

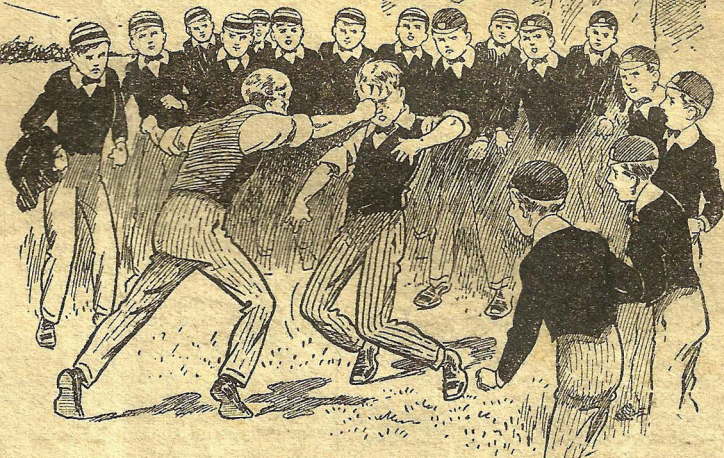
RUCTIONS AT ROOKWOOD!

Jimmy Silver, the junior skipper of Rookwood, has good reasons to regret the day he revived the football fixture with the juniors of Oakshott School!

ASKING for TROUBLE!

ANOTHER ROLICKING LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD.

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.



THE FIRST CHAPTER.
Waiting for Oakshott!

LET'S chuck it!" growled Lovell. And Raby and Newcome chimed in:

"Let's!"

Jimmy Silver looked worried.

It was a fine afternoon; a clear, cold day; glorious weather for football. The Rookwood junior team were on their ground, ready—some of them punting a ball about to keep themselves warm.

Jimmy Silver did not want to "chuck it" if he could help it.

Oakshott were expected to send over a team that afternoon; and Jimmy did not want to "chuck" a football match. But Oakshott were late—very late—there was no doubt about that.

Kick-off was timed for half-past two. It was now a quarter to three, and Chilcot & Co., of Oakshott, had not yet put in an appearance.

All sorts of things might have happened to delay their arrival, of course; but it was very disconcerting, not to say exasperating, to fellows who were kicking their heels waiting for the late comers.

"It's check—sheer unadulterated cheek!" said Valentine Mornington. "Better chuck it, and when they come, let 'em go home again."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

He was worried, and he was annoyed; but he was not prepared for so drastic a measure as that.

"They're bound to come," he said.

"When?" grunted Lovell.

"If anything had happened to stop them, they'd wire or phone," said Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell grew sarcastic. "Are we going to wait for them and play after dark?" he inquired. "Are we going to ask fellows to stand round striking matches to show us a light?"

"Ass!" said Jimmy.

"It's cheek!" repeated Mornington. "I know that fellow Chilcot, and he's just puttin' on side."

"Just that," said Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth. "Come to think of it, it was rather fatheaded to revive that old fixture with Oakshott."

"Well, I wasn't keen on it, for one," said Jimmy. "But we had a vacant date, and they seemed keen. I think it's all right—they've had a breakdown on the road or something."

"Lost a connection on the railway, perhaps," suggested Erroll.

"Sniff, from Lovell. They're not coming by rail. They're coming over in a whacking big car. That's the way Chilcot splashes his money about."

"Well, cars break down sometimes," said Jimmy Silver. "Might have run out of petrol, same as you used to with the motor-scooter in the vac, old chap."

"Bosh!"

"You see, Lovell—"

"Rubbish!"

"Well, we'll give them a chance," said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want to chuck a football match if we can help it. It means wasting a half-holiday."

"We can pick up sides and play a House match," said Tommy Dodd.

"Good! And it can be going on when they arrive—if they ever do arrive," said Lovell. "That will show how much we think of them."

"Hear, hear!" said Mornington.

"But if there's been an accident on the road—" urged Jimmy.

"There hasn't!" answered Lovell.

"They could telephone," said Raby.

"But suppose their jolly old car broke down miles away from a telephone," said Jimmy, determined to look on the brighter side of the matter.

