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BOAT-RACE THRILLS, AND SCHOOL ADVENTURE AT ROOKWOOD I



THE ROOKWOOD BOAT RACE!

BY
Owen Conquest.

Lovell may be a chump, and a very bad skipper; but for all that he sticks to his guns in the face of misfortune and ill-luck!

THE FIRST CHAPTER The High Hand!

"STOP!" A good many fellows on the Rookwood raft and the tow-path glanced round as Arthur Edward Lovell shouted.

Mornington of the Classical Fourth was pushing off in a skiff, in which Erroll was seated. It was to Valentine Mornington that Lovell's shout was addressed.

Certainly Morny must have heard it; every fellow within a very wide radius heard it. But possibly Morny did not know that the shout was addressed to him. At all events, he did not heed it.

Lovell, with a red face, raced across towards the water. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome, who were taking out a boat, exchanged glances.

"More trouble!" sighed Jimmy.

A good deal of trouble had been gathered up by Arthur Edward Lovell since he had become junior captain of Rookwood School. Now it looked as if some more were coming along.

"Stop!" shouted Lovell again.

Still Valentine Mornington seemed deaf.

"Hold on, Morny," murmured Erroll. "Lovell's shouting to you."

"Is he?" said Morny.

"Yes. Hold on—"

"We're goin' up the river, old bean."

"Yes; but Lovell—"

"Bother Lovell!"

"Lovell's junior captain now, Morny. Do hold on and hear what he's got to say," urged Erroll.

"Lovell may be junior captain now, but he isn't yet Emperor of Rookwood," drawled Mornington. "He seems to fancy that he is, but he isn't—not a little bit. I'm goin' on."

"Mornington, stop, I tell you!" shouted Lovell angrily, reaching the edge of the raft.

The skiff danced a few feet away on the water.

Morny looked at Lovell with impatient inquiry.

"Well, what is it then? We're just off up the river, and we're goin' as far as the island."

Lovell knitted his brows.

"You're doing nothing of the sort!" he snapped.

"What?"

"You're number four in the crew for next Saturday!" snapped Lovell. "You're wanted for practice with the eight this afternoon!"

"First I've heard of it," said Mornington, with a stare.

"Well, you've heard of it now I've told you!" said Lovell sharply. "Bring that skiff in at once!"

"Wait a bit," said Mornington coolly. "It's usual to let a fellow know when he's wanted for practice. Jimmy Silver used to post it up."

"Jimmy Silver isn't junior captain now!" grunted Lovell.

"No. But—"

"Never mind 'butting'! Get out of that boat!"

Mornington's eyes glittered.

"You howl out at the last minute, when I'm startin' up the river, that I'm wanted for practice with the eight," he said. "You've had all day to tell me, and you spring it on me at the last tick. I'm sorry, I can't oblige!"

"What?" shouted Lovell.

"You see, it's such a rippin' afternoon, and we've arranged a picnic on the island," said Mornington coolly. "Oswald's gone already with the tuck. I suppose we can't leave Oswald hangin' up on the island all the afternoon, waitin' for us?"

"Oswald can go and eat coke!"

"Well, he's got something nicer than that to eat, as it happens. But we really can't leave him hangin' about on the island. You should have mentioned this before, Lovell!"

Lovell's face was crimson with wrath.

Some of the fellows on the raft chuckled. Raby and Newcome grinned. But Jimmy Silver looked serious.

Matters were not going so well as of old in the Lower School at Rookwood since Lovell had been elected junior captain.

The captain's election itself had been a sort of comedy of errors. Only by a series of curious and unforeseen circumstances had Arthur Edward Lovell come out at the top of the poll. And Lovell's best friend—if he had had any friends left—could not have said that Arthur Edward was making a success of the job.

Lovell's own opinion was that he was one of those fellows who are born to command. He had that opinion entirely to himself.

Really, it seemed difficult for any fellow—even Lovell—to cram so many mistakes into so short a time.

Even in so simple a matter as games practice he seemed fated to pile one blunder on another. Sometimes he forgot to post notices at all. But if the Fourth were notified to turn up at a certain hour, they were as likely as not to find the ground already occupied by the Shell or the Third. Once Lovell had found himself entirely alone on Little Side, and returning, enraged, to the House to hunt up the slackers, he had found the whole school gathered in Hall for a Head's lecture, Lovell having omitted to take due cognisance of that function.

