

213
X *The POPULAR CHOICE is the 'POPULAR!'* X

The POPULAR

Week Ending October 12th, 1925.
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EVERY
TUESDAY.



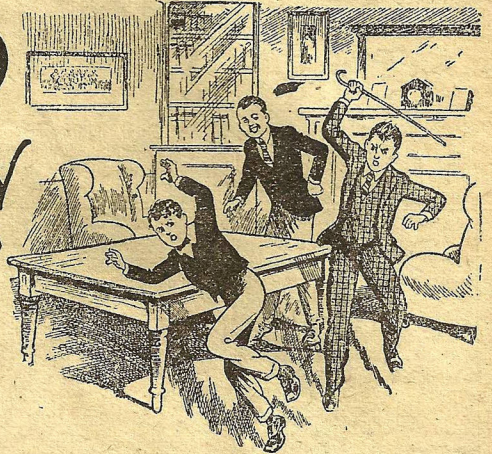
WHO PUT THE
CRACKER IN THE GRATE ?

1032

PUTTY, THE PRINCE OF JAPERS!

It's dangerous—very dangerous—to cross the path of Putty Grace, the irrepressible japer of Rookwood, as Mark Carthew of the Sixth discovers to his cost!

The ROOKWOOD BARGAIN HUNTERS



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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Carthew's Catch!

JUST come here, Silver!"

Carthew of the Sixth spoke in unusually polite tones.

Generally, Carthew did not waste much politeness on juniors, especially on Jimmy Silver of the Fourth Form.

Now he seemed quite amiable, and he even smiled as he called to the captain of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver stopped very unwillingly. He had had many a trouble with the bully of the Sixth, and he did not trust Carthew, especially when he seemed amiable. And Jimmy was on his way to join Lovell and Raby and Newcome, who were waiting for him in the quad.

It was a half-holiday, and the Fistical Four had planned quite an extensive bike spin for the afternoon, and they were anxious to get off as quickly as possible after dinner.

Perhaps Carthew of the Sixth was aware of it.

"What is it, Carthew?" asked Jimmy Silver, as civilly as he could.

"No football match on this afternoon, I think?" asked Carthew.

"No."

"That's all right, then. I shouldn't like to interrupt a football match, fagging you," said Carthew agreeably. "I want you to take this note down to Coombe, Silver."

"I'm just going out."

"Quite so. Take it to the printer's office. You know, the office of the Coombe Times."

"Look here, Carthew—"

"Ask Mr. Oldface specially to put it in this week's 'Times.' It's an advertisement, you know," said Carthew blandly. "Here's the half-crown to pay for it. And you'll bring back the receipt."

"I say—"

"I'm selling my bike, you know," said Carthew. "I shan't want it any more this year. Mind you make it clear that the advertisement is to go in this week."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

How far the fagging rights of the Sixth extended over the Fourth was a question that had never really been settled at Rookwood. It was established that games and games practice could not be interrupted by such duties. At other times there was no settled rule, which was quite convenient to a fellow

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like Carthew, who liked to make his power felt in the Lower School.

Jimmy was perfectly well aware that Carthew knew of the excursion the chums of the Fourth had planned for the afternoon. Likewise there was no reason why Carthew should not have sent his advertisement by post the day before, and there was no reason why he shouldn't walk down to Coombe with it himself. Nevertheless, it was difficult to refuse.

"Well, what are you waiting for, Silver?" asked Carthew cheerily.

Jimmy Silver backed away from Carthew.

"Look here, Carthew," he said. "We'll go round through Coombe and drop your message at the printer's. I'll bring you the receipt when we get back from our ride. Will that do?"

Carthew smiled. That would have "done" quite well if Carthew's object had not been to pay off old scores against the end study.

But that precisely was Carthew's object, so obviously Jimmy Silver's suggestion would not "do."

"Not at all," said the Sixth-Former. "Not in the least! You'd probably lose the receipt—a careless fag like you. You must learn to be careful in money matters, Silver. Bring the receipt back directly."

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"Rats!" he retorted.

"What?"

"Rats!"

