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RUCTIONS AT ROOKWOOD-A FORM IN REVOLT !

The POPULAR

Week Ending
April 21st,
1928.
New Series,
No. 482.

EVERY
TUESDAY

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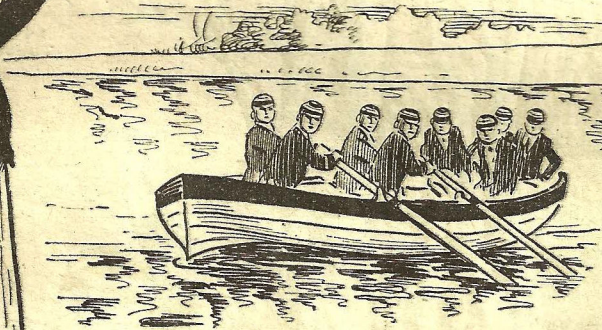


HUNG UP!

ANOTHER TRIUMPH FOR THE REBELS! Hansom of the Fifth, reckons he could bring the Rookwood Rebels to book, given a few followers and ten minutes in which to do the trick. But when he sets out to make good his boast—oh, what a surprise he gets, and what a reception at the hands of Jimmy Silver & Co.!

Foiling the Fifth!

By Owen Conquest.



A ROLLICKING
LONG COMPLETE
TALE OF JIMMY
SILVER & CO., OF
ROOKWOOD.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Chance for the Fifth!

"THIS," said Hansom of the Fifth, "is where we come in!" Edward Hansom, captain of the Fifth Form at Rookwood, had been thinking.

There were half a dozen Fifth Form fellows in Hansom's study, discussing the topic which was now the chief topic at Rookwood School—the rebellion of the Classical Fourth.

That rebellion was a serious matter from the point of view of the Head—it was extremely, inexpressibly serious. But all Rookwood did not see eye to eye with the Head.

Most of the fellows, seniors as well as juniors, chuckled over Jimmy Silver & Co.'s revolt and their retreat from Rookwood to the island in the river.

So there was more laughter than seriousness in Hansom's study as the Fifth Form fellows discussed the matter. But while his comrades were laughing and talking, Edward Hansom was thinking, with a corrugated brow. All of a sudden he shot his remark at the company; this unexpected remark being, apparently, the outcome of his deep and unusual cogitations.

"Eh?" said Talboys.

"What?" asked Brown major.

"This is where we come in!" repeated Hansom firmly.

"Where, what, how, and why?" inquired Lumsden of the Fifth.

"Shut up a minute, and listen to me!" said Hansom. "This is our chance, and it's where we come out strong!"

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"Didn't you say it was where we come in?" asked Lumsden.

"Yes."

"Now you say it's where we come out strong."

"Yes."

"Do we come in and come out, too?"

Some of the Fifth Form fellows laughed. But Hansom did not laugh—he gave the humorist a severe stare.

"Don't be a funny ass, Lumsden," he said sternly. "This is a serious matter."

"My mistake!" yawned Lumsden. "I hadn't noticed it myself. But if you say it is, old bean, all right."

"What's it got to do with us, anyhow, Hansom?" asked Talboys. "We've got nothing to do with the Fourth—scrubby little sweeps!"

"We're going to have something to do with them though," said Hansom.

"I've thought it out. As the matter stands the Classical Fourth had got their ears up because the Head sacked their Form master Dicky Dalton. To be quite candid, the Head was a bit of an ass. Dalton was a good man, and the Head oughtn't to have pushed him out."

"Hear, hear!"

"But that's neither here nor there," said Hansom. "Fourth Form kids are only fags, and must do as they're told."

"Hear, hear!" repeated the Fifth Form fellows, more emphatically.

There wasn't a fellow in the Rookwood Fifth who did not believe in fags being kept in their place.

"This sort of thing is bad for a school," said Hansom sagely. "Why, we shall have the Third Form gettin' their ears up next. And the Second! No tellin' where the thing might end. It's got to be stopped."

"That's the Head's bizney, isn't it, not ours?" said Lumsden.

"Yes; but the Head's failed to score," said Hansom. "He sent the Sixth Form prefects to round them up. What happened to the prefects—Bulkeley, and Neville, and that lot?"

There was a chortle in the study.

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"They were licked!"

"Licked to the wide!"

"They looked a sorry crowd when they came tricklin' in afterwards!" grinned Talboys.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Since then those cheeky fags have been sticking on the island in the river, and they say they're sticking it till Mr. Dalton comes back as Fourth Form master. Of course, the Head can't give in to them. But this sort of thing can't go on. Bad for the school. Bad all round. We shall have the governors on the scene. The whole neighbourhood is talkin' about it already. Kids go up from Coombe and Latcham to stare at those fags on the island; it's gettin' to be a regular show. Now, the Sixth have failed! That's admitted! So, as I said, this is where we come in!"

"But—"

"The Sixth having failed, the Fifth take it up," explained Hansom. "Of course, we can handle a gang of fags easily enough."

"Of course."

"It will be no end of a score over the Sixth if we succeed where they failed."

"Oh, good!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The prefects will have to—to—" "Hide their diminished heads," suggested Lumsden.

"That's it—hide their giddy, diminished nappers," said Hansom. "It will mean a little less of their swank in the future. We can point out to the prefects that we had to do their job for them."

"Bravo!"

"And it will impress the fags. A lot of the fags don't treat the Fifth with proper respect; don't seem to understand that we're a senior Form at all. What with cheeky fags on one side, and swanking Sixth-Formers on the other, we have to keep busy to keep our end up. Well, this is a chance for us. I'm going to the Head to offer him the services of the Fifth."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Jolly good wheeze!" exclaimed Brown major heartily. "We can go up the river on a half-holiday, and mop up those fags as easy as falling off a form!"