Jimmy Silver—unseen by Lovell, whose back was to him—made a sign to Mornington in the skiff.

The junior eights were a very important matter in the eyes of the ex-captain of the Lower School. Lovell, as usual, had been careless. It was not until this moment that Jimmy himself knew that the Classical eight were to practise together that afternoon. But the important point to Jimmy's mind was to beat

the Modern boat when the Rookwood junior boat race came off, and all other things had to yield to that.

But Mornington was in an obstinate mood.

As a matter of fact, Lovell's manner was dictatorial and rather hard to bear, especially by a passionate-tempered fellow like Morny. It really seemed to be Lovell's system to attempt to make up for any shortcomings by assuming a more and more dogmatic and dictatorial manner. And although he was junior captain he was not, in actual fact, monarch of all he surveyed, as he seemed to fancy.

Mornington did not bring the boat back to the raft. He reached out with his oar to give another shove off. He saw Jimmy Silver's imploring sign without heeding it.

"Morny!" called out Jimmy.

"Ta-ta, old son!" called back Mornington.

"Chuck it, old man!" exclaimed Jimmy anxiously. "Oswald won't mind—at least, I—"

"Can't leave a chap in the lurch like that after tellin' him we'd join him on the island."

"But—"

Lovell stared round at Jimmy.

"You needn't chip in, Silver!" he snapped. "You're not captain of the boats, by any chance, I suppose?"

"No. But—"

"Well, then, don't butt in! When I want assistance, I'll ask for it!"

Jimmy Silver bit his lip hard.

"Now, Mornington, bring that boat in!" went on Lovell savagely.

"Sorry, can't be done."

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Lovell, his temper quite failing him. "Get out of that boat, or I'll jolly well jump in and pitch you out!"

"Lovell!" exclaimed Erroll.

"You shut up, Erroll!"

"Oh!"

"Are you getting out, Mornington?"

"I think I've said I'm not," drawled Mornington. "You couldn't bully me, Lovell, if you were captain of the school—instead of junior captain, who got in because the other candidates were kept away from the election. Go an' eat coke!"

Lovell set his teeth.

"Then I'll jolly well handle you!" he exclaimed.

"Dear man, go ahead!"

Lovell made a spring at the skiff. Mornington watched him with a mocking light in his eyes.

As Lovell leaped, the dandy of the Fourth shoved with the oar and the skiff shot swiftly away into the river.

Lovell alighted where the skiff had been; but it was no longer there. The next instant the river had closed over the crimson, excited face of Arthur Edward Lovell.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Wet!

SPLASH!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter on the raft and the tow-path.

Even Jimmy Silver, anxious as he was, could not help grinning. The other fellows roared.

There was something rather entertaining in the sudden downfall of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell's head came up in a moment. His cap was gone, his hair drenched, and water streamed down his face as he struck out for the raft. Mornington had sat down to his oar.

THE POPULAR.—No. 532.

"Pull way, Erroll, old bean," he said, laughing.

The skiff glided away with both the juniors pulling. Arthur Edward Lovell grasped at the raft, and Jimmy Silver leaned down to give him a hand.

Lovell savagely rejected the proffered help and clambered on the raft, streaming with water. Grinning faces surrounded him as he stood there panting, with a pool of water forming at his feet.

"Is it wet, old man?" asked Conroy.

"What a wheeze, you know, to dive in with one's clothes on!" remarked Gower. "I should prefer to strip first myself."

Lovell's expression was one of concentrated rage. At the best of times Lovell's temper had been a little uncertain; and there was no doubt that it had deteriorated since his quarrel with his old chums, and since he had had the responsibilities of the junior captaincy on his shoulders. He had made himself ridiculous once more, as had happened only too often since he had become invested with a little brief authority. Lovell was very sensitive on such occasions, though he seemed quite unable to avoid them.

He gave the grinning juniors a glare and tramped away up the bank. The most necessary thing for Lovell then was a rub down and a change of clothes. He squelched water from his shoes as he tramped away.

"What about the practice, Lovell?" called out Newcome.

No answer. Lovell did not turn his head.

"Dash it all, we've got to know whether the eight is rowing this afternoon or not!" exclaimed Conroy.

Jimmy Silver ran after Lovell.

"Lovell, just a word—"

"Shut up!"

