

"THE HOLIDAY ANNUAL"

NOW  
ON  
SALE

"EVERY  
BOY'S

HOBBY ANNUAL"

Venables

Read *A. S. HARDY'S Grand Footer Yarn* inside

# The POPULAR

2<sup>d</sup>

EVERY  
TUESDAY,  
Week Ending  
September 25th,  
1926.

New Series,  
No. 400.



"PLAY UP, THE BLUE CRUSADERS!"

## A SHOCK FOR JIMMY SILVER!

at midnight on the scene of a burglary, doing at Rookwood School?

What is the man, whom Jimmy Silver had last seen



# The Mystery Man At Rookwood!

A Dramatic, Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., dealing with the Rookwood Tramps' last adventure on the highway, and their return to Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

#### The Alarm in the Night!

"THE last night out!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Rotten!" remarked Lovell. Jimmy Silver nodded thoughtfully.

It was a clear September night. The velvety sky was spangled with stars. The Rookwood holiday tramps were camped on the edge of a wood in Berkshire. Trotsky, the pony, lay asleep in the grass. The baggage-cart rested on its shafts by the side of the lane that bordered the wood. The tent was up, and Raby and Newcome and Putty Grace had already turned in. Arthur Edward Lovell was yawning.

Jimmy Silver, seated on a camp-stool, looked away among the trees, where the starlight fell in patches. He was in a thoughtful mood.

Everything comes to an end, and the tramp of the Rookwooders was ending. They had enjoyed themselves on the open road, and they would willingly have prolonged their march for a few more weeks. The weather had not always favoured them, but they had had a good time. But in a few days now Rookwood School would be assembling for the new term, and on the morrow Jimmy Silver & Co. were to start for home.

Jimmy was not inclined for bed, though the hour was late. He was more inclined to make the most of the last night out.

"We've had a jolly good time," remarked Lovell. "But, after all, I sha'n't be sorry to turn up at Rookwood again. There'll be the football."

"That's so," agreed Jimmy. "And we shall see all the fellows again."

Jimmy nodded. Arthur Edward Lovell yawned, and rose to his feet.

"Better turn in," he observed.

"Go ahead! I'll follow."

"Right-ho!"

Lovell strolled to the tent under the trees.

Jimmy Silver was left alone. He leaned back against the trunk of a big beech-tree behind his camp-stool. The night was very silent. A rabbit scuttled

out of the wood, and stopped and blinked at Jimmy Silver, and then scuttled off again. From somewhere in the far distance came a chime. It was midnight.

Then suddenly, through the stillness of the wood, came a sharp ringing sound, startling in the deep silence of midnight.

Crack!

Jimmy Silver started.

"A giddy poacher!" he murmured. He rose to his feet, staring into the wood. His first thought was that there was a poacher at hand, but he realised that what he had heard was not the report of a gun. It was a pistol-shot.

Far across the wood was the manor-house—Deepden Manor. Earlier in the evening the campers had seen the lights from its high windows glimmering through the wood, but all was dark now.

Jimmy Silver breathed rather quickly. The pistol-shot had been fired in or near the house—he knew that. What did it mean?

He stared through the trees, and out of the darkness came a sudden flashing of lights. First one window, then another of the distant house leaped into brightness.

There was a confused sound of shouting. Jimmy could not distinguish the words, but the shouting told of sudden alarm.

"Burglars!" breathed Jimmy.

He stood still in the shadow of the beech-tree, watching. He was too far from the house to think of rendering assistance, even if it were needed. And that was not likely. There were a dozen servants at least at Deepden Manor. Jimmy had been up to the house at sundown to ask permission to camp in the wood—a permission that was genially granted by the squire of Deepden.

If only in return for that genial hospitality, Jimmy Silver would have been glad to chip in if his help were wanted. He was wondering whether to make his way through the shadowy wood towards the house, when a sound of hurried trampling came to his ears.

Hurried, running footsteps were approaching the spot where the Rookwooders were camped.

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

The camp was on the edge of the wood, where it was bordered by the lane, and the running man was evidently taking a short cut through the trees to the lane to escape.

As the footsteps came nearer Jimmy heard the panting breathing of the runner, though in the shadows he did not see the man yet.

It was obviously the burglar who was running to escape, and the pistol-shot was yet ringing in Jimmy Silver's ears. It was a thief, or perhaps a murderer, who was tearing towards him through the shadows. Jimmy's heart beat faster, and he clenched his hands. The scoundrel should not escape if Jimmy could help it.