Hansom smiled the smile of superior wisdom.

"Not on a half-holiday," he said. "We've got uses for all the holidays we get. Quid pro quo, you know. If the Head wants our services, he lets us cut classes for the job."

"Bravo!"

"You've got a head on you, Hansom, old man," said Brown major admiringly. "I'd rather scrap with the fags up the river than grind classics with old Greely any day!"

"What-ho!"

Hansom jumped up.

"Strike the iron while it's hot" he said. "You come with me, Talboys—and you, Lumsden! We'll see the Head and take the job on and make a success of it, before the Sixth get goin' again."

"Hear, hear!"

And the three Fifth-Formers quitted the study to interview Dr. Chisholm, and the other fellows dispersed, to spread the news in the Fifth of Edward Hansom's great wheeze—which was to bag no end of kudos for the Rookwood Fifth, to make the Sixth Form prefects hide their diminished heads, and to put a sharp and sudden end to the rebellion of the juniors—perhaps!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

In Camp!

JIMMY SILVER, captain of the Fourth, stood on the bank of the little island in the river and looked along the flowing stream, glimmering and shimmering in the spring sunshine. Raby and Newcome, sitting on a stump, were playing chess with a pocket set of chessmen. Arthur Edward Lovell was looking over the game, and helping both players with advice alternately—advice which was received without gratitude, and even with contumely.

Mornington, leaning against a tree, was reading the latest copy of the "Coombe Times," with an interest that was rather remarkable; for the local paper was not, as a rule, an enthralling publication. Tubby Muffin was busy at the camp-fire, which blazed and smoked in front of the old Army hut in the centre of the island—Tubby being cook to the rebel forces. Erroll and Rawson were busy with their school books, but they were the only members of the rebel Form who bothered about school books.

Most of the rebels of Rookwood regarded the revolt as a happy escape from lessons. Peele and Lattrey and Gower had retired to a secluded spot in the thickets for a quiet game of nap—with one eye on their cards, and the other open for Jimmy Silver.

All the rebels were occupied in one way or another, and they all agreed that it was better than classes. How long the present situation would last they did not know, but most of them hoped that it would last till the end of the term.

"What have you got there, Morny?" asked Jimmy Silver, glancing at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Coombe Times," said Mornington. "Somethin' in it that's rather interestin'." He looked at Jimmy Silver over the paper. "The Head doesn't seem to be gettin' busy yet, Jimmy."

"It's bound to come, though," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm looking for a shindy every day."

Arthur Edward Lovell looked round from the chess—much to the relief of the players.

"We can hold our own," he said. "We beat off the prefects, and we got the better of those fellows Carker set on us. We've laid in lots of grub, and we can hold out. The Head's bound to realise that in the long run."

"The Head's sacked Mr. Carker," remarked Putty of the Fourth. "I heard it from Wegg of the Third. He was waxy at Carker getting a gang of bargees to go for us. We should have been knocked right out if Mr. Dalton hadn't come along and chipped in."

"Good old Dicky!" said Lovell.

"I was thinkin' of that," said Valentine Mornington. "Carker was a brute, but he knew what was what. If the Head's waitin' for us to give in he will be disappointed. We shan't be left alone much longer, and we've had a narrow escape once. That's why this giddy advertisement in the local paper is interestin'."

"How's that?" asked Jimmy.

"Army surplus stores," said Mornington. "Any amount of barbed wire goin' cheap."

"Barbed wire?" repeated Lovell.

"Just that!"

"What the thump do we want with barbed wire?" asked Lovell, whose powerful intellect never did work very quickly.

"Just what the boys at the front wanted with it in the Wartime," answered Mornington. "To keep the enemy off."

"Oh, my hat!"

"If we'd had it when those bargee johnnies came up from Latcham they'd never have got at us," said Mornington. "Next time, we're goin' to be ready for the enemy, and next time can't be very far off. The Head simply can't afford to let this sort of thing go on. He must beat us or give in."

"That's so," said Jimmy.

"Well, whether he'll give in or not, I don't know, but he's not goin' to beat us."

"No fear!"

"But it's no good sayin' that we could handle a couple of dozen men if he tried Carker's game on us, because we couldn't," said Morny. "But with barbed wire round the camp, I fancy we could hold off half Hampshire, what?"

"Jolly good idea," said Putty.

Lovell grunted. Arthur Edward Lovell was a good fellow, but he had a way of regarding any other fellow's ideas as superfluous.

"Don't see that we need it," said Lovell. "If anybody comes barging on this island we'll jolly well chuck him into the river, see?"

"I see," assented Mornington affably. "I can see you chucking a six-foot bargee into the river—I don't think."

"Look here, Morny—"

"Two or three fellows had better come with me to carry the stuff," said Mornington. "We can get the boat down to Latcham—that's the quickest way."

"You'll have to pass the school," said Lovell. "They might jolly well catch you."

"We'll chance that."

Jimmy Silver nodded assent. Fortune had favoured the Rookwood rebels so far; but Jimmy, like a good general, was always on the alert for the turn of the tide. The rebels had a strong position on the island in the river, but there was no doubt that an overwhelming force could be brought against them if the Head once made up his mind to that extreme step. Angry as he had been with Mr. Carker for his drastic methods, it was quite possible that, in the long run, the Head might come to realise that very drastic measures were the only useful ones. A barbed wire defence round the rebel camp would, so to speak, put "paid" to any attempt to rush the island.

