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THE END OF THE HOLIDAYS!

On the last stages of their cycling holiday Jimmy Silver & Co. hit upon a strange, deep mystery, and when next they encounter it, it is at Rookwood School!

A CHALET in the WOODS!



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Accidents will Happen!

WHIRR-R-R-RR!
"Oh—dear!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Whirrrrrrrr!
"The jolly old scooter again!" sighed Raby.

"About time we scrapped it, I think," grunted Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell knitted his brows. Lovell was mounted on the motor-scooter, his comrades were on the push-bikes. For a long, long time the motor-scooter had been giving hints that all was not well with it.

It sounded asthmatic, if a motor-scooter could be supposed to suffer from asthma. Lovell was perplexed.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were not perplexed at all. Lately there had been an accident to the scooter. Lovell had executed running repairs.

According to Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome it was the running repairs that had done it.

A motor mechanic had put the machine together after Lovell had finished his running repairs. He had made it run again. Considering the state to which Lovell had reduced it, Jimmy Silver & Co. had looked on that motor mechanic as a remarkably clever fellow, and his performance as a wonderful one.

But it had not lasted. Whirrrr! Clink-clink! Snap! Weird sounds came from the scooter. Suddenly it stopped. Arthur Edward Lovell jumped off.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome dismounted. They were looking rather exasperated. For two or three days they had been worried by the scooter. It was an invalid that required constant attention. It had served them well. It had carried the baggage of the Rookwood cyclists many a long league. But really it seemed to have outlived its usefulness now, and three of the party, at least, were fed-up with it.

"For goodness' sake," said Newcome, "chuck the thing into a ditch and leave it there!"

THE POPULAR.—No. 503.

A gripping long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Cheery Chums of Rookwood.

By
OWEN CONQUEST

"I'll have to do a few running repairs, I think," said Lovell, unheeding. "I'm sorry now I trusted the machine into the hands of a mechanic. Fumbling ass, you know!"

"The wonder is, that he got it together at all, after the way you mucked it up Lovell."

"Don't be a silly ass, Newcome, if you can help it."

Jimmy Silver glanced at the sky. The shades of night were falling fast, as a well-known poet has already remarked. A few light drops of rain were falling, a fore-taste of the wrath to come, as it were. It was not going to be a fine night.

Camping out that night was not attractive. But the juniors were still several miles from the village where they had intended to put up, on a lonely road in Hampshire. The road they were following ran through deep, thick woods, dark and shadowy on either side. The woods belonged to some large estate, and two or three boards, peeping from the trees, announced that trespassers would be prosecuted.

"We'd better get under shelter, if we can," said Jimmy Silver. "Wheel the bikes into the wood."

"Trespassers will be prosecuted," remarked Newcome.

"Well, we don't want to get drenched. Come on, and chance it!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome wheeled their machines into a narrow path that wound among the trees by the roadside. Arthur Edward Lovell snorted as he looked after them.

He snorted and sniffed, but he heaved the motor-scooter out of the road into the shelter of a tree a little distance in the wood. Then he called to his comrades.

"I can't work in the dark. I can't repair this scooter without a light."

"That's all right!" called back Newcome. "You can't repair it at all, old chap. You won't do any more damage in the dark than in the light."

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "Look here, will you fellows stand round with the bike lamps while I do the repairs?"

"No, we jolly well won't!" said Raby emphatically.

"Then it will have to be left till the morning."

"Bow-wow!"

Arthur Edward Lovell carefully covered a ground-sheet over the scooter, and joined the other fellows deeper in the wood. They had stacked the bikes against a tree, and put waterproof covers over them. The thick foliage overhead sheltered them, but as the rain increased it found them out. For the greater part of their tour they had enjoyed good weather. Now the weather was taking its revenge.

"Lovely place to put in a night," groaned Raby. "Look here, this rain isn't going to stop! Let's get on. Lovell can have a lift behind one of us. He can come back for the scooter in the morning, if he likes."

"That's a good idea," agreed Newcome. "Let's."

Snort from Lovell. "I'm not leaving that scooter to be stolen by some dashed tramp!" he growled.

"Well, we're for it," sighed Jimmy Silver at last. "But we can't stay here in the rain. Let's look for something better than this. There's a big house not far away, and we may get leave to camp in a shed, or a barn or something. Come on!"

"What about the bikes?"

"They're all right here. Nobody can see them in the dark. Even that dashed precious scooter is safe. Come on!"

"I don't want to go too far from the scooter," grunted Lovell. "Some sneaking tramp—"

"Oh, rot!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. moved on along the narrow path in the wood, and Lovell, after some hesitation, followed them. The rain was getting serious now, and it was really necessary to find a shelter of some sort. So the Rookwooders proceeded to look for it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ordered Off!

THERE'S a light!"
"Oh, good!"

