

**LOVELL AT IT AGAIN!**

*Of course, Arthur Edward Lovell starts the trouble! He always does! His latest escapade lands both himself and his chums in an extremely unpleasant situation*

**THE FIRST CHAPTER.****Bad Form!**

"JUST one shot!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ass!"

"Look here, Jimmy—"

"Fathead!"

"For goodness' sake, Lovell, old man, don't play the goat!" urged Newcome. "Have a little sense, old chap."

"Just for once!" said Raby.

Arthur Edward Lovell gave a snort.

He was at variance with his three comrades—a not unusual state of affairs. Being at variance with them, he was more than ever inclined to have his own way—still less unusual.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were crossing a frosty field-path towards the river, which gleamed frozen in the wintry sun. They were a mile from Jimmy Silver's home, where the four were spending the holidays. A hedge, capped with snow, divided the field from the tow-path, and on the other side of the hedge a tall silk hat appeared in view—a handsome silk hat, well polished and shiny.

Evidently the hat was on a head; it could not have been suspended, like Mahomet's coffin, self-sustained between earth and sky. But the wearer of it could not be seen. The snowy hedge hid him from sight. Only the silk hat, gleaming in the sunshine, was visible, and the idea had occurred to Arthur Edward to knock it off with a snowball.

Certainly it was a tempting target.

And the astonishment of the wearer, when his hat suddenly flew from his head, would be quite funny—at least, in Arthur Edward's opinion. He grinned in anticipation as he stooped and gathered up a double handful of snow, to knead into a snowball.

"You silly owl!" said Raby, as Lovell carefully prepared his snowball. "Let the man's tile alone!"

"Rats!" said Lovell.

"He may be one of Jimmy's father's neighbours," said Newcome. "May be somebody Jimmy knows—"

"Bosh!"

"Look here, Lovell!" urged Jimmy Silver.

"Bow-wow!"

Lovell took careful aim. The silk hat had not moved; the owner thereof was standing on the tow-path, his back to the hedge apparently gazing across the frozen stream. Why the gentleman should be standing there at all, on a cold, windy day, was a mystery; perhaps he was looking for something or somebody. Anyhow, there he was, and the silk hat still presented a tempting target when Lovell had his snowball ready for business.

"Collar him, and shove the snowball down his neck!" suggested Raby impatiently.

"Oh, cheese it!" said Lovell.

"Look here—"

"Don't bother! Here she goes!"

Whiz!

The snowball flew.

Crash!

Right on the silk-hat the snowball crashed and smashed, and the hat flew through the air.

"Good shot!" chortled Lovell.

"Oh, you ass!"

There was an exclamation on the tow-path. The wind caught the hat as it flew and twirled it over the hedge, and it dropped in the field. The next instant a red and excited face was glaring through a gap in the hedge—

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the gap the juniors had been making for when Lovell sighted the silk hat and fell to the temptation to use it as a target.

"You young rascals!"

The gentleman was an elderly gentleman. He was short and stout; he had a plump face, with gold-rimmed glasses stuck upon a plump little nose. He looked like a kindly and benevolent gentleman of sixty or so when in repose. But he was not in repose now. He was angry, and three members of the Fistical Four could not deny that he had reason to be angry. Undoubtedly the sudden detaching of his hat had given him a startling shock.

"Hook it!" muttered Raby.

The old gentleman was scrambling through the snowy gap in the hedge. He did not pause to "field" his hat. Hatless, and evidently enraged, he came pelting through the gap, a big walking-stick grasped in his hand.

The least observant fellow could have seen that the hatless gentleman wanted vengeance, and wanted it badly.

"Cut!" said Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver thought, for a second, of stopping to apologise to the old gentleman.

But really he did not look in a mood to receive an apology with urbanity. It was more probable that, once at close quarters, he would put in some hefty work with the walking-stick without stopping to listen.

So the four took to their heels across the field.