He saw the man now—a man of powerful build—panting as he ran. As he came into Jimmy's view he was glancing right and left like a hunted animal. The starlight fell full upon his face—a face with regular features, dark eyes, and well-cut mouth; a face that would have been handsome but for the deadly pallor that was in it now, and the expression of mingled fear and rage.

Jimmy, standing in the thick shadow of the beech, was invisible; but the tent glimmered under the trees, and the running man saw it. For an instant he paused, staring at the tent. Then he ran on, passing under the wide branches of the beech where Jimmy Silver stood.

And as he passed the Rookwood junior sprang at him.

The attack was utterly unexpected. Jimmy's grasp closed on the man's collar, and he came down into the grass with a crash.

A revolver rolled from his hand as he fell.

He uttered a breathless cry of panic as he sprawled in the grasp of the sturdy Rookwood junior.

"Lovell! Raby! Help!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Let me go! Let me go!" panted the man, as he turned on the schoolboy and struggled to rise.

"Help!" roared Jimmy.

There was a shout from the tent.

"Jimmy! What—"

"Help!"

Lovell, in his pyjamas, came springing out of the tent. Raby's startled face appeared behind him.

Jimmy Silver was struggling desperately with the thief, striving to hold him till his chums should come to his aid.

But the man was powerful and utterly desperate. He rolled over in the grass with the Rookwood junior, and came uppermost.

"Let go!" he panted.

Jimmy held on like a bulldog.

"Hold on, Jimmy!" yelled Lovell.

And he came racing up.

Crash!

A savage fist was dashed into Jimmy Silver's face, dashing his head back against the hard ground.

Jimmy gave a cry, and, half stunned by the concussion, released his hold. In an instant the fugitive had torn himself away, and was leaping towards the lane. Lovell came up a second too late, grabbing at him and missing. The man leaped into the lane and ran, and the shadows swallowed him up, only the echo of his running feet coming back for a few seconds.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### The Cracksmen's Escape!

"JIMMY!"

Lovell turned to his chum.

He helped Jimmy Silver to his feet, and the captain of the

Rookwood Fourth stood unsteadily, his head spinning, leaning on his chum's shoulder.

"You're hurt, Jimmy?" gasped Lovell.

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"Only a thump. Oh, my napper! Ow! Has that brute got away?"

"He's gone," said Lovell. "Who the dickens was it—"

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Newcome, coming out of the tent.

"A footpad?" asked Putty Grace.

Jimmy Silver could not explain for the moment. His head was aching and spinning from the savage blow he had received. He leaned on Lovell, panting for breath.

"Something's up at the house!" said Raby, pointing to the flashing lights in the distance.

"They're coming this way."

Two or three lanterns were moving under the trees, and footsteps and voices were coming nearer. The Rookwood juniors watched and listened.

"It's a burglary!" gasped Jimmy at last. "I got hold of the burglar. He's dropped a revolver here."

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Here they come! And here's the shooter," said Putty of the Fourth, picking the revolver out of the grass.

One chamber of the revolver had been discharged, as he could see.

Three or four men came hurrying up to the group. At the head of them Jimmy recognised the squire of Deepden—a stout old gentleman, half-dressed, with a golf-club in his grip. He shouted to the juniors.

"Did he pass this way?"

"Yes!" called back Jimmy.

"You saw him?"

"Yes—and collared him!"

"Good lad!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "Which way—"

"Down the lane," said Lovell, pointing in the direction in which the cracksmen's footsteps had died away.

"After him!" shouted the squire.

Two or three keepers and menservants ran on in the direction indicated by Lovell. There was little chance now,

however, of running down the cracksmen; his start was too great, and the shadows had long swallowed him up. The squire stopped to speak to the schoolboys.

"You're hurt, my boy," he said.

"I had hold of him," said Jimmy ruefully. "He banged my head on the ground—it aches like thunder!—and I had to let go. Another minute and my pals would have had him, the rotter! There's his revolver. He dropped it when I tackled him and brought him down."

The old gentleman took the weapon from Putty.

"The police will want this," he said. "Did you see the fellow's face, Master Silver—could you give a description of him?"

"I saw him clearly, sir—a man of about thirty. I should know him anywhere again," said Jimmy.

"Good!"

"But—but has he hurt anybody at the house?" faltered Jimmy. "I heard the pistol-shot—"

"He fired at my butler, who found him at work at the safe," said the squire. "Luckily, he missed, but he got away. He will be charged with attempted murder when he is caught. If you can give a description of him, I've no doubt the police will have him soon."

