the Head seemed to expand before him, and grow larger and more terrifying. His voice, when he spoke, rumbled in Lovell's ears like thunder.

"Lovell!"

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Lovell. "I never——"

"What?"

"I didn't—I—I never—wasn't——" stammered Lovell incoherently.

"You inquired of the porter, Bulkeley?"

"Yes, sir," said the Rookwood captain. "Mack informed me that the pony and cart had been driven in by Lovell of the Fourth. Lovell requested Mack to take charge of them, and they are in the stables now. A green-painted cart and a little plump, brown pony, such as Mr. Richards described."

"Then there can be no mistake, amazing as the matter is!" said Dr. Chisholm. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Richards, for—having testified a very marked unbelief——"

"Not at all, sir," said the young man in Norfolk politely. "I am sure it must have been a great shock to you."

"A very great shock indeed," said the Head. "Even now I can scarcely believe a Rookwood boy capable of so wicked a theft—and of such open and crass folly in committing it!"

"I have not spoken of theft, sir," said Mr. Richards. "I brought the officer with me in case there should be need of his assistance. Also, he is aware that the pony and cart are my property. If the person who purloined my property should dispute the matter, of course, I must call upon the law. But I hope—I trust—that it may turn out to be nothing more serious than a foolish schoolboy practical joke."

Lovell heard, but without comprehending. His brain was in a whirl.

"We shall see!" said the Head.

"Lovell, do you admit having brought

this gentleman's pony and cart into the school?"

Lovell gasped.

"Certainly not, sir!"

"Have you brought any pony and cart into the school, as Mack has informed Bulkeley?"

"Yes, sir; my own."

"Your own!" exclaimed the Head.

"Yes; my pony and cart!" stammered Lovell. "Certainly, sir! Bought for and paid for with my own money, sir!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

"If this gentleman has lost a pony and cart I can't help it," said Lovell, recovering a little. "It's like his cheek to think that I know anything about it!" Lovell gave Mr. Richards a defiant look. "You've no right to suggest anything of the kind!" he blurted out.

Mr. Richards eyed him very curiously.

"Listen to me, Lovell," said the Head in a grim voice. "Mr. Richards has explained to me that he was on a walking tour in Sussex with a little pony and cart, which carried his baggage. He left the pony tied up in the lane——"

"There wasn't any baggage in the cart I bought, sir!" said Lovell.

"Let me explain," interposed Mr. Richards. "I have reached the end of my tour, and my baggage has been sent home by train. The pony and cart I intended to leave with a friend who lives near Coombe, to be taken care of for the present. I was on my way to his house with them when I went into the wood to take some photographs, leaving the pony tied up by the roadside in the grass. When I returned about half an hour later they were gone. I immediately called at the local police-station, and Mr. Boggs was kind enough to assist me——"

"Not at all, sir!" murmured Mr. Boggs.

"We soon learned that more than one person had seen the cart driven away by a schoolboy, who wore the Rookwood colours on his straw hat," said Mr. Richards. "I therefore came on here at once with Mr. Boggs to claim my property. But I repeat I charge no one with theft. I'm inclined to believe that the whole thing is an exceedingly foolish practical joke."

Lovell felt his head spinning again.

Was it possible that there had been two little green carts, with little fat brown ponies attached, in Coombe Lane at the same time, one outfit belonging to Mr. Richards and the other to Mr. Walker?

It seemed highly improbable.

Then what did it all mean?

"Well, Lovell!" The Head's voice was grinding. "What have you to say now? Mr. Richards is taking a lenient—a very lenient—view of the matter. To my mind it is undoubted that you took possession of his property, whether for a foolish joke, or with a darker purpose."

Lovell wiped his perspiring forehead. It was borne in upon him, in spite of himself, that there was only one pony and cart in the affair. But if that was Mr. Richards' property, where did Mr. Walker come in?

"You state," continued the Head, "that you bought a pony and cart—a sufficiently remarkable proceeding for a Fourth Form boy. I will give you a hearing, however. At what establishment did you make this extraordinary purchase?"