It would have been easy enough for the four sturdy Rookwooders to "handle" the exasperated old gentleman, but even Lovell did not think of doing that.

They fled.

"My hat! He's after us!" exclaimed Lovell, as he looked back from a stile, over which the four leaped actively.

He was!

With a speed very creditable to a gentleman of his years, the hatless man came chasing across the field, brandishing his walking-stick, and shouting:

"You young rascals! Hooligans! By gad! Young rascals! Stop! Do you hear me? Stop! I am going to thrash you! Stop!"

"What an inducement to stop!" murmured Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four crossed the next field at their best speed. The old gentleman, who was evidently a game old gentleman, clambered over the stile, and came pelting across the second field on their track.

Lovell glanced back again.

"He's getting winded!" he remarked critically. "He can't keep up this pace, with all that weight to carry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Another field will do it," said Lovell. "If he keeps on after that he'll burst something. Put it on."

# Well



The Rookwooders trotted across another field. From the farther side they looked back again.

The old gentleman had come to a halt at last.

He was standing in the middle of the field, gasping for breath, his plump face purple and perspiring, and with the last remnant of his energy he was brandishing his stick after the Rookwooders.

"Done!" said Lovell. "All right now."

The Fistical Four dropped into a walk. They were rather breathless themselves—though certainly not in the winded state of the old gentleman behind.

But they walked rather quickly, and crossed another field, and then a patch of woodland, and the puffing and perspiring pursuer was lost to sight.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.****Jimmy to the Rescue!**

"WHAT the dickens—" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

He stopped, bent his head, and listened.

The Rookwooders had crossed the frozen stream on the ice, and were rambling on the opposite hillside—a gentle slope that was green with trees and ferns in the summer-time—now bare and frosty, with leafless trees standing gaunt against the sky.

Somewhere between them and Jimmy Silver's house they had left the pursuer behind—and had sagely resolved to make a wide detour back to the Priory, to give the old gentleman a wide berth. Fortunately, they had plenty of time on their hands.

Even Lovell realised that it would be awkward if the old fellow tracked the juniors home and lodged a complaint. Mr. Silver, it was certain, would be very much annoyed at such an occurrence—he might even be very cross with Jimmy for bringing home a friend who could not be relied upon not to knock off the hats of neighbouring old gentlemen with snowballs.

From somewhere among the frozen trees a strange wailing sound had become audible—the juniors had heard it for several minutes without taking



# Out Of It!



A long complete story of  
Jimmy Silver & Co. of  
Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

any special heed. But it grew louder and shriller, and they took notice of it at last. Jimmy Silver listened, and his chums stopped and listened also. Sharp and clear the howl echoed over the frosty hillside.

"Sounds like a dog!" said Jimmy.

"More likely the wind," said Lovell.

"There isn't much wind to-day."

"There's some, and I think it sounds like the wind," said Lovell, growing, as usual, more positive at a hint of argument. "In fact, I'm pretty certain it's the wind, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"It's a dog," he said. "It's got hurt somehow—may have been caught in a trap. Let's go and see."

"Oh, it's the wind, you know!"

"Rats!"

Jimmy Silver listened very carefully to locate the sound. Then he turned from the path he had been following and struck off across the hillside.

At frequent intervals the painful, prolonged howl was repeated, and as the juniors advanced it grew louder—till even Lovell had to acknowledge that it was the howl of some animal.

But there was no animal to be seen. "Fallen somewhere," said Jimmy Silver. "There are old gravel-pits in this quarter—disused now, and half-covered in with ferns and things. Mind where you step, you fellows!"

Still guided by the sound, the juniors pushed on through frosty bushes, and suddenly a plump figure in uniform came in view. It was the figure of Police-constable Blumpy, of Hadley Priors, who constituted, in his plump person, the local police force.

"Hallo, Blumpy!" called out Jimmy.

Mr. Blumpy touched his helmet to the Rookwooders.

"Mornin', Master Silver! You 'eard that dorg? I've been looking at him, but there ain't no getting him out."