"About the boat practice—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"But we have to know—"

"Mind your own business!" roared Lovell. "I'm fed up with you and your meddling, Jimmy Silver! Can't you get it into your head that you're not junior captain now? For two pins I'd turn you out of the crew!"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Jimmy, his own temper giving way a little.

"We want to know if—and when—we're to row—"

"Find out!"

With that answer, which could not be called a reasonable one in the circumstances, Lovell turned his back on Jimmy Silver and tramped back to the school.

"Some captain," grinned Conroy.

"Well, is there to be a trial spin or not—and, if so, when? Anybody know?"

Nobody knew.

"We're to hang about until it pleases our lord and master to give us the tip," said Newcome. "I must say I'm getting fed up."

"I've got fed-up," said Raby. "If Lovell likes to fix the time I'll turn up to the second; but I'm not wasting the first fine afternoon of the term in hanging about waiting for him."

"No jolly fear!" said Newcome.

"Let's get the boat out," said Raby. "Morny asked us to his spread on the island and we may as well go."

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

"But if there's a practice—"

"We're entitled to know the time of it. Are we going to dawdle about here all the afternoon?" bawled Raby.

"I jolly well know I'm not!" hooted Newcome. "I'm jolly well going up to the island."

"Hold on," said Jimmy uneasily. "Give Lovell ten minutes. If he's not back by then, we'll cut."

"Rot!"

"Oh, hold on for ten minutes," said Jimmy. "Keep smiling, you know."

Raby and Newcome grunted impatiently, but they agreed to hold on. Really it was an irritating state of affairs. The afternoon was bright and fine—a rare spring afternoon—and many fellows had been tempted to get a boat out on the river. All the fellows who were down to row in the Classical eight on Saturday were ready and willing to put in all the practice that their skipper demanded. But they were not willing to cancel arrangements they had made simply because Lovell had forgotten to notify them that they were wanted—and they were not willing to be hectorated. And Lovell's "latest" really had put the lid on. Apparently he expected his men to hang about the raft kicking their heels till it pleased him to turn up, and in his present temper it was quite possible that he would leave them there an hour or so, or that he might even cut out the afternoon's practice altogether.

Raby kept an angry eye on the clock in the Rookwood tower, visible over the trees.

"Time's up!" he said suddenly.

Jimmy Silver cast a final glance along the path from the boathouse. There was no sign of Lovell.

"Let's go!" said Newcome.

Jimmy nodded.

"Let's!" he assented.

And the chums of the end study were soon pulling up the river in the wake of Mornington and Erroll, heading for the island and the picnic. Conroy and Pons, two other members of the Classical eight, exchanged a glance and sauntered away along the tow-path. They also were fed-up.

In the Classical Fourth dormitory, Lovell rubbed himself dry and changed, with gleaming eyes and a black brow. He sneezed several times, which added to his wrath. Catching a cold, with Boat Race day so near at hand, would really have been the limit.

After changing, he went down, with the intention of returning to the boathouse and fixing up the rowing practice. But he did not hurry himself. He had been treated rottenly, and disrespectfully—in his own opinion, at least—and all the fellows had laughed at his mishap. Let the beggars wait!

So when about half an hour had elapsed, the junior captain of Rookwood sauntered down to the boathouse, still in a leisurely manner, however.

He stared when he arrived there.

Peele and Gower were sitting on a bench there; but they were not rowing men, and of no use to Lovell. Nobody else was at hand.

"Where are the fellows?" Lovell called out.

Peele grinned.

"Oh, they're all gone!" he said.

"Gone!" repeated Lovell.

"Yes." Peele winked at Gower.

"We'll help you carry the boat out, if you want to practise all on your own."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Gower.

The idea of Lovell taking out an eight-oar to practise all on his own, struck Cuthbert Gower as comic.

Lovell breathed hard and deep.

He had made the beggars wait; but apparently the beggars had not waited very long! Lovell had over-stepped the limit once more. Evidently boat practice for that afternoon was off—very much off.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER,
Blow for Blow!**

NOT a word!" "Nct one?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically. "No! Hook it!"

It was a day or two later, and Arthur Edward Lovell was seated in the window-box of the Fourth Form passage, with a book on his knees and a wrinkle in his brow. Jimmy Silver came up to him with his politest manner on; but he booted not, as a poet would say.