"It didn't!" said Lovell.

"It might have, fathead! Suppose—"

"Oh, if you're going to suppose, I'm done!" said Lovell resignedly. "While you're about it, suppose there was an earthquake and they were swallowed up. Or suppose there was a tidal wave, and they were washed away. Suppose any old thing you like."

Jimmy Silver did not answer, but he looked across at the clock-tower. It was close on three now.

"Give them till three o'clock," suggested Tommy Dodd. "If they're not here by then, they can't expect us to wait any longer, accident or not. We can't fool about till dark, I suppose."

"Nunno, but—"

"It's cheek," repeated Mornington. "We were doubtful about renewing that old fixture, and Chilcot knew it, and it put his back up. So he's foolin' us like this to get even."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "A fellow wouldn't be such a silly ass."

Hansom of the Fifth strolled up to the group of juniors. Edward Hansom, the captain of the Fifth, was to act as referee in the junior match. It was an act of kindness on the part of the great man of the Fifth Form. Hansom was an important fellow—especially in his own eyes. He could not help feeling that his importance was being underestimated. Certainly he was not accustomed to loafing about like this and wasting his valuable time.

"What does this mean, Silver?" asked Hansom brusquely. "Didn't you tell me you were kicking off at half-past two?"

"Yes, Hansom."

"Well, it's close on three now. What does it mean?"

"I don't really know, Hansom," said Jimmy ruefully. "You can see for yourself that the Oakshott fellows haven't turned up yet."

"I can see that," assented Hansom. "They might have wired if they can't come." He looked at his watch. "I've an engagement before five, so if they don't show up soon I shan't be able to ref for you."

"I'm sorry—"

"That's all very well, of course, but a fellow can't hang about like this, wasting his time," said the Fifth-Former, with dignity. "You can send me word when they come; but mind, if it's more than another ten minutes, don't send word—I shan't be able to come back."

And Hansom of the Fifth walked off. "Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver dismally. "Now Hansom's got his back up."

"No wonder!" grunted Lovell. "I've got my back up, too, if that amounts to anything."

"It doesn't, old chap."

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

There was a shout from Tommy Cook.

"Here they come!"
 "Oh, good!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in great relief.
 "Past three!" growled Lovell.
 "Better late than never. Cut off and tell Hansom."

Lovell grunted and cut off. And Jimmy Silver went to greet Valence Chilcot, the junior captain of Oakshott, with the pleasantest smile he could muster up in the painful circumstances.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Swank!

VALENCE CHILCOT shook hands with Jimmy Silver in a very perfunctory way. He was a rather handsome and very elegant fellow, and looked as if he thought a great deal of himself; as probably he did. Jimmy expected an explanation or apology for the tardy arrival, but Chilcot offered none. He did not seem to think the matter worthy of mention; or, rather, he did not seem to think of it at all.

Jimmy Silver wondered whether Morny was right, and whether the Oakshott captain's intention was to be "cheeky." Jimmy certainly was not the fellow to take "cheek" with too much patience; but, on the other hand, he was slow to take offence, and charitably desirous of thinking the best he could of everybody. So he was resolved to be perfectly agreeable to Chilcot. But if Chilcot did not consider the tardy arrival worthy of mention, most of the Rookwooders did not agree with him. They wanted to know.

"Accident on the road?" Mornington asked.

Chilcot glanced at him.

"No. Why?"

"You're jolly late."

"Are we late?"

"Wha-a-at?"

Chilcot glanced at his watch.

"By gad! We're a little late," he agreed. "Have we been keepin' you fellows waitin'?"

"Well, you couldn't be late without keeping us waiting, could you?" said Tommy Dodd rather tartly. "We were ready on time."

"Dear me!" said Chilcot.

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips.

"Do you mean to say that you haven't been delayed on the road at all?" asked Newcome.

"Nothin' of the kind."

"Do you generally turn up half an hour late for a fixture, then?"

"Not for an important fixture, of course," said Chilcot.

Some of the Oakshott footballers grinned.

"No need to waste time talking," interrupted Jimmy Silver hastily—and inwardly determining that the revived fixture with Oakshott should be dropped like a hot potato after this match. "Let's get going."

