

Thrilling Yarns? **YES-THERE ARE 5**

IN THIS ISSUE!

The POPULAR

2^d

The
**NEW BOSS
OF THE
LAZY O!**

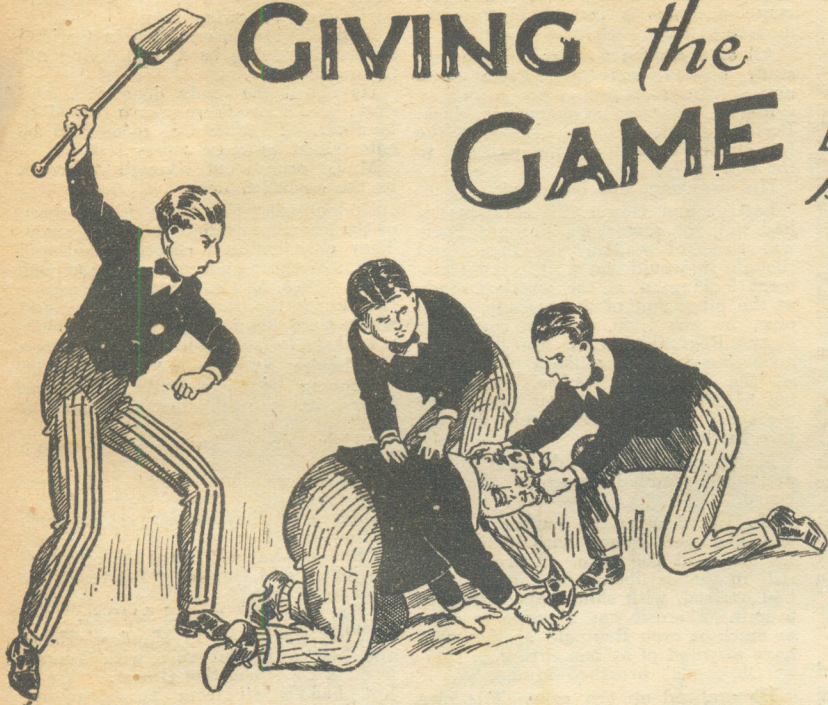


*Full of Action
Tale of the
Wild West*

ACTION, LAUGHTER, AND SENSATION ARE ALL CONTAINED IN THIS STIRRING TALE OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS!

GIVING *the* GAME AWAY!

by OWEN CONQUEST



THE FIRST CHAPTER. Nothing Doing!

"JIMMY, old fellow!"
Snort!

It was not like Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Rookwood Fourth, to snort when a fellow addressed him as "Jimmy, old fellow."

But Jimmy Silver, for once, was really cross.

Generally, he was able to live up to his favourite maxim and "keep smiling."

But he was not smiling now.

Neither were his comrades, Lovell and Raby and Newcome. Frowns were the order of the day in the end study in the Rookwood Fourth.

The Fistical Four were very busy.

The study looked a good deal as if an air-raid or an earthquake had happened there. Jimmy Silver & Co. were putting it to rights.

Tubby Muffin, looking in at the doorway, grinned. Jimmy Silver & Co. felt like anything but grinning; but Reginald Muffin seemed to find something entertaining in the aspect of the end study. It was not his study!

Red and dusty, the four juniors laboured, putting things in their places, trying to evolve order out of chaos. They were in no mood for visitors—especially for Tubby Muffin.

Hence the impatient snort with which Jimmy Silver responded to the fat Classical's affectionate address.

"I say, Jimmy—"

"Hook it, Muffin!" growled Lovell.

"But, I say—"

"Oh, get out!" said Raby crossly. "We've got to get this room in order before prep."

"Have you come to lend a hand, Muffin?" asked Newcome sarcastically. "Eh? No!"

"Then travel!"

"And sharp!" snapped Lovell.

Reginald Muffin did not travel. He stood in the doorway and watched the Fistical Four at work.

That the end study had been ragged

by some unknown ragger was well known to all the Classical Fourth. It had been ragged just before a "Head's inspection"; and the Head, finding it in such a state, had caned all four owners of the study. The Head had not known that a ragging had taken place; and—in the unfortunate, hasty way Dr. Chisholm sometimes had—he had not stopped to inquire.

So it was no wonder that the Fistical Four were not in a sunny temper. They yearned for vengeance on the unknown study ragger; but they did not know who he was. They suspected Cyril Peele, of the Classical Fourth, for various reasons; but there was no proof.

Arthur Edward Lovell certainly did not consider it essential to wait for proof; he was for reprisals first and inquiry afterwards. But the Co., exasperated as they were, gently but firmly restrained Arthur Edward on that point.

