

# The POPULAR

2¢



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CAPTAIN OF THE FOURTH—BUT AN OUTCAST, A BOY WITHOUT A STUDY!

# BACK TO THE FOLD!

BY  
OWEN CONQUEST.

The leopard cannot change its spots, but Lovell is forced to change his manners—manners that have landed him in such an unpleasant position at Rookwood!

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Rooted Out!

"TROUBLE for somebody!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Looks like it!" agreed Raby and Newcome.

The chums of the Classical Fourth were lounging in the doorway of Study No. 4, talking with Mornington and Erroll, who were in the study. From the direction of the staircase came a heavy tread, and Bulkeley of the Sixth came into view.

The captain of Rookwood had a frown upon his face, and his official ashplant was tucked under his arm.

His expression indicated that there was, as Jimmy Silver said, trouble for somebody, and the chums of the Fourth could only hope that it was not for their noble selves.

"About the Greyfriars match," Mornington was saying. "If that ass Lovell sticks to it that you're not to play centre-half, Jimmy—"

Morny broke off as Bulkeley of the Sixth arrived outside the study doorway.

Bulkeley stopped. Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome regarded him inquiringly. Mornington, from the study, gave him a cool nod.

"Hallo, Bulkeley! Have you dropped in to supper?"

The captain of Rookwood did not heed that cheeky question.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Yes, Bulkeley?" answered Jimmy in his meekest tone. He had a wary eye on the ashplant, and it was a time to be meek and mild.

Certainly Jimmy Silver had no sins upon his conscience. But there were certain little matters upon which the Fourth Form did not see eye to eye with the head prefect of Rookwood. A fellow could never tell.

"There's a light in the top box-room," said Bulkeley. "I saw it from the quad."

"Oh, good!" said Jimmy.

"What do you mean—good?"

Jimmy smiled.

"I mean I'm glad you're not after me, old bean. I haven't been in the top box-room; in fact it would be impossible."

"I don't see that it would be impossible, you young ass! The stair goes up from this passage, at the end."

"Yes, but fellows are not allowed in the box-rooms between prep and dorm!" explained Jimmy Silver. "I couldn't have been there, you see, without breaking a rule of the House."

Jimmy Silver made that statement with much gravity, while Raby and

Newcome grinned, and Mornington, in Study No. 4, chuckled. Bulkeley made a move as if to slip his ashplant from under his arm into his hand; but he checked that movement and laughed.

"You young ass! Some kid is in the top box-room with a lamp or a candle, as there's no other light there. Do you know who it is?"

"Hem!"

The junior exchanged glances.

"I see that you do," said Bulkeley.

"There's something on here. What is it?"

No answer.

The captain of Rookwood gave them an expressive look and walked on towards the stair that led up to the box-room.

"That ass Lovell!" murmured Raby.

Bulkeley tramped up the little stair to the landing outside the box-room.

The door was closed but a gleam of light showed under it.

Bulkeley turned the handle and threw open the door. There was a sudden exclamation in the box-room.

"You silly ass! What do you want?"

"What?" roared Bulkeley.

"Oh!"

The junior in the box-room jumped up. It was Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth. His face crimsoned.

"I—I didn't know it was you, Bulkeley! I—I thought it was one of the fellows butting in—"

Bulkeley glanced round the room in amazement.

He had expected to find something going on in that secluded apartment after seeing the light in the window at that late hour, for it was near the bedtime of the lower school. Probably he had suspected a smoking-party—there were fellows in the Fourth who smoked forbidden cigarettes in secluded spots, and fondly fancied themselves men of the world therefore.

But the captain of Rookwood certainly had not expected to behold what now met his eyes.

On top of a large trunk stood a bicycle lamp for illumination. By it lay several

books, with paper, ink, and pens. The trunk served as a table, and next to it was a box that had served Lovell as a seat. The junior captain of Rookwood had been at prep.

"What on earth does this mean, Lovell?" asked Bulkeley, in sheer astonishment. "You're working up here?"

