

X SPECIAL PAGE of COMIC PICTURES

inside!

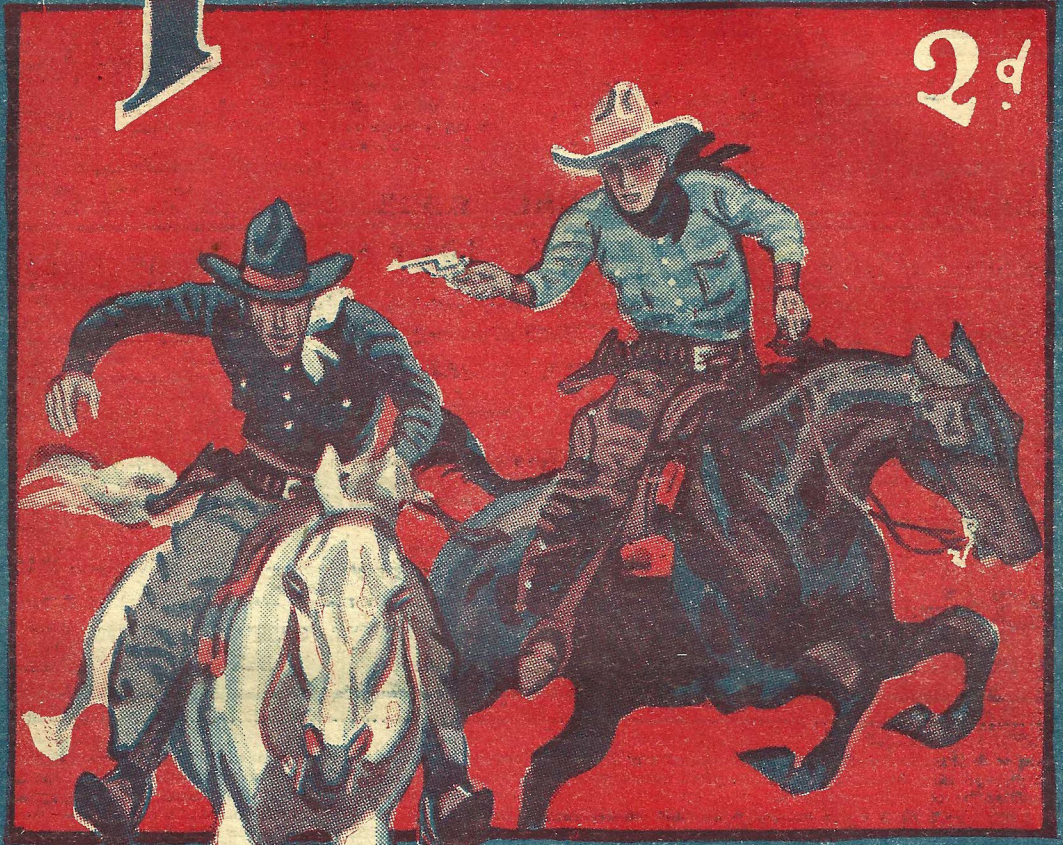
The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY.

Week Ending September 29th, 1928.

New Series, No. 505.

2¢



You'll Jump at
OUR ROARING
TALES OF THE
WEST!

LOVELL, THE GOOD SAMARITAN!

It isn't often that Arthur Edward Lovell shines in anything but fatheadedness and obstinacy, but this week he reveals an entirely new quality—that of champion of the oppressed and friend of the needy!

LOVELL LEND'S a HAND!

A STIRRING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF
JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF
ROOKWOOD.

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Rounding Up a Slacker!

"GOWER—" "Oh, let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver. "I don't see it!" said Lovell. "My dear man—come on, we're wasting time," urged Jimmy Silver. "Gower will keep." Arthur Edward Lovell did not come on. Instead of that he frowned severely at Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood. "Look here, Jimmy, this won't do!" said Lovell. "Duty first!" "Fathead!" "There's such a thing as duty," said Lovell loftily. "You seem to have forgotten it. But there is."

Jimmy Silver grunted impatiently. Generally he was very patient with Lovell; in fact, a fellow could not have been Lovell's pal without possessing a very considerable gift of patience. But often and often Lovell tried the patience of his friends. Now he was trying their patience once more.

It was true that football practice was on, that it was a compulsory day, and that Gower of the Fourth was slacking in his study, and obviously seeking to dodge games practice.

Equally, it was true that Jimmy Silver, as captain of the Fourth, was bound to round up the slackers on compulsory days, being answerable to Bulkeley of the Sixth therefor.

Nevertheless, Jimmy Silver had decided to give Gower a miss, and that should have settled the matter. But it did not settle it. Arthur Edward Lovell felt it incumbent upon him to see that Jimmy did not neglect his duties.

"Gower's a slacker!" said Arthur Edward severely. "He slacks all the time, and fairly works at it. Now he ought to be rounded up. It's bad for him to stick in his study, very likely smoking cigarettes—and bad for us to let him do it, Jimmy!"