"Where is he?" asked Raby.

Mr. Blumpy pointed.

The plump policeman was standing almost on the verge of a pit that cleft the hillside. The edges of it, crumbling away in wind and weather, were thick with snow, and dangerous to approach.

Treading very cautiously, the Rookwooders approached near enough to look down into the pit.

It was a good forty feet deep, and had been deeper, but had been partly choked by falling earth and stones.

At the bottom rain had collected, and there was a thin sheet of ice over water of unknown depth.

On the thin ice, which cracked even under his light weight, was a little Aberdeen terrier.

Evidently the animal, nosing inquisitively along the verge of the pit, had tumbled over, and rolled down the steep side. Climbing out would have been very difficult for an active human being; and it was quite impossible for a dog. The unfortunate terrier scuttled to and fro on the creaking ice, and howled lamentably.

"I 'eard him," went on Mr. Blumpy. "I came along, but there ain't nothing doing. Man can't get down there."

"Not without forty feet of rope," said Raby, staring down.

"We might get a rope," said Newcome, looking compassionately at the little animal. "We could get one in the village."

Mr. Blumpy shook his head slowly. "Two mile," he said. "That dorg wouldn't last till you got 'arf back. There he goes again!"

Crack!

The ice was thin, and was already broken in half a dozen places, where the terrier evidently had gone through, and scrambled out again. Now it broke once more, and, with a startled, scared yelp, the terrier plunged through into dark water.

"Poor old dog!" murmured Lovell.

The animal scrambled out again, cracking the ice right and left, but getting a foothold at last. Then it resumed scuttling to and fro and howling.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"We've got to help him somehow," he said. "Got any idea how deep that water is, Mr. Blumpy?"

"More'n ten foot, I reckon," said Mr. Blumpy.

"Oh, my hat!" Jimmy stared down.

The sides of the old pit were steep, crumbling here and there, and covered with snow. But Jimmy Silver was making up his mind.

"I'm going to try it on," he said.

"Rot!" said Lovell.

"I'll manage it somehow," old fellow!

"Look here——" "Nuff said, old chap!"

Jimmy Silver threw off his coat and scarf. Sharply from below came the howling and whining of the dog. The thin ice cracked open again, and once more the terrier was struggling in welling water. He crawled out once more, but evidently almost exhausted; and his whining now was fainter and more pitiful.

"Look 'ere, Master Silver," said Mr. Blumpy, "you ain't going! Your father wouldn't 'ave it if he was! 'ere. I think it's my duty to stop you."

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"Once you slip you're done in," said Mr. Blumpy. "That water's freezing, and you'd never climb out of it alone. You see that?"

"I'm not going to slip."

"Now, you look 'ere——" urged Mr. Blumpy. The plump constable seemed to be doubtful whether he ought not to collar the junior and restrain him by force from the desperate attempt. Jimmy Silver's chums had the same thought in their minds.

Jimmy settled it by dropping on his hands and knees and backing on all fours to the edge of the pit. His legs swung down, groping for foothold, and he lowered himself by tufts of grass and roots.

"Jimmy!" muttered Lovell huskily. "Jimmy, old man, stop——"

But Jimmy was gone.

## THE THIRD CHAPTER.

### Still on the Trail!

DOWN, slowly but surely, went the captain of the Rookwood Fourth. Progress was slow.

Sometimes his feet found support, sometimes they hung free in space. But carefully and cautiously he found holding for his hand and lowered himself foot by foot, inch by inch.

The strain on his arms was great;

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his face was set, and perspiration trickled on his forehead.

With his chest to the steep slope, he wormed his way down, and every now and then loose stones, fragments of earth, or chunks of snow were displaced and went hurtling downward.

It seemed ages to Jimmy Silver and to his chums before his feet touched the cracking ice on the pool at the bottom of the pit.