"Ye-es."

"Prep?"

"Ye-es."

"And why aren't you at prep in your study?"

Lovell did not answer.

"A few weeks ago," said Bulkeley, "you were elected junior captain. You haven't made much of a success of it so far, but I suppose you know that a junior captain has his responsibilities, like the senior captain? Your duty is to see rules observed, not to break them yourself."

"I—I know."

"You know you're not allowed to be up here late in the evening at the risk of setting the house on fire with a candle!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "You will take two hundred lines, Lovell."

Lovell set his lips.

"Very well, Bulkeley," he answered quietly.

"And now tell me what this nonsense means? Why are you doing your prep in a box-room?"

"I used to do it in the Form-room, but Mr. Dalton stopped me," answered Lovell sulkily.

"Your study is the place for prep."

"I—I haven't a study now."

"I know you've quarrelled with your study-mates. Do you mean to say that Silver and Raby and Newcome have turned you out of the end study?"

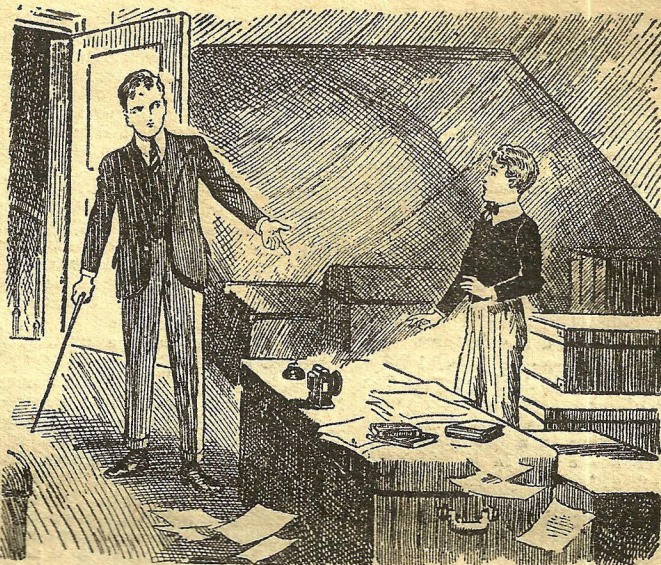
"N-n-no."

"Then you turned out of your own accord?"

"I don't want to dig with fellows I'm not on speaking terms with," muttered Lovell.

"A fellow's allowed to change his study," said Bulkeley. "Why haven't you changed into another, then?"

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Lovell did not reply, but the colour in his face deepened.

"Well?" snapped Bulkeley.

"I—I did at first," stammered Lovell; "but I couldn't pull with the fellows there because—"

"There seem to be a good many fellows in the Classical Fourth that you can't pull with," said Bulkeley dryly. "But there are plenty of studies—isn't there one willing to take you in?"

No answer.

"If there isn't, it's your own fault," said the captain of Rookwood. "If you're on bad terms with all your Form you needn't ask me to believe that it's the Form that is to blame. Anyhow, this won't do. If you can't find a new study, you must go back to your old one. Take your books out of this box-room at once."

"I—I—" Lovell stammered. "I—I've just finished, Bulkel y. I should have been down in a few minutes."

"You will go down now, Lovell! Why, it's only a couple of days ago that you came out of the sanatorium after being laid up for a week with a bad cold. Now I find you sitting in a draughty room that never has a fire in it. Haven't you any sense?"

"I—I—"

Bulkeley stepped aside from the doorway.

"Get out!" he said. "Take your lamp and clear! You can fetch your books away in the morning. Cut!"

And Lovell, with a red face, cut, and Bulkeley shut the door of the box-room and followed him down the stairs.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Pride Goeth Before a Fall!