"I—I bought it of a man!" said Lovell weakly.

"His name?"

"Walker," said Lovell.

"Walker!" repeated Mr. Richards, with a faint smile.

Only at that moment did the slangy significance of the name strike Lovell.

"And where was this man?" asked the Head.

"In—in Coombe Lane."

"What?"

"The pony and cart were tied up by the roadside," faltered Lovell. "The—the man Walker was snoozing—I mean napping—that is, resting in the grass. He—he told me he was fed-up with touring with the outfit, and—and offered to sell it to me. I—I've got his receipt for the money."

The Head adjusted his glasses, and gave Arthur Edward Lovell a very special scrutinising blink.

"Give me the receipt," he said.

Lovell handed it over without a word. His face was crimson now. The terrible truth was dawning on his mind.

The Head glanced at the paper, and laid it on his desk. The corners of his mouth twitched.

"You incredibly stupid boy!" he said. "Had you any reason to believe that this—this Walker was the owner of the pony and trap he sold you?"

"I—I—I—I suppose so!" groaned Lovell. "He—he—he was resting just near it—just as if he had just tied it up. Oh dear!"

"I accept your statement, Lovell," said the Head. "It is clear to me that you have acted with crass stupidity in allowing yourself to be swindled in the most palpable manner by a worthless character. The man was probably some disreputable person, and it is clear that he had no right to sell the pony and cart at all."

Lovell suppressed a groan. He knew that now.

"Mr. Richards, I trust you take the same view—that you recognise that this foolish lad had had no dishonest intentions?"

"Most certainly, sir," said Mr. Richards. "I never dreamed of such an explanation of the incident; but I believe every word the lad has uttered. It is clear that he has been cruelly taken in by an unscrupulous rascal. Certainly, he should not have been so confiding."

"So crassly stupid, you mean, no doubt," said the Head grimly.

"Ahem!" murmured Mr. Richards.

"I—I've been done, sir," said Lovell miserably. "I—I'm sorry you've had this trouble, sir. It's rotten enough for me. My money's gone, and we sha'n't have the turn-out for our holiday! Oh dear! It—it's in the stables now, sir; you can take it away with you."

Lovell's voice almost broke.

The Head, with something of compassion in his severe face, signed to Lovell to leave the study. Arthur Edward almost tottered out.

He limped out into the quadrangle, where he found the Co. waiting for him with scared faces. They surrounded him at once.

Lovell made a defensive gesture.

"Don't pile it on me, you fellows!" he groaned. "It's bad enough! I—I was diddled by some awful rotter—just a beast, you know, who took me in! He hadn't any right to sell the contraption at all; it belongs to Mr. Richards. Oh crickey!"

"Some fellows," said Raby, addressing space, "know how to make a bargain."

Lovell only groaned by way of response. He was so utterly crushed by the awful outcome of his wonderful bargain that his chums took pity on him, and forbore to rub it in. They were only too glad that Arthur Edward was

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Both wore scarlet mantles, and both were very like Shamus in their savage appearance, save that their hair and beards were as black as ink, and that one of them was lame with a deformed foot.

"Dost hear that, Flay-the-Goat?" muttered Gerald Clubfoot, drawing his companion into the shadow of the masonry. "The red man flies his hawk too high to my liking."

"And mine, too." Dost not see his game? He would wed the maiden, slay Gondomar, and become lord of Bally-shanturbetnacree."

"Curse him!" said Gerald Clubfoot. "He is too mighty for his mantle as it is, but Shamus a baron—faugh! He shall nip off my sword first! We must be wary and watch unobserved."

They came out of their concealment, deeming it unwise to be detected, and behaved as though they knew nothing of what had been said.

"How now? Quarrelling again?" said Flay-the-Goat, with a laugh.

"Not so," replied Shamus. "I was but insisting that the guard at the main gate be doubled."

Then he told them of Sir Brian's Cartel, and while they were venting their wrath in wild Irish, which made it sound the more terrible, Gondomar seized the opportunity to escape and seek the hall in the keep, where he drowned his troubles for the time in copious draughts of wine.