"He's wound up," said Raby, with a sigh.

"I'm surprised at you, Jimmy!" said Lovell. "The fact is, I'm really shocked! This slacking—"

THE POPULAR.—No. 505.

"Look here, ass!" said Jimmy. "Gower's told me he doesn't feel fit—"

"Malingering!" "He looks a bit seedy." "He would—smoking cigarettes and hanging over a study fire!" agreed Lovell. "Games practice is what he wants."

"Well, I've let him off, so come on!" Lovell shook his head.

"It's your weakness, Jimmy, that anybody can pull your silly old leg," he said. "Gower's pulled your leg. Now, look here—"

"Uncle James" of Rookwood was very patient, but by this time he had arrived at the very limit of his patience.

"Are you finished chin-wagging, Lovell?" he asked.

"Eh? No! I think—" "Well, come along to the footer when you've finished!"

And with that Jimmy Silver walked away with Raby and Newcome.

"Well," said Lovell, "my hat!"

Jimmy had told Lovell to come along to the footer when he had finished "chin-wagging." Naturally, Lovell finished at once. It was useless to "chin-wag" without a listener—he was not disposed to waste his sweetness on the desert air.

But he was wrathful. Instead of following his comrades to Little Side for games practice, Lovell turned back and ascended the stairs.

He headed for the Fourth Form passage and stopped at the door of Study No. 1, which belonged to Gower, Peele, and Lattrey. The last two were already on the football field—unwillingly. But Gower, Lovell supposed, was still in his study—and Lovell's intention was to "roust" him out. If Jimmy Silver neglected his duty Lovell was going to do his duty for him, like a faithful comrade. That this was a "cheek" on his part never occurred to Arthur Edward.

Lovell turned the handle of the study door and hurled it open.

"Now then, you slacker!" he shouted. There was no reply from the study.

"Gower, you slacking bounder!" Lovell strode in. He was prepared to pour scorn and contumely on the slacker

of the Fourth, and shame him into turning up for games. If that gentle method did not answer Lovell was further prepared to take him by the scruff of the neck and conduct him personally to the football ground, helping him with a boot.

But as it happened, the room was empty.

Lovell stared round it, but Gower was not there.

"Skulking in one of the other studies, of course!" grunted Lovell.

And with increasing wrath Arthur Edward marched along the Fourth Form passage, looking into study after study in search of the skulker.

Study after study was drawn blank, till Lovell arrived at the last in the passage—the end study, which belonged to the Fistical Four. It seemed unlikely to Lovell that the slacker would have the nerve to skulk in his—Lovell's—own study, but he looked in.

"Gower!" he ejaculated.

Gower was there! He was standing over Lovell's desk, in a corner of the room, and as Arthur Edward spoke he swung round, his face flushing a deep crimson. Then, as he stared blankly at Lovell, the colour ebbed from his face, leaving him ghastly pale. He did not speak. He stood as if rooted to the floor, staring at Arthur Edward as if the latter were a ghost. Lovell, with an angry snort, strode heavily into the end study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Lovell on the Warpath!

"OH!" gasped Gower at last.

"You!" "I've been looking for you!" said Lovell grimly.

"I—I came here to—to—" Lovell grinned.

"I know why you came here, old bean," he said.

Gower of the Fourth started violently. His glance went for a moment to the desk, over which he had been standing when Lovell appeared. Then it returned to Lovell in a questioning, terrified way.

"You—you said—"

"I said I knew why you'd come here, you silly owl," said Lovell contemptuously. "You're slacking, and you're skulking here because you expected to be rounded up for games practice. Like your dashed cheek to slack in my study!"

"Oh!" gasped Gower.

He eyed Lovell rather curiously, and he seemed relieved, somehow. Lovell did not observe it—he was not very observant.

"Come on!" he said.

"I'm going into my study," said Gower.

"You're not; you're going down to the changing-room," said Lovell. "I'm going to see that you do it, too! See?"

"I'm let off games practice this afternoon," said Gower sullenly.

"Rats!"

"I'm not going!"

Lovell drew back his right foot expressively. Lovell already had his football boots on—and Lovell took a good size in boots.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

Gower backed into the passage, eyeing him savagely.

"Jimmy Silver's let me off," he muttered. "I'm not fit. I—I've been feeling seedy for days."

"That's your rotten bad habits," Lovell explained. "Smoking cigarettes, and slacking about, and breaking bounds after lights out, and so on. What you want is football practice, and lots of it. I'm going to see that you get it."

"Silver says—"

"Never mind Silver now—I'm attending to this for him," said Lovell. "Are you going down?"

"No," howled Gower desperately.

"Then I'm going to take you!"

Gower dodged into his study and slammed the door. His intention was to turn the key, but before he had a chance of turning it Lovell's hefty shoulder crashed on the door and burst it open again. There was a yell from Gower as the door crashed on him and sent him spinning across the room.

"Yoooop!"