Mornington called to Erroll, and with his chum's aid, ran the boat down into the water. Conroy joined them in the boat. Jimmy Silver's place was on the island, though as a matter of fact he would have enjoyed the pull on the river down to Latcham and back.

Financial resources had been pooled among the rebels in the present crisis, and so far there was cash in hand. Jimmy Silver counted out the necessary sum to Morny, and the boat pulled away down the river.

Then, leaving Lovell and Raby and Newcome on the watch, Jimmy strolled back to the camp. Tubby Muffin was going strong with the preparation of a wonderful stew, which had a most attractive aroma as it simmered in the big iron pot over the fire. Tubby Muffin tasted it occasionally to see how it was getting on—his "tastes" were extensive, and happened about every four or five minutes. He turned a fat and ruddy face to the captain of the Fourth.

"It's ripping," he said. "Simply ripping, Jimmy! Have a dumpling?"

"Not till feeding-time, thanks," said Jimmy, laughing.

"They're top-hole," said Tubby, beaming. "I can make a dumpling, I can tell you! I've only eaten seven, as I don't want to spoil my appetite for dinner."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver looked round the camp and called to Oswald.

"Seen Peele?"

"Not lately," answered Oswald. Jimmy knitted his brows. He knew

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how Peele & Co. were likely to be occupied, and he had a very keen eye open for the black sheep of the Fourth. There was a difference between liberty and license, which Peele & Co. did not seem to perceive, and which Jimmy was anxious to impress on their minds.

He strolled into the thickets, and a little later he was not surprised to hear a voice under the trees:

"Your deal, Gower!"

Jimmy Silver pushed through the thickets. Three juniors were seated round a stump, which served as a card-table. There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the air. Peele and Lattrey and Gower were enjoying the idle hours in their own way.

They looked up suddenly as Jimmy Silver loomed over them. Gower, in his alarm, almost swallowed his cigarette, and choked and coughed.

"Groogh! Gug-gug! Oh!"

"Hallo, Silver!" said Cyril Peele, with an impudent grin. "Come to take a hand in the game?"

"Just that," said Jimmy.

"Sit down, old bean," said Lattrey.

Jimmy Silver did not sit down. He stooped and gathered up the cards. Peele gave him a fierce look, but did not venture to interfere. Jimmy slipped the cards into his pocket.

"They're going into the fire!" he said. "Will you fellows oblige me by handing over your smokes?"

"Look here!" shouted Peele.

"Will you?" asked Jimmy politely.

"No, I won't, for one! Oh! Ow! Let go, you cad!" howled Peele.

Jimmy grasped the blackguard of the Fourth by the collar. There was a bang as Cyril Peele's head smote a tree-trunk. "Yow-ow! Leggo!" yelled Peele, struggling wildly.

"Say when!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"Yoooooop!"

"Are you handing over the smokes?"

"Yow-ow! Yes!" gasped Peele.

"Thanks!"

Jimmy Silver made quite an extensive collection of cigarettes from the trio.

"Next time I find you up to these tricks, you'll go in the river," said Jimmy. And ignoring the furious looks of the three cads, he turned on his heel and walked back to the camp.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Hot Chase!

"HANSOM!"

"Hallo, Bulkeley!" said Hansom of the Fifth with studied carelessness.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was looking serious, perhaps a trifle annoyed. Hansom, on the other hand, smiled cheerily.

"A message from the Head," said Bulkeley curtly.

"Yes. I was expectin' somethin' of the sort," said Hansom.

"It seems that you Fifth Form chaps are taking a hand against the fags on the island," said the captain of Rookwood.

"Well, we thought we'd better," drawled Hansom. "You see, the Head seems to be in a bit of a scrape, and the Sixth Form don't seem able to help him much. We've talked it over, and agreed that it's up to the Fifth."

"That's how it is, Bulkeley," smiled Talboys.

"So I mentioned to the Head yesterday that we'd round up the fags, if he cared to give the word," said Hansom. "He told me he would think it over."

"And you think you will handle the fags better than the Sixth Form prefects?" asked Bulkeley.

"I fancy so."

"Just a few!" said Lumsden.

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"Well, you're welcome to try," said Bulkeley, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I dare say you'll be sorry later on that you butted in. But that isn't my affair. The Head says he has spoken to Mr. Greely, and you are to see him about it."

"Right-ho!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth walked away, frowning. It was true that the Sixth Form prefects had failed completely to deal with the rebels. But Bulkeley would willingly have tried again at a word from the Head. Apparently the Head did not care to ask him, or perhaps he was annoyed at the failure of the prefects. Anyhow, it seemed that Dr. Chisholm had decided to accept the services of the Fifth Form volunteers, and he had asked Bulkeley to tell Hansom so.

So Bulkeley frowned as he walked away, but the Fifth-Formers were grin-

ning. They liked old Bulkeley, as everyone did, but it was a great score for the Fifth to go "one better" than the Sixth.

"Go and see old Greely, Ted," said Talboys. "We're lucky if we get off this afternoon—there's maths."

And Edward Hansom went to speak to his Form master. Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, did not seem pleased.

"The Head has asked me to excuse certain members of my class this afternoon, Hansom," he said. "It appears that you are going to fetch back the rebellious juniors from the island?"

"That's it, sir," said Hansom. "Of course we're very pleased to oblige the Head in any way."

"Oh, yes of course!" said Mr. Greely. "I should really have supposed, however, that a half-holiday would have been a more suitable time to select."