Holding on almost like a cat, Jimmy Silver looked round at the ice. The terrier had ceased to howl, and was already snuggling against his legs. The intelligent animal had realised at once that this newcomer was a rescuer.

"Good dog!" murmured Jimmy breathlessly.

The Aberdeen whined softly.

Jimmy glanced up.

Over the verge above he could see Arthur Edward Lovell's face, white and set, staring down. Lovell was lying on his chest above, his head over the verge.

"Buck up Jimmy!" he called out hoarsely.

Jimmy did not reply; he had no breath to waste. The water, dotted with fragments of glassy ice, washed round his ankles, almost freezing him. He groped for a foothold, and found one at last, and released one hand.

Then he reached for the terrier and seized its collar.

A loose cord dangled from the collar, and Jimmy gathered it up. He lifted the little animal to his shoulder.

"Good dog—good doggie!" he murmured soothingly. But the little Aberdeen did not struggle or wriggle. He quite understood, in his intelligent canine brain, what was being done for him.

Jimmy had only his right hand to work with; he did not venture to let go with the other. Slowly—with painful slowness—he looped the dog's lead round his own neck and knotted it.

Then he began to climb.

Three faces were watching him from the top of the steep slope now.

With the Aberdeen on his shoulder Jimmy climbed on. The weight of the tiny animal was nothing to him. Twice the terrier slipped from his shoulder and hung over his back by the lead, scrambling wildly; and then Jimmy held on breathlessly, but the little animal scrambled back to his shoulder each time.

Slowly, but surely, the Rookwood junior wormed and scrambled his way up the steep side of the pit.

Lovell was reaching down, eager to help, and at last, as Jimmy came within reach, he was able to grasp his chum's collar and give a helping hand. A moment more and Raby and Newcome had hold of him and were helping him to safety.

"My eye!" said Mr. Blumpy.

Jimmy Silver scrambled away from the verge and lay for some minutes in the frosty grass, breathing hard and fast. He was quite exhausted.

Raby untied the dog.

"Jimmy, old man—" murmured Newcome.

"All serene!" gasped Jimmy.

He sat up, aching from his exertions and breathless. Mr. Blumpy had taken possession of the Aberdeen, holding him by the lead.

"This 'ere is a lost dorg," he remarked. "If there's a reward out for him, Master Silver, you're entitled to it."

Jimmy grinned faintly.

"Never mind the reward! I'm glad I got the little beast out. You'd better take him to the station, Mr. Blumpy;

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his owner's bound to inquire for him there."

"That's so," said Mr. Blumpy; "and I'll give him your name, Master Silver."

And Mr. Blumpy walked away, holding the lead, with the Aberdeen frisking round his ample calves.

"My hat! Look at my clothes!" said Jimmy Silver ruefully, as he picked himself up.

"You look a picture, and no mistake!" said Lovell. "Mud from head to foot, and your chivvy's smothered, too!"

"Never mind—all in the day's work!" said Jimmy cheerfully. "Lend me a hand to clean down, and then I think we'd better make for home. I'm a bit tired."

Jimmy Silver was made as presentable as possible; but he was still in a muddy state when the Fistical Four left the spot and started for the Priory. And he was fatigued—there was no doubt about that. The juniors came out at last into the country road from Hadley Priors to the Priory.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Raby suddenly.

"What—"

"There he is again!"

Not more than twenty yards away, as the juniors came out into the road from the hillside path, was a stout old gentleman, his gold-rimmed glasses gleaming in the sun. The silk hat, which Lovell had treated so disrespectfully, gleamed on his head—the old gentleman had recovered his headgear.

He sighted the Rookwooders at the same moment, and broke into a run towards them. Apparently his wrath was still unappeased; they wondered whether he had been hunting for them all this time.

"My hat!" exclaimed Lovell. "That old ass is after us again! Let's give him some more snowballs—plenty of snow along the hedge in—"

"Fathead! Hook it!"

"I'm fed-up—"

"Hook it, you dummy! It's all your fault!"