"Certainly. Perhaps you'll show us to our dressin'-room."

"This way!"

"Thanks!" yawned Chilcot.

The Oakshott fellows went in to change. The Rookwooders looked at one another, with feelings almost too deep for words.

Even Jimmy Silver, with all his desire for peace and good-fellowship, could not doubt that Chilcot was deliberately insolent. The looks of the other Oakshott fellows showed that the late arrival had been intentional, and was intended as a slight.

"Cheeky cads!" said Mornington, careless whether the Oakshott fellows overheard him or not. "But we'll take

some of the swank out of them when we get going."

"Yes, rather!" said Tommy Dodd, with a deep breath.

"Goal!"

It was a shout from the Rookwood crowd, mingled with laughter.

From the Rookwood point of view it was entertaining.

The game had been going three minutes, and in those three minutes the Rookwood footballers had scattered Oakshott almost like chaff before the wind.

Mornington put the ball in.

He did not go all out to put it in—far from that. Mornington was a brilliant forward and he was in great form to-day. But his brilliance was not needed—he need not have been in form at all. For Rookwood came through Oakshott like a knife through cheese, and Mornington fairly strolled up to the visitors' goal and actually had his hands in the pockets of his footer shorts when he kicked the ball in.

"Goal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Valence Chilcot bit his lip hard. The goalkeeper looked sheepish, as well he might. The ball had been "lobbed" in carelessly, and the custodian had missed it by about a yard.

"My only hat!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Do they call this football? What are we playing them for?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"They used to play football," he said. "Their form's gone down a lot under Chilcot—he doesn't seem to me much of a skipper. They must have better men than these at Oakshott."

"Why didn't the ass bring some of them along with him, then?" said Lovell. "Jolly queer idea to bring these chaps to a football match, and leave the footballers at home."

Jimmy chuckled. He had a pretty clear idea of the kind of football captain Chilcot was. His chief qualification for his post was apparently "swank"; and his method of making up a team was to fill it with his friends. Certainly there were plenty of fellows at Oakshott who could play the game, and play it well; but they did not happen to have a "show" under Chilcot's captaincy.

But Oakshott played up a little better after that goal, and for some time Rookwood did not get through. But Oakshott did not get through at all; the play was almost entirely in the visitors' half. Rawson, in the Rookwood goal, stamped his feet and thumped his chest to keep warm. He was not likely to have much other exercise during the match.

For a quarter of an hour Oakshott, going all out, held the enemy; and then Rookwood came through with a rush.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Lovell! Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell snorted.

The goal had not been well kicked; it had not been necessary to kick it well. And Lovell's business, in the half-way line, was rather to feed the forwards than to kick for goal. But he had lobbed in the ball easily, taking a chance that he would never have dreamed of taking against a team that knew its business.

"Call this football?" snorted Arthur Edward, in supreme contempt for his own goal.

Three minutes later Jimmy Silver, at centre-half, sent the ball in. And within five minutes more Tommy Doyle, full-back, lounged along with a goal, amid

roars of laughter. By that time the Rookwood crowd really would not have been surprised if Rawson had walked out of his "chicken-run" and put the ball into the opposite goal.

Oakshott panted and gasped, and looked bewildered, and played up all they could. But the total for Rookwood had reached five to nil, when the whistle went for the interval.

Hansom of the Fifth blew it savagely. Hansom felt that his valuable time was being wasted, in refereeing in a match like this. He was greatly inclined to walk off and leave the entertainment to continue without him.

Chilcot & Co. drew together in the interval, some of them almost tottering, all of them savage and sulky.

Chilcot snapped his teeth.

He ragged his men savagely, and his men retorted with breathless recriminations. They were still breathless when they had to line up again for the second half.

There was a big crowd round Little Side now. Not only juniors, but a good many seniors, had walked down to see the match, purely from the point of view of a humorous entertainment. And all the spectators were openly smiling.

"Look here, Silver," called out Chilcot savagely.

"Hallo!"