"You fellows seem busy!" remarked Tubby Muffin. "But I suppose you can spare a few minutes, Jimmy?"

"No!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"Don't be ratty, old man! I didn't rag your study, you know!" remonstrated Tubby. "I want you to do something for me, Jimmy! It won't take you a few minutes."

"Oh bother!" said Jimmy impatiently.

He paused in the task of scraping gum out of the armchair. Uncle James, of Rookwood, always was a good-natured fellow; and even when he was cross his good nature did not quite desert him.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"Look here, never mind Muffin!" hooted Arthur Edward Lovell. "Get on with it, Jimmy. It's jolly near prep—and look at the place!"

"It won't take a minute!" urged Reginald Muffin.

"Oh, buck up and give it a name!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Peele, you know—"

"Bother Peele!"

"I want you to go to his study and—"

"What on earth for?" snapped Jimmy.

"And get him out of the room for a few minutes—"

"Eh?"

"Is it a jape?" asked Lovell, a little more amicably. Any kind of a jape on the suspected ragger was welcome to Lovell just then.

"Well, yes. That's it! Will you do it, Jimmy? It won't take you a minute. Just tell him the Head wants him—"

"The Head doesn't want him."

"Well, tell him Mr. Dalton wants him."

"He doesn't!"

"Well, tell him anything!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin impatiently. "Tell him his uncle's telephoned, and he's to go and take the call. Tell him anything to get him out of his study for five minutes!"

Jimmy Silver smiled faintly.

Reginald Muffin had not been brought up at the feet of the late lamented George Washington, who—according to his own statement, at least—could not tell a lie.

Reginald Muffin could—and did! And Reginald never quite saw the objections of other fellows to following his example. Jimmy Silver did not attempt to explain. Muffin and truth were such strangers that it was hopeless to think of making them better acquainted.

Jimmy resumed scraping gum from the armchair.

"Well, ain't you going, Jimmy?" asked Muffin.

"I'm not going to tell Peele lies, fat-head! That sort of thing is in his line—not in mine!"

"But what's the jape?" asked Lovell. "Peele's a cad, and it looks as if he ragged this study. I can get him out of his study all right. I'll go in and take him by the ears. But what's on?"

Tubby Muffin grinned.

"Thanks, old man! Get him out of his room before Gower and Lattrey come in. I just want to nip into the

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study. And look here, I'll whack out the cake with you chaps!"

"The what?"

"Cake!"

"Cake?" repeated Lovell.

"Yes. Peele's had a whacking cake from home, you know," said Tubby Muffin eagerly. "No end of a lark to bag it—what? I know he's got it in the study cupboard, and in a few minutes—"

"You—you fat rascal!" hooted Lovell. "You said it was a jape! Do you want us to help you pinch a cake from a fellow's study?"

"Yes—exactly! You see—"

Reginald Muffin broke off suddenly as Lovell grabbed up a broom which had been borrowed from below stairs for tidying the study.

"I—I say, Lovell, what—what are you going to do with that broom?" he ejaculated apprehensively.

There were grounds for Muffin's apprehension. Lovell did not explain what he was going to do with the broom. He did it! He charged at Reginald Muffin with the broom, like a knight of old with a trusty lance. The bristly head of the broom caught Reginald Muffin on his well-filled waistcoat and hurled him through the study doorway as if a cannon-ball had smitten him.

Bump!

"Oh!" roared Muffin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say— Yarooooooooop!" yelled Tubby Muffin, as Lovell followed him out of the study, broom in hand, and fairly swept him away down the passage.

Reginald Muffin rolled over and picked himself up, and fled frantically, helped on his way by a final lunge from the broom. He vanished at record speed along the Classical Fourth passage.

Lovell tramped back into the end study, feeling a little better. Reginald Muffin was feeling decidedly worse.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tubby Muffin Makes Discoveries!

"OH, what luck!"

It was a quarter of an hour later, and Reginald Muffin, hanging about the head of the staircase, near the door of Peele's study, was keeping a watchful and wistful eye on that door.

In that study was Cyril Peele; and so long as Peele was there, Reginald Muffin's designs on Peele's cake were impossible of execution. Muffin had seen that cake unpacked—a large, rich, fruity cake, with marzipan on top; a cake that made Muffin's mouth water merely to look at it. It was a cake for a fellow to dream about—at least, a fellow like Reginald Muffin.