"SEE the Conquering Hero Comes!" murmured Putty of the Fourth. Some of the fellows in the Classical Fourth passage

laughed. Raby and Newcome grinned. Jimmy Silver's face was very grave. Arthur Edward Lovell, with a crimson complexion, came down from the box-room into full view of all the fellows in the study passage. Bulkeley walked away to the staircase and disappeared. Lovell lingered in the passage, his cheeks burning and his eyes gleaming. Lovell had a sense of the ridiculous, though it seemed his destiny to place himself continually in ridiculous positions. Jimmy Silver was the only fellow in the passage who kept a serious face, and Jimmy only did so with difficulty.

There was, in fact, a good deal in Arthur Edward Lovell's present position to appeal to a fellow's sense of humour.

He had come out top in the junior captain's election by a kind of accident; he was junior captain, taking himself very seriously indeed, but taken seriously by nobody else. His captaincy had been a series of mistakes and blunders—to such an extent that even Lovell himself was beginning to have some faint doubts as to whether he was the right man in the right place.

Although he was junior captain, he was a fellow without a study, with nowhere to lay his weary head, so to speak. It was an uncomfortable and humiliating position. Properly speaking, all the Classical Fourth should have rushed to secure the honour of having the junior captain as a study-mate, but the Classical Fourth did not rush.

Loftily and proudly Lovell had shaken

the dust of the end study from his feet, throwing over the old chums with whom he had quarrelled and declining to share a study with them any longer.

But it was a case of pride going before destruction, and a lofty spirit before a fall!

Other fellows were not keen on taking in a chap who "rowed" with his study-mates, threw them over, and cut them dead in quad. Moreover, as nearly all the Form were friends of Jimmy Silver, it was a little difficult for them to extend the right hand of friendship also to the fellow who was on the worst of terms now with Jimmy.

Lovell's eyes gleamed as he noted six or seven grinning faces in the passage, and two or three more looking out of study doorways. He moved along slowly, trying to appear unconscious of the general entertainment, while his burning cheeks showed that he was only too keenly conscious of it.

Jimmy Silver made a movement to intercept him.

The kind heart of Uncle James of Rookwood was moved. At this climax of Lovell's peculiar situation, Jimmy was impelled to break the ice and offer once more to let bygones be bygones, and let Arthur Edward return to his old quarters in the end study. Uncle James had a forgiving nature, and he was willing to welcome the wandering lamb back into the fold as it were. And no doubt Raby and Newcome would have followed the lead of Uncle James.

"Lovell, old man."

Arthur Edward's eyes glinted.

If there was one thing more than another that his lofty pride could not tolerate, it was compassion. He read Jimmy's kind thoughts as easily as if they had been written on his face, and his flush deepened and he set his lips. So it had come to that—that he was being taken pity upon!

He stopped.

"Lovell—"

Jimmy had no time to say any more. Lovell stared him full in the face with a steely, unrecognising stare, and stepped aside a little and passed him.

Jimmy flushed.

"Lovell, you cheeky ass!" roared Raby indignantly.

Lovell did not turn his head.

Having given Jimmy Silver the cut direct he walked on towards the staircase. Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

A moment before his feelings towards his former comrade had been kind and forgiving. Now he was strongly tempted to dash after Lovell, grab him by the collar, and knock his head against the wall.

Fortunately, he restrained that impulse.

"Cheeky dummy!" growled Newcome. "You're an ass, Jimmy! You'd better let him rip, as I've told you lots of times."

Jimmy Silver nodded without speaking.

"He, ho ho!"

That fat cachinnation came from Tubby Muffin, who was grinning out of the doorway of Study No. 2 as Lovell came along to the stairs.

Tubby was amused, and he expressed his amusement in that cachinnation.

Never had a cachinnation proved so disastrous to the cachinator. It was the last straw to Lovell, already boiling over with anger and humiliation and chagrin.

He swung round on the cachinnating Tubby and grasped him by the collar.

Bang!

A terrific yell rang along the Classical Fourth passage as Reginald Muffin's

head came into contact with the study door.

"Yaroooh!"

Bang!

"Yooop!" roared Tubby Muffin in anguish. "Yuuugggh! Help! Ow!"