"We never expected much in the way of manners here," said Chilcot. "But you ought to keep your mob in a bit better order, I think. We're not accustomed to play football in the middle of a swarm of howlin' dervishes."

"You're not accustomed to play football at all, from your style!" hooted Lovell.

"I can't help the chaps cackling, Chilcot," said Jimmy Silver mildly. "They think it's funny."

The whistle blew sharply.

The game was resumed; and the Rookwooders came on, as it seemed to the hapless visitors, like a tidal wave. The ball went in, in a couple of minutes, and five minutes later it was in again. The Rookwood crowd cheered and laughed at a score of seven to nil.

Chilcot's face expressed sheer evil now.

He was only too conscious of the fact that his self-satisfaction had deluded him; and that he had committed an act of folly in taking on a match with Rookwood at all. He hardly dared to think of what the Oakshott fellows would say when he led home his hopelessly defeated team. His sway in the Lower School at Oakshott might be very seriously imperilled. Chilcot was trying to think now, of some means of escaping from the match, in a way that would "save his face" at home, as much as possible. And Valence Chilcot was not at all particular in his methods.

And so it happened that he charged Jimmy Silver, and when he was easily and lightly shouldered off, turned on the Rookwood skipper, and struck him full in the face with a savage fist.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

Crash!

The unexpected blow landed Jimmy on his back. There was a yell from the Rookwood crowd, and a shrill blast from the whistle. Hansom came hurrying up with a crimson face.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Unfinished Match!

"FOUL!"

"Turn him off!"
 Jimmy Silver staggered to his feet, quite dazed. His impulse was to hurl himself at Chilcot, and mop up the ground with the Oakshott

captain. But he controlled that impulse. He dabbed his nose, from which there came an ooze of crimson, with one hand, and with the other he grabbed at Arthur Edward Lovell and jerked him back from Chilcot. Lovell was on the verge of drastic measures.

"Foul!"
The game was stopped. The Oakshott players drew together, rather apprehensive of the angry crowd. But they were in no danger of being mobbed on the Rookwood ground. The indignant spectators contented themselves with yelling; but their yells were emphatic.

"Is that how you fellows play football at Oakshott—punching a man's face?" bawled Hansom.

"Oh, shut up!" said Chilcot.

"Thank goodness!" murmured Tippet.

"Come along, the lot of you!" growled Chilcot. "The sooner we're off the better. Let's get out of this!"

"Too bad!" yawned Mornington. "We're only seven up—and we were going to make it seventy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chilcot & Co. drew together and walked off the field—or, rather, they limped and tottered off. Hansom of the Fifth stared after them.

Then he glared at Jimmy Silver.

"Look here, Silver, if you ever play that crowd again don't ask me to ref. for you!" he snorted.

And Hansom of the Fifth strode away in great wrath.

hurry. They were winded to the wide, and they ached tremendously, and they grunted and groaned as they changed. In the dressing-room they slanged Chilcot freely, and his face was set and evil.

"I wonder what they'll say at Oakshott, when they hear?" Tippet remarked.

"That's all right," growled Chilcot. "The match wasn't played out—we were practically mobbed by the home crowd—and the Rookwood skipper fouled me—"

"You fouled him, you mean."

"I don't mean anythin' of the kind. And the referee was unfair, an' all that. We chucked the match because we didn't get fair play."



SIMPLE! "Goal!" It was a shout from the Rookwood crowd, mingled with laughter. Mornington had fairly strolled up to the visitors' goal, and actually had his hands in the pockets of his footer shorts when he kicked the ball in. "Goal!" "Ha, ha, ha!" (See Chapter 2.)

"What?"

"We know we've got the referee against us—we never expected fair play here," said Chilcot.

Hansom almost stammered with wrath.

He did not catch on to the fact that Chilcot was deliberately playing for a "row," as an excuse for getting off the ground with the match unfinished. At Oakshott it would sound much better to say that there had been a shindy, with the referee and the crowd against the visitors, than that there had been an overwhelming and ridiculous defeat. And Chilcot was thinking of nothing now but of saving his face as much as he could.

"You cheeky young cad!" gasped Hansom. "Get off the field! I order you off—do you hear?"