"Stop!" shouted the old gentleman, brandishing his stick. "You young rascals! I know you! Stop!"

But the Rookwooders did not stop. They scudded away down the road, with the enemy in full pursuit.

Jimmy Silver panted.

His climb in the old pit had told severely upon him, and he was in no state for a foot-race. He lagged behind his comrades, and the pursuer gained on him.

Jimmy Silver's chums slackened down as he lagged. With a rush the pursuer came on.

Whack!

The walking-stick came down across Jimmy's shoulders, and the captain of the Rookwood Fourth uttered a yell.

"Yooooop!"

"Stop it, you old donkey!" roared Lovell. "Oh, my hat! Yaroooh!" Lovell caught the next hefty whack from the walking-stick.

"Young rascals—hooligans—scoundrels!" panted the old gentleman, piling in with the stick at a great rate. "Take that—and that—and that—"

The Rookwooders took them—there was no help for it. But Jimmy Silver put out a foot as the excited old gentleman was rushing at Newcome, and he tripped over it and came down.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

It was the old gentleman's turn to yell.

He sprawled in the road, his hat flying in one direction, his stick in another.

"Bump him!" shouted Lovell!

"You silly ass!" shrieked Jimmy. "Cut off while you've got a chance, fathead!"

And the Rookwooders fled once more. When they looked back from a distance, the old gentleman was sitting on a wayside stone, rubbing his knees, which seemed to have suffered in his downfall.

"Thank goodness we're done with him!" gasped Raby.

Ten minutes later the Rookwooders arrived at the Priory, late for lunch, but deeply thankful that they had done with the incensed old gentleman—if, indeed, they had done with him!

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

### Shocking!

"SHOCKING!" said Mrs. Silver.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Cousin Phyllis.

Jimmy Silver & Co. heard those remarks as they came in to tea.

The Rookwood chums had spent the afternoon within the precincts of the Priory.

The possibility that the incensed old gentleman was still hunting for them made them reluctant to take their usual walks abroad.

It was not his walking-stick that they feared; they dreaded a visit to Mr. Silver, and a complaint which would have made matters extremely awkward. The old gentleman, name unknown, was apparently a resident of the neighbourhood. Had he called upon Mr. Silver, with an angry and perhaps exaggerated account of what had occurred, the situation would have become very uncomfortable for all concerned.

"Shocking!" Mrs. Silver was saying, as the juniors came in to tea, and Mr. Silver nodded assent and Cousin Phyllis agreed.

"What's happened?" asked Jimmy.

"Poor old Mr. Corkran," said Phyllis.

"Never heard of him," said Jimmy, as he sat down. "Who is he, Phyl, and what's the matter with him?"

"Mr. Corkran is a gentleman who has recently taken Ivy Lodge," said Mr. Silver. "I have not met him, but I understand that he is a very respectable and worthy old gentleman. He seems to have been treated shockingly, from what Phyllis says."

"It must have been some of the village boys," remarked Mrs. Silver. "There are, I think, some few rough lads in Hadley Priors."

"There were four of them," said Phyllis.

Lovell, with a cup of tea half-way to his mouth, stopped and put down the teacup.

The Fistical Four exchanged sudden glances.

The same thought struck all of them at once; they wondered whether "Mr. Corkran," who had recently taken Ivy Lodge, was the same old gentleman with whom they had had so unfortunate an encounter that morning.

Jimmy breathed rather quickly.

"But what has happened exactly?" he asked.

"I heard about it in the village," explained Phyllis. "I saw Mr. Corkran there in the post office; he was talking to the postmaster, and was very angry and indignant. He was attacked—"

"Attacked?" murmured Lovell.

"Four young hooligans—" said Phyllis.

"Hooligans!" said Raby faintly.