"Now then!" growled Lovell.

"Ow! Leggo!"

Gower came out of the study like a bundle in Lovell's powerful grip. The dutiful—perhaps over-dutiful—Arthur Edward propelled him along the passage to the stairs.

From that point Gower decided to go quietly. He was nothing like a match for the burly Lovell, and he really had no chance. He went down quietly to the changing-room, where he changed into football garb under Lovell's grim eye. His eyes burned with rage and resentment as he did so.

"That's better!" said Lovell. "Now come on!"

"You rotter!" hissed Gower.

"If you want my boot—"

"I'm going, you cad!"

Gower evidently did not want Lovell's boot. He slouched out of the room, and Arthur Edward Lovell followed him out.

They walked down to the football ground together.

"Hallo! Here comes Lovell!" grinned Raby, as the two late comers arrived on Little Side.

Jimmy Silver glanced round.

"Oh, here you are, Gower!" he said. "I'm glad you've turned up after all. Feel better?"

"No," growled Gower. "I'm seedy—I told you so. I shall jolly well complain to Bulkeley about this."

Jimmy stared.

"Eh? I've let you off, if you want to be let off," he said. "What the thump are you here for if you're seedy?"

"I've brought him," said Lovell loftily. "He's only malingering, and you really ought to have sense enough to see it, Jimmy."

"Oh, gad!" murmured Mornington, with a grin, and several of the Fourth-Formers laughed.

Jimmy looked rather fixedly at Lovell. Lovell was his chum, but there was a limit.

"You've yanked Gower down here, after I've let him off?" he exclaimed.

"Yes. You see—"

Jimmy raised his hand.

"You can cut off, Gower," he said.

"Look here—" roared Lovell.

"Don't be an ass, old chap," said Jimmy impatiently. "When you are elected captain of the Form you can run the show just as you choose. Till that time, leave it to your Uncle James."

Gower, with a derisive grin at Lovell, turned and walked away. Arthur Edward Lovell grew crimson.

"You're letting Gower off, after I've rounded him up!" he exclaimed.

"I let him off before you rounded him up. Now drop it, and let's get going!" said Jimmy Silver tersely.

"Look here—"

"Chuck it, old man!" said Raby.

"You're not captain of the Fourth yet, you know," sneered Cyril Peele. "Why can't you mind your own dashed business, Lovell?"

"Catch Lovell minding his own business!" grinned Lattery.

Jimmy Silver turned away. He did not want an argument with Lovell; still less did he want a quarrel. But the wrath of Arthur Edward was too intense to be suppressed.

"Jimmy!" he roared.

"That's all right, old chap! Football now!" said the captain of the Fourth soothingly.

"You silly ass—"

"Shush!"

"You cheeky dummy—"

"For goodness' sake shut up, Lovell!" exclaimed Jimmy impatiently. "Now pick up sides, you fellows; we've wasted enough time."

Lovell was heeded no further. He stood with a crimson face, his hands driven deep into the pockets of his football shorts and majestic wrath in his brow. Some of the fellows on the ground surmised that it would come to punching; but, fortunately, Lovell restrained his wrath. And he turned and strode away from the football ground.

"Lovell!" called out Newcome as he went.

Lovell did not heed.

He tramped away savagely towards the House.

"Slacker!" shouted Peele.

Even that did not make Lovell turn back to the football. He was feeling too furious to join in the game with his comrades. But it happened, unfortunately for Lovell, that a dozen yards away he met Bulkeley of the Sixth face to face. The captain of Rookwood was coming down to the junior ground to take charge of the practice.

He stopped Lovell.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Eh? Indoors!" snapped Lovell.

"What are you cutting games practice for?" asked Bulkeley. "This won't do, Lovell! Get back to the field!"

"I—I—"

"Can't have any slacking. Get back!"

Lovell's feelings were too deep for words as he tramped back to Little Side. The imputation of slacking was really the last straw. But the Head of the Games was not to be argued with. And Lovell went without a word.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Marble Eye!

JIMMY SILVER compressed his lips.

Football practice over, Arthur Edward Lovell marched away by himself, instead of walking off with his chums, as usual. He did not give them a glance.

Evidently Arthur Edward was offended.

"Lovell!" Jimmy called out amiably.

Lovell seemed deaf.

"Silly ass!" commented Raby.

In the changing-room Lovell seemed blind, as well as deaf. At all events, he did not appear to see his comrades.

He changed in silence, taking no part in the cheery buzz of talk in the crowded room, and was soon gone.

"Now old Lovell's got his back up!" sighed Newcome. "I suppose he's going to scowl about the study till he comes round. I've a jolly good mind to kick Gower!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, it really wasn't Gower's fault!" he said. "I don't like the fellow; but he really is seedy, as he said. I dare say Lovell will be all right after tea."

And the Co. proceeded to the end study for tea—for which footer practice had given them a keen appetite.