It was useless to think of joining Peele & Co. when they dealt with that cake. The study was not a hospitable one. Tubby Muffin was not popular there, either. If Tubby had presented himself for a share in the cake with his most ingratiating smile, Tubby would have received the order of the boot, short and sharp. He was only too well aware of it—only too well aware that there was but one way of obtaining a "whack" in Peele's enormous cake—by raiding it. Tubby had no scruples about raiding another fellow's cake; he had very few scruples of any kind. All he wanted was a chance at the cake; he was not bothering about his conscience. Tubby, of course, had a conscience, and he

never did anything of which his conscience did not approve. But his conscience was a remarkably accommodating one.

All of a sudden the door of the first study opened, and Cyril Peele came out.

Really, it was tremendous luck. Peele, without even a glance at the fat junior, walked up the passage to the end study.

His own room was left empty.

Lattrey and Gower, his study-mates, had not yet come in. Perhaps Peele was tired of waiting for them, and thought he would find a little entertainment looking in at the wrecked study at the other end of the passage. Anyhow, he was gone, and the coast was clear. Reginald Muffin, who had hung about the study door like a plump Peri at the gate of Paradise, darted in before Peele was half-way along the passage. Fortunately, Peele did not turn his head.

Muffin closed the study door softly, and then scudded across to the cupboard.

He jerked open the cupboard door, and his eyes bulged with delight as he gazed at the cake. There it was, still in the cardboard box in which it had arrived, with shiny paper wrapped over it. There it was, a gorgeous cake, as much as even Reginald Muffin could have disposed of at one sitting.

"Oh, good!" breathed Muffin.

He grabbed up the cake. His idea was to bolt with it, to carry it off to some secluded corner where he could devour his prey at his leisure, so to speak. But Peele was in the passage; Lattrey and Gower might come up the staircase at any moment. It was quite probable that the raided cake might be stopped in transit. There was no time like the present; and the cake was tempting. Reginald Muffin hacked off a huge chunk and started.

He started on the cake standing at the cupboard. If the enemy caught him as he carried off his plunder and recaptured it, at least they would not be able to recapture the portion that Reginald Muffin had devoured. That was absolutely certain. And Reginald Muffin's podgy jaws worked with amazing speed.

It was a large cake, but Tubby Muffin travelled into it with such speed that half of it was soon missing. He was still going strong when he heard Peele's voice outside the study:

"Hallo! You chaps back?"

Evidently Peele was greeting Lattrey and Gower, who had been over in Manders' House, on the Modern side of Rookwood.

Tubby Muffin's fat hand, with a chunk of cake in it, was arrested on its way to his capacious mouth.

He shivered. Even the fruity cake had lost its attraction for the moment.

Peele & Co. were coming in! If they found him there, with half the cake already gone—

There was no escape for Muffin. The enemy were at the door. Any second the door might open, and then—

That cake, doubtless, was worth a kicking. Still, Reginald Muffin did not want a kicking.

Almost without stopping to think, Muffin plunged into the lower half of the study cupboard, under the wide shelf on which the cake lay.

He plunged in among foils and boots and boxes and other odds and ends, and drew the cupboard door nearly shut after him.

He was only just in time.

The study door opened, and Cyril Peele came in, with Lattrey and Cuthbert Gower following him.

Reginald Muffin crouched in terrified silence, breathing hard, and trying not to breathe at all.

He heard the study door slam and shut; and then there was a sound of laughter. Peele & Co. seemed to be entertained by some merry jest.

Muffin peered out through the crack in the cupboard door.

Undoubtedly the three black sheep of the Fourth were in a hilarious mood. They chuckled and chortled loud and long. Muffin wondered what the joke was. Peele & Co. knew nothing, so far, about the raid on the cake; and when they knew they were certainly not likely to look upon that as a jest.

"They're at it now!" Peele said. "Mopping up their study! I've just looked in. Lovell shied a broom at me!"

"They don't know—" began Lattrey.

"Of course they don't! I fancy they suspect." Peele shrugged his shoulders. "They can suspect as much as they like!"

"But you haven't heard the cream of the joke," said Gower. "It's really too good to be true!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lattrey.

"They went over to Manders' House and had a fearful row with Tommy Dodd & Co.!" chortled Gower. "We've just had it all from Towle, of the Modern Fourth."

Peele gurgled.

"I left Tommy Dodd's chemistry manual in their study when I ragged it," he said. "I thought they'd find it and jump to the conclusion that it was a Modern raid. And they did!"

"They did! Ha, ha, ha!"

"They've been over the way!" gasped Lattrey. "They fairly wrecked Tommy Dodd's study, without stopping to ask questions."

"And ragged those Modern cads, and inked them!" chortled Gower.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele.