"That was how Mr. Corkran was describing them," said Phyllis, with a smile. "Four young hooligans. They attacked him with snowballs, and knocked his hat off, and ran away—"



"Oh!"  
 "Afterwards he came on them, on the Hadley Priors road, and was about to punish them, and one of them tripped him up—"  
 "Ah!"  
 "He had a very painful fall—"  
 "D-d-did he?"  
 "And hurt his knees," said Phyllis. "He seemed very angry indeed. It is rather a shame, isn't it?"  
 "Shocking!" said Mrs. Silver.  
 "Perhaps he was pitching into the chaps with his stick then they tripped him up!" suggested Newcome diffidently.

"That is no excuse" said Mr. Silver, in his deep voice. "They had provoked the punishment by attacking him in the first place."

"Oh, ah—yes! Of—of course!" stammered Newcome.

"I am sorry to learn that such rough characters exist in our quiet countryside," went on Mr. Silver. "I was quite unacquainted with the fact. I think these young rascals may turn out to be strangers in the neighbourhood—a low class of excursionists perhaps."

"Oh! Perhaps!" gasped Lovell.  
 "I trust that Mr. Corkran will be successful in his endeavours to discover them," said Mr. Silver. "The matter is not, I suppose, serious enough to be placed in the hands of the police—"

"Phew!"  
 "But the boys should be found, and their parents acquainted with their misdeeds," said Mr. Silver "No doubt a thrashing from their parents would meet the case. But the thrashing should be severe."

Lovell bent a crimson face over his teacup.  
 There were beautiful little cakes on the table—cakes of Cousin Phyllis' own making. But Lovell did not touch them—though Phyllis had made them. Arthur Edward had lost his appetite.

Cousin Phyllis did not speak. She had noted crimson complexions on four faces, and something had suddenly dawned on her mind. For a moment or two the girl's eyes danced.

Then, with great kindness and tact, she spoke on another topic, and the subject of Mr. Corkran and his grievances was dropped. Jimmy Silver & Co. were only too glad to have done with it.

They got away as soon as they could; and out of hearing of Jimmy's parents three members of the Co. proceeded to tell the fourth what they thought of him.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**  
**For It!**

"**QUICK!**"  
 "What!"  
 "He's coming!"  
 Lovell gasped out the warning.

It was the next day—a frosty January morning.

Mrs. Silver and Cousin Phyllis had driven out that morning; and Mr. Silver was occupied in his library. Raby was trying over some of Cousin Phyllis' music, in the music-room, and Newcome was helping him vocally. Jimmy Silver was in the room, reading a letter from Harry Wharton of Greyfriars, who had been spending part of the vacation with the Rookwooders, and had left a few days ago. Arthur Edward Lovell had gone out into the gardens—and now he suddenly opened the french window, fairly jumped into the music-room, and gasped out his warning in breathless haste.

Lovell had said that "he" was

coming, and his comrades did not need to ask who "he" was.

There was only one "he" of whom the Rookwooders lived in dread—and whose coming was a matter of consequence to them. Any other "he" in Wiltshire might have butted in without worrying them.

"So he's trailed us down!" gasped Raby. His fingers ceased suddenly to wander idly over the ivory keys.

"Yes. He—"  
 "Coming here?" exclaimed Newcome.

"Coming up the drive!" said Lovell. "For goodness' sake, let's get out of sight!"

"Well, that's a good idea," Jimmy Silver said. "It's barely possible that his call mayn't have anything to do with us."

"Barely," said Newcome.  
 "Well, it's a chance!" exclaimed Lovell impatiently. "For goodness' sake, don't let's butt into him and ask for trouble. He may be shown into this room—or some ass may open the door and let him see us from the hall—"

"Come on!" said Jimmy hurriedly. The Fiscal Four hurried out of the music-room.

As they crossed the hall to the staircase, they had a glimpse, from the window, of a stout figure and a plump face adorned with gold-rimmed glasses and a shining silk hat.

It was the elderly gentleman of the day before—Mr. Corkran, of Ivy Lodge, as they had learned from Cousin Phyllis.

