

X ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD! THIS WEEK'S WESTERN THRILLER **X**

The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY
Week Ending November 10th, 1928.
New Series.
No. 511.



**\$1,000 REWARD
FOR THE CAPTURE OF
THE RIO KID!**

"CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!" SAYS THE RIO KID

LOVELL'S "WHITE ELEPHANT!"

Arthur Edward Lovell has been landed with a huge leather trunk, and what to do with it he doesn't for the life of him know. But the difficult problem is solved for Arthur Edward in an amazing manner!



The TRUNK with a SECRET!

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

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Head is Surprised!

WHAT—what is this?
Dr. Chisholm, headmaster of Rookwood School, seemed surprised.

He paused in his stately walk, adjusted his eyeglasses upon his august nose, and stared intently at the object which had attracted his attention, and caused his surprised ejaculation.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head. "It is a—a—a trunk!"

Certainly, it was a trunk.

It was, in fact, a gigantic leather trunk, more than four feet long, and very high and broad—almost a mammoth trunk. It was a massive relic of the days when trunks were trunks.

Even considered merely as a trunk, it was rather unusual. In its present surroundings it was more than unusual—it was startling. It lay in the open air, not far from the woodshed, behind some of the school buildings, and it was wet with recent rain. How that gigantic trunk had found a place within the walls of Rookwood was a puzzling mystery to the Head. He gazed at it in perplexity. Then he glanced round him, and sighted four members of the Classical Fourth Form—Jimmy Silver, Raby, Newcome, and Lovell.

The four were, as a matter of fact, watching the Head.

They had seen that the headmaster's stately walk was taking him along the secluded path by which lay the big trunk. They had wondered uneasily whether he would spot it, and what he would say if he did. So they kept him in sight, at a respectful distance, and so they were in view when the headmaster glanced round.

Dr. Chisholm beckoned to them.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "He's seen it, and he's seen us. You ass, Lovell—"

"You chump, Lovell!" murmured Raby.

"You frabjous ass!" muttered Newcome.

The Head's beckoning finger was not to be disregarded. Reluctantly, the Fistical Four of the Fourth approached their headmaster.

Then Dr. Chisholm pointed to the huge trunk.

"What does this mean, Silver?" he asked.

"That—that trunk, sir?" asked Jimmy.

"This—this enormous trunk," said the Head. "Do you know anything about it, Silver?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"It is extraordinary that such a thing should be lying here," said the Head. "Does it belong to you, Silver?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"It's mine, sir!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

Dr. Chisholm's eyeglasses turned on Lovell.

"Then what is it?" he demanded. "How came you to be the possessor of this—this huge trunk, and why is it lying here, in the open air?"

Arthur Edward Lovell crimsoned under the steady gaze of the Head. He was feeling extremely uncomfortable.

"I—I bought it, sir," he stammered.

"In the name of all that is absurd, Lovell, why did you purchase this enormous and useless trunk?"

"I—I didn't mean to—"

"You purchased it without meaning to do so?" exclaimed the Head, raising his eyebrows. He was naturally astonished at such a statement.

"Ye-e-es, sir," stammered Lovell.

"It was at an auction—"

"An auction?"

"That's it, sir. There—there was an auction the other day at Latcham—they were selling the goods of Colonel Thompson, of Latchm, who's gone abroad, sir. We—we went and—and I did some bidding for—"

"You did some bidding?" repeated the Head.

"Yes, sir, and—and got landed with the trunk. I—I didn't expect it to be knocked down to me," explained Lovell.

"Bless my soul!"

Dr. Chisholm fairly blinked at Lovell.

He did not know Arthur Edward so well as Arthur Edward's chums knew him. So he was greatly surprised to hear that Lovell had entertained himself by bidding at an auction for goods he did not want to buy.

"Dear me!" said the Head at last. "This is very extraordinary! You seem to have acted very thoughtlessly, Lovell. In fact, very foolishly. I did not know you were so stupid a boy!"

Lovell's face, already crimson, fairly

burned. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome manfully strove to suppress their smiles. They had already told Lovell what they thought of him, more than once. Now he was hearing much the same from the Head, though in more polished language.