It was a glimmer of light in the rainy wood, so high up that it evidently came from a window. Jimmy Silver & Co., wet and rather dragged, and not in the best of spirits, pushed on towards the light. They hoped that it shone from the window of the house to which the woods belonged, undoubtedly a country mansion

of some magnitude. But they soon saw that they were nowhere near the mansion.

The light glimmered from a shuttered window in a little timber building in the heart of the wood, that resembled a Swiss chalet in construction. The shutter allowed only a glimmer of light to escape into the rainy darkness without. The trees grew quite close to the chalet, embossing it in foliage.

"Come on!" said Lovell. "Blessed if I can make out what this show is, but there must be somebody there. This way!"

Lovell strode on.

A minute later he stopped, with a howl.

"Ow!"

"What the thump—"

"Wow! A dashed wire fence!"

Lovell had walked right into the wire fence, which was invisible in the gloom.

He rubbed his nose savagely. His nose seemed to have come into painful contact with the wire, which was barbed.

"The silly brutes!" muttered Lovell. "What the thump do they want to run barbed wire here for?"

"To keep out trespassers, perhaps," chuckled Raby.

"Ow! My nose!"

The Rookwooders stopped, and then they moved on along the wire fence, seeking a gate. There was somebody in that lonely little building, chalet or summer-house, or whatever it was, in the heart of the wood, and they hoped that it was a hospitable somebody who would give them shelter for the night.

"Here's a gate," said Raby at last.

"Locked!"

"Blow it!"

Jimmy Silver stared round him rather curiously. The barbed wire fence was a high one; it was impossible to get over it. The gate was narrow and strong, and was locked securely. Jimmy could see that all the windows of the chalet were shuttered, and only from one of the upper windows came that glimmer of light. He could not help wondering who and what was the denizen of this lonely retreat in a Hampshire wood.

"Suppose we stand here and shout?" suggested Newcome.

"Isn't there a bell, or something?" growled Lovell.

There was no bell.

"My hat! There's a 'og!" muttered Newcome.

A shadowy form loomed up on the other side of the closely-netted barbed wire. Two bright eyes gleamed at the juniors, and a deep, savage growl echoed in their ears.

The door of the chalet opened, and a stream of light came into the gloom.

In the doorway stood a burly man, dressed as a keeper, with a gun under his arm.

"Toothy! What is it, Toothy?" asked the man, in a deep, surly voice.

"Hallo!" called out Jimmy Silver.

The keeper gave a start, and hurried down to the gate. He silenced the dog with an angry gesture.

"Who the dickens are you?" he exclaimed, staring through the bars of the gates at the Rookwooders.

"Cyclists looking for shelter," explained Jimmy Silver. "We're hung up on the road."

"What?"

"Can you let us into a shed for the night? We shan't do any damage. We'll pay, if you like."

"Get out of it!" snapped the keeper. "This isn't a casual ward. Get out of it!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter—" exclaimed Lovell.

"Trespassers ain't allowed in Rutland Park!" snapped the man. "Ain't you seen the boards?"

"Yes; but—"

"Get out of it, then! I'll have you run in if you ain't out of these woods pretty quick."

Jimmy Silver eyed the man through the gate.

"You might be a little more polite about it," he said coolly. "As for getting out of the woods, we'll please ourselves."

"Will you, by gum! Here, Toothy!"

The dog came up snarling.

"I give you one minute afore I open the gate," said the keeper. "If this 'ere dog gets arter you, I'm sorry for you. He nigh killed a tramp the other day. I give you while I get this 'ere gate unlocked, and arter that look arter yourselves, my lads!"

He fumbled in a pocket and produced a key. The big mastiff watched the juniors with a savage intendment, waiting for the gate to be opened.

"Better clear!" murmured Raby.

"What-ho!"

The surly keeper evidently intended to be as good as his word. He was putting the key into the lock.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not linger.

A scrap with a big, savage mastiff in the dark woods was not what they were looking for. They hurried back under the trees.

As they did so they heard the gate open.

"Find 'em, Toothy!" shouted the keeper.

The mastiff rushed out.

"My hat!" breathed Lovell. "The brute's actually set the dog after us! Hook it!"

"Hold on!" muttered Jimmy. "Get into this tree—quick! We could never dodge that dog in the wood."

"Quick!" breathed Newcome.

There was no time to lose; they could not see the dog now, but they could hear him bounding in pursuit.

In hot haste the four Rookwooders drew themselves into a tree and clambered up into the higher branches.

They were scarcely up when the dog raced by below, barking.

Jimmy panted for breath.

"Oh, my hat! We're well out of that! Quiet, you chaps; I believe I can hear that brute coming!"

They heard the click of the gate-lock. Then the heavy steps of the burly keeper were audible. He had come out and locked the gate after him.

The four Rookwooders were silent as they clung to the branches in the darkness. The man, calling to the dog, came to a halt almost under the tree.