Hansom did not reply to that. He did not agree with Mr. Greely at all. On a half-holiday he might have had difficulty in raising an adequate force to deal with the rebels. But during classes it was certain that most of the Fifth would volunteer. A few "swots"

might prefer the Form-room, with classics and maths, but it was quite certain that the great majority of the Form would prefer a rag up the river.

"However, the Head seems to have decided," said Mr. Greely. "I am directed to give excoats to any members of the Fifth Form whom you select to accompany you Hansom."

"Very good, sir!"

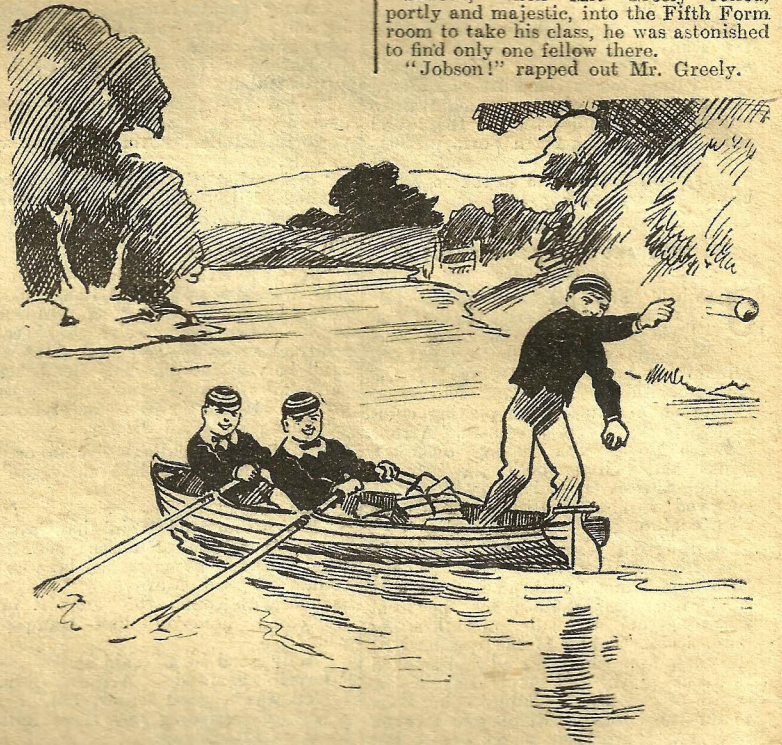
"The remainder will come into class as usual," said Mr. Greely; and he dismissed Hansom with a wave of his podgy hand.

Hansom was not long in spreading the glad tidings. The Fifth received the news with enthusiasm. That afternoon they were to have Latin prose with Mr. Greely and mathematics with Mr. Manders in a senior set.

Needless to say, Mr. Greely's class and Mr. Manders' set were likely to be extremely depleted.

Indeed, when Mr. Greely rolled, portly and majestic, into the Fifth Form room to take his class, he was astonished to find only one fellow there.

"Jobson!" rapped out Mr. Greely.



Jobson of the Fifth blinked at him. "Where are the others, Jobson?"

"Gone out of gates, sir," said Jobson.

Mr. Greely breathed hard.

"All of them?"

"I think so, sir."

"Do you mean to say, Jobson, that you are the only Fifth Form boy in class this afternoon?"

"It seems so, sir. I'm ready to begin, sir."

Mr. Greely snorted. Jobson of the Fifth might be dutifully ready to begin, but Mr. Greely certainly wasn't ready to begin with a class of one.

"I shall dismiss the—class," said Mr. Greely, and he rolled out of the Form-room again, leaving Tobias Jobson to his own devices.

Evidently Hansom had found no difficulty in collecting recruits. The Fifth had joined up as one man.

While Mr. Greely fumed and wondered what Rookwood was coming to, Hansom & Co. walked down to the river. The weather was fine and sunny, and the river, glistening in the spring sunshine, looked tempting—much more tempting than the Fifth Form room.

Quite a happy crowd of seniors walked down to the boathouse with Hansom.

"We're in luck, and no mistake!" grinned Talboys. "Look here, I don't see that there's any hurry, Hansom, old man. If we march those young sweeps back in an hour, we shall be expected to turn up in the Form-room afterwards. That's not good enough."

Edward Hansom nodded. "I've thought of that," he said. "We'll get the boats out, and pull up the river as far as Fishers' Rest, and have tea there, and mop up the fags on the way home."

"Good egg!" "That's top-hole!" assented Lumsden. "If we do the Head's jolly old bizney for him, he can't grouse at our having a whole afternoon for the job."

"Grouse or not, that's the programme!" said Hansom. "I don't want any Greely or any Manders on a gorgeous afternoon like this."

"Hear, hear!" "I don't suppose it will take ten

pulling up the river from the direction of Coombe and Latham. In the skiff were Mornington and Erroll rowing, and Conroy of the Fourth steering. And there were a number of large packages in the bottom of the skiff, which Hansom noticed without paying them much attention.

"Hallo! There's the fags' boat!" exclaimed Hansom. "We'll bag that lot to begin with."

"Lucky chance!" said Talboys. "Chuck in those oars—quick!"

Hansom's boat was a double sculler. Hansom and Brown major, sat to the oars, and Lister of the Modern Fifth took the lines. The boat shot out into the river, and the rest of the Fifth crowded the raft, looking on with grinning faces to watch the capture of the rebels' boat.

The three juniors had already seen their danger, and they were pulling hard now, and were already abreast of the school raft.

"Those cheeky bounders are going to

great distance away. Conroy, as he sat steering, could see its tree-tops over the winding banks against the blue sky. But the Fifth-Formers were gaining steadily.