"I can do that," said Jimmy confidently.

"I've sent a man to the village for the police," continued the squire. "You boys are remaining here, of course?"

"Yes, sir; they'll find us here."

"Good!"

The old gentleman followed the keepers, and disappeared. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another—and Jimmy rubbed his head ruefully. There was a bruise on his forehead, where the cracksmen's knuckles had struck, and a bump on the back of his head, where it had hit the ground. And Jimmy had a terrific headache.

"Feel pretty bad?" asked Lovell sympathetically.

"Ow! Yes, rather! Wow!"

"What a giddy excitement for our last night out!" said Raby. "I hope they'll get the brute. You were rather an ass to tackle him, Jimmy. Suppose he had potted you."

"He's made my head ache, anyhow."

"Better turn in," said Lovell. "We'll wait up for the bobbies, and call you when they come."

Jimmy Silver nodded, and went into the tent. He was glad to lay his aching head upon a pillow. In spite of the ache, he was soon fast asleep. He was feeling rather better when Lovell called him about an hour later to interview the police-sergeant from Deepden village.

Jimmy gave a succinct account of what had occurred, and a very complete description of the cracksmen, feature for feature. The man's white, desperate face was imprinted like a photograph on Jimmy's memory. The sergeant took down the description with much satisfaction.

After he was gone, Jimmy returned to bed, and slept soundly enough till morning.

In the fresh September morning he felt almost his old self, though he had a couple of bumps that were not likely to disappear for some days at least.

A message came from the manor house asking the Rookwooders to breakfast there, an invitation they accepted with alacrity. It was nearly noon that day when the Rookwooders broke camp

and left Deepden behind them, and yet there had been no news, by that time, of the capture of the cracksmen. And in the days that followed the episode faded from the memories of Jimmy Silver & Co., though it was to be recalled, ere long, in a way that Jimmy Silver certainly did not dream of.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### The Face Jimmy Knew!

"LATCHAM JUNCTION!"

"Here we are again!" sang

out Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Hallo, old Jimmy—"

"Cheerio, Rawson—"

The platform at Latcham swarmed with Rookwood fellows. Seniors by the dozen, juniors by the score, crowded the station, arriving from all points of the compass, to take the local train from Latcham to Coombe.

There were shouts of greeting and yells of recognition, most of the Rookwood-fellows apparently considering it a bounden duty to make as much noise as possible. And if that was their object they succeeded admirably.

Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three Modern juniors, came along the crowded platform, knocking off every Classical hat they could reach—in the exuberance of their spirits even knocking off Fifth Form hats, as well as fags' headgear. Talboys of the Fifth was seen chasing a handsome topper—which was not handsome by the time it had been rescued from a few hundred feet.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, towering over the crowd, came within reach of the three Tommies, and they were tempted to knock off even Bulkeley's hat, but refrained. The hat of the captain of Rookwood was sacred, even to exuberant Modern juniors on the first day of term.

They gave him a yell instead.

"Cheerio, old Bulkeley!"

And Bulkeley of the Sixth nodded and smiled.

Smythe of the Shell appeared just in time to compensate the three Moderns, as it were, for sparing Bulkeley's hat. Adolphus Smythe's elegant silk topper went flying, and there was an infuriated yell from Adolphus.

Tommy Dodd & Co. roared with merriment till the Fistical Four of the Classical Fourth bore down on them at the charge. The three Moderns went rolling over on the platform, and they roared still more energetically, but not with merriment this time.

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched on victorious, leaving them sprawling.

"Cheeky Modern worms!" said Lovell, with a chuckle. "They want a lesson to begin the term with."

"And they've got it!" chortled Raby.

"Yah! Classical rotters!" roared Tommy Dodd breathlessly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Here's the train!" yelled Conroy of the Fourth.

There was a rush for the train. Rookwooders of all Forms crowded along the opening doors. Way had to be made for the Sixth, but fellows of all other Forms had to take their chance. Hanson & Co. of the Fifth were successfully charged off by a mob of juniors, who swarmed into the local train with yells of triumph. Ordinary passengers who wanted that train hadn't much chance in the Rookwood mob.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were the first to bag a carriage, and they stood on guard at the door to keep Moderns out.