"You must dispose of this trunk immediately, Lovell. It cannot remain here. Certainly it cannot be placed in the House. It must be disposed of. In fact, I will give instructions to the housekeeper to request the dustman to remove it on his next visit."

"Oh, sir!"

"You should not have attended an auction, Lovell. You should not have joined in the bidding. Above all, you should not have made bids for articles you did not desire to purchase. Your conduct seems to me to indicate the most crass stupidity on your part. You will take two hundred lines of Virgil for this act of folly, Lovell."

"Oh!"

"And unless you contrive, in some manner, to dispose of this trunk immediately, it will be removed by the dustman!" added the Head.

With that, Dr. Chisholm resumed his stately walk.

Arthur Edward Lovell was left staring at his trunk, and his comrades staring at Lovell—and smiling.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Unexpected!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL grunted.

From every fellow in the Lower School at Rookwood Lovell had received more or less chipping on the subject of his bargain at the Latcham auction-rooms.

Truly, a reckless bidder at an auction sale could scarcely have been landed with an article more cumbrous and utterly useless than that enormous trunk.

Its former owner, Colonel Thompson of Latcham, had gone abroad, but had had the wisdom not to take that trunk with him.

It was probable indeed that the gallant colonel never had used that trunk at all. It looked as if it might have been left him by his grandfather or great-grandfather. Probably it had

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stood empty and neglected in a lumber-room all the time that it was in the colonel's possession.

Only the general sale of the colonel's household effects had disinterested it from the attic where it had long rested. And Lovell had bagged it at the auction—which all the Classical Fourth agreed was just like Lovell. Anything else might have been of some use or service to the purchaser—that trunk was absolutely useless and unserviceable. And so it was quite natural that Arthur Edward Lovell should become the happy possessor of it.

Lovell had hoped to get his money back on the bargain. He had advertised the trunk for sale in the local paper at Coombe. There had been no replies, so far, and Lovell had given up expecting any.

Nevertheless, the idea of having his trunk taken away by the dustman as rubbish was very disconcerting to Lovell. He had paid hard money for it. It was a good trunk for anybody who wanted a trunk nearly large enough to live in.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked back to the House—three members of the Co. smiling, and Arthur Edward Lovell frowning.

Tubby Muffin called to them as they came in.

"Letter for you, Lovell."

"Oh, good!" said Lovell.

Perhaps Lovell hoped that the letter was an answer to his advertisement of the valuable trunk. He hurried across to the rack to take it down.

"My hat!" ejaculated Lovell a minute later.

"Remittance?" asked Raby hopefully.

"Just in time for tea in the study!"

"Better than that," said Lovell.

He grinned cheerily.

"I think you fellows had an idea that I couldn't sell that trunk!" he said.

"Just a few!" agreed Jimmy Silver.

"Look at that, then?"

Lovell held out his letter to his three chums. Jimmy Silver, in some surprise, took it, and the three read it together. And then they stared.

For the letter ran:

"Dear Sir,—From your description of the trunk you have for sale, I think it is just the one I am in want of. Please let me know whether you will accept five pounds, or name your price.

"Yours truly,

"JOHN SMITH."

The Peal of Bells,
Greenwood.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Lovell in Luck!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. blinked at that letter.

It fairly took their breath away.

"Well, my only Aunt Jane!" ejaculated Newcome, in astonishment.

"It's a hoax!" said Raby.

"A what?" hooted Lovell.

"A hoax! Nobody in his senses would give five pounds for that rotten old trunk!"

"You silly ass, Raby!"

Jimmy examined the letter with care. So far as he could see it was genuine enough. Mr. John Smith, whomsoever Mr. John Smith might be, had read the description of the trunk and decided that he wanted it. If Mr. John Smith had any use to put it to, no doubt five pounds was a reasonable price for the great leather structure.

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"Looks fair and square," said Jimmy at last. "I'm jolly glad!"

"I fancy I told you I could sell that trunk," grinned Lovell. "I won't say I told you so! But I did tell you so, all the same!"

