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## SOME LION!

Don't miss this week's Thrilling Tale of the Chums of St. Jim's!



# THE ROOKWOOD JAPER AGAIN!

Horace Coker of Greyfriars encounters the irrepressible Putty Grace, and falls an easy victim to the Rookwood Japer!



# Putty's Little Joke!

Another Rollicking, Long Complete Holiday Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood By Owen Conquest.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER. Lovell Drives!

**B**ETTER let me 'drive'!"

Arthur Edward Lovell spoke in quite a decided tone.

Jimmy Silver looked doubtful. Raby and Newcome looked very doubtful. Putty of the Fourth made a grimace.

Lovell had full confidence in his powers as a driver. His confidence did not seem to be shared, to the same full extent, by his chums.

"You see—" murmured Jimmy.

"I'm the only fellow here that can really handle the ribbons, you know," explained Lovell.

"Well, we've got to get off!" said Raby. "Jimmy's more used to the horse, Lovell."

"If you think I can't drive, George Raby—"

"Oh, let him drive!" said Newcome resignedly. "Can't stand here all day."

"After all, it may prolong the vac!" said Putty. "We can't go back to Rookwood for the new term if we're smashed up."

Lovell breathed hard through his nose.

There were many things that Arthur Edward Lovell prided himself upon, and his way of handling the ribbons was one of them. For the safety of the whole party, Lovell considered that he was bound to drive.

At school, Jimmy Silver might have requested Lovell to go and eat coke; but Arthur Edward was now a guest at Jimmy's home, and a guest could not be requested to go and eat coke. So Jimmy Silver nodded, and hoped for the best.

"Go it!" he said.

The juniors mounted into the trap. Lovell took the reins and the whip, and the groom let go the horse's head. The trap rattled down the drive and turned into the road at Hadley Priors, and Lovell gave his comrades a lofty glance.

"Looks as if I can handle him!" he said.

"Appearances are sometimes deceptive!" murmured Putty.

"Fathead!"

Lovell drove on. There was snow on the road, and it was slippery in places, and careful driving was needed. Lovell

was rather given to shaking out his reins, and cracking his whip, in a flourishing style. The trap dashed along at a good speed in the keen, frosty morning.

The vacation was drawing to an end now, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were already thinking of the new term at Rookwood. Mornington had quitted Jimmy's party to join Erroll for the remainder of the vacation. The party in the trap chatted cheerily of the approaching term, elaborating a scheme for giving the Moderns the "kybosh" when they meet their old rivals once more at Rookwood. The talk was interrupted by the sight of a burly figure tramping on the roadside.

"Jolly old Coker!" remarked Putty Grace.

The Rookwooders grinned as they looked at Coker of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. They had had some little troubles with the burly Greyfriars senior, Coker's fixed belief that he was monarch of all he surveyed being the cause of the trouble.

"So he's still about here!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "I thought he was gone by this time."

Horace Coker glanced round.

A deep frown knitted his brows at the sight of the Rookwood juniors. Coker evidently had not forgiven or forgotten. "You cheeky young sweeps!" ejaculated Coker.

"Where did you get that face, Coker?" called out Putty.

"What?"

"Did you win it in a raffle?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Coker made a step into the road as the trap came rattling up. It seemed to be in his mind to stop the trap and collar the whole Rookwood party, and "wallop" them on the spot. Perhaps it dawned upon Coker's mind that this was too large an order. Instead of making a frontal attack, he stopped, and gathered up handfuls of the snow that lay beside the road.

He rose again, wrathful. A snowball flew. It was intended for Jimmy Silver, so naturally it hit Lovell. Coker was not a good marksman.

There was a howl from Lovell, and he jerked on the rein unintentionally. The

horse spun towards the farther bank of snow heaped against the hedge.

"Hold on!" gasped Jimmy, as the trap rocked.

Whiz! Whiz!

Snowballs flew from Coker with great force, though with faulty aim. One of them smashed on the horse's nose.

Lovell dragged on the reins desperately. There was no doubt that the horse was a little fresh and Lovell had his hands full, without Coker weighing in with snowballs. Coker, grinning, tramped on his way, leaving Arthur Edward Lovell struggling with the horse.