The Fistical Four allowed Classical to enter—and Classical only. Rawson, and Conroy and Putty Grace, and Tubby Muffin crowded in, and then Pons, and Van Ryn, and Erroll, and Oswald. After that even Classical had to be refused admission; it was a railway carriage and not a sardine-tin, as Lovell explained to further applicants.

Jimmy Silver sat down in the corner seat, laughing.

"Jolly old crowd!" he remarked.

"I say, give a fellow room!" panted Tubby Muffin. "Gerroff my knee, Rawson! Gerroff my other knee, Conroy! Wow!"

"Roll Tubby under the seat," suggested Putty. "He takes up enough room for three sideways."

"Why, you rotter——" roared the fat Classical.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Just going," said Lovell. "Hallo, here's another merchant wants a seat—a common or garden person who doesn't belong to Rookwood at all! Awful neck to think that he can get into this train."

A rather handsome young man, with a bag in his hand and a rug over his arm, stopped at the door of the carriage and looked in.

"No room!" sang out half a dozen voices.

"Hook it!" chuckled Raby.

"Now, then, where's your manners?" said Jimmy Silver severely, and he turned to the young man, whose head and shoulders were framed by the window. "Sorry, sir, but the carriage is full—in fact, over-full." Jimmy continued, with elaborate politeness: "Why, wha-a-a-t the——"

Jimmy broke off suddenly.

He stared at the young man outside, as if the rather pleasant, handsome face, with its regular features and dark eyes, had been the face of a grisly phantom.

Jimmy's jaw dropped as he stared.

"You!" he stuttered.

The young man, seeing that the carriage was crammed, walked on down the train without heeding Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy put his head out of the window and stared after him.

The young man was walking along the carriages, looking into one after another, in search of a seat.

Jimmy's glance followed him, as if fascinated.

For he knew the man's face—feature by feature it was imprinted on his memory, as if the scene at Deepden Manor had taken place only the day before.

It was the face of the cracksman in the wood—the face of the man with whom Jimmy Silver had struggled on that wild night.

Four carriages down the man found a seat, and Jimmy saw him disappear into the train. A few seconds later the train was in motion, and the last doors slammed.

Jimmy Silver sank back into his seat, dumfounded.

He had never expected, of course, to see again the cracksman of Deepden. He had hoped to hear of the man's arrest, but certainly he had never expected to set eyes upon him.

And here he was—in the local train for Coombe, in the midst of a crowd of Rookwooders bound for the old school!

It was amazing! That man, searched and hunted for by the police, was travelling in broad daylight, as if he had not a fear in his heart, not a shadow of care on his mind.

Jimmy Silver wondered dizzily whether he was dreaming.

It was the man—he was sure of that. He knew every feature of the face—the

well-cut mouth, the straight, handsome nose, the dark eyes with their rather long lashes. The last man in the world who, from his looks, Jimmy would have guessed to be a criminal had he not seen him in circumstances that left no doubt on the subject.

"Well, my hat!" murmured Jimmy.

Jimmy's chums were looking at him inquiringly. The other fellows in the carriage were all talking at once, and Tubby Muffin was complaining loudly of being squeezed and shoved. But the Co. had noticed Jimmy's amazed interest in the stranger.

"What's the row, Jimmy?" asked Lovell. "Do you know that chap?"

"Know him!" gasped Jimmy. "I should say so!"

have a good look at him before you say anything. You don't want to make a mistake; it's too jolly serious for that."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I'm going to make absolutely sure, of course," he said. "But I'm sure already, for that matter. No need to say anything yet; he's on the train, and if he gets off before Coombe, we get off, too."

"That's all right," assented Lovell.

"Hallo! What are you fellows confabbing about?" called out Oswald.

But the Fistical Four did not answer that question. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were deeply doubtful, and Jimmy Silver had his head out of the window, watching.



**THE FACE JIMMY KNEW!** A rather handsome young man stopped at the carriage door and looked in. "No room!" sang out the hilarious Rookwooders. Jimmy Silver caught sight of the man, and a startled exclamation broke from him. "You!" he stuttered. (See Chapter 3.)

"He didn't seem to know you," said Raby.

"I don't suppose he does! He didn't see my face in the dark that night, of course."

"What—who——"

"It's the man!" said Jimmy.

"The Deepden man?"

"Yes."

"Great Christopher Columbus!"

The Co. fairly blinked at Jimmy Silver. There was very strong doubt written in their faces.

"Draw it mild, Jimmy," said Lovell at last. "You're letting your giddy fancy run away with you, you know."

"Ass!" said Jimmy.

"He looked a decent sort," said Raby very doubtfully.