Lovell, with a swing of the arm, sent the fat Classical tumbling into the study. There was a crash in Study No. 2 as Tubby landed there, and another crash of a chair knocked over as he sprawled. It was followed by a yell from Higgs of the Fourth, who was at prep in the study.

"What the thump—"

"Yarooop! Ow! Oooop!"

Higgs jumped up and jumped to the door.

"Lovell, you cheeky ass! What do you think you're doing?" he bawled.

"Find out!" snapped Lovell.

"You've made me drop about twenty blots."

"Rats!"

"I've spoiled an exercise!" roared Higgs.

"Both your exercise!"

"Why, I—I—I—" spluttered Higgs. He did not waste any more words on Lovell; he rushed at him.

Tubby Muffin sat up breathlessly.

"Go for him!" he shouted. "Give him beans! Ow, ow, ow!"

Putty of the Fourth and Jones minor, who also belonged to Study No. 2, rushed up and reached Lovell as Higgs reached him. The three juniors collared the junior captain of Rookwood on all sides.

"Hands off!" roared Lovell.

"Bump him!"

Lovell hit out furiously, and Jones minor yelled as he caught a set of hard knuckles with his nose and sat down. But Lovell was down the next moment, struggling with Putty and Higgs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!" sighed Mornington.

Jimmy Silver made a stride towards the scene of the struggle. Raby promptly grasped his arm, and Newcome grasped the other arm.

"No you don't!" said Raby.

"You jolly well don't!" grinned Newcome. "Lovell's asked for it, and you're not going to chip in, Jimmy!"

"But—"

"Rats!" said Raby and Newcome together. And they fairly dragged Jimmy Silver away into the end study.

Meanwhile, Arthur Edward Lovell was going through some minutes that were crammed with incident.

Jones minor picked himself up and laid hold again. Tubby Muffin rolled on the scene to lend a hand. All Study No. 2 had hold of Lovell now, and, sturdy as he was, and angry as he was, he was not of much use against four.

He was swept off the floor and bumped on it hard.

Bump!

"Now roll him down the stairs!" roared Higgs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good egg!"

Lovell, struggling desperately, was rolled away along the passage as far as the staircase. Then he was rolled down, Higgs' boot giving him a powerful start.

The hapless junior captain sprawled down the stairs, clutching wildly at the banisters. He stopped himself half-way down and jumped up, panting.

"Now come back and have some more!" roared Higgs.

"My hat! He's coming!" grinned Putty of the Fourth. "All hands ready to repel boarders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell came charging up the stairs

like a bull. But really it was not very useful for one fellow to charge upstairs at four.

He found himself rolling down again, and this time he went to the next landing.

There he picked himself up and glared at the four grinning faces above. But he did not make another charge. Even Lovell realised that it was not good enough. He turned and tramped down the lower stair and disappeared, followed by a loud chortle from the Classical Fourth passage.

**THE THIRD CHAPTER.  
Home Again!**

**O** HI!" George Raby uttered that ejaculation in tones of great surprise.

It was the following day, and Raby had arrived at the door of the end study a little late for tea. Jimmy Silver & Co. had been at games practice after class, and Raby was the first in. Raby brought with him a parcel from the sergeant's little shop, containing certain good things for a study tea. He stopped in the doorway and stared.

The study was not unoccupied, as Raby had naturally expected to find it.

A junior sat by the fire, apparently keeping an eye on a kettle which was nearly boiling. That junior was Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth, junior captain of Rookwood School.

Lovell certainly heard Raby's surprised exclamation. But he gave no sign of having heard it.

His gaze remained fixed on the steaming kettle. He did not speak or turn his head.

"Oh!" repeated Raby. "You!"

He stepped into the study and placed his parcel on the table. Then he turned to Lovell again.

"You here?" he said.

No answer.

"Can't you speak?" demanded Raby.

Either Lovell couldn't or he wouldn't; at all events, he didn't. He regarded the kettle with a fixed gaze.