Lovell was not to be placated. He was not really feeling well. His plunge in the river, between Morny's boat and the raft, had, in fact, given him a cold. But Lovell was struggling against that cold with grim determination. He was making superhuman efforts not to be knocked out of Saturday's race. And it almost seemed that by sheer will-power he would succeed.

He was, at least, keeping the cold at bay, though, perhaps, it was only receding to spring on him with greater force! He was drenched with eucalyptus and other useful disinfectants to such an extent that, though it really made it safer for other fellows to go near him, nobody liked being near him.

Lovell was leaving no stone unturned to keep fit. And yet everyone but Lovell could see that he was by no means fit, and that he would have acted more wisely in thinking about bed than about a boat race. More than once Mr. Dalton's glance had rested on him keenly; but Lovell kept up appearances wonderfully well in the Form-room, and succeeded in hiding a good deal from the Form-master's eyes.

Now Lovell was mugging up Latin, with dizzy eyes and an aching head. Life was hard or Lovell in these days—as it generally is on fellows who do not know their own limitations and take on a job a size too large for them.

He was feeling rotten, and savage, and quarrelsome. He would gladly have hurled his Latin book at Mr. Dalton's head, had that been practicable. But he had to "mug" up this rotten stuff, or land into more trouble on the morrow. Mr. Dalton was aware that Boat Race day came along that week, and that the Rookwood boat race coincided with it; but in neither event did he see any reason for slacking down in class work.

Neither did Lovell—had he only been feeling his usual healthy self. But he was very far from being his usual self. He lifted his glance from the worrying Latin, and fixed it upon Jimmy Silver with grim animosity, as Jimmy Silver came up. He did not want any argument with the ex-captain of the Lower School, and he did not mean to have any. He was feeling more like punching Jimmy Silver's head than arguing with him. He would, willingly, indeed, have punched anybody's head that day, from Dr. Chisholm's down to the boot-boy's.

"Hook it!" he repeated, as Jimmy stood irresolute. "I don't want any chin-wag, and I don't want any advice. Just clear, before you get hold of trouble!"

"About the boat——"
"That's settled!"
"You can't call it settled, Lovell," said Jimmy Silver patiently. "You

really must be a bit reasonable, old chap."

"I'm 'old chap' to my friends!" snapped Lovell.

Jimmy was tempted for a moment to ask him who were his friends. He seemed to have made only enemies since he had thrown over his former comrades. But Jimmy checked that question. He had not come there to quarrel.

"Every fellow who cut practice against orders is scratched from the crew," said Lovell. "That includes you and Raby and Newcombe and Mornington. It's definitely settled."

"You'll make the fellows think that you want the Moderns to beat this House."

"The fellows can think what they like."

"Do have a little sense, Lovell!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "You yourself, for instance, are in no state to row. If Dicky Dalton knew how seedy you were he would order you into sammy."

"That's Mornington's fault," said Lovell, between his teeth.

"His fault or yours, there's the fact. Morny's one of our best oars——"

"That's enough."
"You know as well as I do that you'll crock up in a dozen yards if you row on Saturday, Lovell."

"I've decided not to row," said Lovell. "I'm going to cox the boat. Not that I'm under the necessity of telling you anything about it. Mind your own business!"

"It's the business of every fellow in the House, Lovell. We don't want a frost on Boat Race day."

(Continued overleaf.)

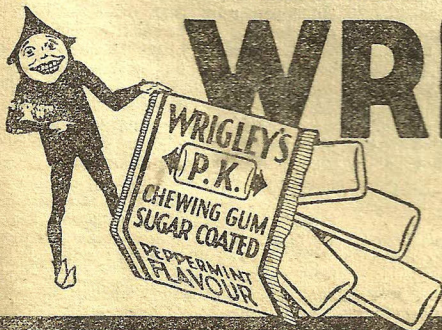
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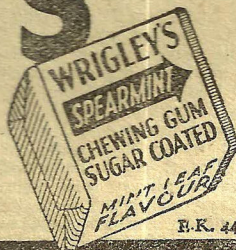
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"You should have thought of that sooner!"

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"Then you don't care?" he exclaimed.

"Find out!"

"I can tell you that if you keep on like this—"

"You needn't tell me anything. Shut up!" exclaimed Lovell savagely. "I tell you I'm fed up with you and your back chat. Another word and I'll jolly well shy this book at your head!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

Whiz!

Lovell kept his word.