Arthur Edward seemed to be walking on air, as he proceeded to the end study with his chums for tea.

Over tea he talked a good deal, chiefly on the topic of himself and his unusual perspicacity as a bargain hunter.

The offer of five pounds for the trunk was, indeed, a much-needed solace to Arthur Edward, after all the chipping he had received on the subject.

The news of the letter from Mr. John Smith spread in the Fourth Form passage, and a good many fellows came along to the end study to inquire about it.

After tea the Fistical Four wheeled out their bicycles. The village of Greenwood was only a few miles away, and there was time to bike across and see Mr. Smith before loking up.

Lovell wanted to clinch the matter at once. Possibly he had a lurking doubt that Mr. Smith, given time, might repent him of his offer. For really and truly, at the bottom of his heart, Lovell could not quite understand why any man, presumably in his right senses, should offer five pounds for that dilapidated old trunk.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome cycled over with him, rather curious to see Mr. John Smith, whose munificent offer had brought so much satisfaction to Lovell.

The four juniors pedalled along the country lanes at a great rate.

About half-way to Greenwood there was a sudden interruption.

A constable stepped out of a gap in the hedge, and held up his hand, and the four juniors jammed on their brakes and jumped down.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Jimmy Silver.

The constable scanned them.

"All right," he said, "you can get on!"

"But what the thump did you stop us for?" demanded Lovell, rather warmly.

"Dooty, sir!" said the gentleman in blue. "My orders are to watch this road. We're looking for a man, and he ain't far off, either."

Lovell whistled.

"Nosey Jenks?" he asked.

The constable gave him a quick look.

"What do you know about him?" he asked.

"Lots!" answered Lovell cheerily.

"We happen to be the chaps who found the giddy burglar hiding in a shed, Latcham way, one day last week."

"Oh, I see! You've not seen him since?"

"No!" said Jimmy Silver.

The constable stepped back into the hedge, and the Fistical Four remounted their machines and rode on.

"So they haven't got Jenks yet," remarked Raby.

"Must be an ass to hang on around here, with all the bobbies after him," said Newcome.

Lovell grinned.

"He's after the loot he hid away in these parts, and he won't be happy till he gets it," he remarked. "I fancy they'll get him before he gets the loot, at this rate."

"It's queer!" Jimmy Silver remarked thoughtfully. "It's months ago that that man Jenks robbed the bank at Latcham, and got away with a bundle of banknotes. They suppose that he hid them somewhere, as he had nothing on him when the police collared him.

As he's come back after getting away,

it looks as if he hid the loot somewhere around Latcham; but it's more than a week since we saw him in that shed, hiding from the bobbies. It's jolly queer that he hasn't got hold of the stuff yet, if it's really hidden in these parts as they suppose."

"Jolly queer!" agreed Lovell. "It's jolly risky of him to come back, too. He'd be known anywhere, with his broken nose."

"I suppose he thinks it's worth the risk, with two or three thousand pounds in notes lying around," said Raby.

"Must be a jolly exciting life for him."

"There's Greenwood," said Lovell, as they came in sight of the village.

The chums of the Fourth rode into the village. The Peal of Bells, a little old-fashioned inn, stood at the end of the little old rugged High Street. Greenwood was a quiet little sleepy place, with not more than thirty inhabitants, and it did not even boast a village policeman.

Jimmy Silver & Co. rode up to the inn, and jumped off their machines.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

"MR. SMITH at home?"
Arthur Edward Lovell asked that question of the red-cheeked, rather sleepy-looking innkeeper at the Peal of Bells. The innkeeper nodded.

"Yes, sir; he's always at home since he's been staying here," he said. "Here, George, tell Mr. Smith there's a young gentleman to see him."

A plump, red-cheeked youth blinked at the Rookwood juniors, and disappeared upstairs.

He came back in a few minutes.

"Mr. Smith wants to know the young gentleman's name and his business," he said. "He's got a cold, he says, and can't come down."

"My name's Lovell, and I've come about the trunk, tell him that," said Lovell.

"Yes, sir!"

The lad went upstairs again.

The juniors heard a murmur of voices again, and George returned.

"You can come up, sir," he said.