Raby breathed hard and deep, but he turned away from Lovell without another word. He was perplexed and he was annoyed, and could not even begin to guess what Lovell's presence in the study portended. If the junior captain had come there looking for trouble, there was plenty of trouble for him to find; but his look was not hostile, it was only indifferent. If he had come to make advances towards reconciliation, Raby was not sure that he was willing to welcome them; but Lovell did not look conciliating in the very least.

If it was neither the one nor the other, it really was difficult to guess why Lovell was there at all.

Raby decided to leave the mystery over till his chums came in. So he unpacked the parcel and proceeded to lay the table.

Meanwhile, the kettle boiled, and Lovell made a pot of tea in a small teapot which looked new. Then he put a little tin saucepan on the fire—a saucepan also new—with an egg in it. Raby

noted these proceedings from the corner of his eye without comment.

"Hallo! What——"

Arthur Newcome had arrived. He stared at Lovell, and then looked at Raby as if for an explanation.

Raby shrugged his shoulders as a sign that he had no explanation to give.

"What are you up to, Lovell?" asked Newcome.

No reply.

"Getting deaf?" Silence.

"Or dumb?" hooted Newcome.

Lovell might have been deaf and dumb. He remained mute and regardless.

Newcome's hand wandered to a fives bat. But he, like Raby, decided to remain inactive till Jimmy Silver came in. It was for Uncle James to decide how to deal with this curious situation.



Lovell bent down, and commenced to draw a chalk line on the floor, cutting off his portion of the study from that of his old pals!

Jimmy Silver's step was heard in the Classical Fourth passage a few minutes later. Jimmy came in cheery and ruddy from recent football.

"Tea ready, you chaps?" he asked. "Why—what—Lovell! Have you come to tea, old ben?"

Grim silence from Arthur Edward Lovell. He had taken up the boiled egg and placed it in an egg-cup. He had cut bread-and-butter, using a box as a table. Now he was sitting down to tea, and he sat down regardless of the three staring Classics.

"Lovell!"

The junior captain of Rookwood rose from his improvised tea table, and deigned at long last to take cognisance of the existence of his three former comrades.

His face was frowning and unpromising. Never had he looked less like conciliating his old pals.

"I bar you fellows," he said. "You bar me all right. No need for us to speak even in the same study. This is my study."

"Oh!"

"Mine as much as yours!" said Lovell

defiantly. "Yours as much as mine. I'm going to tea here and do my prep here. You can have the table. I can manage here. That's all!"

"But——"

"Nothing more to be said, that I know of," said Arthur Edward Lovell, lofty, haughty, and unapproachable—almost Olympian in his superb disdain.

"Well, a little more," said Jimmy Silver mildly. "You mean, that you've come back to the study?"

"Yes!"

"Fed-up with box-rooms and things?" asked Raby, with a wink at the ceiling.

Lovell coloured, but he did not deign to answer.

"You haven't thought of trying the woodshed?" asked Newcome.

Lovell's colour deepened; but he made no response.

"Well, it's your study, Lovell, of course," said Jimmy Silver.

"I'm glad you admit it," said Lovell sardonically.

"I don't know that I do admit it," said Raby warmly. "You walked out of this study of your own accord, Lovell, and refused to come back when you were asked civilly. I don't feel inclined to admit that this is your study."

"All the same to me," said Lovell.

"Why, you cheeky ass——"

"Keep smiling!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Nothing to rag about!"

"Why not roll him out of the study and let him come back if he asks civilly, and not before?" demanded Raby hotly.

"Try it on!" said Lovell.

"My hat! I jolly well will!"

Raby was making a step towards the junior captain when Jimmy caught his arm and stopped him.

"Keep smiling, I tell you! It's Lovell's study, if he chooses to come back to it. Mr. Dalton would chip in if we turned him out. Besides we don't want to turn him out."

"Don't we?" growled Raby.

"No, old man, we don't!"

"All the same if you did," said Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell was not in a mood to concede a fraction of an inch. "If you don't like my company, you can change out, of course."