"Then a mob of Moderns got hold of them, and booted them all out! They had a high old time altogether!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They seemed to have found out that it wasn't Moderns who ragged their study—after the mischief had been done!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three young rascals roared with laughter.

"Oh, my hat!" said Peele. "This is one on the end study, and no mistake! It was sheer luck, you know. I heard the Head tell Mr. Dalton that there was to be an inspection this afternoon—

one of the giddy surprise visits, with a prefect keeping guard on the passage, so that naughty boys couldn't get ready for it. While those footing asses were at footer I got their study ready for the Head to inspect—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The jolly old scout never asked a question—he never does, you know! Just gave them six each for having their study in such a state!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And then they find Tommy Dodd's chemistry book, and never dreamt that it had been left there for them to find—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's really too good to be true!" gasped Peele. "Uncle James fell right into the trap! Ha, ha, ha!"

"They're not very bright in the end study after all!" chuckled Gower.

"Not up to the weight of this study, at any rate!" said Lattrey. "They wrecked Tommy Dodd's study, and were simply mobbed by the Moderns when they'd done it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I fancy they rather suspect me now!" grinned Peele. "Lovell looked like it when he shied the broom at me. But they can't prove anything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Cyril Peele wiped his eyes. This was, in his view, the jape of the term; it had worked like magic. All along the line, the Fistical Four had been baffled and beaten; and Cyril Peele had paid off a long list of ancient grudges at one fell swoop.

Generally, the end study was more than able to hold its own. But this time it had been beaten to the wide. There was no doubt about that. And Peele & Co. rejoiced accordingly.

"Well, what about prep?" said Gower at last.

In the study cupboard, Tubby Muffin heard that remark with dismay.

He was getting cramped.

He had hoped that the three juniors might leave the study again. But clearly they had come to stay.

Still chucking over their successful enterprise, Peele & Co. sorted out their books for prep.

Muffin was a prisoner!

He was a prisoner, with discovery certain now. For after prep, it was pretty certain Peele & Co. would get out the cake for supper; and then—

Reginald Muffin suppressed a groan.

He was cramped in the narrow confines of the cupboard; he was getting pins-and-needles in his fat limbs. He knew that he could never last out till prep was over.

But as he crouched there, palpitating with apprehension, his fat brain was working.

It dawned on him that what he had heard had placed Peele & Co. under his fat thumb.

Jimmy Silver suspected Peele; but there was no evidence! Reginald Muffin was in a position to supply the evidence! He was in a position to make terms with Peele & Co.!

The three juniors had sat down to their work. Peele smoked a cigarette over his prep—one of his little ways. There was silence in the study.

It was suddenly broken.

Crash!

Reginald Muffin, a prey to pins-and-needles, had been unable to keep still any longer.



A SWEEPING MOVEMENT! The bristly head of the broom caught Tubby Muffin on his well-filled waistcoat, and hurled him through the study doorway. Bump! "Oh! I—I say—yarooop!" yelled Tubby, as Lovell followed him out of the study, broom in hand, and fairly swept him away down the passage. (See Chapter 1.)

He moved suddenly, involuntarily, and a couple of wooden foils and a pair of football boots were displaced as he moved.

"What the thump—" exclaimed Peele.

He jumped up from the table, and stepped across to the cupboard.

"Can't be a dog there!" said Gower.

Peele opened the cupboard door. The first thing that caught his eyes was the cake—unwrapped and half gone. Peele gave a yell of wrath.

"Somebody's been raiding this cake!"

He sighted Muffin in the lower half of the cupboard the next moment. And then Reginald Muffin, with a savage grip on his collar, came sprawling out into the room, yelling!

"You fat rotter!" howled Peele. "You've been bagging my cake!"

"I—I haven't!" gasped Muffin.

"It's half gone!"

"I—I mean—" Tubby Muffin spluttered. "I—I mean, I—I—"

"My hat! I'll jolly well lam you for this!" said Peele. "Give me the shovel, Gower, and roll him over on the carpet!"

"I—I didn't!" roared Muffin. "I never knew you had a cake! I never came in here for any cake! I haven't touched it! Besides, I haven't taken much—only a bite or two! And I'll pay for it! Look here—Yarooooh!"

Lattrey and Gower rolled the fat Classical face down on the carpet. Peele flourished the shovel.

Whack! Whack!

The fall of the shovel fairly rang on Muffin's tight trousers.

The yells of Reginald Muffin rang far and wide.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Whoop! Yaroooh! Help! Rescue!" roared Muffin. "Oh crumbs! Oh dear! Stop it! I'll tell Jimmy Silver! Yoop!"

"Tell him as soon as you like!" hissed Peele. "Tell him you bagged my cake, and tell him I skinned you for it! You've only had a taste, so

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THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Under Tubby's Thumb!