"Right-ho! You fellows wait here," said Lovell.

He followed the boy upstairs.

"Ere you are, sir."

Lovell was shown into a back room, and George descended the stairs again, leaving him with Mr. Smith.

Lovell blinked about him.

Outside, the sun was setting, but most of the sunset was shut out by curtains across the little diamond-paned window. A candlestick stood on a table by the bed, but the candle was not lighted. Mr. John Smith seemed to prefer the gloom.

Mr. Smith was seated in an armchair, and he did not rise as Lovell entered. His face was swathed in a muffler, concealing nearly all his features, revealing little more than a pair of very keen, shifty eyes, closely set together.

There seemed to Lovell something familiar about those keen, shifty eyes as he looked at Mr. Smith.

The man fixed the shifty eyes on the Rookwood junior very keenly, and it seemed to Lovell that he gave a start. Somehow, it came into Lovell's mind that he had seen the man before somewhere, and that the man had also seen him.

"Mr. Smith?" he asked.

"Yes." The man's voice was rough, but subdued. "You're Lovell, who was

advertising a trunk in the Coombe paper?"

"That's so," said Lovell.

"Sit down."

Lovell sat down.

Mr. Smith had his back to the window, keeping his face out of such light as there was. Lovell faced him, puzzled by the familiar aspect of those keen, shifty, close-set eyes.

"Let us come to business, then," said Mr. Smith. "Your description of the trunk looks as if it will suit me. Four-foot-six long—"

"That's right."

"Leather, with leather handles and all—"

"Right!" said Lovell.

"Nearly two feet high, and the same deep."

"Yes."

"The description is very like that of a trunk mentioned in an auction sale

the colonel's things when Colonel Thompson sold up on going abroad."

"That's all right, then. Where is it now?"

"At my school—Rookwood. You can send for it when you like."

Mr. Smith seemed to reflect for a moment.

"I'll send for it," he said. "That's all right. I'll ask the landlord here to tell the carrier to call for it to-morrow."

"You're going to buy it without seeing it first?" asked Lovell.

"It's all right, from the description," said Mr. Smith. "I can see you're a straightforward young gentleman, and I can take your word about it."

"Thank you!" said Lovell, rather flattered.

"Now about the money?" said Mr. Smith.

Lovell's eyes danced. He already saw the fiver in his hands—and himself dis-

And he quitted the room and closed the door after him. It struck Lovell that Mr. John Smith was rather a peculiar man to do business with, but he was too pleased at the success of his visit to think much about that. He joined Jimmy Silver & Co. downstairs.

"Come on!" he said. "We shall have to buzz to get back before lock-up!"

"Is it all right?" asked Raby.

"Of course."

"You've got the fiver?"

"Smith's sending it by the carrier to-morrow, when he sends for the trunk," explained Lovell. "It's all right; he's very keen to have the trunk. He knows it's Colonel Thompson's old trunk that was sold at the auction last week. I dare say he meant to be at the auction and bid for it; he seems to know all about it, anyhow."

"What's he like?" asked Jimmy



AN AMAZING FIND! In a remote recess down in the corner of the trunk, something was wedged tight in the lining. Jimmy Silver drew it out. It was a wad of crisp slips of paper, and at the sight of them Lovell jumped. "I—I say, that looks like—like banknotes!" he gasped. (See Chapter 6.)

catalogue in a sale that took place at Latham last week," said Mr. Smith.

Lovell smiled.

"It's the same trunk," he said.

Mr. Smith's shifty eyes glittered.

"How's that?" he asked.

"You see, I bought the trunk at the auction," explained Lovell. "Not wanting to keep it, I've advertised to sell again."

"I thought so," said Mr. Smith. "There's not many trunks knocking about that answers that description. I fancied it might be the same."

"That doesn't make any difference, I suppose," said Lovell rather anxiously. "I want to sell the trunk."

"Not at all. I'm ready to buy it," said Mr. Smith cordially. "But I want to know what I'm buying. If the trunk is the one that was the property of Colonel Thompson, of Latham, it's good enough for me."