The horse seemed to have a determination to get through the hedge, and as he now had the bit between his teeth and was in a state of great excitement, Lovell had about as much effect upon him as a fly on his back. The juniors held on as the trap rocked and plunged.

"Keep to the road, Lovell!" yelled Newcome. "You'll have us over!"

Lovell gasped.

"The brute won't come round! Oh, my hat!"

The horse's forelegs went plunging deep into a ditch hidden by banked snow. The trap heeled over and crashed on the hedge.

What happened next the juniors hardly knew.

Jimmy Silver found himself sprawling on the hedge, Lovell was in the snowy ditch, Raby and Newcome went right over the hedge, and landed in the field; fortunately in thick snow. Only Putty Grace saved himself by a quick leap, and dropped on his feet in the road.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Putty.

"Oh crumbs!"

"Oh! Wow!"

Putty dragged Lovell from the ditch. Then he helped Jimmy Silver to descend from the hedge in a considerably ruffled and scratched state. Jimmy ran to the horse's head, and, with Putty's help, got him out of the ditch. Fortunately, he was not damaged. Raby and Newcome came limping out of the field by the nearest gate.

"No bones broken!" said Jimmy Silver, as cheerily as he could. "I've got a few pains—"

"I've got a few hundreds!" groaned Raby.

"Wow-wow-wow!" was Newcome's contribution.

The Rookwooders were considerably shaken up. By common consent the drive was given up for that morning. Jimmy drew the horse round in the road.

"Nother time!" he said. "Better get back now! Tumble in, you fellows!"

"Leave him to me!" said Lovell.

"What!"

"Better let me drive."

"You dangerous lunatic!" roared Newcome, in wrath. "If you're going to drive, I'm going to walk!"

Snort from Lovell.

"If you think I can't drive, Newcome—"

"You silly owl!"

"I can't help a silly chump chucking snowballs and scaring the horse!"

"And suppose we meet another snowballer on the road!" hissed Raby.

"Oh, rot!"

"You see, we've only got one neck each, Lovell!" said Putty. "I want mine to last a bit longer!"

"Look here—"

"I'll drive back!" said Jimmy Silver.

And Jimmy drove the trap home. Arthur Edward Lovell sat in it in an attitude of lofty dignity. But the party reached home with bones unbroken, which was a more important consideration than the dignity of Lovell.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Coker Asks for More!

"HERE!"

"Hallo!"

"Carry this bag for me!"

"Well!" said Jimmy Silver, with a deep breath.

It was the following day, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had walked over to Denewood, to take the train there. They were going to see the "pictures" that afternoon, and there were no pictures within any short distance of the Priory. But the Rookwooders enjoyed the brisk walk through the frosty air, and they arrived in the hamlet of Denewood in great spirits. And there, as they came up to the station, they sighted Coker of Greyfriars.

Coker of the Fifth was with his two friends now, Potter and Greene—who also were ornaments of the Fifth Form at Greyfriars. Apparently the three were on their departure. Coker, indeed, had only lingered in the vicinity so long in order to give Jimmy Silver & Co. the thrashing they deserved for their manifold sins.

The thrashing had not come off—indeed, such thrashing as had occurred had been received by Coker. But Potter and Greene had pointed out that they couldn't hang up in that corner of Wiltshire for ever, and the vacation was drawing short now; and, finally, Coker got a move on. And here he was, heading for Denewood Station, just as the party from the Priory came along.

Coker & Co. had several bags to carry, and Coker called to Jimmy Silver to carry his bag!

"Jevver hear of such a cheeky cad!" breathed Arthur Edward Lovell. "I say, let's rush them, and roll them over!"

"You hear me, young Silver?" bawled Coker.

"I'll carry your bag, Coker!" called out Putty of the Fourth.

"Well, look sharp, then! I'll give you sixpence!"

"Thank you, Coker!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 418.

"Putty!" roared Lovell indignantly.

But, heedless of Lovell, Putty of the Fourth took the bag from Coker, who grinned complacently at Potter and Greene. The incident proved that Coker was a fellow to be obeyed. It proved that to Coker—not to Potter and Greene. Potter and Greene wondered what was going to happen to Coker's bag.

Putty marched on with the bag towards the station. His face was very demure in expression.