"Go for 'em, Toothy! Fetch 'em—fetch 'em! Bite 'em!"

The mastiff was racing and plunging in the underbrush, barking furiously. Jimmy Silver & Co. were thankful enough that they were safe out of his reach. They had caught a glimpse of his teeth, and a glimpse was quite enough for them.

With beating hearts they clung to the wet boughs in silence. There was a sudden exclamation at a little distance, a loud barking, and then a growl. Then a voice again:

"Down, you brute! Don't you know me? Down!"

The keeper called out:

"That you, Master Philip?"

"Yes, Brood! What's the row?"

A dim figure appeared under the tree. Jimmy Silver & Co., looking down, could just make out that it was the figure of a boy—a rather largely-built

fellow of about sixteen. He came to a stop close by the keeper, and the dog's savage barking died away.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Little Mysterious!

JIMMY SILVER & Co., clinging to the boughs overhead, made no sound. Their only idea was to keep their presence undiscovered till the two were gone, with the dog, and there would be a chance of getting away unseen. By this time the Fistical Four regretted deeply enough that they had not heeded the notice-boards. They would have given a good deal now to be safely out of the precincts of Rutland Park. Evidently the owner of that estate was not hospitable to hapless strangers.

"What's the row, Brood? I heard the dog barking, and came along. Has anything happened?"

There was a note of anxiety in the voice.

"No, Master Philip—he's all right," said Brood.

Who the "he" was, to whom the keeper alluded, Jimmy Silver & Co. had not the faintest idea—not that they cared.

"Then what—"

"Some fellers have been trespassing in the wood, sir, and I set the dog on them," said Brood. "There was three or four of them, and they had the neck to ask for shelter—"

"My hat! At the chalet?"

"Yes, Master Philip."

"Are they gone?"

"Yes; and they must have gone away quick, or Toothy would have had some of them, Master Philip."

Master Philip laughed.

"There ought to be a paling put along the road to keep these dashed tramps out of the woods," he said. "It's never been wanted before, but it's wanted now, Brood. I'll speak to my father about it."

A match scratched in the gloom and a scent of tobacco was wafted to the Rookwood juniors above.

The youth was lighting a cigarette.

As the match flared, and he puffed at the cigarette, the juniors above had a full and clear view of his face.

He looked about sixteen or a little more, rather a handsome fellow, with strongly-marked features and thick, dark eyebrows. His nose was slightly aquiline, and his lips rather thick. The whole face was heavy, though not at all ill-looking. It was not a face to be easily forgotten.

The match went out.

Master Philip blew out a cloud of smoke.

"You're sure they're gone, Brood?"

"Oh, yes, sir! They're scuttling down the road by this time, I fancy. I wish Toothy had caught one of them."

"How is he, Brood?" asked Master Philip, apparently alluding to the unknown "he" the keeper had already mentioned.

"Same as ever, Master Philip."

"Savage as ever, I suppose?"

"Yes, Master Philip. I thought he would jump at me when I took in his supper, only he knowed it was no use. He says we shall all go to prison for this before we're much older."

"That's enough, Brood!" snapped Master Philip. "You'd better get back, and take your dog with you."

"Yes, Master Philip!"

The keeper called to the dog and strode back to the gate of the wired enclosure, with the mastiff at his heels. The juniors in the tree heard the click

of the lock as the gate was unlocked, and then looked again.

Below them they heard the footsteps of Master Philip. He was strolling away through the rain, smoking his cigarette.

The footsteps died away into silence. "Well," murmured Jimmy Silver at last. "This is a go!"

"There's something jolly queer going on here," said Raby. "What the thump does it all mean?"

"Somebody's in that chalet, where we saw the light at the window," said Newcome.

"Some invalid, perhaps," said Lovell thoughtfully. "That may be why they're so annoyed at strangers butting in. May be a consumptive or something, who's got to be kept quiet. Or—or perhaps a giddy lunatic that's being taken care of."

"Possibly!" assented Jimmy. "They seem to have cleared off now—and the sooner we get out of this the better."

"Yes, rather." All the Fistical Four were agreed on that. The rain was better than the kind of hospitality they had experienced at Rutland Park.

They slipped down from the tree and turned their backs on the lonely chalet, where the light still glimmered from the shuttered window.

It was not easy to find their way back to the road in the darkness and the dropping rain.

But they reached the spot, at last, where they had left the bikes and the scooter.

Camping in the wood was given up now. A camp that was likely to be disturbed by a visit from Toothy or Mr. Brood was not attractive. In spite of the rain, three bicycles were wheeled out into the road.

"What about the scooter?" asked Lovell.

"Nothing about the scooter!" said Jimmy Silver. "Blow the scooter! We're fed-up with the scooter! If you can't wheel it, leave it there!"

"I can wheel it!" growled Lovell. "But I can't ride it again till I've done some running repairs."