Lovell was already there. He did not seem to be thinking of tea; he was sitting at a corner of the study table, with an account-book open before him and a stump of pencil in his hand. It gave the Co. a discouraged feeling. Lovell was at his accounts—and those accounts were a worry, at the best of times, in the end study! Lovell being treasurer to the junior club, the accounts were one of his important duties. And he never failed to make the rest of the study realise how important this duty was.

Jimmy Silver, and Raby, and Newcome set about getting tea. Lovell devoted his attention to his accounts.

The clink of a teacup, the bubble of a kettle, was quite enough to make Lovell look up with an expression of patient martyrdom. But hungry footballers had no time to consider that. They really wanted their tea.

Lovell rose at last, and closed his account-book with an air of resignation.

"Finished?" asked Raby affably.

"No."

"Have some of these sosses and chips?"

"Thanks! I'm teeing in Study No. 2."

"Look here, Lovell!" urged Jimmy Silver.

Lovell walked out of the study. The three chums of the Fourth exchanged exasperated glances.

"Now the silly ass is sulking!" growled Newcome. "I'm getting fed-up with Lovell's silly rot!"

Lovell was quite unconscious that he was sulking, and he was far from regarding his line of conduct as "silly rot." With lofty dignity he quitted the end study and walked along the passage to Study No. 2, where he expected to find Putty Grace. He had told his study-mates that he was "teeing" with Putty of the Fourth, that being his intention. But when he looked into Study No. 2 he found only three juniors there—Jones minor, Tubby Muffin, and Higgs.

"Where's Putty?" he asked.

"He's teeing with Conroy," answered Jones minor.

"Oh!"

Lovell stepped back from the study.

THE POPULAR.—No. 505.

He was not disposed to "tea" with Higgs & Co., even if they had asked him, which they did not. He stood in the passage, rather disconcerted. Nothing would have induced him to return to the end study and claim a share of the good things there; he had told the Co. that he was tearing out, and he was going to tea out. But he could not very well follow Putty to Conroy's study as an additional guest unasked.

Tea in Hall seemed to be the only resource; and Lovell did not like tea in Hall, the last resource of hard-up juniors. But there was no alternative after his dignified exit from the end study, so down to Hall he went.

Weak tea and thick bread-and-butter compared very unfavourably with "sosses" and chips in the end study, and they seemed weaker and thicker to Lovell now. He sat and glowered over his tea, feeling a very injured fellow indeed.

After tea he lounged out into the quadrangle.

The autumn dusk was falling, and it was close on time for all Lower School fellows to be in their Houses. But Lovell was not eager to get back to the end study. He had to turn up there for prep; but he did not mean to turn up so long as he could help it. After his severe rebuff in the matter of Cuthbert Gower, Lovell felt, like the prophet of old, that he did well to be angry.

He tramped by the path under the old Rookwood beeches with his hands in his pockets and a deep frown on his face. The dusk grew deeper, and deepened into dark, and Lovell glanced once or twice at the lighted facade of the House. But he did not go in. Really, it almost seemed as if there were some pleasure in a state of solitary sulkingness.

All the Rookwooders were in their Houses now—or should have been. Lovell tramped the path under the beeches in solitude and silence.

The silence near him was suddenly broken by a strange and unexpected sound. Lovell started.

It was a sob.

The sound was repeated.

Lovell stepped towards it, peering before him in the shadow of the trees. If it was some bullied fag crying over his injuries Lovell was prepared to sympathise, and to take up the cause of the injured party, if there was anything to be done.

A shadowy figure was discernible, half sitting, half lying on the ground at the foot of one of the beeches. The figure started, and a sob was checked and choked as Lovell loomed up in the gloom.

"Who's that?" exclaimed a startled voice.

Lovell jumped. He knew that voice. "Gower!" he exclaimed.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The Way of the Transgressor!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL stared down at Gower's shadowy form. The junior did not rise, he seemed shrunk into a heap of hopeless dejection, and after the first startled ejaculation he stared up at Lovell with a face that glimmered white in the gloom, in silence, and without movement. Arthur Edward stooped a little nearer, staring at Cuthbert Gower.

"What on earth's the matter with you?" he asked.

"Nothing."

"You've been blubbing!" said Lovell, with immeasurable scorn for a Fourth Form fellow who was guilty of blub-

bing. A Head's flogging would not have caused Lovell to blub.

"No bizney of yours, is it?" said Gower savagely. "Leave me alone."

Lovell relented a little. His brain did not work with great swiftness, but he realised that Gower must be in a very great and very unusual trouble to be knocked out like this. Even a slacker like Gower was not likely to "blub" unless something very serious was the matter with him.

"Feeling seedy?" asked Lovell, with some compunction.

"Yes—no! Let me alone."

"I say, has Carthew been bullying you? If he has we'll jolly well take the matter up in our study."

"No; what rot! Do you think I should be knocked over like this by being bullied?" growled Gower. "If you want to know I'm going to be sacked from Rookwood. I dare say you're glad to hear it! Now leave a fellow alone."