Carthew made a stride at the junior. Jimmy Silver jumped back and made a bolt for the big doorway on the quad.

"Stop!" roared Carthew. "Bulkeley, stop him!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in at the door as Jimmy Silver almost reached it.

He glanced at the junior and then at the prefect, and held up his hand.

Jimmy Silver halted in dismay.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, was not to be disputed with. As head prefect the matter was within his jurisdiction.

"What's the trouble?" asked Bulkeley quietly.

He gave Carthew rather a suspicious look. He was quite aware of Carthew's bullying proclivities and of the trouble that had long existed between Carthew and the end study.

But Carthew was not looking like a bully now. He was quite genial and good-tempered.

"I've asked Silver to take a message for me to Coombe," he said. "The

young rascal was scolding off instead of taking it."

Bulkeley frowned.

"That won't do, Silver," he said.

"You—you see, Bulkeley—"

"There's no game on?" asked the captain of Rookwood.

"No, but—"

"Then you can take Carthew's message. I'm surprised at you, Silver. You know very well that you're under a Sixth-Form prefect's orders."

"Yes, but—"

"That's enough! Take Carthew's message at once, or you'll find yourself in trouble!"

With that, and a frown, the captain of the school walked on.

Jimmy Silver suppressed his feelings.

It was useless to attempt to explain to Bulkeley, even if he had felt disposed to do so. Jimmy was quite sure that his old enemy had planned to "muck up" that half-holiday for the juniors he disliked, but he had no proof of any kind, and Bulkeley was not likely to believe a Sixth Form prefect guilty of such meanness without the strongest proof.

Jimmy set his teeth.

He did not answer, but he held out his hand for the letter and the half-crown.

Carthew smiled as the junior walked out of the House. For once, at least, he had made Jimmy Silver knuckle under and realise that a prefect of the Sixth was a little too powerful for him. Bullying the end study had never been quite successful. Jimmy Silver & Co. had always been able to keep their end up against that. But petty persecution was more difficult for them to deal with, and Carthew had scored. As for the meanness of such a score, that did not trouble him in the least.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Putty Obliges!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL gave Jimmy a glare as the captain of the Fourth came out of the House.

"We're waiting!" he said acidly.

It was not uncommon for Arthur Edward to keep his comrades waiting. On such occasions he expected them to wait with patience. But personally he did not like waiting.

"Well, let's get off now you're here, Jimmy," said Raby.

"Can't!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"More waiting?" asked Lovell sarcastically.

"Fathead!"

"Well, why can't we get off, old chap?" asked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver held up the note and the half-crown and explained. There were exclamations of annoyance from the other three.

"Look here, it's too thick!" exclaimed Arthur Edward Lovell hotly. "If we wait while you mooch down to Coombe and back we shan't get out to Bunbury to-day. You're not going!"

"Must!" said Jimmy. "Carthew don't matter, but we can't back up against old Bulkeley."

"Bother Bulkeley!" growled Lovell. "Well, I've got to go. We'll make it a shorter run afterwards, unless you fellows would like to get off and leave me to it."

"Oh, rot!" said Newcome.

"We'll come down to Coombe with you," said Lovell. "But it's all a catch. Carthew could have sent that off by post, and, anyhow, it doesn't matter about bringing back the receipt for his miserable half-crown. It's just a catch to do us in the eye."

"I know that."

Jimmy Silver took his bicycle, which Raby was holding for him, and the four chums wheeled their machines down to the gates.

They were all in a mood of exasperation.

The weather was exceptionally good that afternoon, and they had been looking forward to an agreeable excursion of unusual extent. Now that happy prospect was knocked on the head.

But that was not the worst of it. What rankled more deeply was the knowledge that their old enemy of the Sixth had "done them in the eye"—easily, completely, and without any prospect of retaliation.

Even Jimmy Silver, whose face was generally sunny and serene, looked moody and downcast.

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed wrath.