"Nobody could ride it after you've done that."

"Look here—"

"Better leave the thundering thing where it is!" growled Raby.

"Rats!"

"Well, wheel it, then, and be blown to you!" said Raby forcibly. "I'm getting on out of this rain. It's two miles, anyhow."

And George Raby mounted his bike and started. He had reached the end of his patience.

Lovell snorted.

"No need for you fellows to hang on. You can clear, and I'll wheel the scooter. I'll join you at the White Lion—that's the inn at Draycott."

"Well, no good all of us getting soaked," said Newcome; and he put a leg over his machine and followed Raby. Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"I'll walk with you, Lovell, old chap," he said.

"You needn't!" snapped Lovell.

"Look here, Lovell—"

"If you like to stay and show a light while I get the machine running again, well and good! If not, clear off, and the sooner the better, and be blown to you!" growled Lovell.

Evidently Arthur Edward was not in a good temper.

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

And he mounted his machine and followed Raby and Newcome. Arthur Edward Lovell plodded on wrathfully.

with the disabled scooter, which, like other obstinate creatures, could be led, but not driven.

An hour later Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were sitting down to a comfortable supper at the White Lion in Draycott village. It was more than an hour afterwards when Arthur Edward Lovell came in—wet and muddy and cross.

But an ample supper restored his good-temper a little.

"It's all right about the scooter," he told his comrades. "I fancy I know where the trouble is. I'll have it in the yard to-morrow and give it a thorough overhauling. That's what it really wants, you know, after the way that mechanic handled it. You'll see."

To which Jimmy Silver & Co. made no rejoinder. They had their own ideas about what was going to happen to the scooter on the morrow.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Last of the Scooter!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. were up early on the following morning—at all events, three members of the Co. were up early. Arthur Edward Lovell found his bed too comfortable to leave it in a hurry. Doubtless his walk with the scooter that could be led but not driven had tired him, and so he allowed himself an extra rest.

While Lovell enjoyed his extra snooze, his comrades breakfasted rapidly and got busy.

When Arthur Edward Lovell came down they were absent from the inn; and Lovell sat down quite cheerily to an ample breakfast of new-laid eggs and home-bred bacon, and enjoyed it thoroughly. He was close on the finish when his three friends strolled in. Over breakfast Lovell had been chatting with the ruddy-cheeked country waiter; but that individual faded away when the juniors came in. Lovell cracked his fifth egg and nodded to the Co.

"You were up before me," he remarked. "Been for a stroll?"

"Yes, walking around, you know," said Jimmy. "We're ready to get on the road when you are."

"By the way, I've been asking the waiter about that show, Rutland Park," remarked Lovell, as he negotiated the fifth egg. "They know all about it here. Some of the local men were employed in building that chalet in the wood; it's quite a recent erection. The whole place belongs to Sir Harry Rutland—a kid of sixteen. Lucky bargee—what?"

"Jolly lucky merchant; but I suppose that means that he's an orphan, so I dare say he's got bad luck along with the good luck," said Jimmy. "But it's jolly odd for a kid of sixteen to have a chalet built in his woods—rather an expensive fancy, I should think. He must have a guardian, and the old gent ought to be looking after his money for him."

"It was the guardian who had the chalet built," said Lovell. "He's a Mr. Packington, and he lives at the Park along with his ward, and his son, Philip Packington. That must be the Master Philip that that keeper chap was talking to last night."

"I suppose so," assented Jimmy Silver, not very much interested.

He was, in fact, thinking chiefly about the motor-scooter, and the surprise that was awaiting Arthur Edward Lovell.

"But it seems a queer sort of show, though," went on Lovell. "Mr. Packington used to be rich, but he lost his money in speculation, so they say. He's not popular about here. Master Philip

seems rather a card—the waiter says he often comes along here to talk with sporting men and play billiards and smoke, and so on."

"He looked that kind of a shady waster," said Jimmy Silver carelessly.

"The other chap—the kid baronet—is in delicate health, and isn't seen about much," went on Lovell. "He has—or, rather, had—a tutor. He's going to a public school next term."

"Is he?" yawned Newcome. "You seem jolly interested in them, Lovell."

"It happens to be Rookwood that he's going to."

"Oh, I see!"

"His father, the late baronet, was a Rookwood man," said Lovell. "The jolly old waiter here knows all about it, you see, and he's been spinning me the yarn over brekker. The old baronet seems to have been a good sort; but Packington, the giddy guardian, appears to be a crusty sort of johnny. They say in the village that he's so hard up that he wouldn't have much to live on if he hadn't been left guardian to young Rutland. Now he's got the Park till the kid comes of age, and so much a year for guardianing him, and all that. Now, I've got an idea."

"Not really!" ejaculated Raby.

"Don't be an ass! They treated us in a rotten way last night," said Lovell.