Chilcot's eyes glittered.

"I hear," he answered, "and I'm ready. I was a fool to fix up a match with a school of this class!"

"You cheeky outsider!" roared Lovell. "Let go my arm, Jimmy!"

"I'll go off the field fast enough, and my men will come off with me," said Chilcot. "Get a move on, you fellows! We're done here."

"What a game!" said Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver smiled.

"I'm glad it's over," he said. "I'm fed-up with Oakshott. They must be potty to send out a team like that. It's the last time they'll send them over to Rookwood, anyhow."

"Yes, rather!"

"Are they getting off like this?" hissed Lovell. "That cad kicked up a shindy just as an excuse to sneak off. He punched your nose. Are you going to let a cad punch a Rookwood chap's nose?"

"Never mind my nose," said Jimmy. "My nose will stand it. We don't want a fight on the football field, old chap."

Lovell snorted angrily, but the other fellows backed up Jimmy Silver's view very decidedly. Chilcot & Co. might have their own manners and customs, but Little Side at Rookwood was not the place for a shindy. And the game now being over, the Rookwooders went in to change, only desirous that the visitors would clear at the earliest possible moment in the "whacking" big car that was waiting for them.

But Chilcot & Co. were in no hurry. They really were in no state to

"I suppose that's the best yarn to spin; but it's deuced thin," said Tippet.

"I wish I'd given Silver another punch now," snapped Chilcot. "He seems to like havin' his face punched. He must be a pretty funk to take it as he did."

"He doesn't look to me like a funk."

"He acted like one," sneered Chilcot. "And I'm not done with him yet. I'm going to make him eat dirt, hang him, as he's afraid to put up his hands. They can cackle all they like about beatin' us at football, but they won't cackle so much over their captain funk'in' puttin' up his hands."

"Look here, Chilcot, there's a limit—"

"Oh, shut up!"

Chilcot turned his back on Tippet, who shrugged his shoulders. The Oakshott captain spoke in a low tone to Merton, who stared, and then nodded and departed. A little later the Oakshott men went to their car, and Merton rejoined them there.

"He's comin'," he said.

"Who's comin'?" asked Tippet.

"Silver."

"Comin' to say good-bye—what?"

"I sent him a message that I wanted to speak to him before I left," said Chilcot. "He's bound to come."

"Here he comes!" Jimmy Silver came up to the car. Jimmy was a peaceable fellow, and always tolerantly ready to make allowances. He supposed that Chilcot wished to make some apology for his outbreak on the football field, and he was quite prepared to part with the visitors on civil terms.

But his supposition was very far from the facts.

"Just starting," said Jimmy cheerily. "Pleasant journey! It's all right, Chilcot!"

"Is it?" sneered Chilcot. "I've got a few words to say to you, Silver!"

"Go ahead!"

"I punched you on the field—"

"Never mind that!"

"Not at all, if you don't!" sneered Chilcot, with a glance round to make sure that a number of Rookwooders were within hearing. "Before I go, I want to tell you that I don't think much of your football, and I don't think much of your manners, and I don't think much of your pluck!"

Jimmy breathed hard. "Is that all?" he said quietly. "If so, you'd better go!"

"It's not quite all," jeered Chilcot. "That's to finish!"

And his open hand came across Jimmy Silver's face with a crack like a pistol-shot.

Smack! The nuts of Oakshott grinned, and Chilcot, with a mocking laugh, turned away towards the car.

Jimmy Silver for a second stood as if rooted to the ground. The next second he was upon Chilcot, and the Oakshott captain was in his grasp and being shaken like a rat in the teeth of a terrier.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Chilcot Asks for It!

"OW! Oh! Leggo!" screamed Chilcot.

Shake, shake, shake! Chilcot almost crumpled up in the grasp of the angry Rookwooder. He was shaken till every tooth in his head felt loose. He struggled frantically, but he might as well have struggled in bands of steel as in Jimmy Silver's sinewy grasp.

"Ow! Leggo! Help me, you fellows!" yelled Chilcot.