The Fistical Four mounted in the road, and pedalled away towards Coombe. On the stile in Coombe Lane a Fourth-Former of Rookwood was seated, reading the "Holiday Annual." It was Teddy Grace, better known at Rookwood as Putty of the Fourth. As a new boy at Rookwood, Grace had been named "Putty" because he was so "soft." Later, the Rookwooders had discovered that Putty was by no means so soft as they had supposed, but the name clung to him.

Putty of the Fourth glanced at the four frowning cyclists with a cheery grin.

"Hallo, old tops! Going to a funeral?" he called out.

Snort from Lovell.

"This isn't the way to Bunbury," added Putty. "Weren't you fellows going bike-pushing to Bunbury this afternoon?"

Jimmy Silver jumped off his machine. Quite a bright idea had flashed into his mind.

"Oh, come on!" growled Lovell. "Let's get it over."

"Hold on a minute."

"Oh, rot!"

"You're not doing anything special this afternoon, Putty?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Putty grinned.

"Yes, I am. I'm keeping out of Carthew's way."

"What for?"

"I fell on him coming downstairs just after dinner," explained Putty.

"Carthew wouldn't believe that it was an accident."

"Was it?" asked Newcome.

"Hem!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I want to give him time to cool down before I see him again," said Putty. "So I've borrowed Morny's 'Holiday Annual,' and I'm spending a jolly afternoon out of gates. Anything I can do for you?"

Jimmy Silver held up the note and the half-crown. Once more he explained Carthew's device for "mucking up" the afternoon for the chums of the end study.

"You see, even Carthew couldn't find fault with another fellow taking his message, if you cared to take it," he said. "You can read that giddy 'Annual' any old time. Carthew's particular about the receipt being taken back, so if you don't want to see him—"

Putty smiled genially.

"Leave it to me," he said. "I'll buzz down to Coombe for you, and I'll see that Carthew gets his receipt. I'm getting a licking from him, anyhow, and that won't make it any worse."

"Good man!" said Jimmy Silver gratefully.

"Not at all, old bean!"

The Fistical Four brightened up. That ride to Bunbury was to come off, after all; and even Carthew could scarcely complain, so long as his advertisement appeared in the local paper, and the receipt was taken back to him at once. If he did, Jimmy had only to appeal to the head prefect. Carthew's real object, certainly would be defeated. But he could not very well explain his real object to George Bulkeley.

"Leave it to me, old beans," said Putty. And the Fistical Four, quite merry and bright now, left it to Putty, and rode away cheerily, to take the first turning that led into the Bunbury road.

Putty of the Fourth sat on the stile, and looked after them with a smiling face.

He was on chummy terms with the Fistical Four, and glad to oblige them. But that had not been his only object in offering to take Jimmy Silver's mission off his hands. Putty's chief characteristic was a propensity for practical jokes, and he thought he could see an opening here with Mark Carthew as his victim. Jimmy Silver, in his keenness to get away on his bike ride, had quite forgotten Putty's peculiar propensities.

"I wonder—" murmured Putty.

He calmly tore open the envelope and looked at the contents. There was a brief message from Carthew to the printer of the local paper.

"Dear Sir,—Please insert the enclosed advertisement in this week's number of the 'Coombe Times.' The bearer will pay 2s. 6d., for which, please, send receipt."

"Yours truly,

"M. CARTEW."

There was an enclosure as follows:

"FOR SALE.—Enfield bicycle in excellent condition. £10 or nearest offer. Communication, by letter only, to Mr. Carthew, School House, Rookwood."

Putty of the Fourth pondered over that advertisement, with a pucker of thought on his brow, and a gleam in his blue eyes.

Then he took out a fountain-pen.

For some time Putty of the Fourth was deep in the throes of composition. He was making a couple of trifling alterations in the advertisement.

Then he slipped off the stile, and sauntered away down the leafy lane in the direction of Coombe.

He did not go at once to the printer's. He dropped in at the post-office, which was also a stationer's, and bought an envelope there. In the new envelope he sealed up Carthew's letter and the advertisement.

Then he strolled along to the office of the "Coombe Times."

He found Mr. Oldface there, somewhat grubby and very busy, setting the type of his paper. The "Coombe Times" was not one of the larger undertakings in the newspaper world. Its circulation was limited, and its contents were chiefly advertisements. The staff consisted of Mr. Oldface himself and one youth of sixteen.