"It's the one," said Lovell. "It was sold at the auction with the rest of

playing the same to admiring eyes in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood. But Mr. Smith went on:

"Of course, I trust you, Master Lovell—I can see you're straightforward. Still, one doesn't pay for goods before delivery."

"How are we going to arrange it, then?" asked Lovell.

Mr. Smith reflected again.

"I'll send the money by the carrier," he said. "He'll hand you the envelope with the fiver in it, and you'll hand over the trunk to him. Is that all right?"

"Right as rain," said Lovell.

"That's settled, then!" said Mr. Smith. "Good-evening!"

Lovell rose to his feet. Mr. Smith pulled the muffler a little closer about his face and coughed.

"I've got rather a bad cold," he said apologetically. "Shut the door carefully, will you?"

"Certainly!" said Lovell. "Good-evening!"

Silver, as the juniors wheeled their bicycles into the street.

"Blessed if I know! He's got a cold, and kept his face muffled up," said Lovell. "It struck me I'd seen him before somewhere; his eyes seemed familiar somehow. Let's get on."

And the Fistical Four rode back to the school, Lovell in high feather. The chums of the Fourth were just in time to escape being locked out. As they came up into the Fourth Form passage at least a dozen of the Classical Fourth greeted Lovell with questions.

"Sold the giddy trunk?"

"Where's the fiver?"

"I say, Lovell," bawled Tubby Muffin, "there's just time to change it at the tuckshop before they close! Shall I go for you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I haven't got the fiver yet—"

gaped Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly asses, it's all right!"

howled Lovell. "The fiver's coming to-morrow, when Mr. Smith sends for the trunk."

"I don't think!" said Putty of the Fourth; and there was another laugh. "Jolly old Smith is a practical joker, and he's pulling your leg!"

Lovell snorted. "Well, to-morrow you'll jolly well see what you will see!" he said.

And as that was a statement that could not possibly be controverted, the subject was dropped, and the Fistical Four settled down to prep.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Startling News!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL was in an expectant mood the following day.

He was looking forward keenly to the arrival of the carrier, with a five-pound note to hand over for the trunk.

His friends were not quite so expectant.

But Lovell had no doubts. Old Mac, the porter, was instructed to deal with the carrier if he came during class, and to receive the payment for the trunk, and to hand over that enormous article in exchange.

But when morning class was over and Lovell hurried down to the porter's lodge old Mack had no news for him. The carrier had not called.

"I suppose he'll be here this afternoon," Arthur Edward Lovell remarked to his comrades.

"Let's hope so!" said Raby. Lovell sniffed a little, but he did not doubt. Why on earth should John Smith, a stranger to him, bargain for the trunk and arrange to purchase it if he had no intention of keeping to his bargain? The thing was absurd. Lovell was quite assured that Mr. Smith intended to keep to his bargain, unless prevented by some accident.

But when classes were over for the day, and Lovell inquired again at the porter's lodge, there was still no news. Lovell was puzzled.

"The carrier's not likely to come along later than this," he said. "Of course, his van may have broken down or something."

Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled. They had not the slightest belief that the carrier's van had broken down. Really, it would have been rather too much of a coincidence.

"I suppose he'll come to-morrow!" said Lovell. "After all, there's no hurry that I know of."

"Quite so!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Lovell waited till dark for the carrier; but there was no carrier. Then he was rather sorry that he had waited and had not cycled over to Greenwood to see Mr. Smith again. However, it was too late to think of that now, so Lovell had to wait till the morrow.

"Of course, there may have been some accident," Lovell told his chums the next morning after breakfast.

"Of course," smiled Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Smith may have fallen over his own feet and broken his neck," suggested Raby. "Or the carrier may have retired from business, or emigrated to Canada. You never know!"

Lovell glared. "You silly owl! Lots of things may have happened—"

"Oh, lots!" said Jimmy Silver pacifically. "Hallo, Tubby, what's the jolly old excitement?"

Tubby Muffin came up to the

Fistical Four in the quad, his fat face fairly blazing with excitement. He had a "Daily Mail" in his hand—probably Mr. Dalton's copy of that newspaper.