Some of the Oakshott men made a move. But a dozen Rookwooders were on the scene, and they made a counter move. The visitors promptly backed off, realising that they were in danger of being handled in a way they would have disliked extremely.

Shake! Jimmy gave his adversary a final shake, and then tossed him contemptuously aside. Chilcot sprawled on the ground.

"Now clear off while you're safe!" said Jimmy breathlessly. "You've asked for a hiding, Chilcot. Get off before you get it!"

Chilcot staggered up. Once more he had been utterly deluded in his estimate of Rookwood—once more pride had gone before a fall. But Chilcot, blackguard as he certainly was, was no coward; and he was foaming with rage now. He stood panting and stuttering furiously.

"Silver, you'll put up your hands for this!" he gasped.

"As soon as you like!" said Jimmy scornfully.

"Hear, hear!" grinned Lovell. "We can't scrap here," went on THE POPULAR.—No. 512.

Jimmy quietly. "But if you want a scrap you shan't be disappointed, Chilcot! Stop your car on the road at the Coombe cross-roads, and I'll be there ten minutes after you."

"If you're not, I'll come back for you!"

"You won't have to wait!"

Chilcot scrambled into the car. The rest of the Oakshott crowd followed him, and the huge vehicle lumbered away. Jimmy Silver stood with a set and troubled face.

A scene like this was against all the traditions of Rookwood; it was an outrage on the Rookwood ideas of good form. But it could not be helped now.

"Come on, Jimmy!" said Lovell, tapping his chum on the arm. "If that cad's kept waiting he'll think you're funky!"

Jimmy nodded.

"We won't keep him waiting," he said. "But we don't want a crowd there—just a couple of chaps can come with me."

"Rot!" said Lovell. "That crew would mob you as soon as look at you, when you licked their giddy skipper. You're going to have a dozen along with you, and I'll see that you do!"

Lovell had his way; and, in fact, more than a dozen of the Rookwood Fourth walked with Jimmy Silver when he started to keep the appointment on the Coombe road. Lovell carried a bag, in which were two sets of gloves, a sponge, and a tin basin for water.

At the cross-roads they found the big car halted.

"Oh, you're here!" sneered Chilcot, who was looking at his watch.

"Get into the field," said Jimmy, unheeding the sneer. "We don't want to make a show of it!"

He led the way through a gap in the hedge.

His comrades followed him and the whole Oakshott crowd. The latter were grinning confidently, evidently having great faith in the fistical powers of their chief.

Lovell filled the basin at a pond, and dropped the sponge in it. Raby picked out the gloves, and Chilcot was offered the choice of them.

He glanced at them with a sneer.

"So you're afraid of gettin' your beauty spoiled, Silver?"

"We always scrap with the gloves on at Rookwood," answered Jimmy.

"I'm not usin' gloves!"

"Please yourself," said Jimmy.

"I mean to!" Raby, with a grin, dropped the gloves back into the bag. He was pretty certain that in a very short time Chilcot would repent from the bottom of his heart that he had elected to fight without the gloves on.

"I'll keep time for you," said Mornington.

"You won't," said Chilcot coolly. "I want fair play!"

"Why, you thumpin' blackguard, do you think—"

"Let an Oakshott man keep time," interrupted Jimmy Silver. "It doesn't matter a button."

"You, Tippet," said Chilcot; and Tippet took out his watch. "Two-minute rounds and one-minute rests—what?"

"Any old thing," said Jimmy Silver carelessly.

The crowd of juniors stood round in a ring.

Tippet looked at his watch.

"Time!"

The adversaries did not shake hands. From the call of time they started, hot and strong, and the crowd of juniors watched them breathlessly.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Fight to a Finish!

"MAN down!"

It was Valence Chilcot. Chilcot had been putting up a good fight. The football match had certainly tried him more than it had tried Jimmy Silver, and he was anything but fresh. But savage malice spurred him on, and the keen desire to win some sort of victory over Rookwood. And he plainly knew a good deal about boxing, and was no coward.

For three rounds he held his own, and both the combatants showed signs of punishment. In the fourth he went down with a crash.

"Good egg!" murmured Lovell. "I thought it was never coming! Good man, Jimmy!"