Near the station a country cart was just starting, after the carter had refreshed himself at the Peal of Bells. The carter cracked his whip, and his cart rumbled away, and Putty, with a heave of the bag, tossed it into the interior of the cart, where it landed among sacks.

Coker seemed petrified as he saw that action.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Rookwooders.

"You—you—you—you young villain!" spluttered Coker.

He jumped at Putty Grace. That humorous youth dodged him, and dodged into the station.

"What about your bag, Coker?" yelled Greene, as Coker was rushing in pursuit. "Don't you want it?"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Coker.

He was rushing back. The carter was going at a trot, and the cart was already more than a dozen yards away.

Coker, leaving Putty of the Fourth to his own devices, dashed in pursuit of the cart, to recover his property.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled, and walked into the station; and Potter and Greene chuckled and followed them. It was rather unfeeling of Potter and Greene to chuckle; but they often found it entertaining when Horace Coker bit off more than he could chew.

Coker was a good fellow, and they liked him, and, moreover, he was paying the expenses of that little trip; nevertheless, they often found Coker rather overpowering. They seemed now quite amused at the sight of Coker chasing after the cart. Coker's hat blew off, and a little boy picked it up and chased after Coker with it.

Carter and cart, Coker hatless, and the little boy with the hat disappeared in a sort of procession. And Potter and Greene heartlessly chortled.

"Good old Putty!" said Lovell. "I—I suppose you meant to pull his leg when you offered to carry the bag."

"Dear man!" said Putty affectionately. "Has that just occurred to you, Lovell?"

"Well, I never thought—"

"Do you ever?" asked Putty, with interest.

"Look here—"

"Here's the train," said Jimmy Silver.

The train had stopped in the station. The five Rookwooders found a carriage, in which there were three passengers already. They crowded in, and filled the carriage. Potter and Greene looked in, and passed on farther up the train.

Jimmy Silver glanced from the window.

"Coker looks like missing the train!" he remarked. "Poor old Coker!"

"Hallo! There he is!"

The guard was slamming the doors when Coker of the Greyfriars Fifth came bolting on the platform. He was in a tearing hurry. Evidently he had recovered both his bag and his hat, for he held them in either hand as he raced for the train.

"Urry up, there!"

Coker panted up to the carriage where Jimmy Silver & Co. were looking from the windows.

"No room!" said Jimmy, with a smile.

Coker jammed his hat on his head, and wrenched at the door with his free hand. Jimmy held the handle.

It was a third-class carriage, which seated eight, and there were eight passengers in it. So, obviously, there was no room for Coker.

But Coker was not to be argued with. He wrenched frantically at the door.

"You young sweep, you're holding it!" he gasped.

"Stand back, there!" roared the guard.

The train was beginning to move. But Coker did not let go; and Jimmy Silver, to prevent an accident, yielded the point. Coker really looked as if he would ride on the footboard rather than let go; perhaps he was too excited to think, or perhaps his thinking powers were not highly developed. He dragged the door open, hurled his bag in, and hurled himself after it, fairly sprawling into the carriage.

Slam!

The guard banged the door after him, and said something to Coker at the same time—something emphatic, which, fortunately, was lost in the noise of the train.

"Oh!" gasped Coker.

Somehow, as he sprawled in the carriage, he had come into contact with every foot in the Rookwood party. There were ten feet in the party, and every one of the ten collided, somehow, with Coker.

The Fifth-Former looked a little dusty as he scrambled up breathlessly and fielded his hat from among the many feet. The hat looked a little damaged.

"You cheeky little beasts!" gasped Coker.

He stood in the carriage and glared. There was no seat for him unless one was given up, and the Rookwooders did not seem to be thinking of giving up their seats to Coker. The other three passengers certainly weren't. So Coker stood and glared.

"I've a jolly good mind—" began Coker.

He paused.

Even Coker realised that it would be bad business to begin a rough-and-tumble with five sturdy juniors in the close quarters of a third-class carriage.

"Don't tread on my feet, Coker!" said Jimmy Silver mildly.

"Hang your feet!" snapped Coker.

"I've a jolly good mind to give you a hiding all round! I've been looking for you cheeky kids to give you a hiding!"