Putty of the Fourth handed in the letter and the half-crown. He duly impressed upon the printer that the advertisement must appear that week without fail, and received an official receipt for the half-crown.

"I'm setting up the Sale Column now, sir," said Mr. Oldface. "I'll put it in at once. It will be all right. You can tell Master Carthew so."

"I will," said Putty.

And he sauntered out of the dusky little office, and walked back cheerily to Rookwood.

A little later Carthew of the Sixth hastily put a cigarette out of sight as a knock came at his study door.

"Come in!" he snapped.

It was Townsend of the Classical Fourth who entered. He laid a receipt on Carthew's table.

"I've been asked to bring this to you, Carthew," he said.

"What?"

"All right, isn't it?" asked Townsend. Carthew glared at the receipt. It was "all right," so far as that went. Still, the bully of the Sixth did not seem satisfied.

"Did Silver ask you to bring this here?" he asked.

"No. Young Grace of the Fourth."

"Oh!"

Townsend left the study, leaving Carthew glaring at the receipt. He jumped up and called after Townsend.

"Townsend, do you know where Silver is?"

"Out of gates, I think. I heard that they were going on a jaunt to Bunbury on their bikes," answered Townsend.

Carthew turned back into his study, picked up the receipt, and jammed it savagely into his pocket. He realised that he had not scored over the Fistical Four so successfully as he had supposed. Teddy Grace, apparently, had relieved Jimmy Silver of his task, and the Fistical Four had gone off to Bunbury, after all. Until they came back they were out of reach of reprisals. But Carthew put his ash-plant under his arm, and walked out to look for Putty of the Fourth.

It was unlucky for Grace that he was just coming out of his study, with the intention of making himself scarce, when he saw Carthew. He dodged back at once, but Carthew had seen him. The prefect strode up to the study and threw open the door.

Carthew fixed glinting eyes on Putty of the Fourth. That too-humorous youth realised that he was "for it" now, and he waited for it.

"You fell on me on the staircase after dinner to-day, Grace," remarked Carthew.

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" murmured Putty.

"You've been dodging me ever since."

"You're not always a nice person to meet, you know, Carthew," said Putty.

"Bend over!"

"You're not going to lick a chap for a little accident like that, Carthew!" urged Putty.

"Do you give me your word that it was an accident?"

"Hem!"

"I thought not. Bend over!"

There was no help for it. Putty of the Fourth bent over a chair, and the ashplant rose and fell.

"Six" was a light or a severe punishment, according to how the strokes were laid on. Where Carthew was concerned it was generally severe. On this occasion the bully of the Sixth put unusual beef into it.

Putty had had to "bend over" many a time and oft; a propensity for practical jokes often led to such undesirable results. But he had seldom been through so painful a "six" as this.

His face was quite pale when it was over.

"I hope that will do you good!" remarked Carthew, as the hapless jester of the Fourth stood wriggling.

"I—I hope so!" gasped Putty. "Thanks for your kind wishes, Carthew!"

Carthew smiled grimly.

"You took on Silver's fagging job this afternoon," he said. "I'd give you another six for that, only—"

"Only I should go straight to Mr. Dalton if you did!" interrupted Putty coolly. "Hand 'em out, if you like!"

Carthew did not seem to hear that remark.

"You seem to be fond of fagging," he said. "I'll see that you have plenty to keep you busy for some time, without taking on other fags' jobs! That's all."

And Carthew tucked his ashplant under his arm, and left the study.

Putty sat down to prep, but jumped up again rather quickly. That evening Putty of the Fourth did his prep standing.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Trade!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL whistled.

"You fellows seen this?" he asked.

It was a few days later.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth were adorning one of the old oaken benches under the beech-trees, and Lovell was looking through the latest issue of the "Coombe Times."

Lovell, as secretary and treasurer of the Junior Football Club, kept an eye on advertisement columns of the local paper, with a view to bargains in the line of sports requisites. That was how he chanced on a rather surprising advertisement.