"I know that."

"It can't be——" began Newcome.

"It is!" said Jimmy quietly. "Unless it's his twin brother, it's the man!" Lovell whistled.

"Well, if you say so——" he murmured dubiously. "Is he on the train?"

"Yes; I saw him get in!"

"Then he's going to Coombe," said Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy, better

If the suspected man alighted before Coombe was reached, Jimmy's mind was made up—he and his chums would alight, too, and keep him in sight till he could be handed over to the police. It was his duty to see that a thief and attempted murderer did not escape justice, and Jimmy was prepared to do his duty.

But the man did not leave the train at any of the little local stations the train passed through. He remained on board till Coombe was reached, and at Coombe he descended with a crowd of Rookwooders. And the Fistical Four hurried along the swarming platform to keep him in sight.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Classicals Against Moderns!

"THERE he goes!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell,

"After him!"

More and more doubtful the Co. looked as they followed the athletic young man from the station platform at

Coombe. Jimmy Silver, indeed, was invaded by a faint glimmer of doubt. The young man strode away with a light, springy step, his head well up, his manner easy, care-free. He was an athlete—a glance was enough to tell that. He looked in the best of condition—healthy, fit, full of vigour and good-nature. Looking at him, it seemed almost impossible to connect him with the white-faced wretch who had fled through the Deepden woods, and who had been brought to the ground, revolver in hand, in Jimmy Silver's grasp. Yet as the young man stopped and spoke to a porter, half-turning his head, Jimmy had a full view of his face again, and his momentary doubt was dispelled. If it was not the man of Deepden, it was that man's double—and the latter was too far-fetched a theory to recommend itself to Jimmy's practical mind.

But he realised how necessary it was to be quite sure before he made so startling a charge against a perfect stranger. Jimmy was thinking hard as he followed with his chums.

In the station doorway the young man stopped again, and, to the amazement of the juniors, he was in speech with Bulkeley of the Rookwood Sixth. He stood for some minutes chatting quite pleasantly with Bulkeley, watched by the amazed juniors. Evidently he was known to some extent to the captain of Rookwood—at all events, Bulkeley did not seem to be treating him as he might have treated a stranger who had addressed him.

"Bulkeley knows him, Jimmy!" murmured Lovell.

"Looks like it," admitted Jimmy.

"He can't be the man!"

"He is the man!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Come on—he's going!"

More and more dubious, and feeling that their chum had made a mistake, Lovell and Raby and Newcome followed Jimmy into the village street. There was a rush of the Rookwood mob for the school brakes, but the Fistical Four did not take part in it. A crowd of Moderns shered off a Classical crowd from the nearest brake, and there were yells from Conroy and Putty and Oswald to "back up," addressed to the Fistical Four. But for once Jimmy Silver & Co. passed a "rag" unheeded.

The suspected man had glanced at the brakes, and then swung on lightly down the old High Street of Coombe.

"Look out!" came a roar.

One of the brakes was in motion, and Jimmy had to jump back to the pavement as it came careering by. Then there was a swarming of Classical juniors along the pavement outside the station, shouting and yelling, and the Fistical Four were caught in the crowd.

"Back up, Classics!" Putty Grace was yelling. "They've got our brake!"

The first brake had started with a cargo of seniors. The second was fought for by Classics and Moderns, and Tommy Dodd & Co. had had the best of it. Moderns were swarming into the brake, after driving off the Classical crowd.

"Back up!" roared Lovell. "Down with the Moderns!"

The Classics rallied, and returned to the attack.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome rushed with them, the defeat of the Moderns being apparently more important in their eyes than the capture of Jimmy Silver's cracksmen. As a matter of fact, Lovell & Co. were quite convinced by that time that Jimmy was in error.

"This way!" yelled Conroy. "Back up, Jimmy Silver!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 400.

The Classics rushed for the brake. Jimmy did not heed. He was staring down the street in search of the athletic figure which had been lost to view as the first brake swept past. It had vanished from sight.

Jimmy set his lips.

The man was gone—probably by one of the winding turnings in the village street—possibly into one of the old houses or cottages. It was too late to point him out to P.-c. Boggs—and that plump, rural gentleman, as Jimmy realised, would have wanted a lot of convincing that the Rookwooder was not pulling his plump official leg in giving him such information.

"Come on, Jimmy!" yelled Lovell, who was hotly engaged with the enemy.

Jimmy Silver gave it up. He mentally determined to speak to his Form master on the subject as soon as he reached Rookwood.