WHOOP!" Tubby Muffin roared. Peele and Lattrey and Gower gathered round him with furious looks. Muffin sprawled on the carpet and roared. He was not hurt yet; but he had a well-grounded apprehension that he was going to be hurt. He roared in anticipation, as it were.

far! I'm going to give you six dozen!"

"Oh crumbs!"

"And then I'll give him a few!" said Gower.

"Same here!" said Lattrey. "Go it, Peele!"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Peele went it, with great vim. Muffin roared and wriggled and yelled. There was no doubt that the fat Classical had asked for a licking, and that he deserved it; but really Peele was going too far. A Head's licking was a joke to what Reginald Muffin was getting now.

"Stoppit!" shrieked Muffin desperately. "I'll tell Jimmy Silver that you ragged his study! Oh! Ow! Ooooooh!"

"Wha-a-at?"

The shovel was descending again, and Peele arrested it in mid-career. Muffin's words had made him jump.

In his excitement, it had not occurred to him that Muffin, hidden in the cupboard, must have heard all that had been said in the study.

It occurred to him now. He lowered the fire-shovel.

"My hat!" murmured Gower. "That fat villain heard—"

"Phew!" Lattrey whistled softly.

"I jolly well heard everything you said!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I'm going to Jimmy Silver to tell him who ragged his study! I'm going to Lovell to tell him! You just wait till Lovell knows!"

Cyril Peele dropped the shovel into the fender again. Lattrey and Gower released the fat Classical, exchanging a glance. Muffin sat up on the carpet.

"You rotters!" he gasped. "Making all this fuss about a cake! Suppose I sampled your cake? That's not like mucking up a fellow's study all ready for a Head's inspection, I suppose? You cad, Peele!"

"You fat rotter!" hissed Peele.

Muffin staggered to his feet.

"Yah! Wait till Lovell gets on your track!" he gasped. "I'm jolly well going to him now!"

Cyril Peele put his back to the study doorway. His face was a little pale now, and his eyes glittered. He had deemed himself quite safe; and his supposed safety had vanished all of a sudden; he was at Muffin's mercy! A word in the end study, and Peele was booked for the punishment of his offence. Muffin rolled to the door, and Peele pushed him roughly back.

"Stand back, you fat fool!" he said, between his teeth.

"Let me out!" roared Muffin.

"Shut up, I tell you!" muttered Peele. "Look here, Muffin, if you heard us sayin' anythin'—"

"I heard every word!" gasped Muffin.

"You rotters! You got Jimmy Silver a Head's licking by ragging his study! Dirty trick! That's not a jape—that's a dirty trick! Worse than sampling a fellow's cake, I think. You're for it now, the lot of you!"

"I had nothing to do with it!" said Gower hastily. "Peele told me what he had done, that's all."

"And I!" said Lattrey uneasily. "Peele told me afterwards—you know you did, Peele!"

Cyril Peele gave his study-mates a bitter look. The three black sheep were friends, but their friendship was not of a very reliable kind. Lattrey and Gower had been immensely entertained by Peele's knavish trickery, but they had no intention whatever of sharing the consequences with him when the reckoning came after the feast. Peele had done it on his own, and he

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could take the consequences on his own. Lattrey and Gower were in a hurry to dissociate themselves from the affair, even before Muffin had reported his discovery in the end study.

"Better make that fat fool hold his tongue, Peele!" said Gower. "After all, it was rather thick, getting those fellows a Head's licking. It was over the limit; I thought so when you told me."

"You didn't say so!" sneered Peele.

"Well, I thought so!" snapped Gower. "It's not a lark, getting chaps into a row with the Head! It's a mean trick, if you ask me!"

"Muffin won't talk about this," said Lattrey.

"Won't I?" hooted Muffin. "I've

to jaw about this," he said. "Look here, I—I'm sorry I pitched into you."

"I dare say you are now!" sneered Muffin.

"You can have the cake, if you like!" said Peele desperately.

Muffin's expression changed.

He was hurt and he was sore. But a cake was a cake! And he knew what a ripping cake it was, having half of it inside him already.

"Oh, well, if you're going to be decent, Peele!" he said, mollified.

"Take it and go—and hold your tongue, of course," said Peele. It was unpleasant to have to part with that beautiful cake! Peele's only solace was the disappointed look on the faces of Lattrey and Gower. His study-mates had intended to help Peele dispose of that cake.

Muffin grinned.

He rolled to the study cupboard, and calmly packed up the remains of the cake in the cardboard box. Peele watched him with glinting eyes.