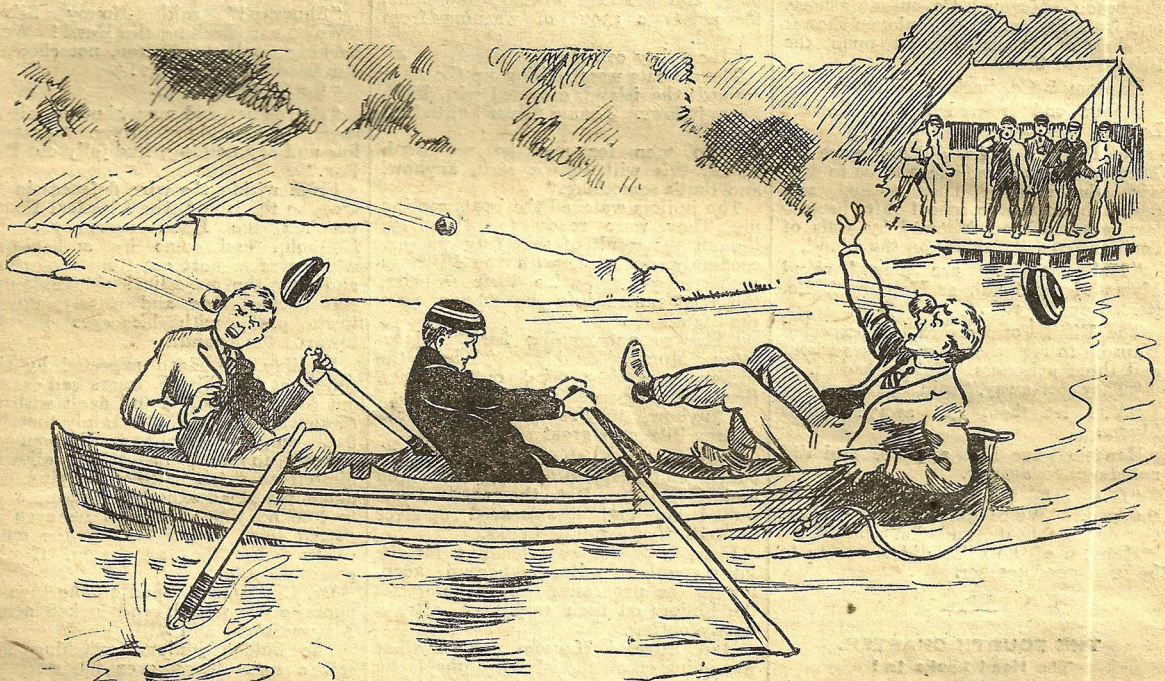
Morny set his teeth.

Arthur Edward Lovell had warned him that he might be caught passing the school; but Morny had expected all Rookwood to be at classes at that hour. He knew nothing of Hansom & Co.'s campaign. He was very anxious that Arthur Edward's prediction should not be realised.

Beside the packages of barbed-wire in the bottom of the skiff were several bags of provisions. Morny & Co. had done some shopping at Latham. Mornington drew in his oars and fumbled in one of the bags.

"Keep it up, Erroll!" he muttered. Erroll did not answer, but he pulled his hardest. Mornington drew a half a dozen oranges from the bag.

Whiz!



A HOT CHASE! Mornington stood up in the boat, and drew half a dozen oranges from the bag. Whiz! Whiz! With good aim, he opened fire at the oncoming Fifth Form boat. One orange whizzed fairly into Lister's eye, and another got Hansom behind the ear. "Ooooh!" "Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Hansom, dropping his oar.

(See Chapter 4.)

minutes to mop up those cheeky kids and bundle them into the boats," said Hansom. "We'll make them row us back from the island when we've licked them and brought them to their senses, just to show them who is who and what is what!"

"Yes, rather!"

"We'll time to get back when classes are over, especially as we want the Sixth to see us march the fags in," added Hansom.

And the Fifth-Formers chuckled.

There were twenty fellows with Hansom, of the Classical and Modern Fifts. And certainly Hansom's confidence in victory seemed well founded. Once at close quarters there seemed no doubt that the big Fifth-Formers would knock the juniors right and left. Ten minutes seemed to them quite as much time as they could possibly need to bring Jimmy Silver & Co. to heel.

A boat was run out over the raft and plumped into the water. Hansom jumped into it, and as he fended off from the raft he caught sight of a skiff

bother us," said Conroy. "Put it on, you fellows! Best if I know what the Fifth want to chip in for, but they're going to."

Morny and Erroll pulled hard, and the light skiff fairly flew over the shining water. Hansom waved a hand to them.

"Stop, there!"

"Go and eat coke!" shouted back Mornington.

"Stop, I tell you!" roared Hansom.

"Why aren't you kids in class?" asked Mornington. "Does your master know you are playin' truant, you naughty boys?"

Hansom did not answer them. He choked with wrath and tugged at his oar. The Fifth Form boat glided behind the skiff, and, with two hefty fellows pulling, it gained.

"We'll have them in a few minutes, you chaps," said Lister. "We're going hand-over-hand."

"Good!" gasped Hansom.

Mornington and Erroll rowed hard and harder. The island was not a

Morny was a good marksman. The orange whizzed through the air with unerring aim.

It crashed fairly in Lister's eye in boat behind. The Fifth-Former gave a startled yell and sprawled backwards. He let go one line, but dragged heavily on the other as he sprawled.

The boat swerved round.

"Gooooop!" spluttered Lister.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Hansom.