"Well, here we are!" grinned Raby.

"Start in!" said Lovell.

"One of you kids can stand!" said Coker, unheeding. "I can't stand up all the way! Give me your seat, Silver!"

"You really want it?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, I do!"

"And if I don't give it you, you'll take it?"

"Yes!" roared Coker.

"Then you'd better take it!" smiled Jimmy. "Go ahead!"

That was too much for Coker of the Fifth. Travelling with a set of fags was bad enough, but to be cheeked by the fags in addition was the "thing too much."

Coker grasped Jimmy Silver by the shoulders to swing him out of his seat. At the same moment, as if moved by clockwork, the five juniors laid violent hands on Coker, and before he knew



what was happening the great man of Greyfriars was in a recumbent position in the carriage, with ten feet pinning him down.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### The Death of Putty Grace!

**H**ORACE COKER, gasped on the floor of the carriage.

He hardly knew how he had got there. But the fact was indisputable that he was there! He was there, on his back, with ten feet planted on him. Of that there was no shadow of doubt. No possible, probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever, as the gentleman in the "Gondoliers" would have put it.

"You—you—you—" stuttered Coker. "Lemme getrup, and I'll smash you into smithereens!"

"What an inducement!" murmured Putty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Take your hoof off my face, young Lovell—"

"Keep quiet, then," said Lovell, grinning. "You're safer down there, Coker. Yow-ow-ow!" went on Lovell, jumping up, as his ankle was savagely pinched. "Yoop!"

Lovell jumped up, and, naturally, he jumped on Coker, who filled most of the space between the seats. One of his boots was on Horace's neck and the other was on Horace's chest. To judge by the terrific yell Horace gave, he did not like them there.

"Better be quiet, Coker," said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"I—I—I'll—" spluttered the hapless Coker.

The train slowed into a station. Three passengers alighted at that station. Possibly they considered it judicious to change their carriage, the company being so extremely lively.

"You can have a seat now, if you're a good boy, Coker," said Jimmy Silver, as the train started again.

Coker was allowed to stagger up.

He plumped breathlessly into a seat, covered with dust and looking exceedingly ruffled and red.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not heed him.

They chatted cheerily as the train ran on, leaving Coker of Greyfriars Fifth to glare as much as he liked.

But Coker was not satisfied.

His lofty dignity had been treated with complete disregard; his lordly person had been handled; his hat had been turned into something like a concertina; he was dusty and dishevelled. Such a state of affairs could not possibly pass unavenged.

Coker was only getting his second wind, as it were.

Having got it, Coker rose to his feet, with an expression of truculent determination on his dogged face. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged grinning glances. They were quite prepared to deal with further alarms and excursions from Coker of the Fifth.

"Now," said Coker. "You—I don't know your name, and I don't want to—but you chucked my bag into a cart." "Guilty, my lord!" said Putty.

"I'm going to thrash you!"

"Thanks!"

"If any of you kids interfere," said Coker warningly, "I shall thrash you all round!"

"Sure you can manage it?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Don't be cheeky!"

There were a walking-cane and an umbrella sticking in the strap of Coker's bag. He jerked out the cane.

Then, taking a businesslike grip on the collar of Putty's overcoat, Coker jerked the humorist of Rookwood from his seat.

At the same moment Coker's leg was hooked by an unseen foot, and he received a violent shove in the ribs. He staggered, and bumped down on the floor; and Putty slipping out of the overcoat at the same moment, Coker dragged the coat down with him.

His long legs thrashed out like flails, and there was a sudden yell from Putty, as he caught one of Coker's big feet with his knee.

"Yaroooh!"

Jimmy seized the overcoat and jammed it over Coker's excited face.

He was blindfolded for the moment.

There was a sudden shout in the carriage:

"Help!"

Coker sat up dizzily, hurling off the overcoat. He was surprised to find that he was not touched as he scrambled up. The Rookwooders did not lay a finger on him.

Coker stared round him.

The carriage door was swinging wide open—and there were only four Rookwooders to be seen. Putty of the Fourth had disappeared.

"Wha-a-at—" stammered Coker.

"It's murder!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Stop the train!" exclaimed Raby wildly. "Coker's killed him! Stop the train!"