Having decided that, Jimmy Silver joined his chums. The Moderns were in possession of the brake, and the Classics were having an uphill struggle to deal with them. Jimmy Silver rushed into the fray.

"Back up, Classics!"

"Yah! Classic cads!"

"Modern rotters!"

"Kick 'em off!" roared Tommy Dodd.

The attack on the brake was going strong when Jimmy Silver joined in, and Tommy Dodd, who had clambered into the driver's seat and taken the whip, was trying to start the horses. But five or six Classics held the horses' heads, and refused to let go, though Tommy lashed round with the long whip in a very liberal manner.

"Rush the rotters!" shouted Lovell breathlessly, getting a foothold on the vehicle at last.

Jimmy Silver was after him in a moment more, and the rest of the Classics backed up their leaders in great style. The odds were on the Classical side, and they gained a footing, and the Moderns were driven along the vehicle, and knocked or pushed off. Tommy Dodd let go the reins as he was gripped by the back of the collar.

"Ow! Leggo!" roared Tommy.

"Chuck him overboard!" cried Lovell.

"Yaroooh!" howled Tommy Dodd, as he dropped into the road. "Oh, my hat!"

"Bump him!"

"Get those geegees going!" howled Conroy.

Jimmy Silver, with a grin, dropped into the driver's seat, and gathered up the reins and cracked the whip. The Classics jumped clear as the big vehicle started, and crowded round to jump on behind. There was a last desperate rally of the Moderns, and some of the Classics were seized and dragged off. But the brake was in motion, and it went down the village street, rocking and rumbling, Jimmy Silver cracking the whip, and a crowd of Classics standing up and waving their hats and shouting.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Amazing!

"SILVER!"

Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth, was standing at the gates of the school, and he stared as the brake came rocking up, driven by a junior of the Fourth Form. Jimmy Silver could drive; he handled the horses well, and he brought the brake to a halt at the gates with a flourish.

"Silver, what are you doing?" exclaimed the Fourth Form master.

Jimmy raised his cap politely.

"Driving the brake, sir!" he answered cheerily.

"Where is the driver?"

"Haven't seen him, sir."

"We—we were in rather a hurry to get back to school, sir!" ventured Lovell.

"Hurrah for us!" came in a roar from a crowd of fellows on the brake who had not yet seen Mr. Dalton. "We've beaten the Modern rotters! Hurrah!"

Mr. Dalton suppressed a smile.

"Mack!" he called to the school porter. "Please take charge of the brake. Silver, you will take a hundred lines."

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy. "I—I mean yes, sir!"

The Classics crowded out of the brake, and swarmed into the quadrangle. Except for a contingent of the Sixth and Fifth, they were the first to arrive. They made the old quad ring with their jubilant voices as they swarmed in.

"Nice for me!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "Hundred lines before I've fairly set foot in the school!"

"Never mind; we've beaten the Moderns!" grinned Lovell. "Besides, they never ask for imposts on first day of term. Come on!"

The Fistical Four marched across the quadrangle arm-in-arm, taking possession, as it were. They "capped" several masters in the quad, and elaborately ignored Mr. Manders, the Modern master—and gave a derisive howl to Knowles of the Sixth, the Modern prefect. Jimmy Silver, in the excitement and exuberance of the moment, had quite forgotten the man he had lost sight of in Coombe.

There was a table spread in Hall, at which fellows came and went as they liked, on the first day of term. Tubby Muffin was the first junior to reach it, and he was very quickly busy. Jimmy Silver & Co. joined him there, and Tubby blinked at them joyfully.

"Try this ham!" he said, with his extensive mouth full. "It's prime—real prime—and there's lots!"

"Here we are again!" sang out Gunner of the Fourth, coming in with his heavy tread. "I say, have you seen Wilmot, you fellows?"

"Wilmot!" said Jimmy Silver, who was carving ham. "Who's Wilmot? New chap?"

Gunner grinned.

"No; football coach. Just heard about him—Head's engaged him; no end of a tremendous footballer."

And Gunner passed on.

"By the way, what became of that johnny you were so keen on, Jimmy?" murmured Lovell. "I forgot him!"

"He's somewhere in Coombe," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to the Head about it."

"Too thick, old chap!" murmured Raby.