"What is it?" asked Jimmy Silver lazily.

"Carthew's selling his bike."

"Let him!"

"He's offering it for ten bob," said Lovell.

"Must be an ass!" said Newcome. "Why, it's a ripping Enfield! I've seen it often enough. It's worth ten pounds!"

"Blessed if I understand it!" said Jimmy. "Let's look!"

The juniors read the advertisement—it was plain enough.

"FOR SALE.—Enfield bicycle, in excellent condition. 10s. or nearest offer. Call personally only to M. Carthew, School House, Rookwood." THE POPULAR.—No. 507.

"That must be the advertisement Carthew made me take down to the printer's the other day," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"That's it!"

"Well, he's an ass! The bike's worth ten pounds, I should think, secondhand—anyhow, lots of fellows would give six or seven!"

"That's so," assented Lovell. "Now, I think this is where I come in."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"The jigger's no good to you," he said. "Sizes too big!"

"I know that, ass! But I could sell it again," explained Lovell. "If Carthew chooses to sell a first-class jigger like that for ten shillings, it's his own funeral! I could easily sell it again for five pounds or more the same day. I don't mean that I'm after a profit personally. But it would raise some funds for our club—see? I'll buy it with ten bob from the club money, and the profit will go to swell our funds. We can do with some new goalposts!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked dubious.

Speculating with the club funds was not the business of a club treasurer. Certainly, in this case, the speculation seemed to show a clear profit of some pounds without risk. Nevertheless, the principle was bad.

Dubious looks from his comrades were quite enough to make Arthur Edward Lovell determined. Only opposition was needed to confirm him in any opinion.

"That's what I'm going to do!" he announced.

"It won't do," said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "But I tell you what—we'll buy the bike with ten bob of our own money, and sell it again, and present the profit to the club."

"Where's the difference?" demanded Lovell.

"Well, there is a difference, old chap, whether you can see it or not. But I can't believe that this is genuine," said Jimmy. "Carthew must have had an accident with his bike, if he's offering to sell it for ten bob! The lamp alone is worth that!"

"Let's have a look at it," suggested Raby. "We can see it in the bike shed."

"Good!"

The Fistical Four left the oaken bench and strolled round to the bike shed. There, among innumerable machines, they found Carthew's Enfield on its stand.

Apparently Carthew had not had an accident with it. The machine was, as the advertisement stated, in excellent condition. It was undoubtedly a good bike, and Carthew had taken care of it. It was well worth ten pounds of anybody's money, secondhand.

"Looks all right!" said Raby.

"My hat! It does!" said Jimmy Silver, greatly puzzled. "Carthew needn't have spent money on advertising if he wanted to sell that jigger for ten bob. Any fellow at Rookwood would have taken it off his hands at that price!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Well, we happen to have seen the ad," said Lovell. "I don't suppose there's another copy of the 'Coombe Times' in the school—it's not a paper the fellows would read, except when there's a report of a First Eleven match in it. We're not missing this. I'm going to see Carthew about it at once. If he's fool enough to sell that jigger for ten bob I'm the chap that's going to bag it!"

And Arthur Edward Lovell walked out of the bike shed, eager to strike the iron while it was hot and secure that

wonderful bargain, while it was still going.

Relations were very strained between the Fistical Four and Carthew of the Sixth. Generally, they avoided his study with sedulous care. But this was a matter of business, and Arthur Edward Lovell marched into the Sixth Form passage with cheery confidence, and tapped at Carthew's door.

Carthew was there, and he scowled at Lovell as the junior entered. Knowles of the Modern Sixth was with him, and Lovell did not fail to detect a scent of cigarette smoke in the study—though no cigarettes were visible.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Carthew.

"Your bike," answered Lovell, with a grin.

Carthew stared, and then his face relaxed its expression. On a business matter he was prepared to be civil. The Enfield was well worth ten pounds, but buying and selling are different matters, and Carthew was well aware that he might have to let the machine go below its value. If this junior was prepared to take it off his hands for ten pounds, Carthew was prepared to meet him half-way and with great civility. As he had not seen the "Coombe Times," Carthew had, of course, no suspicion of the trifling alteration that had been made in his advertisement. Certainly it never occurred to him that Lovell had come there to buy his valuable bike for ten shillings.