Tippet began to count.

"One, two, three, four, five—"

Tippet fully expected Chilcot to pick himself up. But Jimmy Silver's left, famous in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, had told severely.

"Six, seven, eight—"

There was a perceptible slackening in Tippet's counting. He was giving his friend all the time he could.

"Nine!" said Tippet.

There was quite a long pause. Valence Chilcot staggered to his feet. He had taken about enough time to be counted out twice over by any timekeeper with less peculiar methods than Tippet's.

"Now then, Jimmy!"

Jimmy waited.

"Fathead!" murmured Mornington.

Jimmy only smiled.

Chilcot came on again, rather teebly, and only the end of the round saved him from another fall.

In the fifth round he was on the defensive all the time, and evidently going quite groggy.

By that time the Oakshott fellows were looking very dubious. Even Chilcot had realised his mistake in rejecting the gloves. One of his eyes was blackened, and his nose was swollen and oozing crimson. There were marks all over his handsome face—not in the least handsome now. Jimmy Silver's face, also, was marked, but to nothing like the same extent. As a matter of fact, the Rookwooder had the upper hand now, and it was doubtful whether he had any more punishment to take, howsoever long the fight lasted.

"Sixth round—and last!" said Lovell as Tippet, with an uneasy glance at his chief, called time again.

But it was not the last. Chilcot was driven right and left, and his other eye blinked, and blinked, and was evidently on its way to harmonise with the colour scheme, so to speak, of the first. His lip was cut, and his chin bruised. But he fought on savagely, and Jimmy Silver had to retreat, defending only, for he knew Chilcot had been punished enough.

Towards the end of the round Chilcot made a desperate spring, and Jimmy Silver had no choice but to hit out. Chilcot caught a fist that seemed as hard as iron between the eyes, and he went to the ground like a log.

Crash!

"Oh gad!" murmured Mornington.

"That's the finish I reckon."

Chilcot lay still.

"One, two, three—"

Tippet proceeded to count slowly, and more slowly. But he might have counted hours without Chilcot being able to renew the fight before he was counted out. The Oakshott man was knocked fairly out, and he lay without a movement, staring blankly.

Merton tossed the sponge into the air. "My man's done," he said.

"He was jolly well done long ago, if he'd only known it," said Lovell. "Looks a bit over-done now."

The Oakshott men picked Chilcot up. He did not speak. He leaned heavily on Tippet. His face was really shocking to look at, and was obviously going to be a great deal worse before it was any better. He blinked feebly out of his discoloured eyes.

"I'm sorry for this," said Jimmy Silver, sincerely enough. "I'd have stopped long ago if you'd let me."

"Hang you!" muttered Chilcot faintly.

"I'm willing to shake hands over it, if you are."

"Hang you! Let me alone!"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Lovell. "Here's your jacket, Jimmy. You don't look much the worse for it, anyhow."

The Rookwooders moved away. Some of the spectators of the fight were already on their way to the school, to announce that Jimmy Silver had knocked the "stuffing" out of the swanking skipper from Oakshott. But Jimmy Silver lingered. He was concerned about Chilcot, though the obstinate fellow had only himself to thank for the state he was in. The winter dusk was falling, and in the gloom the lights of the big car gleamed along the dusky lane.

Chilcot was helped to the pond by his comrades, and there, for quite a long time he bathed his damaged face. But when he donned collar and tie again and looked at his face in a pocket-glass produced by one of the Oakshott nuts, he muttered savagely. He hardly knew the bruised and discoloured countenance that looked back at him from the glass.

"I can't show up at Oakshott like this!" he muttered.

Tippet stared at him.

"What do you mean? You've got to!"

"I shall have to spin some yarn. What will the Head say when he sees this? I shall have to say somethin'," muttered Chilcot savagely.

He stared round him, and saw that Jimmy Silver and some of the Rookwooders still lingered. He came back to them.

"Silver——" he muttered huskily.

"Anything I can do?" asked Jimmy quietly.

"No. And I wouldn't ask you if there were!" said Chilcot bitterly. "You've made me look a pretty picture."

"I wanted the gloves on," said Jimmy.