"Sacked?"

"Yes. Get out, can't you? Can't you leave me alone, when you're going to see the last of me in a day or two?" hissed Gower.

Lovell did not go. Gower's statement had taken him quite by surprise.

There was something in Gower's white, pinched, worn face that appealed to Lovell, conscious of strength and firmness of character. He realised, too, that Gower must be in a very shaky state to break down utterly like this, and his heart smote him for the drastic measures he had used towards the wretched slacker that afternoon.

It was up to the strong to help the weak; and that, as a matter of fact, was the favourite role in which Arthur Edward Lovell fancied himself. He felt a keen desire to help Gower now, if he could—all the more because his prophecies had been fulfilled by the wretched fellow's downfall.

"Is it really so bad as that?" he asked, after a long pause.

"Yes—and worse! I'm going to be booted out of the school—bunked from Rookwood!" snarled Gower. "What a jest for the end study—what? You can all tell one another that you said so all along. A regular triumph for you—I hope you'll enjoy it! And—I—I—"

The tone of sardonic mockery died away as a realisation of his position rushed over the junior. He hid his face in his hands and sobbed. "Oh, what am I going to do? What can I do?"

Lovell stood in silence, looking at him. His contempt had given place now to compassion for the unhappy fellow, almost grovelling there in the deep shadow of the beeches.

"Dash it all, kid!" said Lovell uneasily. "It's jolly hard cheese. What has the Head found out? About your breaking dorm bounds and going down to the Bird-in-Hand?"

"He hasn't found out anything yet."

"What?"

"He will know it all to-morrow morning—by the first post. It—it's in a letter. I'm done for!"

"But I don't understand," said Lovell perplexed. "Do you mean that somebody's going to write to the Head and give you away?"

"Yes," groaned Gower.

"But who—how? Not one of your pals here?"

"Of course not! A man—a rotter—a shady blackguard I was a fool ever to speak to," hissed Gower. "It was Peele's fault, too. Peele introduced me to him last term. I'd never have known him but for Peele. But catch Peele helpin' me out now! He says he can't—and I dare say it's true—he he"

wouldn't, anyhow! Peele don't care much for a lame duck!" Gower laughed mirthlessly. "I'm a lame duck now, and no mistake!"

"How could Peele help you?" asked Lovell puzzled. "Oh!" He understood suddenly. "Is it money?"

"Of course it is!"

"You're in debt?"

"Seven pounds," groaned Gower. "And—and I haven't sevenpence towards it, and if it isn't paid this evening Joey Hook is sending on my IOU to the Head."

"Phew!"

Lovell whistled softly. He understood at last how the matter was. It was this that had been weighing on Gower's mind for days, and making him look ill and seedy. It was no wonder—for, in case of exposure, the headmaster's sentence on the offender was certain to be short and sharp. There was no place at Rookwood for fellows who dabbled in betting on horseraces.

"Now you know," mumbled Gower. "You can tell all the fellows, if you like. It won't make any difference. As soon as the Head hears from Joey Hook I shall be called on the carpet, and then it will all come out—breaking bounds, and going to that den, and the lot of it. It will be the first train home for me—and serve me right. But—but what am I going to say to my father?"

Gower cowered in the shadows with a spasm of terror. Facing his father at home, after being ignominiously turned out of Rookwood School was a more severe ordeal than facing even the Head. Truly, the dingy blackguard of the Fourth was finding the way of the transgressor hard.

"Seven pounds!" repeated Lovell. "My hat! If it was seven bob I'd lend you the money. But look here, Gower, is it straight? How did you come to owe that man Hook such a sum of money as that?"

Gower made an impatient movement. "Part of it was a bet on a horse, and part was money that Hook lent me when I was playing cards at the Bird-in-Hand," he groaned. "I was fool enough to give him my IOU for the whole amount—and the Head will know my writing. I can't deny my own hand."

"Well, you precious blackguard!" exclaimed Lovell in disgust. "You've jolly well asked for what you're going to get, that's certain."

"Rub it in!" muttered Gower.

"Well, I don't want to do that," said Lovell, relenting again. "But really, you've been an awful rotter, Gower. Look here, Peele ought to stand by you in this—he's more to blame than you are."

"He can't—or won't!"

"Can't you make terms with the man?" asked Lovell. "It won't pay him to get you kicked out of the school. He will never get his money then. Your father's more likely to prosecute him than to pay him anything, I should think. Make terms with him, and pay him a little at a time."

"I—I've tried. He says he's waited long enough!" mumbled Gower. "So he has, if you come to that. He agreed to wait while I sold my bike and got the money. Only—only—"

"I know you sold your bike," said Lovell. "Didn't it raise enough to pay him?"