"Oh, you've seen my advertisement?" he said, quite genially.

"That's it," said Lovell. "I've got the paper in my pocket. You needn't have paid for that advertisement, Carthew—I'd have taken the bike off your hands if you'd told me."

"Well, I couldn't guess that, could I?" said Carthew, with a smile.

"You've got a jigger of your own, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes!"

"What the thump is the use of a Sixth-Former's bike to you, Lovell?" asked Knowles, with a stare. "You can't ride it."

Lovell smiled cheerily.

"Never mind whether I can ride it or not," he answered. "I'm going to buy it, and that's near enough."

"Quite," said Carthew. "That is, of course, if you've got the money. I'm not selling things to a fag on tick."

"I'm not asking for tick—spot cash."

"All serene, then."

Lovell was quite elated. Why Carthew should have advertised that handsome bike for sale for ten shillings was a mystery to him. He could not help entertaining a fear that, at the last moment, Carthew might think better of it, and cry off the offer. He was quite pleased to find Carthew open to do business.

"It's a go, then, Carthew," said Lovell. "You'd better draw up a receipt—that's business-like—and I'll go and take the machine off the stand. Here's ten bob."

Lovell drew a ten-shilling note from his pocket.

Carthew stared at it.

The genial look faded from his face at once.

"You're offering me ten bob?" he said.

"Yes."

"For my Enfield bike?"

"That's it," said Lovell.

Knowles burst into a chuckle; Carthew rose to his feet with a black brow.

Neither of the seniors had the slightest doubt that this was a jape—that Lovell had come to the study to

pull Carthew's leg over the sale of his bike. The offer of ten shillings, when Carthew knew that he had advertised the bike for sale at ten pounds, could scarcely be looked on in any other light.

Carthew of the Sixth was not exactly the fellow to be jested with like this. He picked up a cane and stepped between Lovell and the door.

"Jolly funny, no doubt!" he remarked.

Lovell stared at him.

"I don't see anything funny in it!" he said. "I'm offering you ten shillings for your bike!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Knowles.

"Blessed if I see anything to chortle at!" said the bewildered Lovell. "Here's the ten bob—spot cash! Wha-a-at are you going to do with that cane, Carthew?"

"I'm going to lay it round a cheeky young scoundrel!" answered Carthew. And he proceeded to suit the action to the word without delay.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Oh!" roared Lovell. "Ow! My hat!" He dodged frantically round the study table, Carthew pursuing him with the lashing cane. "You

silly ass—ow! You beastly bully—yoop! Don't you want to sell your rotten bike—Yarooooh!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"Oh crikey! Ow, ow!"

Lovell reached the door and fled into the passage. A hefty swipe of the cane caught him as he went, and Lovell's yell echoed through the Sixth Form passage from end to end.

Then he vanished.

Whether Carthew's bike went for ten pounds or ten shillings it was certain now that Arthur Edward Lovell would not be the purchaser. He had had enough, more than enough, of business dealings with Carthew of the Sixth.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mad as a Hatter!

"W HAT—"

"Which—"

"What the thump—"

"Ow! Ow! Groogh!"

Moo! Oooop!" gurgled Lovell. "He's mad—mad as a hatter! Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome simply blinked at Lovell. They had waited in the changing-room for him to return from his visit to Carthew's study. Whether he would return the happy possessor of an Enfield bike, secured at a great bargain, they felt rather doubtful. But certainly they had not expected him to return like this.

Lovell came into the room wriggling and writhing and mumbling, breathless with anguish and fury.

"What on earth's happened?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in amazement.

"Had a row with Carthew?" asked Newcome.

"Moooooooh!"

"Blessed if I see what there was to row about!" exclaimed Raby. "I suppose even that bully could be civil when he's selling a bike."

"Ow, ow! My hat! I'll make him sit up for it!" gasped Lovell. "The beastly bully, pitching into a chap for nothing!"