"You fellows heard?" he gasped.

"Heard what?"

"They've got him!"

"Lucid!" said Newcome. "Who's got whom?"

"The bobbies, you know!" gasped Tubby. "They got him yesterday—that man Nosey Jenks, who robbed the County Bank at Latcham months ago!"

The Fistical Four were keenly interested at once. Lovell even forgot Mr. Smith and the big trunk. For more than a week, it was known, Nosey Jenks, the bank-robber, had been lurking in the neighbourhood of Latcham and Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. had actually found him in hiding—in a shed one rainy day—and others had seen him in various places. The news that he had been arrested at last was not surprising, but it was quite interesting.

"Well, I'm glad they've got him!" said Jimmy Silver. "I believe he was a jolly dangerous character. Where did they get him?"

"At an inn at Greenwood."

"My hat, there's only one inn at Greenwood!" exclaimed Lovell. "Mean to say they got him at the Peal of Bells, where we went the day before yesterday?"

"That's it," said Tubby. "He's been living there two or three days, under an assumed name. He called himself John Smith—"

"What!" roared the Fistical Four together.

"John Smith!"

"You silly fat duffer!" shouted Lovell. "Is that your idea of a joke? Sit down!"

"Yaroooh!" howled Tubby Muffin as he sat. He sat down hard under Lovell's heavy hand.

"You shouldn't be so jolly funny, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "It isn't really in your line."

"Yaroooh! It's true, you dummy!" howled Tubby Muffin. "It's in the paper!"

"Oh, cheese it!" snapped Lovell.

"I tell you it's in the paper!" yelled Tubby.

Jimmy Silver jerked the "Daily Mail" away from Reginald Muffin. He looked at once at the column headed:

"WANTED MAN ARRESTED AFTER SIX MONTHS!"

"Read it out," said Raby.

Jimmy Silver read it out, what time Tubby Muffin picked himself up breathlessly, glaring indignantly at Lovell. The news was rather startling to the Fistical Four—most of all to Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell's face, indeed, was a study as Jimmy proceeded.

"John Jenks, alias 'Nosey' Jenks, was arrested yesterday morning at a village called Greenwood, in Hampshire. It will be recalled that Jenks was wanted in connection with a bank robbery at Latcham, in the same county. On the occasion of the robbery Jenks was discovered in the bank, and escaped by the roof and by forcing an entrance into an attic window of an adjoining house, belonging to Colonel Thompson, of Latcham. He was seized soon after escaping from a lower window of the house, but his plunder was not found upon him, and it was surmised at the time that he had thrown it into the river. He escaped again later, and has since been at large. Why he returned to the scene of the crime, where his

face, disfigured by a broken nose, is quite well known to the local police, is not at present known; but it appears that he has been staying some days at an inn called the Peal of Bells, at Greenwood, a few miles from Latcham, under the name of John Smith. He is now in the hands of the police."

"Well?" snorted Tubby Muffin indignantly. "Well, Lovell, you silly ass, what about that?"

Lovell did not speak. He grabbed the paper from Jimmy Silver and read the paragraph over again. The news had come like a thunderclap to him—and, indeed, to his comrades. They had wondered a good deal about Mr. Smith, but certainly it had not crossed their minds that he was the man with the broken nose whom they had seen the previous week—Nosey Jenks, the bank-robber.

"My hat!" said Lovell at last. "This beats it!" said Raby, with a whistle. "But, I say, Lovell, you must be a thumping ass! You saw the man face to face the day before yesterday!"

Lovell breathed hard. "That's why he kept the room dark and had a muffler over his face," he said. "I saw nothing but his eyes, and I remember they seemed familiar somehow. If I'd seen his nose I'd have known him at once."

"But what the thump did he want with the trunk?" said Jimmy Silver in great perplexity. "His offer to buy it can't have been a practical joke, after all."

"I knew it wasn't!" snapped Lovell.

"Well, it couldn't have been. A chap in such a scrape couldn't have been thinking of practical jokes. He really wanted the trunk," said Jimmy. "What the thump could he have wanted it for? It was risky for him to see anybody, even a schoolboy, who wasn't likely to be suspicious."