"You're saying nothin', of course?" he said, as Tubby Muffin walked to the door with the cake under his arm.

"I'll do what I can for you, Peele," said Muffin coolly. "I'll think it over."

"That's not good enough!" said Peele sagely.

"It will have to be, old pippin! Keep off—I can hear Lovell in the passage!" grinned Muffin.

Peele clenched his hands in helpless rage. Arthur Edward Lovell's voice could be heard outside. The door of the study opened and Lovell looked in—Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome behind him. The Fistical Four had finished putting their study to rights at last, and they looked tired and cross.

"Well, what do you fellows want?" snarled Peele.

"Just a word with you, you cad!" said Lovell. "I believe it was you ragged our study to get us a Head's licking. I'd jolly well wade in and smash you, only—"

"Only you won't, fathead," interposed Jimmy Silver. "It's all right, Peele. We are going to find out who ragged our study, and if it was you, you can get ready for the time of your life! But we're going to make sure first."

"What's the good?" snorted Lovell. "I'm jolly sure it was Peele!"

"You were sure it was Tommy Dodd, ass, and then you were sure it was Smythe of the Shell, fathead! Chuck it!" said Raby.

"Get out of my study!" said Peele.

Tubby Muffin grinned at Peele. He rolled out into the passage with the cake under his arm. The Fistical Four looked at him. They could see that it was a cake in the cardboard box, and they remembered Tubby's request for assistance in raiding a cake from Peele's study. It was simply extraordinary to see him walking it off under Cyril Peele's very eyes, and Peele raising no objection.

"What have you got there, Tubby?" asked Newcome. "Is that the cake?"

"Oh! No! It—it's Peele's wireless—he lent it to me!" stammered Muffin.

"You fat ass! It's a cake!"

"I—I mean, Peele's lent me this cake—"

"Lent you a cake?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"I mean, he's given it to me. I suppose Peele can give me a cake if he likes?" said Tubby. And he rolled away to his study to escape further questioning.

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been whacked with a shovel! Won't I talk about it? I'm going straight to Jimmy's study! And if you don't let me out, Peele, I'll yell!"

Peele gritted his teeth. Apprehensive as he was of the end study's vengeance, he was boiling with fury, and could scarcely keep his hands off the Peeping Tom of Rookwood. His black look alarmed the fat Classical, and he retreated round the study table. Lattrey interposed.

"Don't be an ass, Peele! Muffin's had enough! If you want him to hold his tongue, you'd better be civil."

"Catch me holding my tongue!" jeered Muffin. "All this fuss about a cake, after what you've done!"

Cyril Peele made a great effort to control his rage. He realised that he had to placate Reginald Muffin somehow.

"Look here, Muffin, I don't want you

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

Slam!
The door of Peele's study closed. Peele of the Fourth returned to his prep in a very unenviable frame of mind. He had played his knavish trick on the end study, and he had been successful all along the line, but— There was a but! The way of the transgressor is hard; and this was not the first time that Peele's transgressions had found him out. He was under Muffin's fat thumb now, till the affair blew over at least, and that was an extremely uncomfortable situation. And he had no sympathy from his comrades.

"You'll have to keep that fat fool quiet somehow, Peele!" said Cuthbert Gower uneasily. "If those cads found out, they'd think nothing of wrecking this study in return—and it's our study as well as yours."

"Just what I was thinking," said Lattrey. "It was a good jest in its way, but too thick—much too thick! We don't want those brutes ragging in this study, Peele. You'll have to keep Muffin quiet."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snarled Peele.

"Well, look here—"

"Just look here—"

"Shut it!" howled Peele angrily.

Prep that evening in Peele's study went on in rather thundery atmosphere.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
Rough Justice!

"NOTHING doing!" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's all very well!" growled Lovell. "But I'm not standing it, for one. Let's rag Peele, and chance it!"

"Fathead!" said Lovell's three chums together.

Another day had passed, and on Saturday afternoon Jimmy Silver & Co. sat in the window-seat in the Classical Fourth passage, after footer practice. Jimmy and Raby and Newcome, as a matter of fact, were not so keen on the subject of the study-ragger, but Arthur Edward Lovell seemed as keen as ever. According to Lovell, the end study could not, and should not, let the matter pass. Somehow or other, they were going to discover the "hidden hand," and inflict summary justice. The Co. were willing, if not specially keen, but they did not see how the discovery was to be made.

"We ragged the Modern cads on suspicion," said Raby; "then you wanted us to rag Smythe of the Shell on suspicion, Lovell. Now you want to lynch Peele. Peele's rather a cad, and just the fellow who'd play such a dirty trick, but we're not going to jump on any fellow without any proof."