"Dear man!" said Newcome. "Your company is so agreeable, so grateful and comforting, that we wouldn't lose it for worlds. Your manners, too—almost fascinating."

Raby chuckled, and Jimmy Silver grinned. Arthur Edward turned to his improvised tea-table and sat down.

"So you've come back, Lovell; but you haven't come back to own up that you've been a silly ass, and make friends?" asked Jimmy.

"No!"

"And you're going to tea on your own—"

"Yes."

"Like a sulky kid in a nursery?" Lovell did not answer that. He turned his back on the three juniors, but they could see his ears burning.

"Now, look here, Lovell—"  
"That's enough!" rapped out Lovell, without glancing round. "We're not on speaking terms—we bar one another—let it go at that. If you speak, I shan't answer."

"Are we going to lose the pleasure of your conversation, then?" asked Newcome sadly.

No answer.

"Lend me your hanky, Raby, will you? I'm going to weep!" said Newcome, with a catch in his voice.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Let's have tea—I'm jolly hungry!"

"Let's!" agreed his chums.

And the three sat down round the study table to tea. Every now and then they glanced at the haughty, silent figure of their estranged chum, "teasing" on his own, silent as a stone image. But Lovell did not glance at them.

Having finished his tea, he carefully packed away the little tin saucepan in the box which served as his table along with the kettle and the new teapot. Then, without a word, he left the study, avoiding the glances of the trio.

They looked at one another when he was gone.

"Well," said Newcome, "this is the giddy limit!"

"Of all the silly fatheads!" said Raby. Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Poor old Lovell," he said.

"Oh, blow poor old Lovell!" exclaimed Raby crossly. "I think he's a silly ass and an exasperating chump, and—"

"And a cheeky fathead and a sulky dummy!" said Newcome.

Jimmy laughed.

"All that, and more!" he said. "But he used to be our pal, and he was a fathead all the time, and we bore with him. He's only the same fathead that he always was. He's a good chap!"

"A silly owl, you mean!"

"A fellow can be a silly owl and a good chap at the same time. Keep smiling—after all, we can keep up this game as long as Lovell does."

And Jimmy Silver's chums chuckled and agreed that they could.

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. At Last!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL wore a frown the following day. He wore, of course, other things as well; but the most notable thing about him was his frown. He was wrapped in dignified resentment as in a garment. Lovell had a strongly  
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developed sense of personal dignity, and he hated to be the cause of smiles. But, of late, he had caused more smiles in the Classical Fourth than any fellow at Rookwood.

He was no longer a fellow without a study—and that was something. He had retaken possession of his old quarters, in what appeared to him a lofty and dignified manner, making no concessions. He was in the study, but not of it, so to speak; he barred his former comrades as sternly as ever. Lovell could not see why this should be the cause of entertainment in the Fourth Form. But undoubtedly it was. Morny had declared that the lofty attitude of Arthur Edward Lovell added to the gaiety of existence at Rookwood, and the other fellows agreed with Morny.

In the Form-room that day Lovell's face frowned among many smiling faces. He did not "tea" in the end study that afternoon, he "tea'd" in Hall. But in the evening he came up for prep.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the Classical Fourth passage, when Lovell came up and passed them on his way to the end study. He passed them with a face like a stone image, ignoring their existence with crushing disdain; and they smiled when he had passed, apparently not feeling at all crushed.

Lovell disappeared into the end study. The chums of the Fourth remained chatting with Mornington and Oswald for a little time, and then went along to their study for prep. In that study they found that some little alterations had been made.

There were two windows to the end study, one of them in a wide and deep recess, looking over the quad. A couple of large boxes with rather frayed cushions on them generally occupied that recess, making quite a nice window-seat. On a summer's day it was a very pleasant place for fellows to sit and chat.

Now the boxes had been shifted out and a small table occupied their place. The table looked as if it had been rooted out of a lumber-room and repaired by a somewhat unskilful hand. However, it stood, with a little support from the window, against which it was lodged. Next to it was a chair—a new chair. On the uncertain table were piled Lovell's books, with papers and an inkpot. Lovell sat there already engaged in prep.