"There goes the bell!"

The Fistical Four went in to class. No one else in the Classical Fourth, excepting Tubby Muffin, had yet seen the newspaper, so the news was not known yet in the Form. But during class, regardless of Mr. Dalton, Tubby Muffin spread the surprising information, in a series of excited whispers.

Jimmy Silver was not joining in the whispering, however. Neither was he giving his usual attention to Mr. Dalton's valuable instructions. He was caught out several times that morning by the Form master, and by the time the Classical Fourth were dismissed Jimmy Silver was the richer by three hundred lines. As a matter of fact, Jimmy Silver's mind was greatly exercised on a matter beside which Form work sank into insignificance. Never had the captain of the Fourth been so glad to escape from the Form-room as he was when the Fourth were dismissed after second lesson.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Secret of the Trunk!

"COME on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Where?" grunted Lovell. Lovell was not in a good temper.

"I want to have a look at your trunk, old man."

"Oh, blow the trunk!" said Lovell crossly. "The fact is, I'm fed-up with that dashed trunk! The sooner the dustman takes the dashed old thing away, the better!"

Raby and Newcome grinned. "Never mind, let's go and have a look at it again," said Jimmy Silver.

"It may turn out, after all, to be more valuable than we supposed."

Lovell stared at him.

"What the thump do you mean? It's a jolly good trunk—lots of leather in it, and good leather, too. But if—"

"Come on!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

Somewhat mystified, Jimmy Silver's chums followed him. They walked round the buildings to the woodshed, and came on the great trunk—still lying where the Head had seen it. It had not yet fallen a prey to the dust-man though that sad fate hovered over it, as it were, and was not likely to be much longer delayed.

Jimmy sat on the trunk.

"I've been thinking about this, you chaps," he said. "Just listen to me a few minutes. Why do you fellows think Nosey Jenks wanted to get hold of this giddy trunk?"

"Well, he read the description of the trunk in my advertisement, you know," said Lovell. "He knew it was a good thing."

Jimmy Silver gazed at Lovell and smiled.

"He read the description right enough," he said. "He was lying jolly low at the Peal of Bells; but, of course, he would have the papers brought to him, to keep an eye on them, and read up any references that were made to the hunt that was going on for his jolly old self. That was how he happened to see the advertisement, I suppose; and he must have read, too, that Colonel Thompson's household effects had been sold by auction at Latham. Certainly a man in his position wouldn't have been thinking about buying trunks if—"

"But he was," said Lovell.

"And he was interested in the big trunk that had once belonged to Colonel Thompson, of Latham," said Jimmy, unheeding. "From the description it struck him that it was very likely the same trunk. It's a bit uncommon, you know."

"He told me that when I saw him," said Lovell.

"Quite so, old chap. Well, why did he want to get into touch with Colonel Thompson's old trunk?"

"He knew it was a bargain—"

"H'm! Just recall what happened when the bank was robbed," said Jimmy. "Jenks was spotted there, and chased over the roof. He got into an attic window of the colonel's house, which is next to the bank. He had a bundle of banknotes with him, but the plunder was missing when he was collared soon afterwards in the street. Now, Jenks must have known that it was a hundred to one that he would be collared, with the police so close after him. That was why he got rid of the loot. It was supposed that he'd chucked it into the river; but his coming back here shows pretty plainly that he had hidden it somewhere, and hoped to get hold of it again. Now, suppose he hid it somewhere in the colonel's house?"

"Phew!"

"Suppose," went on Jimmy, "that after getting into the attic window he shoved it into an old trunk that was stacked away there—"

"What?"

"My hat!"

"Jimmy!"

"The police got him soon afterwards," went on Jimmy. "He let them think he'd pitched the banknotes into the river. If he'd gone to prison he would have hoped to get his loot back when he came out of chokey. As it happened, he escaped, and after a time, when he thought it would be safe, he

came back after the plunder. If it's as I've supposed, his game would be to get into the colonel's house, and get back what he'd shoved into that old trunk in the lumber-room. Only, as it happened, Colonel Thompson had gone abroad, and put his effects up to auction. That was rather a facer for Mr. Nosey Jenks—one right in the eye. Then he learns, from an advertisement, that the chap who had bought that old trunk at the auction was trying to sell it again—"

Raby and Newcome stared. Lovell grinned.