"What's happened?" yelled Jimmy Silver impatiently.

hear them. Adolphus Smythe of the Shell listened to Lovell's excited explanation with a superior smile.

"You shouldn't have cheeked him!" remarked Adolphus.

"I didn't cheek him!" roared Lovell.

"Well, you see, you must have," said Adolphus. "If Carthew's trying to sell his bike he wouldn't let out like that at a chap who wanted to buy it. It's not reasonable!"



LOVELL IS WRATHY! "Carthew's offered his bike for sale for ten bob—it's advertised in the local paper!" said Lovell. "Gammon!" exclaimed Adolphus Smythe. "He wouldn't." "Look!" roared Lovell, and he jammed the "Coombe Times" under the lofty nose of Adolphus. He jammed so hard that the dandy of the Shell staggered back and sat down. (See Chapter 4.)

Lovell spluttered.

"He wouldn't take my ten bob. He was civil enough at first—leading me on, I suppose, while he got between me and the door. Then all of a sudden he began swiping me with his cane."

"Did you cheek him?" asked Raby.

"No!" roared Lovell.

"Then what does he mean by it?"

"I don't know—unless he's mad! I suppose he's potty!" howled Lovell. "I know I jolly well shan't buy his bike now!"

Jimmy Silver whistled. He was quite surprised by the occurrence. Unless Carthew was out of his senses, there really seemed no accounting for it. He had offered the bike for sale, and there was no reason why Arthur Edward Lovell should not turn up as a purchaser.

"Well, it's jolly queer!" said the captain of the Fourth. "I suppose Carthew wants to sell the bike, as he's advertising it for sale. Of course, he's down on us personally, but I don't see—"

"That's got nothing to do with a business matter," said Newcome.

"Nothing at all," agreed Jimmy. "I suppose the brute can't keep his beastly temper!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" grieved Lovell. "I've a jolly good mind to go to Mr. Dalton about this! Ow, ow!"

"It's a rotten shame!" said Raby.

A number of fellows had gathered round, curious to know what was up.

Arthur Edward Lovell was not at all loth to explain—his explanation being accompanied by remarks concerning Carthew which would have made that youth's hair almost curl had he heard them. Fortunately, he could not

"I tell you he did!"

"Well, you must have cheeked him!" said Smythe. "You Fourth Form kids are cheeky! I've told you so lots of times!"

Arthur Edward Lovell bestowed a deadly glare on Smythe of the Shell.

"Look here, you born idiot—" he roared.

Adolphus backed away rather quickly. "I say, Lovell, how much did you offer Carthew?" squeaked Tubby Muffin.

"Ten bob, of course."

"Ten bob for his Enfield bike!" exclaimed Tracy of the Shell.

"Yes, ass!"

"No wonder he licked you, then!" said Smythe. "He thought you were japing him, of course."

"Silly ass!" hooted Lovell. "He's offered it for sale for ten bob—it's an advertisement in the local paper."

"Gammon! He wouldn't!"

"Look!" roared Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell jammed the "Coombe Times" under the lofty nose of Adolphus. He jammed it so hard that Adolphus staggered back and sat down quite suddenly on the floor.

Bump!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh gad! Look here!" yelled Adolphus.

"Let's see the giddy advertisement, Lovell," said Mornington of the Fourth, laughing.

A dozen fellows gathered round the "Coombe Times," as Morny held it up to read. Adolphus Smythe picked himself up and turned his eyeglass upon the advertisement.

There it was in plain print! The juniors stared at it, but they had to believe their eyes.

Adolphus Smythe slipped quietly out of the room.

The dandy of the Shell had plenty of money of his own, but he had no objection to getting a little more. Adolphus Smythe was after that valuable bike which was on offer at such a ridiculous figure. He headed at once for Carthew's study in the Sixth. Adolphus was quite keen on exchanging a ten-shilling note for a bicycle worth ten pounds.

He was almost breathless when he reached Carthew's study.

"Come in!" rapped Carthew, in response to Smythe's tap.

Adolphus ambled into the study.

"Well?" grunted Carthew.