"But as young Rutland is going to be a Rookwood chap, and we are Rookwood chaps, you know, we could call on him if we liked. He's bound to be pleased to make some acquaintances belonging to the school he's going to. See?"

"Is he?"

"Of course he is, ass! We'll tell him we'll see him through at Rookwood, and all that—jolly good thing for him, too. You know what a new kid feels like at a big school. Then we'll ask him to sack that ruffian of a keeper—what?"

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"If he's a minor, with a guardian, I don't suppose the sacking of servants is in his hands," he said. "And let the blessed keeper rip, anyhow. If we nose Rutland out he's more likely to think we're after him because he's a giddy baronet, than anything else."

Lovell grunted.

"I'd jolly well punch him if he did even—"

"My dear chap, we're not on a punching expedition. Let's get on the road and forget all about it."

Arthur Edward Lovell grunted again, but he acquiesced. The Fistical Four came out into the inn yard, where four bicycles stood ready for them. Jimmy's bike, Raby's bike, and Newcome's bike stood there; and with them was another push-bike, which had a rather second-hand look.

"I'll get the scooter going now," said Lovell.

"Impossible, old chap!"

"Eh, why?"

"You can't get the scooter going, because—"

"Because what, ass?"

"Because it's gone!"

Lovell blinked.

"Gone!"

"Yes. We're finishing this giddy tour on push-bikes all round," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "You can push a bike as well as we can, you know. Jump on!"

"What the thump do you mean?" exclaimed Lovell testily. "Where's the scooter?"

"Goodness knows by this time!"

"You've done something with that scooter?" roared Lovell.

"Yes, old bean."

"What?" shrieked Lovell.

"Traded it off for a push-bike," said Jimmy. "It's all right. The bike merchant gave us this push-bike in exchange. It's seen service, but it's still serviceable. Jump on!"

Lovell's face was a study. "That—that scooter cost us nine pounds!" he gasped. "This—this old bike isn't worth four. Nine pounds was remarkably—"

"That was before you repaired it," said Raby. "My idea is that the bike merchant got the worst of the bargain. Still, he was willing to take what you'd left of the scooter in exchange. Good-natured sort of chap!"

"You silly owls!" roared Lovell. "My dear fellow—"

"You cheeky chumps! You—you blithering cuckoos! You—you've really parted with that scooter?" shrieked Lovell.

"Really and truly." "I was going to repair it."

"Life's too short," said Jimmy Silver. "Three score years and ten isn't a sufficient allowance for your running repairs, Lovell."

Lovell fairly spluttered.

"You—you—you—Where's that bike man? I'm going to get that scooter back!"

Jimmy Silver smiled cheerily.

He had settled the bill at the inn, and nothing remained but to start. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome wheeled out their machines. Lovell did not touch the second-hand bike, which had now taken the place of the motor-scooter.

"You asses! You dummies! You chumps! Where's that scooter? I tell you I'm going—"

"Ta-ta, old top!"

Three cyclists rode cheerily away. Arthur Edward Lovell stood

in the road, crimson with wrath, and shook an enraged fist after them, rather to the entertainment of some village lads who gathered round. It was not till the three were almost out of sight that Arthur Edward finally dragged out the second-hand bike, mounted it, and pedalled after them.

Three smiling faces greeted Lovell when he came panting up, overtaking the Co. at last.

"Look here—" began Lovell.

"Like your new bike, old chap?"

"Blow the bike! I'm going after that scooter! I—"

"Race you to the next village!" said Jimmy.

"Look here—"

But Lovell's chums did not "look there." They put on speed and whizzed away down the road. Lovell breathed hard and laboured after them. An hour had elapsed when he came up with the three again, and Draycott was left far behind by that time.

Arthur Edward had many things to say, and he said them. But as his chums replied only by smiling, he got

tired of it at last, and the subject of the ill-fated scooter was allowed to rest.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Back to Rookwood!

"ROOKHAM! Change for Rookwood School!"