"Jimmy, old man, you're not built for a Sherlock Holmes," said Arthur Edward. "The actual fact is, that Jenks, thief as he was, had an eye for a bargain, and knew that it was a jolly good trunk—"

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Jimmy—"

Raby chuckled.

"Let's look in the trunk," he said. "Unless Jenks was potty, he must have had a pretty strong interest in this old trunk. I shouldn't wonder if Jimmy's got it right. Let's look!"

"Rot!" said Lovell.

Jimmy slid off the trunk.

The huge lid was raised, and the interior, with its torn lining, was exposed to view. The trunk, of course, was empty, but Jimmy Silver proceeded to examine the torn lining.

Raby and Newcome watched him with interest, Lovell with a derisive grin.

"I'll tell you what, Jimmy," said Arthur Edward. "I'll eat all the giddy banknotes you find hidden in this trunk."

"Ass!"

Jimmy Silver groped under the torn lining. Carefully and methodically he groped, shoving his hand through gap after gap in the lining. He gave a start as his hand came into contact with something that was certainly not lining.

In a remote recess, down in the corner of the trunk, at arm's length from a gash in the old lining, something was wedged in tight.

Jimmy Silver drew it out.

It was a wedge of crisp slips of paper, crumpled tightly together. He held it up in the sunshine.

Lovell jumped.

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"I—I say, that looks like—like—like banknotes!" he gasped.

"It is banknotes, fathead!" said Newcome.

"Great Scott!"

Jimmy Silver unfolded the wedge of crisp notes. Banknotes—Bank of England notes—met the startled eyes of the chums of the Fourth—banknotes of various denominations from five to fifty.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell. "Why, there—there's a thousand pounds there, or more!"

"Quite!"

"Great pip!"

There was no doubt about it. Jimmy Silver had discovered the secret hiding-place of Nosey Jenks' loot. Certainly, had any police-officer been aware of Nosey Jenks' interest in the colonel's old trunk he would not have been long in arriving at the same conclusion that Jimmy had arrived at. But of Nosey's dealings with Lovell, on the subject of the ancient trunk, no one outside Rookwood was aware. But for Jimmy Silver, the old trunk, with its hidden treasure, would have been consigned to the dust-man.

"Better get those giddy banknotes to the Head at once," said Raby, rather unceasingly. "That's an awful lot of money!"

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

And the Fistical Four hurried away to the House.

Dr. Chisholm was astonished.

So was all Rookwood.

So was a police-inspector who came over post-haste from Latham, called on the telephone.

So, probably, was Nosey Jenks, when, in the cold seclusion of the "stone jug," he learned that his loot had been found.

It was quite a triumph for the Fistical Four.

Most of all, it was a triumph for Arthur Edward Lovell—in the eyes of Arthur Edward, at least.

What would have become of the hidden banknotes had Lovell not had that old trunk "knocked down" to him at the Latham Auction Rooms, was a problem. Certainly, no one would have been likely to search behind the lining of the old trunk for hidden treasure. It was due to Arthur Edward's reckless bidding at the auction that the trunk had come to Rookwood—it was owing to his endeavour to get rid of it again that Nosey Jenks had learned where it was, and had attempted to get possession of it, and it was through Nosey Jenks' attempt that Jimmy Silver had figured out how the matter stood. So it was Lovell who had brought the discovery about—at least, in Lovell's own opinion.

"Jolly lucky I bought that old trunk—what?" Lovell said to his comrades about a hundred times. "You fellows were against it, you remember? Suppose I'd taken any notice of your rot, where would those banknotes be now? This really ought to be a lesson to you chaps."

Whereat the Co. chuckled cheerfully.

It was Lovell's fixed opinion that the whole credit in this affair was his own, and he had that opinion wholly to himself.

THE END.

"ASKING FOR TROUBLE!" is the title of next week's rousing long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood. Don't miss it, chums!

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