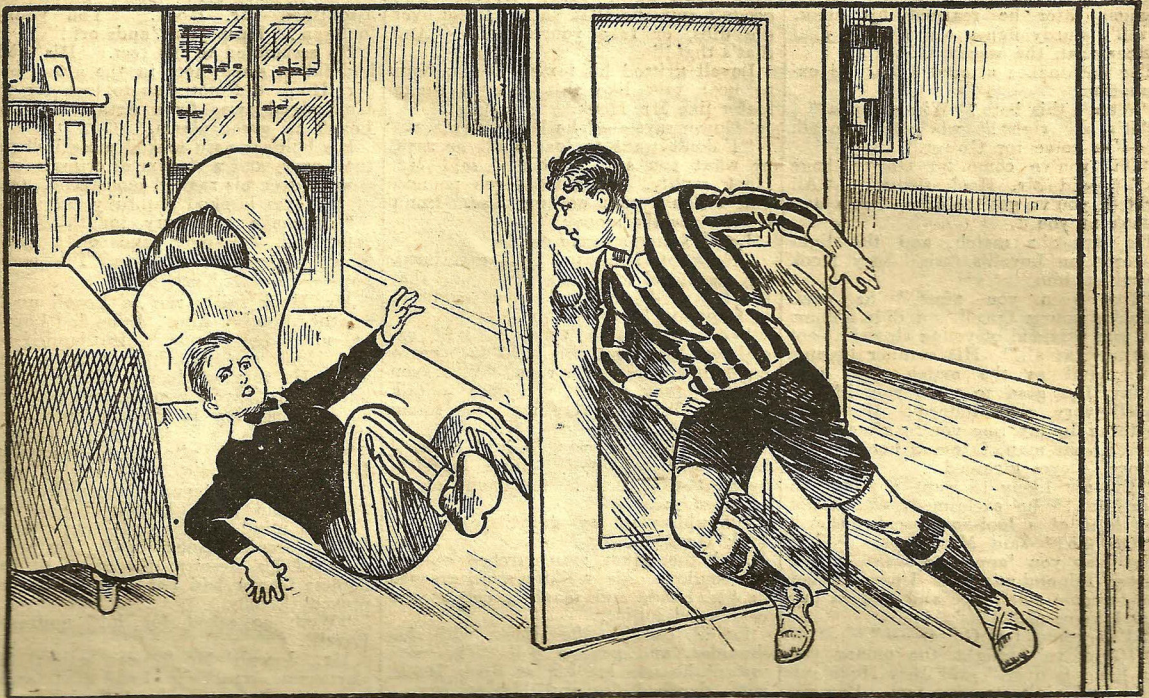
"Yes; but—but—"

"But what?"

"The—the money went," mumbled Gower.

"Well, my hat!"

Lovell turned to walk away. Gower whimpered as he crouched in the



ROUNDING UP THE SLACKER. Gower dodged into his study and slammed the door. His intention was to turn the key; but before he could do so, Lovell's shoulder crashed on the door, and it burst open. There was a yell from Gower as the door sent him spinning across the room. "Yooooop!" (See Chapter 2.)

shadows, and Lovell's kind heart smote him, and he turned back. He looked down on the wretched fellow with mingled pity and contempt.

"The man's a scoundrel to have such dealings with a schoolboy!" he said. "But you seem to have taken him in, Gower. It's no wonder he's cut up rusty!"

"I—I know. He's given me till nine this evening," mumbled Gower. "He's waiting for me in the road now, I think. He said he'd wait till nine, in case I came with the money. I—I can't pay him anything. I know I've been a fool—a rotter! I'm going to suffer for it now. If—if it wasn't for my people I wouldn't care so much. I've never done any good for myself at Rookwood. But—the mater, she'll be frightfully cut up—"

Gower's voice trailed off miserably. Lovell's face softened.

In that extremity of misery and fear the wretched fellow could still think of his mother. It showed that he was not all bad, at all events.

"I'm sorry," said Lovell. "I—I wish I could help you out. You've asked for it, and no mistake. But you might have thought of your people a bit sooner, Gower."

"I know that."

"Well, I suppose you do. But, look here!" said Lovell. "Are you sure the man isn't simply frightening you? He mayn't intend to give you away at all."

"He does. He's awfully wild with me."

"Then take my tip and go to the Head first," said Lovell. "Make a clean breast of it, and he may let you down lightly. He's a tough old bird, but lots of fellows say he's got a kind heart. Go to the Head before that man Hook can get at him."

Gower shuddered.

"I dare not! I—I couldn't."

"It's your only chance," urged Lovell.

"I can't. It wouldn't be any good if I did, and I can't! I—I'm not a fellow like you," groaned Gower. "I

haven't your nerve. But look here, Lovell! If you wanted to help me you— He peered up at Lovell's face in the shadows. "If—if you wanted to—"

"I'd help you if I could," said Lovell. "Then—then if you went to speak to Hook—"

"Catch me speaking to a scoundrel like that! Besides, what good would it do?"

"I—I shall have some money next week," said Gower, in a gasping voice. "Hook won't take my word. But—but you will, Lovell. You know I wouldn't let you down. If you'd give him your word that the money would be paid, that might make it all right. He might wait. He knows about you. He knows you're straight. Your word would be good enough for him."