He looked round as the three juniors came in and stared across the study at his new arrangements. On this occasion Lovell condescended to be the first to speak.

"Just a word to you fellows!" he said icily.

"Go ahead!"

"You fellows don't choose to change out of the study."

"No fear!"

"We're bound to share the room, then, though we bar one another, so I've made this arrangement."

"Which?"

Lovell waved his hand round the recess.

"This space is about a quarter of the study—rather less, in fact, so I'm taking no advantage. You can have the rest of the room and the study table. Leave this to me and I'll leave the rest to you. Then we needn't interfere with one another."

"What rot!" agreed Raby.

"Utter rot!" agreed Newcome.

"I don't see it," said Lovell, in the same icy manner. "I think it's fair, and it's up to you to agree. You don't want my company, and I don't want yours. If you agree, I'll draw a chalk line across this space, and we'll undertake not to cross it on either side."

Raby and Newcome looked at Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy's eyes glimmered.

"Let's have it clear," he said. "You draw a chalk line, cutting off that recess from the study. That's your spot, and the rest is ours?"

"Exactly."

"And we undertake not to invade one another's territory—honour bright?" asked Jimmy. "Nobody is to step across the chalk line?"

"Honour bright," said Lovell.

"Agreed, then."

"But—" began Newcome.

"Dear man, leave it to me," urged Jimmy. "Lovell's quite fair and reasonable in this—let's agree."

"Oh, all right!"

"Anything for a quiet life!" yawned Raby. "Let it go at that."

Lovell rose, took a stump of chalk from his pocket, and drew a line across the floor from one side of the recess to the other.

"Nobody passes that line!" he said.

"Agreed—honour bright!" said Jimmy. "You agree on your side, of course?"

"I've said so—honour bright."

"That's settled, then. Now for prep, you chaps."

Lovell sat down again at his solitary table with his back to the other fellows. Jimmy Silver & Co. sat down at the study table and started prep. Jimmy's eyes were dancing, and Raby and Newcome glanced at him curiously. They could see that something was working in the powerful brain of Uncle James of Rookwood.

"What's the joke?" asked Raby at last.

"Joke?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. What are you grinning at ass?"

"Was I grinning?"

"Fathead!" said Newcome impatiently. "What is it?"

Jimmy smiled serenely.

"I'll tell you after prep!" he said.

"Why not before, ass?"

"Oh, because—" said Jimmy cheerfully.

And with that non-committal reply his comrades had to be satisfied. Prep was the order of the day now, and for some time the juniors worked in silence.

(Continued on page 28.)

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## Back to the Fold!

(Continued from page 6.)

Lovell had started first, but he was not finished first. Prep was always rather laborious to Arthur Edward. Moreover, it was a custom in junior studies to "whack out" prep, fellows helping one another to some extent, and Arthur Edward had lost that great advantage by retiring into the solitude of his own dignity.

Jimmy Silver & Co. finished while Lovell was still busy. Raby and Newcome yawned and rose from the table.

"That's done," said Raby. "Let's get out."

"No hurry!" said Jimmy.

"Dash it all, you don't want to stick in the study now we're finished," said Newcome. "Come along down."

Jimmy shook his head.

"Hang on a few minutes," he said.

"What on earth for?"

"Because I want you to, old chaps."

"Oh, all right!"

Raby and Newcome sat on the table and waited. They did not guess in the least what they were waiting for, unless it was for Lovell to finish his work. Certainly they could see no reason why they should wait for that.

Arthur Edward Lovell finished at last. He rose from his little table, stacked up his books, and turned to walk across to the door. Then Jimmy Silver jumped up.

"Stop!"

Lovell stopped in sheer astonishment.

"What?" he exclaimed.

"Stop!" repeated Jimmy.

"What do you mean?" snapped Lovell angrily. "I'm going down."

"I mean exactly what I say!" answered Jimmy Silver coolly. "Stop on your own side of the chalk line!"