"Hear, hear!" said Jimmy Silver. There was a fat chuckle close at hand, and the Fistical Four glanced round as Reginald Muffin came rolling along from the stairs. Lovell gave him a glare.

"Well, what's the joke, Muffin?" he snapped.

Tubby grinned a fat grin. "Nothing, old man. Are you still looking for the chap who ragged your study, days ago? He, he, he!"

"Perhaps you know who it was?" growled Lovell. "Perhaps it was you—what?"

Tubby jumped back. "Oh, no! Not at all! I wouldn't, you know! I don't know anything about it! Don't you run away with the

idea that I'm keeping anything dark. Nothing of the sort, you know."

"Oh, go and eat coke!" grunted Lovell crossly.

Tubby grinned again. "I'm going to eat something better than that!" he chuckled. "I'm going to tea with Peele. Fat of the land, my boy! He, he, he!"

And Reginald Muffin rolled to the door of the first study in the Classical Fourth with a cheery grin on his fat face, evidently in a state of great anticipation.

Jimmy Silver glanced after him curiously.

"Jolly odd Peele sending Muffin study spreads!" he remarked. "I remember he gave him a cake the other day. I never knew that Peele was a giddy philanthropist!"

"Oh, blow Muffin and bless Peele!" growled Lovell. "The question is, who ragged our study? We got a Head's licking. We were mobbed in Manders' House. Somebody's got to squirm for it. If we let the rotter off, it lets down our study."

And Lovell pursued that topic, and worried it, as it were, like a dog, while his chums listened as patiently as they could. It was true that they desired to take reprisals on the unknown study-ragger; but it was not to be denied that they were getting a trifle fed-up with the subject.

Meanwhile, Reginald Muffin threw open the door of Peele's study and walked in. Peele of the Fourth was there alone. It was tea-time, but Gower and Lattrey were "teasing" in Hall.

"What about tea, dear boy?" asked Muffin.

"I'm teeing in Hall!" growled Peele. "Better tea in the study," said Muffin. "Why not, when you had a remittance to-day?"

"So you found that out, did you?" snarled Peele.

"I happened to notice you opening the letter, old chap. Like me to do some shopping for you?"

"No!"
"The sergeant's got some ripping cakes, and a fresh lot of tarts to-day," remarked Muffin. "Of course, don't fancy that I'm butting in here to tea, Peele. If you'd rather—really rather—that I went, just say the word!"

"Clear, then!"

"Oh, very well!" said Muffin. "I'll tea with Jimmy Silver. He's just outside in the passage now. I dare say I can tell him some interesting things over tea."

Peele set his teeth hard. His eyes fairly blazed at Muffin.

Apparently the fat Classical had worked it out, to his own fat satisfaction, that he was going to "pal" with Peele for the rest of the term on the strength of what he knew. "Palling" with Peele sounded better, to Tubby's fat conscience than "sponging" on

Peele, but evidently it came to the same thing.

Possibly, if Peele had kept cool, he would have submitted. But he was not cool now; he was boiling with rage.

"Have it your own way, old chap," said Reginald Muffin. "Mind, I'm prepared to be friendly. You're rather a cad and an outsider, Peele; but I don't mind taking you up. If you ask me to tea, I'll stay. I shall expect something pretty decent. Now—"

Tubby Muffin broke off suddenly as Peele leaped to his feet.

"I—I say—"
Peele grabbed up a cushion. Even the fatuous Tubby could see the danger-signals now, and he made a jump forward.

Crash!
The cushion caught him as he jumped, and Reginald Muffin sprawled headlong on the carpet, with a roar that rang as far as the end study in the Classical Fourth passage.

"Oh! Ow! Whoop!"
Biff! Biff! Biff!
The cushion, in Peele's hefty hand, rose and fell with amazing speed and terrific force.

Whack after whack descended on the struggling, breathless Tubby as he squirmed and wriggled and yelled.

Peele was warning to his work now. Muffin wriggled and squirmed in vain; he could not escape the terrific swipes of the cushion. Peele seemed to be under the impression that he was beating a carpet.

Wild howls and roars rang from the study. The four juniors in the window-seat across the passage grinned.

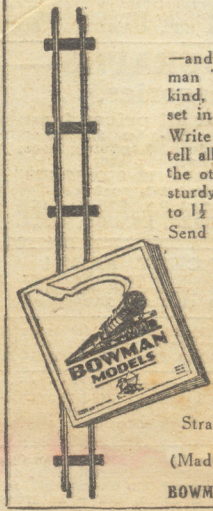
"That doesn't sound like a tea-party!" murmured Newcome. "Tubby doesn't seem so welcome in Peele's study as he supposed."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Yaroo! Help! Rescue! Whoop! Yah! Oh—oh! Ow!" came in frantic yells from Peele's study.