There was a bump as the volume smote Jimmy Silver on the forehead and completely bowled him over. He sat down in the passage.

Uncle James of Rookwood was noted for his patience and good temper. But the patience of Job himself might well have given out in these circumstances. Certainly Jimmy's gave out. For a moment he sat blinking in amazement and rage, and then he leapt up and rushed at Lovell.

Lovell met him half-way. In a moment they were fighting furiously.

There was a yell along the Fourth Form passage.

"A fight! A fight!"

"Roll up!"

"By gad! Silver and Lovell!" shouted Mornington. "It's come at last!"

"Go it, Jimmy!"

There was a rush of the Classical Fourth to see the fight. Most of the fellows would have been distinctly pleased to see the junior captain soundly licked. But the fight ended as suddenly as it had begun.

The two juniors were grasping one another and punching fiercely, when Jimmy felt his adversary crumpling up, as it were, in his grasp. Lovell's first blows fell fiercely enough then they weakened.

Jimmy's anger passed like magic.

He realised—as, indeed, he would have known had not Lovell's violence blinded him with anger—that the hapless Arthur Edward was in no condition for a fight. The spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

Jimmy Silver tore himself loose and sprang back. Lovell made a movement after him and reeled a little, and then almost collapsed into the window-seat, gasping for breath.

"Go it!" roared Gunner of the Fourth.

"Pile in, Jimmy!" squeaked Tubby Muffin. "Punch him, old chap! He thumped me the other day. Now you thump him. I say, old fellow, I'll hold your jacket!"

Lovell, with a dizzy brain, staggered to his feet.

"Come on, you rotter!" he panted.

Jimmy Silver looked at him with a quiet, compassionate gaze. Nothing could have induced him to touch Lovell then. Indeed, his heart was full of pity for the fellow who had been his friend and who was so hopelessly down on his luck through his own obstinate folly.

"You hear him?" grinned Mornington. "Go in and win Silver."

Jimmy Silver shook his head and walked back to the end study.

"Call that a fight?" sneered Gunner.

"Funk!" roared Lovell, as Jimmy disappeared into the end study.

Jimmy heard him, but he did not heed. Lovell could have called him anything he pleased just then.

The Classical juniors dispersed, rather disappointed. Arthur Edward Lovell, breathing hard, tried to fasten his

attention upon his Latin task again. But the print danced before his eyes.

He left the window-seat at last and went down the staircase and out into the quadrangle, hoping that the fresh air would pull him together a little. Indubitably he did feel very queer. Bulkeley of the Sixth glanced at him in the quad.

"Lovell, you're not looking well, kid."

"I'm well enough, Bulkeley."

"Well, you look ill!"

Lovell forced a laugh.

"Fit as a fiddle!" he said lightly.

And he walked on, Bulkeley glancing after him very doubtfully. Under the old beeches Lovell paced to and fro, the keen wind reviving him a little. Was he going to be ill, he wondered savagely—ill, with the Rookwood boat-race coming off on Saturday? Why, if he was knocked out Jimmy Silver, as vice-captain, would take his place! Lovell gritted his teeth at the thought. He was not going to be ill; he would not, could not, should not be ill!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Poor Old Lovell!

BOAT RACE day!

The historic contest between Oxford and Cambridge was no doubt a matter of great moment outside the Lower School of Rookwood.

But so far as the Rookwood juniors were concerned the boat race between Classicals and Moderns was the "goods," so to speak.

From Putney to Mortlake cheering crowds might line the banks of the Thames and shout for Light Blue or Dark. But at Rookwood Classicals and Moderns were thinking of their own more important affair.

Tommy Dodd & Co. wore cheery smiles that morning. Even Mr. Manders' snappy temper and acid tongue could not cast a cloud over their cheery faces. That afternoon they were going to beat the Classical boat by several lengths, and that was what they cared about. Oxford might beat Cambridge, or Cambridge might beat Oxford. What did that matter? What mattered was that Moderns were going to beat Classicals at Rookwood. By how many lengths they were going to win Tommy Dodd & Co. had not decided. Tommy cautiously put it down at one length at least; Cook thought two or three; Doyle, with Celtic exuberance, placed it at six or seven; four or five was Towle's opinion. The number varied widely in different estimations. But all the Moderns were agreed upon one point—that it would be a matter of lengths. Not a case of winning by a nose or a neck this time, Tommy Dodd declared jubilantly. And as for losing, no man in Manders' House even thought of it.