They did not stay for more than one glance. The four of them bolted up the stairs like rabbits seeking their burrow.

They gathered in Jimmy Silver's room in dismay and misgiving. What was going to happen now? They already knew Mr. Silver's opinion of the "young ruffians" who had snowballed Mr. Corkran. What would he say when he learned that the ruffians were his own son and his son's three chums from school?

Really, it did not bear thinking of. From the bottom of their hearts the Rookwooders hoped that Mr. Corkran might have some



**A PLUCKY ACTION!** "Buck up, Jimmy!" called out Lovell hoarsely from above. Jimmy Silver did not reply; he had no breath to waste. The water, dotted with fragments of glassy ice, washed round his leg, almost freezing him. He groped for a foothold and found one at last, and released one hand. Then he reached for the dog, seized its collar, and gathered up the little animal. (See Chapter 3.)

other reason for calling on Mr. Silver, and did not know that they were inmates of the Priory House.

Tap!  
 "Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver opened the door as there was a tap outside. It was a parlour-maid who had tapped.

"What is it, Harriet?" asked Jimmy dimly. He could guess only too well what it was.

"The master sent me for you, Master Jimmy. Will you and your friends go down to the library?"

"Oh dear! Is—is—is there a visitor there, Harriet?"

"Yes, Master Jimmy."

"He—he's not gone yet?"

"No, sir."  
 "Does he want to see us, do you know?"

"I think so, sir."

"Oh dear!"

Jimmy Silver turned back to his chums.

"The game's up," he said. "We've got to go through it. Goodness knows what the pater will say. Come on!"

"Oh, what rotten luck!" groaned Lovell. "I—I say, Jimmy, suppose—suppose I cut off—suppose—"

"Fathead! Come on! We're for it, and it can't be helped. Keep smiling."

"Oh crumbs!"

Jimmy Silver started for the stairs, and Raby and Newcome almost limped after him. Arthur Edward Lovell hesitated a moment or two, and then followed on.

Dismally, the Fistical Four of Rookwood descended the stairs and crossed to the library door. They were for it now, and there was no help for it; and they could only go through it and put the best face possible on the matter. But they were in the lowest possible spirits as they trailed dismally into the library, into the presence of Mr. Silver and his formidable visitor.

### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

#### Quite a Surprise!

MR. SILVER was standing on the hearthrug, with his back to the fire. There was a pleasant and genial expression on his face—rather to the surprise of the Rookwooders. They had not expected to see Jimmy's father looking genial or pleasant just then.

Mr. Corkran was seated in an arm-chair facing the fire. His silk hat was removed, and the juniors had a view of a bald crown surrounded by scanty grey locks. His back was to the Rookwooders, and apparently he did not hear them come in, for he did not move. He was speaking when they entered, and his voice went on:

"In the circumstances, Mr. Silver, I am sure you will excuse this early call."

"Certainly, sir. I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Corkran," said Jimmy's father.

"It was not until this morning that I learned the facts, from Mr. Blumpy, the policeman—"

"Quite so."

"As soon as I knew that your son was concerned in the affair, I decided to call at once."

"Here is my son, Mr. Corkran," said Mr. Silver.

The old gentleman jumped up.

He jammed his gold-rimmed glasses a little more firmly on his plump little nose, and blinked across the room at the four shame-faced juniors of Rookwood.

The juniors stood tongue-tied. Mr. Silver, somewhat perplexed, glanced from them to the old gentleman, and back again from the old gentleman to the juniors.

"Upon my word!" gasped Mr. Cork-

ran at last. "Great gad! Upon my word!"

"You have seen the boys before, Mr. Corkran?"

"Eh? Oh, yes! Indeed!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Silver. "I was not aware that you had met Mr. Corkran, Jimmy!"

"Oh! No!" gasped Jimmy.

Mr. Corkran gasped.

"This—this is your son, Mr. Silver?" he exclaimed, fixing his gold-rimmed glasses on Jimmy.