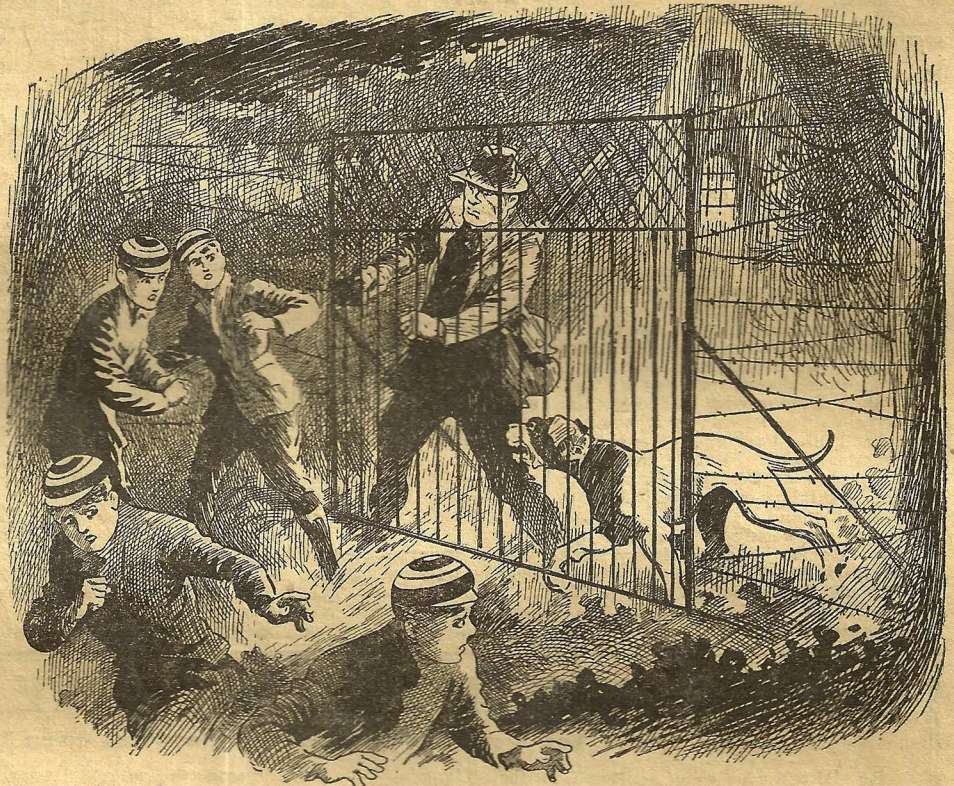
"Here we are again!" sang out Jimmy Silver cheerily.

A swarm of Rookwood fellows—seniors and juniors, old boys and new boys—poured from the train.

Prominent among them were the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form. It was the first day of the term, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were en route for

And the Fistical Four moderated their transports a little, so to speak. They greeted Mornington and Erroll and Conroy and Putty Grace and Tubby Muffin, and other old acquaintances of the Classical Fourth. They exchanged cat-calls with Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Fourth, and they packed themselves into a carriage of the local train that was waiting to take them on to Coombe, and hurled out three or four Shell fellows who tried to follow them in.

The local train was packed, of course. There was a second train in ten minutes, but nobody seemed to want to wait for it. Jimmy Silver & Co. and four or



ORDERED OFF! "I give you one minute to get clear, my lads, afore I open the gate," said the keeper. "If this 'ere dog gets arter you I'm sorry for you!" He fumbled in a pocket and produced a key. The big mastiff watched the Rookwooders with a savage intentness, waiting for the gate to be opened. "Better clear!" murmured Raby. "What-ho!" Jimmy Silver & Co. did not linger another second! (See Chapter 2.)

the old school, in cheery spirits. School, perhaps, was not quite so attractive as holidays. Nevertheless, Rookwood had plenty of attractions for them. They looked forward to a great "brew" in the end study and to a rag with the Modern fellows; and there was the football coming along, too.

Jimmy Silver & Co. linked arms and progressed along the crowded platform. Four fellows could not walk abreast with linked arms on a crowded platform without collisions, and there were a good many collisions. Smythe of the Shell, resplendent in a magnificent topper, sat down suddenly as the Fistical Four walked into him, and his topper was far from magnificent when Smythe recovered it from myriad feet. Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth—seniors and quite great men—came into collision with the four merry juniors, and both the Fifth-Formers sat down on the platform, with roars of indignant wrath.

"Order there, you fags!" shouted Bulkeley of the Sixth, towering over the mob of Rookwooders.

five others of the Classical Fourth were packed into one carriage. Hansom of the Fifth jerked the door open, and shoved his head and shoulders in. The next moment Hansom's hat was flattened on his head, and he found himself sitting on the platform, trying to extract his head from his hat.

"You cheeky fags!" gasped Hansom. "Full inside!" grinned Lovell. "Try again, Hansom."

But Edward Hansom sagely did not try again. He went farther along the train. The carriages filled fast, and the porters slammed the doors.

At the last moment a youth rushed across the platform, and caught at the handle of the door of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s carriage. Jimmy Silver held the handle inside.

"No room!" he said cheerily.

"Let me in, you young fool!"

Jimmy stared at him through the window.

He recognised the rather burly fellow, with his thick, heavy eyebrows, his aquiline nose, and his thick lips.

It was the fellow he had seen by the lighted match, under the trees at Rutland Park, a week or two before—the youth whom Brood, the keeper, had addressed as Master Philip.

"Hallo! You!" ejaculated Jimmy. The youth stared at him. Jimmy knew him, but he, of course, did not know Jimmy, never having set eyes on him before.

"Stand back there, sir!" called out a porter. "She's moving!"

Master Philip stepped back with a scowl.

The train glided out of the station. "Anybody say toffee?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell, taking a packet from his pocket.