Though he had been guilty of a great

act of injustice and robbery in taking possession of Sir Brian's lands and retaining his daughter as hostage, there were some good points still left in the heart of Gondomar de Gondomar, and as the curtain over the door was drawn aside he pushed his cup away, and his face became grave.

"Come hither, Clarice," he said. "I would have some speech with thee."

It was the captive who entered, a timid girl of sixteen, with the look of an imprisoned bird in her dark eyes.

She had been searching for her harp, the only solace she had, and now she went slowly up to Gondomar's chair, and stood there waiting.

"Child," said the baron, glancing cautiously round, for he lived in perpetual dread of the tyranny of the chief, "if I had means to send thee in safety to thy father I would do so."

Clarice was so astounded at his words that she stared at him in blank amaze, and then, bursting into tears, fell on her knees with hands upraised.

"Oh, my lord!" she faltered. "I

would pray for you every day of my life!"

"For mercy's sake get up!" he cried, very much alarmed. "The Red Shamus must not come and find us in this wise. Listen! There is danger threatening. I want to tell you while there is time. Take this key. It fits the little door in the store-room against the buttery. If aught happens that I cannot protect you, take shelter there, and you can obtain food by stealth."

The girl took the key and hid it in the bosom of her gown; but before she had time to say a word footsteps were heard approaching, and Gondomar motioned her hastily away.

"I am easier in my mind," he muttered, as she vanished through the doorway that led to the "women's apartments." "I must preserve this child at all hazards. One never knows what may happen, and when I have leisure I will find whither that secret passage leads."

Little guessed the baron by whom, within a few short hours, the secret of that passage was to be discovered, and the fateful results which were to follow for all within the castle!

THE END.

(Next Tuesday "The Secret of the Withered Oak!" Another grand romance of Robin Hood and his band of adventurous outlaws. Don't miss it!)



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LOVELL'S BUSINESS DEAL!

(Continued from page 22.)

not, after all, to be charged with stealing that marvellous bargain.

The portly form of P.-c. Boggs came out of the House. There was a grin on his fat face as he passed Lovell. A few minutes later Mr. Richards came out, and he glanced about him, and came towards the Fistical Four. There was a smile on his handsome, sun-browned face.

Lovell looked at him speechlessly.

"You've had bad luck, my young friend," said Mr. Richards genially. "Another time you must be a little more careful about placing so much faith in strangers. I am afraid you stand to lose eight pounds ten shillings over this unfortunate affair."

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"I'm not likely to see it again!" mumbled Lovell.

"You were saying something," went on Mr. Richards, "about having bought my pony and cart—I mean, the pony and cart—to use on a holiday trip."

"That was the idea, sir," said Lovell. "I—I—"

"Well, perhaps your loss need not be so very serious after all," said the sun-burnt young man. "I mentioned that I had finished my trip, and was going to leave the pony and cart with a friend to be taken care of. Suppose, instead of doing so, I lend them to you for your vacation?"

"Wha-a-at?"

"When your holidays are over, you will return them to the address I will give you. You are very welcome," added Mr. Richards, with a smile. "I am sure you will use my little pony kindly, and that is all I care about."

Jimmy Silver & Co. simply blinked at the young man. This was like the

sun coming out after a very cloudy day.

"You—you—you're a brick, sir!" gasped Lovell.

"Hurrah!" chortled the Co.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked down to the gates with Mr. Richards, like a guard of honour round a very distinguished visitor. And after he had departed, overwhelmed with thanks, the Fistical Four gathered in the end study, and there at last, now that the clouds had rolled by, Lovell's chums told him what they thought of him. But Arthur Edward did not mind; he was too happy for that. And, anyhow, the Co. had to admit that there had been, after all, a satisfactory outcome in the long run to Lovell's business deal.

THE END.

(You will all enjoy reading next Tuesday's Special Long Tale of the chums of Rookwood, entitled: "Chums on Tramp!")