"Killed him!" gasped Coker.

"Murder!" howled Newcome.

"Seize him!" exclaimed Lovell. "He must be handed over to the police!"

Coker felt as if his head were turning round.

He gazed at the open door in utter horror, understanding at last what it meant.

His wrath faded away. He had meant to give Putty a thrashing—which that cheeky youth deserved for failing to treat Coker with the respect due to so important a personage. But this—Coker shuddered.

"I—I—I never meant—" he gasped through his chattering teeth.

"You threw him out!" howled Raby.

"We're all witnesses!"

"I—I didn't!" gasped Coker. "I—I kicked him by accident! The—The door must have been unfastened—"

"You can tell that to the police!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Coker.

Jimmy Silver covered his face with his hands and sobbed.

"Poor old Teddy Grace!" he groaned. "Poor old Teddy! He—he—he came to spend Christmas with us, and now he—he's dead—murdered!"

"He—he isn't!" muttered Coker, in horror. "He—he must have fallen against the door when I—I kicked him by accident!"

"We saw you kick him!" shouted Lovell.

"You saw it was accidental, then?"



**A TRAGIC STORY!** The policeman came through the crowd, and planted himself in the centre of the limelight, so to speak. "Now then, what's all this about?" he asked. "That young fellow has knocked a boy out of the train along the line," said the station-master. "Name?" said the constable. "Horace Coker!" stammered the Greyfriars Fifth-former. (See Chapter 4.)

"I only know I saw you kick him. And then—"

"The door must have been unfastened!" groaned Coker.

"Didn't you know it was unfastened when you kicked him against it?" demanded Newcome.

"No, no! Of course not! I never meant—"

"It may only be manslaughter," said Lovell.

Coker shivered with horror.

"He mayn't be killed!" he exclaimed desperately. "He—he—he may be all right. Fellows have fallen from railway trains without being killed before now."

"He called 'Help!'" said Lovell, with a deep groan. "We couldn't help him, of course."

"It was so quick," moaned Newcome. Jimmy Silver sobbed softly. Raby and Newcome rubbed their eyes. Lovell pointed an accusing finger at Coker.

"Whether it's murder or manslaughter, you're not getting away," he said. "You can't deny that you attacked him."

"I—I was only going to lick him!" groaned Coker. "Oh dear! I—I never thought—never imagined—"

"You've got his overcoat! You'll have to prove that you didn't kill him to steal his overcoat."

"S-s-s-steal his overcoat!" stuttered Coker, quite dumbfounded by this unexpected accusation.

"You've taken it, and Putty's killed! You'll have to prove—"

"Good heavens! I—"

The train jolted to a halt in a station. Coker made a movement to alight, and the sobbing juniors, ceasing to sob quite suddenly, laid hold of Coker.

"You're not escaping!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"Leggo!" gasped Coker. "I—I'm not going to run away, you young fool! I'm going to explain what's happened!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Coker leaned from the door and shouted:

"Porter! Stationmaster! Here, here! quick!"

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Putty Comes to Life Again!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. looked at one another. Coker jumped from the carriage and shouted again, waving his hands wildly. Two or three astonished porters rushed up, and a stout stationmaster followed them in angry inquiry.

"I—I say, it's gone far enough!" murmured Jimmy. "Let's stop him—"

"Shurrup!" came a whispering voice from under the seat. "Let him rip!"

"I say, Putty—"

"Let him rip, I tell you."

Coker was "ripping" already, at a great rate. In wild and incoherent words he was explaining the "accident." Potter and Greene came along the train, and they almost fell down as they heard what Horace Coker was saying to the horrified stationmaster and porters.

"It was an accident!" Coker spluttered. "Quite an accident! Those kids in the carriage will bear witness! I—I was going to lick the kid for his cheek, and—and he fell out of the carriage!"

"Who did?" shrieked Potter, in utter dismay.

"One of that Rookwood gang!" groaned Coker. "I'll swear I never meant to hurt him—only a thrashing for cheeking me—"

"You—you—you dummy!" gasped Greene. "Do you mean to say that you've killed one of those kids with your foolery?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 418.

"Good heavens!" breathed Potter.

"It was an accident!" shrieked Coker.