"Wha-a-a-t?"

"Your own arrangement," said Jimmy Silver calmly and cheerfully. "You proposed it, and we agreed—honour bright on both sides. I suppose you're not thinking of breaking your word?"

Lovell stared at him blankly. There was a sudden roar from Raby and Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell's face was extraordinary in its expression. He stood on his own side of the chalk line—in the window-recess. The door was opposite that window.

Without crossing the chalk line—his own chalk line—Arthur Edward obviously could never reach the door. By his own arrangement he was, apparently, condemned to remain in the window-recess for the remainder of his natural life.

"Ha ha, ha!" yelled Raby and Newcome, greatly tickled by the expression on Lovell's face.

"I—I—I—" gasped Lovell. "Of course I—I shall have to get to the door."

"Nothing of the sort," said Jimmy Silver. "We're not claiming to get to the window, are we, you chaps?"

"Certainly not!" chuckled Raby. "The window's on Lovell's side of the line, and he can have it all to himself."

"The door's on our side," chortled Newcome. "We'll keep the door to ourselves, same as Lovell does the window. We'll lock our door when we go down."

"You won't!" roared Lovell.

"We jolly well will! You can lock the window, if you like, as it's on your side of the line!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell made a stride. Jimmy Silver held up his hand.

"Honour bright, you know," he said, softly as a cooing dove.

And Arthur Edward halted again.

The three juniors watched him, Jimmy smiling cheerfully, Raby and Newcome chortling spasmodically. Lovell's face grew redder and redder.

"I—I never thought—" he began.

"A little way of yours," agreed Jimmy, with a nod. "You never do."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It was understood, of course, that a fellow had a right-of-way across to the door."

"Not at all. Nothing was said about a right-of-way."

"Nothing at all!" chuckled Newcome.

"Not a word!" roared Raby. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver yawned.

"May as well go down," he remarked. "We'll lock our door—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Not that it's necessary on account of

Lovell. Lovell's an honourable chap, and can be relied on to keep his word."

Lovell breathed hard.

"I can't stay here!" he shouted.

"Looks to me as if you must," said Jimmy. "There's your own line that you mustn't step over. Haven't we kept to our side of the line?"

"Ye-e-es, but—"

"Well, you do the same. Come on, you chaps."

The three juniors moved to the door—their door! Lovell, still standing on his own side of the chalk line, glared at them as they went. It was growing obvious, even to Lovell, that his Olympian dignity had to come down a peg or two—in fact, many pegs. Certainly, he could not remain permanently in the end study, and, equally certainly, he could not leave it without breaking his plighted word.

"Silver!" he called out.

Jimmy turned back.

"I—I say, Silver," said Lovell haltingly.

It was a bitter pill to swallow, but Lovell knew that he had to get it down.

"Yes?" said Jimmy politely.

"If—if you fellows agree, we—we'll rub out that line, and—and whack out the study the same as before."

Jimmy chuckled.

"We'll agree on one condition," he said.

"What's that?"

"That you chuck up playing the ox, stop sulking—"

"Who's sulking?" roared Lovell.

"You are, old bean. Chuck up playing the ox, stop sulking, and whack out the study as we used to, pals, like we used to be last term."

Raby and Newcome grinned and nodded.

"There was a long pause.

"Done!" he said.

"Good!"

And Lovell himself took a duster and rubbed out the dividing line. Four juniors left the study together, arm-in-arm, and marched down the passage with cheery, amicable faces, much to the surprise of the Classical Fourth.

And all was calm and bright!

THE END.

(Another sensation is caused at Rookwood next week when Lovell tries to get rid of the captaincy of the Fourth. Don't miss reading: "LOVELL PUTS THINGS RIGHT!")

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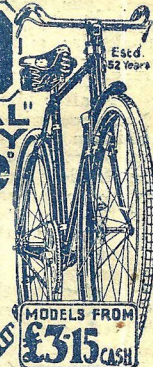
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