But when Jimmy Silver left Hall his chums followed him at once. They were more doubtful than ever on the subject of the supposed cracksmen, and almost dismayed at the prospect of Jimmy going to the Head with his strange story. In the doorway of the School House Mr. Dalton was standing in conversation with a young man who carried a bag in his hand, and a rug over his arm. Jimmy Silver jumped almost clear of the floor as he saw Mr. Dalton's companion.

"Here!" he stammered.

"What?" asked Lovell, looking round.

"Why, my hat! It's the giddy johnny!"

The Fistical Four stared at the man. There he was—the man of the train—the man Jimmy Silver was prepared to swear was the cracksmen of Deepden—standing

(Continued on page 28.)

**"BILLY BUNTER'S BLUFF!"**

(Continued from page 11.)

at all," sniffed Bessie Bunter. "He was only pulling your leg, only you're so soft."

"Oh!"

"I know where he's been, and I'm going to tell you, if Billy doesn't keep his word," said Bessie determinedly. "I'm going to have a cake and a bag of meringues, or I'll know the reason why. You can come and hear me talk to him, if you like, because if he doesn't pay up I'm going to give him away. But he won't dare, after taking you in—"

"Has he taken us in?" asked Wharton blankly.

"Of course he has!"

"But—but how—"

"You'll see, if he doesn't square," said Bessie Bunter; and she marched into the School House resolutely.

The Famous Five exchanged a look, and followed her. They were very curious now.

There were several fellows in the Common-room—some of them giving Billy Bunter a description of his "sister's" proceedings at the feast in the Rag—which made the Owl of the Remove grin. But his grin died away at the sight of Bessie.

"My only hat! Here she is again!" exclaimed Vernon-Smith. "This is rather too much of a good thing!"

"Billy!"

"I—I say, Bessie, old girl—" said Bunter feebly.

"Where's my cake?"

"I—I—"

"And the meringues?"

"You—you see—"

"Are you going to hand them over as agreed, Billy?" demanded Fatima of Cliff House. "You never came—"

"I—I—I—" gasped Bunter

"You agreed, if I lent you my clothes

to go to the spread, you'd bring me a cake and a bag of meringues—"

"I—I say, Bessie, dry up, old girl—"

"Where's my cake?"

"So—that's it, is it?" roared Bob Cherry. "Blessed if we oughtn't to have thought of it! It wasn't Bessie at the feed at all!"

"Great Scott!"

"It was Billy all the time, in his sister's clothes!" yelled Peter Todd. "Why, we were asses not to think of it! That's why he spoofed us into thinking he was going to Popper Court!"

"Bunter, you fraud—"

"So you came to the feed, after all, in spite of the sentence of the Remove!" said Harry Wharton, breathing hard. "And not only that, but you mucked it up for everybody else!"

"Only a—a joke, you know—I—I mean, I never came at all—it was Bessie, you know—"

"You chucked things about, making us believe you were a girl, so that we couldn't wallop you!" roared Bob Cherry.

"I—I—I—"

"Well, you must be noodles," commented Bessie Bunter. "You ought to have tumbled at once. You might have known that if it was me, I should behave in a perfectly ladylike way!"

Miss Bessie Bunter sniffed and walked out of the Common-room. She went without the promised cake and the promised bag of meringues. But William George Bunter looked like suffering for that unpaid debt. It was the most disastrous case of defaulting that had ever happened to Bunter. The Removites closed round him grimly.

What happened next, Billy Bunter hardly knew. But he knew that it was distinctly unpleasant.

THE END.

(There will be another splendid long story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, next Tuesday, entitled: "The Funk!" by Frank Richards.)

**"THE MYSTERY MAN AT ROOKWOOD!"**

(Continued from page 22.)

on the School House steps, chatting pleasantly with the master of the Fourth.

"Bulkeley knew him—and Dalton seems to know him!" grinned Raby. "Oh, Jimmy!"

Jimmy stood silent, amazed. Was he mistaken, after all?

Mr. Dalton called to Tupper, the page. The stranger came into the House and followed Tupper, and the glances of the Fistical Four followed him till he disappeared.

"Still going to the Head?" murmured Lovell.

Jimmy did not answer. Mr. Dalton was standing in the doorway, looking out into the crowded quad, when he felt a touch on his arm, and looked down.

"Well, Silver?"

"Would you—would you mind telling me who that was, sir—the gentleman you were speaking to?" stammered Jimmy. "That was Mr. Wilmot, the new football coach, Silver."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "Thank you, sir!"

Lovell grasped him by the arm, and marched him up the staircase to the end study.