"Never mind that now. I can't take a face like this home to Oakshott, and tell the Head that I got it in a fight without gloves. I shall spin him some yarn or other. Ten to one he would make a complaint to your headmaster if he knew——"

"Let him!"

Chilcot shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"It means a thumpin' row for me at my school. Is that what you want?"

"Certainly not!" said Jimmy at once. "I'm sorry there was any trouble at all. But what can I do?"

"Keep your mouth shut about what's happened, that's all. I'm goin' to spin the Head a yarn when I get back, and my friends will back me up. All you've got to do is to say nothin'—not that you're likely to be asked."

"Very well."

And Jimmy Silver walked away in the thickening dusk with his friends, back to Rookwood School.

Chilcot was helped into the big car by his comrades. The car glided away in the direction of Oakshott, not many miles from Rookwood. For a long time Chilcot sat silent, save for an occasional groan over his injuries. But he spoke at last.

"It's all right," he said. "I left you fellows for a time, and got into a row with a hulking tramp. He tried to rob me, and knocked me about, and you chaps came up just too late. That will wash all right."

"Good enough for the Head," agreed Tippet.

"Good enough for the fellows, if we keep mum," said Merton.

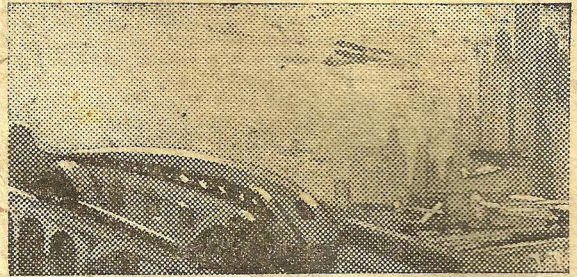
Tippet grinned in the dusk. No doubt it was judicious to "stuff up" the headmaster of Oakshott, but he knew that Chilcot was thinking chiefly of saving his face in the Fourth Form. Anything was better than telling the story of defeat after defeat—a story that would have sadly shaken Chilcot's prestige.

A lie or two cost Valence Chilcot very little. But he did not guess, just then, the consequences that were to follow from the "yarn" he had composed for his headmaster's benefit.

Jimmy Silver, at Rookwood, dismissed Chilcot & Co. from his mind, glad to have done with him. And Jimmy Silver & Co., on their side, did not guess what was to follow, or that they were very far from having "done" with Valence Chilcot of Oakshott School.

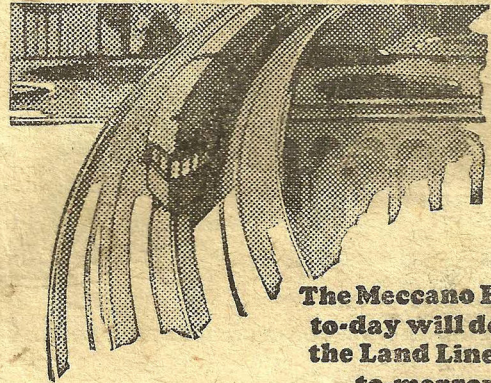
THE END.

(What will be the outcome of this amazing feud with Oakshott School? You will learn in next week's splendid long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled: "A CAD BOWLED OUT!")



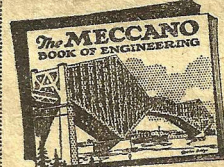
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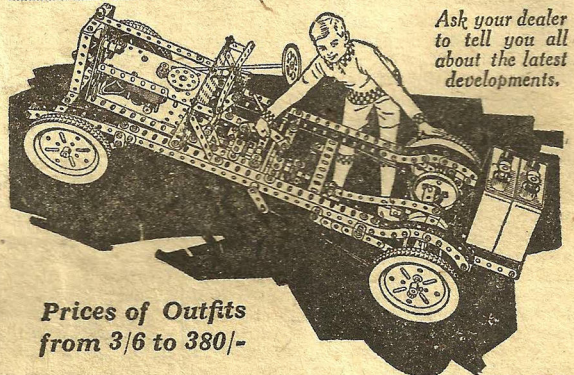
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