"Mind what you are doing, you Modern ass! Do you want us into the bank?"

Lister didn't want it, but the Fifth Form boat went into the bank all the same. It crashed in the rushes.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

The oranges flew from Morny's hand and crashed into the Fifth Form boat. Hansom caught one with his ear, and Brown major captured one with his chin. There were oars of wrath from the Fifth Form crew.

Mornington grasped his oars again

and bent to them. The junior boat shot away up the stream like an arrow.

Hansom & Co. floundered in their boat in great wrath and wild recrimination.

"You dummy, Lister!"

"I was hit in the eye!" yelled Lister. "How could I help it? Look at my eye!"

"Blow your eye!" howled Hansom.

"Oh, cheese it, and let's get after them!" exclaimed Brown major.

"You clumsy ass!"

"You burbling chump!"

"Look here—"

"Get the boat off and shut up!" roared Hansom.

He shoved off with an oar, and the Fifth-Formers took up the chase.

But the juniors had too good a start now. Right up to the island the pursuers followed them, pulling hard. But Morny & Co. were still two lengths ahead when they reached safety. There was a shout from the island, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came swarming down on the beach. Morny & Co. sprang ashore, and from the swarm of juniors a shower of clods and roots volleyed upon the Fifth Form boat.

Hansom & Co. backed off hastily.

"Come on!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

But Hansom & Co. did not come on. They were not in sufficient force to deal with the rebels. They turned and pulled back to the school raft, breathless and wrathful, followed by yells of derision from the rebels on the island.

"Hallo! Where are they?" asked Myers of the Fifth, as Hansom & Co. landed on the raft.

The Fifth Form crowd had expected Hansom to return with a captured boat and three prisoners. But he hadn't. "They got away," said Hansom.

"You let them get away?" asked Myers.

Hansom gave him a glare, and did not deign to answer.

"Get out the other boats!" he snapped. "We're going up the river. Get out the boats, and don't jaw!"

Hansom of the Fifth did not seem to be in a good temper.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Head Looks In!

JIMMY SILVER watched Hansom's boat out of sight, and whistled. The rebels of Rookwood landed Morny's cargo and pulled the skiff ashore.

"So the Fifth are taking a hand in this game, are they?" said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

"Looks like it," said Valentine Mornington. "The raft was swarming with them when we came by, and Hansom came after us. Looks as if the Head has put the Fifth after us, as the jolly old prefects weren't any good."

"Let 'em all come!" said Lovell. "We're ready for 'em!"

"I hope so," said Mornington dryly.

"They're nearly as many as us—quite as many as us if we leave out the slackers and funks. Once they get on the island, I fancy we're booked. Of course, Lovell may be able to lick Fifth-Formers; but, as a rule, the Fourth are not quite up to the weight of the Fifth."

"Oh, don't give us any sare!" said Lovell. "We'll jolly well make 'em sorry they came!"

"Nuff said!" interposed Jimmy Silver. "Your idea of the barbed wire

was a stroke of genius, Morny. I only hope we shall have time to get it fixed before they get at us."

"Let's get going with it, then."

No time was lost by the rebels. Arthur Edward Lovell might opine, if he liked, that the Fourth would beat an equal number of the Fifth in hand-to-hand combat, but nobody was likely to share Lovell's opinion. The one thing needful was to keep the overpowering enemy from getting to close quarters, as everybody but Arthur Edward realised quite clearly. Morny's idea of bagging the barbed wire from the merchant of surplus Army stores at Latcham was really a brain-wave. And evidently it had come in the nick of time.

Under Jimmy Silver's direction the juniors worked hard. There were coils and coils of wire, plenty for the defence of the island, if only it could be got into position in time. The juniors uncoiled it, and ran it among trees and thickets and roots round the island, line above line. But while they were still busy, and the task nowhere half done, there was a shout of warning from Oswald.

"Here they come!"

Three boats were pulling up the river towards the island, crowded with Fifth Form fellows. Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"Too soon for us," he remarked. "Still, this will stop a rush, anyhow, and that's something."

The juniors watched the boats coming up. They were ready for the fray, though the result of that fray was exceedingly doubtful, with the Fifth in such strong force. To their surprise, the boat pulled into the channel past the island.

"They're not coming here!" ejaculated Morny blankly. "What the dickens are they doin' out of class, then? Hansom was after us—"

"Anyhow, they're going on," said Jimmy Silver in great relief.

Some of the Fifth stared towards the island and laughed. Hansom stared and frowned. But the three boats pulled on, and disappeared up-river between the winding banks.

Hansom & Co. were heading for the inn a couple of miles farther up; keeping to the programme of mopping up the juniors on their way back, after a happy outing.

Had Edward Hansom known what was going on on the island, probably he would have changed his plan, and lost no time. But he did not know, and the rebels of Rookwood were left undisturbed.

"I believe they're after us, all the same," said Mornington, with conviction. "We want to keep an eye open, and get on with the giddy wire entanglement as fast as we jolly well can."

"Don't lose a second, you fellows," said Jimmy Silver.

And the Rookwood rebels made the best use of their unexpected respite. It was a case of all hands on deck, as Jimmy expressed it. Even Tubby Muffin was made to help, and Peele and Gower and one or two other slackers were routed out and turned to.

It was hard work and not pleasant work, and there were some sore hands and scratched arms and torn clothes among the juniors when it was finished at last. But that was all in a day's work, and they took it as cheerfully as possible.