"I've dropped in about the bike," said Smythe agreeably. "As you're sellin' it, Carthew, I thought perhaps I'd have it."

Carthew eyed him suspiciously. After his experience with Lovell he had a natural suspicion that there was a "rag" on. A Lower School fellow could not be supposed to have any use, personally, for a Sixth-Former's bicycle. If Smythe wanted to buy it, however, Carthew was ready to "trade."

"Oh, about the bike I advertised in the local paper?" grunted Carthew, with a suspicious eye on Adolphus.

"Yaas."

"Well, if you want it you can have it for the sum advertised, of course," said Carthew. "If you're serious, go ahead."

Adolphus raised his eyebrows.

"Of course I'm serious," he said. "I've come here to buy the bike. Here's ten shillin's—"

"Here's what?" hissed Carthew. He had no doubt now that it was a "rag," and that Smythe of the Shell was hand-in-glove with Lovell of the Fourth in the matter.

"Ten shillin's," said Smythe innocently. "And—Great gad! Wharrer you at? Oh crumbs!"

It seemed like a nightmare mixed up with an earthquake to the astounded Adolphus.

Carthew had leaped up from his chair like a jack-in-the-box and grasped the dandy of the Shell by the collar.

Smythe spun round, gasping, in his grasp.

"So you're in it, are you?" roared Carthew.

"Whoop!"

"You've got the cheek to come raging in my study—a prefect's study, by Jove! Take that—"

"Yaroooh!"

"That" was Carthew's boot, planted on the hapless person of Adolphus Smythe, as he wriggled and struggled in the Sixth-Former's grip.

Adolphus had to take it—he had no choice about that! He yelled frantically as he took it.

"And that!" shouted Carthew.

"Yow-ow-wooop!"

"And that—"

"Oh gad! Leggo!" shrieked Adolphus. "I say, Knowles, stop him! Hold him! He's mad—mad as a hatter! Oh erikey!"

Knowles of the Sixth chuckled.

"Perhaps you'll think twice before you come here again offering ten bob for my bike!" gasped Carthew. "Tell the other young scoundrels what to expect if they try it on! And take that!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now get out!"

Smythe of the Shell was only too glad to get out. He was utterly bewildered and unnerved by the unaccountable outbreak of ferocity on Carthew's part. Unless the fellow was mad there was no comprehending it—and Smythe's opinion was that Carthew was out of his senses.

"Leggo! Oh! Ow!"

"Get out!" Carthew's heavy boot behind Adolphus sent the Shell fellow whirling into the passage.

He sprawled there, roaring.

"Oh, ow! Oh, ow, wow!"

"Clear off!" roared Carthew. "Do you want some more?"

Adolphus Smythe did not want any more. He picked himself up and fled—with less ragerd than ever for the repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere.

Carthew of the Sixth turned back into his study and slammed the door. Knowles was grinning, and Carthew scowled at him.

"Jolly queer sort of a rag, old bean," remarked Knowles.

"Nothing to grin at!" snapped Carthew.

"Nothing at all!" agreed Knowles—but he grinned all the same.

Carthew breathed hard.

"I fancy there won't be any more of it after the example I've made of those two, anyhow," he said.

And Carthew was right on that point. Adolphus Smythe, with tears of rage and pain, was relating his wild experiences to a crowd of amazed juniors, amid exclamations of wonder and amazement. Jimmy Silver & Co. and the rest of the crowd, certainly had no idea of visiting Carthew's study for a business deal in secondhand bicycles after that. A fellow who advertised a bike for sale and started in with a cane as soon as a purchaser appeared was not a fellow to do business with.

There was only one opinion among the amazed juniors—that Mark Carthew of the Sixth was mad—mad as a hatter!

THE END.

(What will be the outcome of this screamingly funny situation you will learn in next week's long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled: "ROOKWOOD'S RECORD RAG!")

THIS WEEK'S LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES!

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- JUNE 27th, 1913.
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- NOVEMBER 19th, 1912.
- OCTOBER 25th, 1909.
- APRIL 25th, 1917.
- FEBRUARY 27th, 1913.
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