Lovell stared down at the shadowy white face.

"If I gave him my word it would have to be kept," he said. "He's a swindling rascal, but a promise is a promise."

"I shall have the money next week," whispered Gower. "I—I give you my word on that."

"Honour bright?"

"Honour bright!" repeated Gower.

"Well, there can't be any harm in telling the man so," said Lovell slowly. "I suppose I can take your word. Look here, if you think it will do any good I—I'll go and speak to him."

Gower's face flushed with hope.

"I—I say, you're a good chap, Lovell," he said huskily. "If—if you can get the brute to give me time it will make all the difference. Once I get out of this—"

"You'll promise me to keep clear of that kind of thing in future!" said Lovell sharply. "Otherwise, I'm keeping clear of you now."

"Of course I promise!" said Gower.

"Do you think I want this over again?"

"Well, I suppose not. Where is the man now?"

"He's waiting in the road—he said

he would—five minutes' walk from the school gates," muttered Gower. "Walk down towards Coombe, and you'll see him."

"Nice if a Rookwood master happens to be coming along the same road about the same time!" muttered Lovell.

"It's not likely!"

"Well, I'll do my best," said Lovell ungraciously. "Blessed if I know why it matters to me whether you're sacked or not! But I'll do my best. Mind, I don't answer for anything, but I'll do what I can."

Without waiting for Gower's reply Lovell walked away. He was fully conscious that he might be missed, and his absence discovered. But he had to take that risk now.

With great caution he skirted the school buildings and reached the wall in a dark corner behind the beeches. There he climbed the school wall and dropped into the road.

It was a quarter to nine. Lovell gave a hasty and uneasy glance about him and hurried up the dark road towards Coombe. There was no time to lose now.

In the deep shadows by the roadside a spot of crimson glowed, and Lovell guessed that it was the lighted end of a cigar. He halted, and made out the figure of a squat man, in a coat and a bowler-hat. The crimson spot shifted as Mr. Joey Hook removed the cigar from his mouth and peered out at the schoolboy in the road.

"Jest in time!" came a husky voice. "Jest in time, young Gower! Ten minutes more, and I'd have been gone."

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Lovell's Way.

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL breathed hard. In the darkness Mr. Hook had mistaken him for the junior whom he was expecting—the wretched

"sportsman" of the Fourth. But a moment later he realised his error. Lovell's sturdy figure was a good deal bulkier than the weedy Gower's.

The bookmaker uttered a startled exclamation.

"What's this here? Who are you?"
 "It's all right!" whispered Lovell.
 "I—I've come for Gower."

"Oh, you've come for Gower, have you?" said Mr. Hook surlily. "All right, if you've got the dibs. Let's 'ave a look at you."

He struck a match, and the light flickered on Lovell's face. Joey Hook stared at him.

"I've seen you afore," he said. "You're young Lovell. I didn't know you was a friend of young Gower's—not that sort at all." His manner became more civil as the match went out. "Why, I'm glad to meet you, Master Lovell—very glad indeed! If there's anything in my line you're after, Joey Hook's your man, fair and honest."

Lovell's eyes gleamed.
 "I'm not likely to want anything in your line!" he exclaimed. "I'm not that kind of a fool—or rascal, either."

"Oh, ho!" said Mr. Hook. "Then what may you 'appen to want, young Mister 'Igh-and-mighty? I never asked you to come along 'ere and talk to me, that I know of."

"I've come for Gower—"
 "If you've brought the money you can hand it over," said Joey Hook sullenly. "I ain't stopping you. I've got young Gower's paper here, all fair and square, and it's his'n when he's paid up. Where's the dibs?"

Lovell coughed.
 "I haven't brought the money," he said.

"Then what 'ave you come for?"
 "To ask you to give Gower time to pay," said Lovell. "He will be able to square next week—"

"I've heard that story before," said Joey Hook, interrupting rudely. "I've heard it several times. That's a chicken

that won't fight, young Lovell. You needn't spin me that yarn. Hand over the dibs, or take yourself off. And that's that!"

Lovell gritted his teeth. It was hard to bear talk like this from a dingy loafer like Mr. Hook.

"Gower says—" he began again.
 "I don't want to 'ear what he says, or what you say, neither!" said Mr. Hook surlily. "I want seven pounds, and I don't want nothing else. Don't he owe me the money?"

Lovell's anger broke out.
 "No, not honestly!" he exclaimed. "A scoundrel who leads a kid like that to play cards and make bets ought to be in prison."

"Oh, that's the tune, is it?" exclaimed Mr. Hook, his hard face growing more purple with rage. "Why, you cheeky young rascal, you dare to talk to me! Why, I'll lay my stick round you—"

"I'd like to see you do it!" retorted Lovell contemptuously, quite forgetful by that time that he had come as an ambassador.

"Would you, by gum?" exclaimed Joey Hook.