Round the little isle, at a short distance from the water's edge, the wire ran, curling through thickets and round trees and stumps and low-hanging bows. Line above line, with many a knot and tangle, it ran, and not a single place

was left for an opening. Within the barbed wire was the camp, with the old Army hut in the centre, and the skiff drawn up out of danger. And when the "job" was finished, and the tired juniors knocked off to rest, Jimmy Silver considered that the rebels' stronghold was fairly impregnable.

"If the Fifth really are after us, I fancy Hansom will be sorry that he lost time when he butts his head against that," grinned Mornington. "I hope they're on the war-path! While we're up against the Head, we may as well give the Fifth a fall."

"Just as well," said Jimmy Silver. "Keep a good watch, you fellows. It may be Hansom's dodge to take us suddenly from the upper end."

"They won't get through the wire," said Morny confidently.

"Not likely!"

"There's somebody on the towing-path!" called out Lovell. "My hat! It's the jolly old Head!"

"Give him a yell!" said Higgs.

"Shurrup!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're not cheeking the Head! We're backing up Dicky Dalton, not cheeking our headmaster, Higgs!"

"Rot!" said Higgs.

"Rot or not, old man, shut up, all the same," said Jimmy Silver. "Just lie low and say nothing, like jolly old Brer Fox."

From within the wire defences in the trees on the island, the Classical Fourth watched the Head curiously. Dr. Chisholm had come by a field-path which was a short cut from the school, and now the majestic old gentleman was pacing, slow and stately, up the towing-path, with his eyes directed towards the islands.

Possibly the Head expected by that time that the Fifth-Formers had carried out their campaign, and dealt with the recalcitrant juniors. Certainly they had had ample time, had Hansom set directly to work instead of allowing himself an extra half-holiday first. No doubt the Head expected Hansom & Co. to lose no time; perhaps he even expected them to get back to the school in time for the last lesson, if they possibly could.

Dr. Chisholm stopped on the towpath opposite the island, and looked across. All was silent and still.

The hidden juniors, watching him, saw a smile break over the stern old face. It was a smile of satisfaction. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another and smiled, too.

They could read the Head's thoughts in his face; at least, they could guess. The Head's impression, from the silence and deserted looks of the island, was that Hansom & Co. had "rounded up" the rebels, and were at that moment engaged in shepherding them back to the school. It was surely an easy task for a score of hefty Fifth-Formers, and the Head had no doubt that they had done it.

"Very good!" said the Head aloud; and the wind brought the muttered words across the water to the ears of the rebels. "Very good indeed! This is very satisfactory!"

"Oh, my hat!" muttered Lovell.

There was a chuckle among the rebel juniors. Higgs of the Fourth rose silently on a tree-stump, with a clod in his hand. Higgs was a fellow with no respect for his elders and betters, and he could not resist the temptation of catching the Head's topper with a missile. Fortunately, Jimmy Silver sighted him in time.

"Higgs, you dummy—"

Jimmy grabbed at Higgs' leg. There

was a roar as Higgs came to the ground with a crash.

"Whooooop!" Higgs hit the ground hard. His roar of anguish rang over the island and the river.

The Head was seen to give quite a jump. He realised now the island was not so deserted as it looked.

"Bless my soul!" The Head raised his voice and called: "Boys! Are you still there?"

"Yes, sir!" called back Lovell.

"Still alive and kicking, sir!" called out Putty of the Fourth. "How do you do, sir? Nice afternoon for a walk up the river!"

Dr. Chisholm did not reply. There was no trace of a smile on his face now. He cast a thunderous look up and down the river, apparently in search of the Fifth-Formers. At the same moment Conroy called from the upper end of the island:

"Here come the Fifth!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Not So Easy!

"TOP-HOLE afternoon!" said Talboys.

"Rippin'!" agreed Lumsden. Hansom of the Fifth smiled genially. In the tea-gardens of the Fisher's Rest, the Fifth-Formers had quite enjoyed an open-air spread after the pull up the river.

On all hands it was agreed that Edward Hansom deserved well of his Form.

There were two half-holidays a week at Rookwood; but an extra one was more than welcome. And it was one of those mild and pleasant days in spring when a fellow thoroughly enjoyed himself up the river. The Fifth-Formers of Rookwood felt that they had had a good time, and they owed it to their Form captain. Hansom's idea of helping the Head out of his scrape was regarded almost as a stroke of genius. True, the Fifth had not yet rounded up the rebels. But they had enjoyed an afternoon on the river and a spread in the tea-gardens; and that, after all, was the chief thing. Hansom looked at his watch.

"Time we were movin'," he remarked. And the Fifth, in great good-humour, went back to their boats. They pulled lazily down the current towards the island.

"Hallo! There's the Head on the bank!" ejaculated Talboys suddenly.

"Phew!" Dr. Chisholm stood like a stern statue on the towpath, his eyes fixed on the three boats as they glided up. He raised his hand commandingly, and the Fifth-Formers swerved in to the bank.

"Hansom!" rapped out the Head.

"Hem! Yes, sir!"

"I gave you leave from school this afternoon in order that you might bring those rebellious juniors back to Rookwood!"

"Hem! Yes, sir! Exactly!" stammered Hansom.

"You have not done so, Hansom."

"We—we—hem!—we thought we—we'd better think it out a bit, sir—strategy, and—and all that, sir!" stammered Hansom, hoping that the Head would not guess that the Fifth-Formers had been up the river for tea. "We—we've laid all our plans now, sir."

"Indeed!" said the Head very dryly.

"Oh, yes, sir! We—we've got it all out and dried," said Hansom. "In ten minutes from now we shall have those cheeky fags marching back to the school, sir. Rely upon us!"