"Toffee!" said all the juniors in the carriage.

"I've got some ginger-pop here," said Mornington. "Did you bring the tin cup, Erroll?"

"Here you are, Morny," said Erroll, with a smile.

It was quite a merry party in the carriage as the train ran on to Coombe.

When they turned out at the little station at Coombe, Jimmy Silver ran his eyes over the Rookwood crowd. There were a number of new boys, joining the school at the beginning of term, and Jimmy wondered which of them was the "kid" baronet, Sir Harry Rutland. He remembered what the juniors had learned at Draycott, that Sir Harry was going to Rookwood that term. Jimmy supposed that "Master Philip" had travelled along with him to see him as far as his new school; or it was possible that Philip Packington was coming to Rookwood also. But in the crowd that swarmed at Coombe, Jimmy did not see any fellow whom he judged to be young Rutland.

He was not keenly interested in the matter, however, and he forgot both Rutland and Master Philip as he went on with his chums to Rookwood in the brake.

First day of term at Rookwood was a

busy day for all hands. The school dame wore a worried look; the masters were busy and hasty and hurried. Health-certificates had to be handed in, bags and boxes sorted out, studies claimed, and the claims made good. Jimmy Silver & Co., of course, bagged the end study in the Classical Fourth, as usual. The most daring spirits in the Fourth would scarcely have ventured to attempt to deprive the Fistical Four of that study.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Jimmy Silver!

"HALLO! There's that chap!" remarked Lovell.

It was the second day of term, and the Fistical Four were sauntering in Big Quad at Rookwood, looking over the old show again, as Lovell described it.

Three fellows came sauntering along by the path under the old Rookwood beeches. Two of them were Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth Form. The third was the youth with the thick lips and the aquiline nose, whom the juniors had heard addressed as "Master Philip," and whose name they supposed to be Philip Packington.

The Fistical Four glanced at him rather curiously.

"So he's at Rookwood," said Newcome.

"Looks like it," said Jimmy Silver. "I saw him at Rookham station yesterday, and thought that perhaps he was travelling with young Rutland. But it seems that he's for Rookwood, too."

"By the bye, I wonder what young Rutland's like?" said Lovell. "Queer we haven't seen him yet!"

"Here's Tubby Muffin. Let's ask him!" said Raby. "He knows everything."

They collared Reginald Muffin, and put the question to him.

"Rutland!" said Tubby. "Yes, I've seen him. Rather a swanky sort of blighter, if you ask me. He's in the

Fifth; the only new chap in the Fifth. He's digging with Hansom and Talboys in their study."

"Isn't Packington in the Fifth, then?" asked Jimmy.

"Packington!" repeated Tubby. "Haven't heard the name. There isn't any new chap named Packington."

"There jolly well is!" said Lovell. "We've seen him."

"Well, I haven't." Tubby Muffin shook his head. "You've got it wrong, Lovell. There isn't any Packington at Rookwood at all."

"Bosh!" grunted Lovell. "Fellow with rather a swanky air, and a rather hookey nose."

"That's Rutland."

"Eh?"

"Rutland," said Tubby. "Rot!"

"Well, perhaps you know best," said Tubby sarcastically. "You can go and look at him if you like—he's in Hansom's study in the Fifth."

And Tubby Muffin sniffed and rolled away. Jimmy Silver & Co. stood in the passage, and looked at one another in rather a curious way.

"Fat young duffer!" grunted Lovell. "He's seen Packington, and mixed him up with Rutland. They're both here."

"I—I suppose so," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "It seems a little odd. I can't quite make this out. I think I'll stroll along to Hansom's study and ask him how he enjoyed the hols."

Jimmy sauntered along the Fifth Form passage, and knocked at Hansom's door.

"Come in!" Jimmy stepped in. Hansom and Talboys were at tea, with their new friend—the youth with the thick lips and aquiline nose, whom Jimmy knew as "Master Philip." The three looked at Jimmy.

"Well, what do you want?" snapped Hansom. "I don't remember askin' any Fourth Form fags to butt into this study!"

(Continued on page 28.)

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"THE RIO KID!"

(Continued from page 12.)

be first if there was going to be gunning. I've been held up on this trail afore." The Kid scrutinized him. He was almost sure that this man was the man he had clubbed the night before, and if he was the man, he could tell where his tenderfoot was, the Kid figured.

"You ain't the man I clubbed, then?" asked the Kid.

"I sure ain't."

"You seen a Mexican on the trail this morning?"

Dave shook his head.

"I ain't seen any Mexican," he answered. "There ain't no greasers in this country, puncher."

"You didn't trail the greaser out of camp, you and your pard Euchre?" asked the Kid.

"Ain't got any pard, and never heard of a galoot named Euchre," said Dave. "I figure you're taking me for another galoot, stranger."

"I reckon I want to know!" drawled the Kid. "You allow you ain't the man I clubbed with this same gun last night, at the hotel in Hard Tack?"