And the squat man lurched out of the shadows, his walking-stick grasped in his hand, and made a cut at the Rookwood junior.

Lovell caught the stick with his shoulder, and gave a yell. The next instant he was leaping at Joey Hook, with clenched fist and blazing eyes.

Crash!
 "Ow! Oh, my eye! Yoooop!" spluttered Mr. Hook, as he reeled back from a terrific right-hander, which landed fairly on his red and bulbous nose. "Oh! Oh! My hat! Ow!"

Lovell's left followed up his right with terrific vim. Mr. Hook's fat legs doubled up under him, and he was strewn along the lane. He smote the earth with a heavy thud.

Lovell stood over him, panting.
 "Now, you scoundrel—"

"Ow! Keep orf! Wow!" gasped the astonished Mr. Hook. "You young 'ooligan! Keep your 'ands orf!"

He scrambled to his feet. His stick had fallen somewhere in the grass, but Mr. Hook did not stop to look for it. He dodged away from Arthur Edward Lovell in great alarm.

His bulbous nose looked more bulbous than ever, and a stream of crimson ran from it over his ragged moustache. One of his eyes blinked painfully.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" he spluttered. "Laying 'ands on a man! You young villain, you, I'll make you— Ow! Keep orf!"

Mr. Hook fairly ran as Lovell made another jump at him. As he fled Lovell let out a hefty boot, which landed on Mr. Hook and sent him spinning forward. He very nearly went down again, but he just saved himself and plunged on, disappearing in the shadows down the lane.

Lovell stared after him, frowning. He had dealt with Mr. Hook as that dingy rascal deserved; there was no doubt about that. But it dawned on Lovell's mind—rather late—that though Mr. Joseph Hook had certainly received his deserts, the cause of the hapless Gower had not been much improved thereby.

"Well, he asked for it!" muttered Lovell.

Mr. Joseph Hook was gone; his stertorous breathing had died away down the lane. Slowly Arthur Edward Lovell turned back towards Rookwood. From somewhere in the distance the hour of nine had chimed out.

Lovell hurried back towards the school.

THE END.

(Arthur Edward Lovell's "good turn" certainly hasn't made things much brighter for the black sheep of the Fourth. Don't miss "A SPORTSMAN IN TROUBLE!" next week's grand story of the chums of Rookwood.)

THIS WEEK'S LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES!

Claim Now If You were Born on any of the dates Given Below!

READERS who were registered in the "Popular" Birthday Gift Club BEFORE SATURDAY, SEPT. 22nd, 1928, may claim a "Hobby" or "Holiday" Annual if the date of their birth is the same as a date in the list given below—

- MAY 4th, 1912.
- JANUARY 7th, 1916.
- JUNE 17th, 1913.
- SEPTEMBER 8th, 1917.
- FEBRUARY 1st, 1913.
- APRIL 21st, 1917.
- AUGUST 17th, 1918.
- DECEMBER 22nd, 1909.
- JULY 1st, 1916.
- MARCH 4th, 1911.
- NOVEMBER 8th, 1912.
- AUGUST 29th, 1907.
- OCTOBER 5th, 1913.
- APRIL 8th, 1914.
- DECEMBER 2nd, 1913.
- JANUARY 19th, 1915.
- MAY 6th, 1914.
- SEPTEMBER 30th, 1912.
- OCTOBER 19th, 1914.
- JUNE 29th, 1911.
- DECEMBER 11th, 1914.
- FEBRUARY 20th, 1915.
- MARCH 29th, 1915.
- NOVEMBER 15th, 1911.
- MAY 18th, 1913.
- SEPTEMBER 19th, 1913.
- AUGUST 21st, 1910.
- NOVEMBER 28th, 1903.
- JULY 7th, 1912.
- AUGUST 6th, 1912.
- JULY 23rd, 1914.
- AUGUST 12th, 1918.

If you were born on any of these dates, fill in the CLAIMS COUPON provided on this page, and send it to: The Editor, "The Popular" Birthday Gift Club, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4—

so as to reach this address *not later* than October 4th, 1928. Please write the word "CLAIM" in the top left-hand corner of your envelope.

No Reader may claim an Annual unless he or she has already been registered as a member of our Birthday Gift Club.

A published date must be exactly the same in day, month, and year as that given on your registration coupon.

You cannot claim and register AT THE SAME TIME. Should your birthday date happen to be published in this list, and you are *not* already registered, YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GIFT.

ANOTHER LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

BIRTHDAY GIFT CLAIM COUPON (For the use of REGISTERED READERS ONLY.)

Name
 Full Address (please write plainly)

I declare myself to have registered in your Birthday Gift Club before Saturday, Sept. 22nd, 1928, and as the date given above (*here state date*) is the date of my birth, I wish to claim a (*state name of Annual you would like*) in accordance with the rules of the club.

THIS COUPON IS ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL OCT 4th, 1928.
 POPULAR. SEPTEMBER 29th.