"I keep on telling you that it was a sheer accident. The carriage door must have been unfastened, and the silly kid fell out on to the line!"

"Fell on the line! Great Scott!"

"Most likely he's not killed. The line must be searched for him. I hope to goodness it's not serious."

"Let's have this straight!" said the stationmaster grimly. "You were attacking a boy in the carriage—"

"Thrashing him—"

"You were attacking him, and he fell from the carriage on to the line. You young ruffian! Johnson, call the constable outside."

"Yes, sir."

"I—I—I'll—I'm quite willing to explain to the police!" groaned Coker. "I'm not afraid to face it. There are plenty of witnesses that it was a sheer accident. I don't believe the kid's killed, either. Very likely he's got off with a broken leg or so."

"A—a broken leg!" stuttered Potter.

"You frabjous idiot—"

"Look here, Potter—"

"You silly dummy!" gasped Greene.

"I knew you'd land yourself in something, some day, with your silly rot. Why couldn't you let the kid alone?"

"He cheeked me!"

"Oh, you dummy!"

"Here's the bobby!" murmured Lovell.

A gentleman in blue came through the crowd on the platform, with a notebook already in his hand. There was a buzzing throng on the scene now. The train, of course, was delayed, and most of the passengers had alighted to look on, and the rest were staring from the windows. The policeman came through the buzzing ring, and planted himself in the centre of the limelight, so to speak.

"Now then, what's all this?" asked the constable.

"That young fellow has knocked a boy out of the train along the line, so he says," said the stationmaster, pointing to Coker.

"Name?" said the constable.

"Coker—Horace Coker."

"This isn't a time for larks, I warn you!" said the officer severely. "You give me your real name."

"My name's Coker!" howled the Greyfriars Fifth-Former.

"That ain't a name."

"It's my name!" shrieked Coker.

"C-O-K-E-R-Coker!"

"Well, I'll take it down," said the constable suspiciously. "It don't sound to me like a name, but I'll take it down. I warn you not to try to play any tricks with the lor, young man. This here is serious. Now, you tell me just what's happened."

"I was licking the kid—"

"Licking him?" said the officer, "you stand there and tell me you was licking him, like a dorg? What was you licking him for, I'd like to know."

"I—I mean thrashing him—"

"Oh! You mean thrashing him! You was being violent?"

"No! No! Not at all! Just a licking—I mean thrashing. And—and my foot knocked him—kicked him, you know—"

"I don't know, till you tell me," said the constable stolidly. "You was being violent to a boy, and you kicked him. Wot next?"

"He fell out of the carriage—"

"You kicked him out of the carriage?"

"No!" yelled Coker. "Nothing of the kind. I fell down, and kicked him. He must have fallen against the door,

and the door must have been unfastened, and so the accident happened. I wouldn't have hurt him for anything."

"You was being violent, and you kicked him, and you say you wouldn't 'ave 'urt him. I warn you that what you say is being took down, and may be used in evidence against you, Master Coker—if your name's Coker."

"Those kids are witnesses!" groaned Coker. "Ask them, they were all in the carriage at the time—"

The constable glanced at the Fistical Four of Rookwood, Jimmy Silver & Co. were keeping their faces very grave; though with some difficulty.

"You young fellers saw what 'appened?" he asked.

"We saw it all, from beginning to end!" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's good. Was the murdered boy a friend of yours?"

"Oh, my hat! I mean, yes."

"Did you see this young person, calling 'imself Coker, treating the boy with violence, and kicking him?"

"Certainly."

"We all saw that!" said Lovell. "he seized him, and in the struggle the chap's coat came off. Here it is."

There was a general move in the crowd to stare at the coat. Potter and Greene fairly groaned at the sight of it.

"I—I don't know how the coat came off him!" mumbled Coker. "I—I think he must have slipped out of it on purpose."

"You be quiet," said the constable. "I'm speaking to this young gentleman now. What else did you see, my lad?"

"I saw Putty, I mean Teddy Grace; I saw him open the door of the carriage," said Jimmy demurely.

"He opened the door 'imself?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens!" gasped Coker. "the young fool! Then it was all his own fault—"

"You be quiet!" snapped the constable. "Go on, my lad! After he had opened the door of the carriage—you're sure he did that?"