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet. "Mustn't slaughter him," he said. "We'd better look in."

The Fistical Four crossed the passage to Peele's door and looked in. Cyril Peele was too busy even to heed them. With a crimson face and blazing eyes, he whacked and whacked with the cushion, while the hapless Tubby yelled and squirmed and dodged in vain.

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"Take that, you fat rotter, and that—and that—and that!" gasped Peele. "Ow! Wow! Rescue! Help!" Jimmy Silver ran into the study and caught Peele's descending arm. He jerked away the cushion.

"Enough's as good as a feast!" he remarked cheerily. "Chuck it, Peele!" Tubby sat up dizzily. "Ow—ow! Keep him off! Wow! Help! He's pitching into me because I know about him ragging your study! Ow—ow!"

"What's that?" roared Lovell. "It was Peele!" roared the infuriated Tubby. "Peele all the time! I heard him say so! That's why—"

"Oh, that's why he gave you a cake!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver, comprehending all of a sudden.

Peele made a quick movement to the doorway. But the doorway was promptly blocked by Arthur Edward Lovell's stalwart form.

"No, you don't!" said Lovell grimly. Jimmy Silver grasped Reginald Muffin by the collar and jerked him to his feet. Muffin staggered breathlessly against the table.

"Now, out with it!" said the captain of the Fourth curtly. Tubby Muffin babbled breathlessly, Peele listening with a savage, sullen scowl.

"It was all up now with the study-ragger; but the Fistical Four were not in a hurry. They extracted the whole story from the breathless Muffin.

"Well, you fat rotter!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "You knew it all along, and you kept it dark, and it's pretty plain that you've been sponging on

Peele on the strength of it. You ought to be scragged!"

"Kick him out!" said Raby. "I—I say! I wasn't going to keep it dark! I was just going to tell you chaps!" gasped Muffin. "You see—Leggo! Oh, my hat! Whoop!"

Reginald Muffin flew through the doorway.

Then the Fistical Four devoted their attention to Cyril Peele and his study.

The door was closed, and then the ragging began. Reprisals were the order of the day, and the reprisals were thorough.

The cad of the Fourth watched the juniors at work without venturing to lift a hand. His brow grew blacker and blacker as he watched.

A quarter of an hour made an immense difference to the study. Nobody would have recognised it as the same room after that lapse of time.

Even Arthur Edward Lovell was satisfied as he glanced round.

"I think that will do!" he remarked. "Ha, ha! Yes!"

"You rotters!" breathed Peele. "I'm going to the Head about this!"

"Do!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "The Head will hear the whole story. And if you think he will be pleased to hear that he licked us because you'd ragged our study all ready for his giddy inspection, you can go ahead. Please yourself, old pippin!"

Peele gritted his teeth. His throat was an empty one. He knew that he dared not let the Head know that he, the majestic headmaster of Rookwood,

had had his leg pulled, and had, in fact, been made use of to wreak Peele's old grudges against the end study.

Having finished with the study, the Fistical Four began on Peele. Then there was a struggle; but Peele's struggles did not avail him much. In ten minutes he lay gasping on the carpet in a sea of ink and gum and ashes and jam and marmalade, probably repenting by that time that he had ever started in business as a reckless ragger.

Justice having been done, Jimmy Silver & Co. walked out. A few minutes later Gower and Lattrey arrived, and they fairly jumped at the sight of their wrecked study.

"What!" gasped Gower. "How—" stuttered Lattrey.

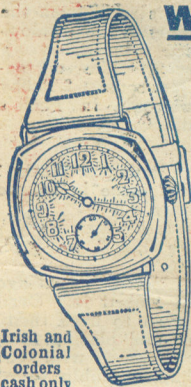
Peele groaned. "They've found out—Ow! Ooooh! Ooooh! Groooh! Oh dear! Wow! I've been through it! Ow! Here, you keep off, you rotters—Ow—ow—ow!"

But Peele's study-mates did not keep off. This disastrous ending to Peele's career as a study-ragger enraged them too much. They fairly hurled themselves on Cyril Peele, and smote him right and left, and did not cease till he fled, yelling, from the study.

It was likely to be a long time before Peele of the Fourth ragged a Rookwood study again. He had found the way of the transgressor too hard!

THE END.

(If you want a long laugh don't miss: "TOO TRICKY BY HALF!" next week's rollicking long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the heroes of Rookwood.)



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