That was a side of the question for the Classicals to think about. And they were thinking about it—even Lovell! But Lovell found it difficult to think about anything clearly that morning. The neglected cold had fairly fastened upon him. He felt it all over him, as it were, from his head to his feet, and added to it was the stress of mind, the excitement the anger, the worry, the sense of failure, the sense of savage resentment. Altogether Lovell was in about as unhappy and "rotten" a state as a fellow could well be in on Boat Race morning.

But his iron determination still held good. It was a case of "no surrender" with Arthur Edward Lovell.

He felt so excessively "queer" when he got out of bed in the morning that he almost fell, and several glances in

the Classical Fourth dormitory turned on him curiously. But Lovell affected to have caught his foot in the bed-clothes, and pulled himself sternly together.

At breakfast he ate hardly anything, and he felt Mr. Dalton's keen eyes on him from the head of the table. Under the Form-master's scrutiny Lovell affected a careless and smiling air, though his heart was sinking. After breakfast he walked out into the quad with quite a jaunty manner, whistling. Valentine Mornington glanced after him.

"Seems fit enough, after all," he remarked to Erroll. "I was in hopes that he was goin' to crock up in time to save the race."

Erroll shook his head.

"I think he's very far from fit," he answered. "I don't quite understand Lovell these days. He must know very well that he's not fit to sit in the boat."

"Sheer pig-headedness!" said Morny, shrugging his shoulders. "He's scratched nearly all the crew and forgotten to scratch the worst of the lot—his giddy self!"

There were glum faces among the Classical juniors that morning. Never had they looked forward to a contest with their old rivals with so little hope. When the Classical Fourth went into their Form-room Lovell came in from the quad with slow and heavy steps, but as he came among the crowd of fellows in the Form-room passage he bucked up and strolled into the Form-room with an easy air.

He sat down in his place, smiling—the smile, as it were, frozen to his lips. He felt—he knew—that he was going to be ill, but he would not give in. His head was a little dizzy and once or twice the maps on the Form-room walls seemed to him to be turning round. He took a grip upon himself, as it were, and sat tight. Still the mechanical smile was on his face.

"Lovell!"

He heard Mr. Dalton's voice as through a mist. He had not noticed that the Fourth Form master had entered the room.

"Lovell!"

"Yes, sir."

"What is the matter with you, Lovell?"

Lovell made an effort.

"Nothing, sir."

"You are looking quite ill, my boy."

Lovell felt a dizzy spasm of rage. Was even his Form-master joining up against him—making out that he was ill, making out that he wasn't fit for the Rookwood race?

"I—I'm quite all right, sir. In—in fact, I—I feel splendid this morning, sir—splendid!" he stammered.

"You do not look it, Lovell," said Mr. Dalton quietly, eyeing him.

"Come out before the class."

Lovell moved out from his place. He knew now that he was ill—almost in a fever. He knew that his legs were unsteady under him. It was only by an heroic effort that he reached the spot where Mr. Dalton stood, and faced him. All the eyes in the Classical Fourth were on Lovell—some curiously, some mockingly, some compassionately. He stood unsteady under Mr. Dalton's searching eyes.

"Come, come, Lovell," said the Form-master kindly. "You are very far from well, my boy. What is the matter?"

"I—I've got a slight cold, I think, sir," stammered Lovell. "But—but it's nothing. I—I'm all right. I—"

Lovell broke off dazedly. Mr. Dalton was swimming before his eyes, and the

hapless junior felt that he was swimming, too. It was the strong grasp of Richard Dalton on his shoulder that saved him from falling.

"My poor boy!" said the master of the Fourth softly. "You are not well, Lovell. Lean on my arm—so. Silver, I leave you in charge of the Form-room for a few minutes."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy. Mr. Dalton left the Form-room with Lovell leaning heavily on his arm, assisted by Mr. Dalton's strong grasp. A buzz broke out among the Classical Fourth when they had disappeared.

"Crooked, by gad!" said Mornington. "Poor old Lovell!" murmured Jimmy Silver; and Raby and Newcome nodded in silence.

Much as their former comrade had exasperated them, his old friends compassionated him at the moment. It was only too clear that it was not a "slight cold" that was the matter with Lovell. He was going to be ill, and he was being taken to the sanatorium, where he ought to have been days ago.