"Quite sure."

"We all saw him!" said Raby solemnly.

"And what 'appened next?"

"Then he winked at us," said Jimmy Silver.

The constable jumped.

"He did what?"

"Winked!" said Jimmy Silver.

"My word! Then he fell out?"

"Nunno!"

"Then what 'appened?" demanded the constable.

"He got under the seat."

"What?"

"Coker was sprawling on the floor, with the overcoat over his face," said Jimmy demurely. "he didn't see Putty get under the seat. At least, I think he couldn't have."

"Couldn't!" said Lovell solemnly. "If he'd seen him get under the seat, he wouldn't have fancied that he'd fallen out of the carriage, would he? It stands to reason."

There was a petrified silence for a moment. The constable closed his notebook with an angry snap.

"Mean to say the boy's in the carriage all the time?" he roared.

"Certainly."

The constable, the stationmaster, the porters, and every passenger who could squeeze near enough, stared into the carriage. Putty of the Fourth, a little dusty, but smiling and cheerful, crawled out from under the seat. He stepped cheerily to the platform.

Coker gazed at him as if he could scarcely believe his eyes. His first

(Continued on page 22.)



pecker, not a good flyer, also a hugger of cover, but still capable of getting up some speed when going for its life, and it had a long start of the bird of prey, too. Nevertheless, when the hawk fairly made his wings whistle as he tore along in pursuit, it just looked as though the woodpecker was crawling by comparison.

In fact, in no longer time than it would take you to count ten, the hawk had fairly eaten up the distance that separated him from the green bird, and was upon him. He had even dropped his long leg—the right one—with the long, crooked, middle claw ready to make that fearful clutch from which there is no escape.

But the woodpecker was already upon the wood. For a moment the two birds seemed to hurl along together into what looked like instant death among the branches; but just at the very last moment the hawk shot upwards, clearing the tree-tops by barely an inch at a speed of sixty miles an hour, whilst the woodpecker looped down under a friendly branch, and up to a tree-trunk, where he clung, in greater danger of death from heart palpitation than by the claws of the hawk. But it had been a fine shave, after all.

Half a mile away, a few minutes later, the hawk espied what looked like an ordinary innocent thrush, hopping about in a small grass paddock, round which grew many stunted little trees.

If he had paused for a moment to think, he would have recognised that, though the bird was a thrush, it was not an ordinary one. The grey on the back proved that, and the size also. It was, in fact, the largest of its tribe, a big missel-thrush, and all missel-thrushes are born fighters.

But the hawk was angry and hungry, and he thought that no bird in the wilds, from the pheasant downwards, could stand up against him when he was really upset.

Surprise was hopeless. The bird was out in the open now, and the hedges being low, the hawk had no cover behind which to approach. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to adopt strategy.

There was a road running past one side of the paddock, and on the telegraph wires bordering this the hawk innocently perched. His object was to remain still, in as disinterested pose as possible, on the chance that the thrush would consider him full fed, and, therefore, probably harmless, till it would approach too close and fall a victim to his quick dash.

This little game of the hawk's worked very well up to a point—the point where the other bird gave a loud, harsh screech, not a bit thrush-like. Far up on a hill a friend of his must have heard the screech, for in a second the hawk could see this second bird flying down to the paddock. The hawk sat quite still, and the bird passed right above him.

He had just time to feel amazement, perhaps, when there sounded in his ears a harsh screech, and something hit him bang in the back, knocking him head over heels off the telegraph-wires. It was the first thrush that had hit him, and they both attacked him again instantly, so that for a moment he had some difficulty in righting himself in the air before he hit the ground.

Even when he did, they held the advantage of being above him, and in order to save his eyes being pecked out he knew that he must regain that advantage instantly. Accordingly, he gave about six strenuous strokes to his strong wings, and shot almost straight upwards like a flash, striking right and left at his persecutors.

THE POPULAR.—No. 413.

Then—well, then there was a soft sound, and the hawk came down again in a heap—and headless. He had struck the telegraph-wires in his dash, and they had very neatly beheaded him.

THE END.

## A DRAMA OF THE WILD!

From the Naturalist's Diary.

"Drat 'im!"