"You can see now it's all rot!" he said.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"I can't understand it," he said. "He may be Mr. Wilmot, the new football coach, but he's the man I saw at Deepden. I—I don't know what I'd better do."

"Nothing!" suggested Lovell, with a grin.

THE END.

(Don't miss the next stirring complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, next week. The title of the story is "Footer-Coach or Crackman?")

**JOIN THE ROYAL NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD.**

Boys are wanted for the Seaman Class (from which selections are made for the Wireless Telegraphy and Signalling Branches). Age 15 to 16½ years.

Men also are required for

**SEAMEN (Special Service)** - - - Age 18 to 25  
**STOKERS** - - - Age 18 to 25  
**ROYAL MARINE FORCES** - - - Age 17 to 23

**GOOD PAY. - - - ALL FOUND. EXCELLENT CHANCES FOR PROMOTION.**

Apply by letter to the Recruiting Staff Officer, R.N. and R.M.:  
5, Suffolk Street, Birmingham; 121, Victoria Street, Bristol;  
30, Cannon Place, Liverpool; 55, Whitehall, London, S.W.1;  
289, Deansgate, Manchester; 116, Rye Hill, Newcastle-on-Tyne; or  
6, Washington Terrace, Queen's Park, Southampton.

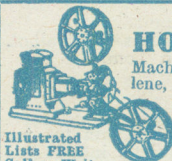
**A BARGAIN!** 2,500 Well-assorted Foreign Stamps 2/-, or 1,250 1/3.—PRICE, 53, Portland Street, LONDON, S.E.17.

**AGENTS WANTED** immediately, to sell Private Christmas Cards. Highest commission. Valuable prizes. Experience not essential. Sample Book free. All the latest novelties. Choice selection.—Apply **DENTON & CO.**, Dept. D. 18, ACCRINGTON.

**HAVE YOU A RED NOSE?**

Send a stamp to pay postage, and you will learn how to rid yourself of such a terrible affliction free of charge. Enclose stamp, Address in confidence: **T. J. TEMPLE, Specialist, "Palace House," 125, Shaftesbury Avenue, LONDON, W.1.**

**300 STAMPS FOR 6d.** (Abroad 1/-). Including Airpost, Triangular, Queensland, Nigeria, New South Wales, Rhodesia, etc.—**W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYE, STOURBRIDGE.**

**EVERYTHING FOR HOME CINEMATOGRAPHS**

Machines from 9/6 to £16 and upwards. Acetylene, Electric, and Gas Lighting Sets, and all other Accessories for Home Cinemas of all sizes. Sample Film, 1/-, post free. 1,000 ft. length, 7/6, post free. **FORD'S (Dept. U), 13, Red Lion Sq., London, W.C.1.**—Entrance Dane Street.

Illustrated Lists FREE Call or Write

**STAMP OUTFIT for Collectors POST FREE!**

Pocket Case, Watermark Finder, 62 Different Stamps (50 United), Perforation Gauge, Price List and Guide, Finest Stamp Mounts, British Colonials. This fine parcel absolutely free. Send postcard only, requesting Approvals.

**LISBURN & TOWNSEND, LONDON ROAD, LIVERPOOL.**

**DON'T BE BULLIED**

Send Four Penny Stamps only for **TWO SPLENDID ILLUSTRATED LESSONS** in **JU-JITSU**: the Wonderful Japanese art of Self-defence without weapons. Better than Boxing or any other science ever invented. Learn to take care of yourself under ALL circumstances and fear no man. You can have a **MONSTER** large Illustrated Portion for 2/0, 3/9. **SEND NOW to "YAWARA" (Dept. A.P.35), 10, Queensway, Hanworth, Feltham, MIDDLESEX.** PRACTICAL TUITION any time at Hanworth.

**FILMS** from 5/6 1,000 ft. 400-ft. Sample 9d., post 3d. Lists.—**S.C.S., 71, Stanley Road, Stratford, E.** Phone: Maryland 1794.

**FREE!** Packet of 40 Unused German Stamps FREE to those sending postage abroad and asking to see Approval Sheet.

**£2,000 WORTH CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL.**—Samples catalogue free; 12 by 10 Enlargement, any photo, 8d.—**HACKETT'S WORKS, July Road, LIVERPOOL.**

**SECRET SERVICE DISGUISE OUTFIT!**

Really Wonderful Value. 3/- complete, post free. Postage overseas, 6d. Dept. **XX, MILTON, 128, BEULAH HILL, LONDON, S.E.15.**