"Silver, old man," exclaimed Mornington eagerly, "Lovell's crooked!"

"Looks like it," muttered Jimmy.

"And the boat race—"
"Oh, blow the boat race!" said Jimmy Silver crossly. He was thinking of his estranged chum, not of the Rookwood race.

"All the same, you take control if Lovell's crooked, and—"

"And we'll beat the Moderns!" said Conroy.

Mr. Dalton came back alone into the Form-room.

"Is Lovell coming back, sir?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"No, Silver. Lovell is being taken to the sanatorium, where the doctor will see him. He will have to remain there for a few days at least, I think. We will now proceed."

And Mr. Dalton proceeded, rather surprised to see his class looking so merry and bright all of a sudden. The Classical Fourth were thinking of the afternoon's boat race, now left in the capable hands of Jimmy Silver, and of the surprise that was in store for Tommy Dodd & Co.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Winning Eight.

"W HERE'S Lovell?" Tommy Dodd asked that question quite anxiously when the rival oarsmen of Rookwood met on the raft that afternoon.

Jimmy Silver smiled. "In sanny," he answered. The Modern skipper jumped.

"In—in sanny! Then—then he won't be in the race!"

"Not quite!" chuckled Mornington. And there was a general chortle among the Classical oarsmen. The expression on Tommy Dodd's face was quite entertaining.

"Then, you—you, Silver," stuttered the Modern junior—"you've taken over control—what?"

"Little me!" assented Jimmy, with a smile.

"You've made some changes in the crew?"

"Just a few."

"Never mind, we'll beat you, all the same!" said Tommy Dodd.

"All the same?" chuckled Mornington. "I'd like Lovell to hear that! It would buck him up no end!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd rejoined his men, with a serious face.

"You fellows will have to pull up your socks," he said. "We've got our work cut out to win. We're going to win, of course, but—"

"Of course!" murmured Tommy Cook, but there was no longer absolute confidence in his tone.

"Only we'd better get it out of our heads that it's going to be the walkover we fancied. It isn't."

The Moderns realised that clearly enough. Their prospects had, in fact, changed very considerably. But they were in great form and ready for the pull of their lives.

Mr. Dalton came down to the raft to start the race. Rookwood juniors thronged on the towpath. Classics and Moderns, ready to encourage their champions with all the power of their lungs. There was a cheer that rang along the shining river as the rival

crews carried out their boats. It was a great occasion.

"They're off!"

"Hurrah!"

"Pull, you beggars, pull!" roared Gunner of the Fourth.

"Put it on, you fellows!"

"Manders! House! Manders! Manders! Manders!" roared the Moderns, racing along the tow-path and yelling themselves hoarse as Tommy Dodd & Co. drew ahead.

"Pull, you dummies, pull!" roared Gunner.

"Play up, Classics!"

"Manders! Manders! Manders!" yelled the Moderns.

It was a hard race and an exciting one. In both Houses at Rookwood it was told later that day, many times over, how the Modern boat got the lead and kept it and gained nearly a length, how the Classics crept on them foot by foot till they recovered that length and drew half a length ahead, how the Moderns won back that half-length inch by inch, how the rivals raced neck and neck till the Classics put on a foot or more, and then the Moderns shot ahead and the yelling Modern mob on the tow-path yelled themselves almost into delirium, and then how, amid frantic Classical shouts and cheers, Jimmy Silver & Co. gained and gained, every man rowing as if for his life, till the Classical boat was half a length ahead, three-quarters of a length, a whole length, and then a length and a half at the finish.

And then the Classical crowd roared and yelled and raved, and tossed up their caps, careless where they came down—or, indeed, whether they came down at all—and fairly hugged one another in their glee.

And later on, when the winning crew were carried back shoulder-high to their House, amid an uproarious crowd, the old quadrangle of Rookwood rang with cheers which the grey old walls echoed back like thunder.

THE END.

(High Jinks at Rookwood next week, chums! Look out for: "BACK TO THE FOLD!" a sparkling tale of the Rookwood Chums!)

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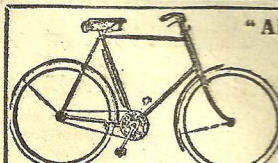
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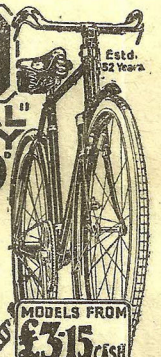
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