The grizzled, strong-lined face of Farmer Benson, upturned to the dull, coloured sky, might have been cut from a block of granite, for all the emotion it displayed as the words were uttered. For perhaps sixty seconds he remained there out in the wind-swept field, gazing at a motionless speck high above his head.

The speck moved a little sideways, dropped earthwards with the speed of a falling plane, halted, and lifted again into the clouds.

"Seen me, the varmint!"

The farmer turned on his heel and made for the farmhouse. As he faded from the picture the hovering speck again dropped a little, and had you been there, and close enough to the bird to see, you would have admired wholeheartedly the way Mr. Kestrel used wings and tail as a brake as he dropped, rose, headed into the wind, then turned his tail for a moment contemptuously to it.

His bearing might almost be described as proud; as though he knew he was among the very first of the birds to commence the northward flight that marks the beginning of the New-Year tide of migration.

Suddenly the kestrel seemed to stiffen. His piercing-bright, beady little eyes were fixed on the newly-turned brown earth far below. Was it a rat, or a mouse?

For, in spite of the farmer's mutterings, the kestrel does yeoman service in clearing rickyards and fields of those nippy little pests.

It was early for any little hunters to be about—Farmer Benson had not yet had his breakfast. But the mole—the ground-speck which held the hawk-eye of the sky-speck—had been tempted from the comparative safety of his underground burrows to a bit of worm-scouting on the surface. And he had just made his kill. Above ground, he was at a great disadvantage. For one thing, he knew nothing of hawks—until it was quite too late to learn.

The motionless hovering of the kestrel (they call him "windhover" because of this almost uncanny gift of his) terminated abruptly. Whiz! There was no noise of impact. Simply the kestrel alighted daintily, using wings and tail as certain brake at just the right instant, then soared aloft again, this time with a mole in his firm clutches.

But the report of a double-barrel gun came so quickly after the moment of capture that it might have been mistaken for the thud of impact 'twixt hunter and hunted.

A few slaty-blue tail-feathers fluttered in the wind—and at the farmer's feet a huddled bird and a mole with broken back. This time Farmer Benson's grizzled face held a little more satisfaction as, with smoking gun under arm, he looked down at the early bird that caught the mole that caught the early worm!

## PUTTY'S LITTLE JOKE!

(Continued from page 20.)

feeling was of immense relief. Potter and Greene were relieved, too; realising that there had been no tragedy; only that Coker's egregious leg had been pulled once more.

"You!" stammered Coker, "you—you didn't fall out—oh, my hat! You—you opened the door—you make me think—why, it was a trick all along—you were pulling my leg—" Coker fairly choked.

"Fancy that dawning on Coker," said Putty cheerily.

The Rookwooders chuckled.

"Look 'ere!" exclaimed the angry constable, "what's all this 'ere mean? You ain't been hurt."

"Not at all."

"What did you get under the seat for?"

"Coker looked so excited," explained Putty sweetly. "I thought I'd give him a chance to cool down."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I—" gasped Coker, "I'll smash you—I'll pulverise you—I'll spifficate you—I'll—I'll—"

The constable gave a snort, and stalked away in great wrath. His valuable time had been wasted; evidently there was no "case" in this! The passengers, grinning, went back into the train. But the stationmaster wasn't grinning; the train had been delayed, and that was not a grinning matter. As Coker made a belligerent rush at Putty, the stationmaster signed to the porters, and the Greyfriars Fifth-Former was seized.

"Put that young ruffian out!" said the stationmaster. "I've a good mind to give him in charge for obstruction."

Coker, almost raving, was escorted out of the station, not gently. Potter and Greene followed, grinning. Jimmy Silver & Co. walked out in great spirits, and headed for the pictures. They looked back from a little distance, at the sound of an uproar, and had a view of Horace Coker engaged in desperate combat with two porters, and Potter and Greene walking off and trying to look as if Coker didn't belong to them. It was quite an exciting scene, and worth watching, but Jimmy Silver & Co. had had enough of Coker, so they walked on and left him to it.

THE END.

## The Return of Jimmy Silver & Co. to Rookwood:

### "The Study-Stealers!"

By Owen Conquest.

Next week's grand long complete tale in which the Chums of Rookwood return to the school to find that their study has been stolen.