"Yes, Mr. Corkran."

"And—these boys—"

"These are his friends—Lovell, Raby, Newcome. I think you told me that Mr. Blumpy had mentioned their names to you."

"Yes!" gasped Mr. Corkran. "Yes! But I did not expect—hem!—I—I did not—"

He broke off, and blew his plump little nose, with a report that sounded like a pistol-shot to the startled ears of the Rookwooders.

Jimmy Silver & Co. waited. Why Mr. Corkran had called, why he had asked to see them, was a deep mystery to them. But there he was—and there they were—face to face; and they waited for the storm to burst.

But it did not burst.

"Well, well," said Mr. Corkran, with a gasp, "boys will be boys! After all, we have been boys ourselves, Mr. Silver."

"Eh?"

"We can forgive a little—er—riotousness—a little—er—exaggerated hilarity—when such—er—outbreaks are accompanied by—by distinguished courage and—devotion," said Mr. Corkran. "Master Jimmy, I thank you! Your father should be proud of you—I do not doubt that he is proud of you! I shall be proud to shake you by the hand, my boy."

Jimmy Silver nearly fell down.

He wondered indeed, whether he was on his head or his heels. His chums stood and blinked helplessly. Mr. Corkran did not look as if he had been drinking. But on any other hypothesis, it seemed impossible to account for his extraordinary words.

"You told me nothing of this, Jimmy," said Mr. Silver. "You should have told your father, my boy."

"I—I—I—" stuttered Jimmy, bewilderedly.

"Modesty—true modesty, my dear sir," said Mr. Corkran. "No doubt you would never have heard of the occurrence if I had not called to thank this brave lad—and I should have known nothing of it had I not learned his name from Police-constable Blumpy when I called at the police station to inquire for my dog."

"Quite so!" said Mr. Silver, with a smile.

"Your—your—your dog!" stam-

pered Jimmy Silver. A light broke on his mind at last.

"My dog, that you saved from the pit he had fallen into, at the risk of your life, my boy," said Mr. Corkran. "I learned what had happened from the policeman, with whom I found my terrier—quite safe and sound, owing to your courage, my dear lad."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

"Oh, what luck!" murmured Raby.

Mr. Corkran shook hands impressively with Jimmy Silver. He proceeded to pay that blushing youth a series of warm compliments. Evidently he had forgiven the snowballing episode, in his gratitude for service rendered, and did not mean to mention it to Mr. Silver. The relief to the Rookwooders was very great.

"And you had seen my son before, it seems," remarked Mr. Silver.

Mr. Corkran coughed.

"Yes. I—I saw these—these lively young fellows yesterday. They were—hem!—snowballing, and running about," he said. "I did not know then what I owed to your son, and his friends, Mr. Silver—your son especially. True courage—unexampled devotion—kindness to a dumb beast—"

And Mr. Corkran ran on again, quite eloquently, till Jimmy Silver began to wonder whether he would ever leave off.

Mr. Corkran stayed to lunch at the Priory, and the story of the rescue of the Aberdeen was told over again to Mrs. Silver and Cousin Phyllis. And when Mrs. Silver inquired gently whether Mr. Corkran had heard anything of the young hooligans who had snowballed him, the old gentleman coughed and blushed, and said that after all it was a trifle, and boys would be boys—and the Rookwooders blushed also and looked down at their plates, and Cousin Phyllis' eyes danced.

When Mr. Corkran left the Rookwooders walked down to the road with him, and Lovell took the opportunity of offering an apology—which the placated old gentleman accepted graciously. When he was gone, the Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Well," said Raby, "we're well out of that!"

"What-ho!" murmured Newcome.

"As for that ass Lovell—"

"That fathead Lovell—"

"That chump Lovell—"

All the way back to the house Lovell's chums told him what they thought of him. Indeed, they continued to do so, on and off, all through the remainder of the vacation, till the holidays were over and the Fistical Four went back to Rookwood.

THE END.

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