"I sure I ain't."

"Take off that Stetson," said the Kid. "And let's see your cabeza! If there ain't a lump on it the size of a big nugget, I'll allow I've made a mistake, feller."

Denver Dave breathed hard, and did not remove his hat. The great bruise on his head, made by the butt of the Kid's gun, was throbbing still; and it was more than large enough to be seen if he took off his Stetson.

"You hear me toot?" asked the Kid pleasantly, and he made a motion with his gun hand. "I let you off last night, feller; but if you don't toe the line now, your goose is cooked, and I'm telling you so. Chuck that Stetson into the trail, or I'll sure shoot it off your head."

The man eyed him desperately, and did not stir, and the Kid's gun suddenly cracked. The bullet bored a hole through the crown of the hat, grazing the head of the ruffian. Denver Dave gave a startled yell, and sprang back. The smoking revolver looked him in the face.

"You want your ticket for soup?" asked the Kid menacingly. "Drop that Stetson, if you don't want me to drop you pronto."

With a curse, the ruffian hurled the hat to the ground. The Kid stepped forward a pace or two, and smiled as he sighted the great bruise that had been made by his revolver-butt.

"You're sure the goods," he said, with a nod. "Now, then, galoot, I want that greaser? Savvy? You're going to take a leafie pasear with me, and show me jest where you've left him corralled."

"You're after the Escobado mine, puncher?" muttered Denver Dave.

"Not any!" smiled the Kid. "I'm after the greaser, jest because I'm an ornery cuss that can't mind his own business, and I'm riding herd over him. I want you to put me wise where he is."

Denver Dave eyed him, his teeth gritting. The Kid had lowered his gun again, but the ruffian knew how quick he was to handle it. The Kid stepped closer to him.

"I guess I'll borrow your gun, feller," he said. "And then I reckon you'll hit the trail for the spot where that greaser is corralled."

He stretched out his left hand to disarm the ruffian. With a sudden movement, so sudden that even the wary Kid was almost taken off his guard, Denver Dave snatched the gun from his belt even as the Kid's fingers almost touched it.

Bang!

The shot was swift and sudden; so swift that the aim was too hasty, and it missed the Kid by inches. The Kid's answering shot was blended into the same report. Denver Dave essayed to pull the trigger a second time, but he was swaying as he pulled, and when the shot flew, it flew wild, as the marshal's man crumpled down to the earth.

The Rio Kid drew a deep, deep breath. Denver Dave had almost beaten him at it—but not quite; but the Kid had had one of the narrowest escapes of his life.

"I guess it was you or me, feller, and it was you for the long trail," drawled the Kid. "I reckon I'm going to find that tenderfoot, if all the bulldozers in Hard Tack stand in the way. I sure am!"

And the Rio Kid left the trail, and plunged into the rocky wilderness from which Denver Dave had emerged; seeking sign, and finding none; but keeping on with indomitable resolution while the long hours wore away.

THE END.

(Will the Rio Kid find his new friend, the little Tenderfoot? See the next roving Western tale included in next Tuesday's programme.)

"A Chalet in the Woods!"

(Continued from page 22.)

Jimmy grinned cheerily.

"I've heard that you've got a baronet in this study," he said. "Can't a fellow have a look at him?"

"Cheeky young ass!" said Talboys.

Hansom laughed. He was a good-natured fellow, though he had rather a lofty way of dealing with the Lower School.

"Well, here he is," he said, with a nod towards the fellow with the aquiline nose.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath. He was so startled that he could scarcely help showing it. "Master Philip's" eyes were fixed on him rather grimly.

"Who may you happen to be?" he asked.

"I happen to be Silver, of the Fourth Form," said Jimmy, recovering himself. "All serene—we don't have giddy baronets dropping in every day of the term, you know. Are you Sir Harry Rutland?"

"Hasn't Hansom just told you so?" grunted the Fifth-Former.

"Shut the door after you, Silver," said Hansom.

Jimmy Silver left the study. His brain was almost in a whirl.

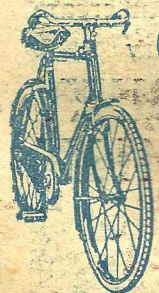
What did it mean?

But for that odd adventure at Rutland Park in the vacation, Jimmy Silver would not, of course, have taken any interest in Rutland of the Fifth; he would have had no suspicion regarding him. Now he had something more than suspicion.

Outside the Fistical Four, nobody at Rookwood, apparently, knew anything about Master Philip Packington. He was accepted there as Sir Harry Rutland, of Rutland Park—a rich heir and a baronet. And he was nothing of the sort! Jimmy Silver knew that! What was Philip Packington doing at Rookwood in a false name—in the name of a fellow who was expected at the school, but evidently had not come to Rookwood?

What did it mean?

THE END.



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