Dr. Chisholm gave the captain of the Fifth a rather grim look.

"Very good, Hansom," he said curtly. "You appear to have wasted time; but we will speak of that later. Kindly lose no more time."

"Oh, yes, sir—I mean, no, sir!" stuttered Hansom. "Pull for the island, you fellows!"

And the three boats turned from the river bank.

"The old boy's in a wax!" whispered Talboys.

"A rare wax," said Hansom below his breath. "But it will be all right when we bring the Fourth to book. He won't rag us after we've done that."

"Couldn't very well," agreed Talboys. "Dash it all, he ought to be grateful!" grumbled Lumsden. "We're doing his dashed bizney for him! Just like the Head!"

"It will be all serene," said Hansom confidently. "It won't take us ten minutes to make those fags howl for mercy! Get on with it!"

Three boats bumped into the rushes on the island. The Fifth Form of Rookwood swarmed ashore, rather surprised that their landing was not disputed. So far as Hansom could see, the rebels' only chance was to rush them before they got fairly ashore; not that it was much of a chance at that.

"Come on," said Hansom. "There's an old hut on this island. I expect they're there. Rout them out and lick any cheeky kid who has the neck to put his hands up!"

"You bet!" "Hallo, Hansom!" It was the voice of Arthur Edward Lovell. "Get off our island, you cheeky Fifth Form cad!"

Hansom smiled grimly. "We're getting off pretty soon, and you're getting off with us, my pippin," he said. "Come on, you chaps!"

And Hansom led a rush into the thickets.

The next minute Edward Hansom was lying on his back, yelling. He had rushed into something he had not seen, and did not yet know clearly what it was. But it had hurt him.

"Come on!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Give them socks!" roared Lovell. There was a yell from Talboys.

"I—I say, there's a wire here!" "There's a wire here!" replied Lumsden, demonstrating that fact by catching his foot and going with a crash to the ground. "Oh, my hat! Oh, my Aunt Belinda! Ow!"

"Why, what—what——" stuttered Hansom.

"Aren't you Fifth chaps coming on?" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Hansom scrambled up and came on. He came on to the tangled skein of barbed wire in the thicket, and yelled and stopped. Over the wire defences a cricket-stump lashed out, and Hansom caught it with his head. He gave a bellow and jumped back. Another stump lunged out at Talboys, and caught him on the waistcoat. He grabbed at the holder of the stump and caught a handful of wire, and raved.

"Quite a surprise for the jolly old Fifth!" chuckled Valentine Mornington. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"They—they—they've got the place wired!" stuttered Edward Hansom, utterly taken aback. "Oh, my thumping Uncle Theophilus! They—they—they've got barbed wire from somewhere, and—and—and— Oh dear!"

"Aren't you coming on, Hansom?" yelled Lovell.

Hansom gritted his teeth.

"Back up, you fellows!" he shouted. "We've got to get them! We've got to do it! Back up!"

And the Fifth backed up manfully. They spread among the thickets of the island, groping among tangled wires, hunting for a way through. But there was no way through. Tangled wire—unpleasant to touch—barred them at every point.

Hansom, almost desperate, came on fiercely, and fairly hung on the barbed wire, caught, and was unable to extricate himself. He hung there, squirming and wriggling and struggling frantically, while Putty of the Fourth tapped him with a cricket-stump and Raby squeezed an orange down his neck and Tubby Muffin plastered his head with handfuls of mud.

Loud and wild yells and howls reached the ears of Dr. Chisholm as he stood on the river bank watching and waiting. The thickets on the island hid what was passing from his view, but his sense of hearing told him that the Fifth were not having matters all their own way—very far from that!

And, meanwhile, on the island one by one, or two by two, the hapless Fifth drifted back to their boats, torn and untidy, dishevelled and breathless, and wishing from the bottom of their hearts that Hansom had never thought of tackling the Classical Fourth.

"Come on!" Hansom was yelling. "Come off, you mean!" howled Lumsden. "You silly ass, what did you bring us here for, playing the goat? I'm going!"

"Same here!" gasped Talboys. "Come and help a fellow. I—I can't get away!" shrieked Hansom in desperation.

And then his followers understood that he was not urging them on to battle, but demanding help to join in the retreat. Even Hansom had had enough.

His comrades extricated him, getting a good many lunges from the Fourth-Formers in doing so, and Hansom retreated with them to the waterside. Loud yells of victory sounded from the Fourth.

"Come on, you funks!" bawled Lovell. "They're running for it!" yelled Raby. "Good old Fifth!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A dejected and dispirited crowd of seniors swarmed into the boats. They did not heed the yells and catcalls from the rebel camp. They only wanted to get away. Three boats pulled off from the island, and Dr. Chisholm watched them with an angry, steely eye. He raised a beckoning hand.

"Hansom!"

"Yes, sir?" groaned Hansom.

"You have failed?"

"You—you see, sir, they—they—we—they——" babbled Hansom.

"Return to Rookwood at once. I desire to hear no explanations. It is my opinion that, in making me the offer of service you did, Hansom, you were simply thinking of obtaining leave from classes, and——"

"Oh, no, sir! Not at all, sir! I—I—we—we——"

"That will do! I regard you as having abused my confidence. Every Fifth Form boy here will take five hundred lines! Not a word! Return to the school!"

Dr. Chisholm turned his back on the hapless Fifth and stalked away, wrathful and majestic. And the miserable Fifth rowed home to Rookwood in the lowest possible spirits.

THE END.

("THE REBEL'S RETURN!" is the last story of this grand Barring-out series. You'll find it in next week's bumper issue.)