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The BOYS' FRIEND

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TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending October 29th, 1921.

The HOUND of BLEAKDALE!



THE TIRELESS WATCHER!

Every day the Hound of Bleakdale would come out from his lair on the moors and intently watch the gang in which his convict master worked. There were several warders from the prison who would have shot him if they had had the chance—and the death of this wonderful dog would have meant the loss of the solution to a very great mystery!

A SPLENDID, LONG, SCHOOL YARN BY OWEN CONQUEST.



Detective Muffin of Rookwood!

The 1st Chapter.

A Charge for Detective Muffin!

"I suppose he's gone to sleep!" Arthur Edward Lovell spoke in a tone of deep and patient resignation. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were waiting on the steps of the School House at Rookwood. They were waiting for Jimmy Silver.

Several other fellows of the Classical Fourth were waiting, too.

It was a fine October afternoon, with a clear and sunny sky. On fine, clear days the sea could be seen from the summit of the clock-tower at Rookwood. And somebody had announced that one of the battleships of his Gracious Majesty King George the Fifth was off the coast, and naturally all the fellows wanted to look at it. That was where the telescope came in; or, rather, ought to have come in.

For Jimmy Silver's telescope was a wonderful telescope. It was worth, on the lowest computation, five guineas. But it had gone cheap at a sale of Government stuff, and Jimmy Silver had picked it up for the moderate sum of ten-and-six. It had adorned the end study for a week or more, and dozens of fellows had visited that celebrated study to try the telescope from the window. Now that a battleship was in the offing that telescope was wanted at the summit of the clock-tower, and Jimmy Silver had rushed in to get it. And he hadn't returned.

"If he doesn't come soon the dashed battleship will have cleared off, and we sha'n't see it at all," said Raby. "With that telescope you could see the captain shaving, it brings a thing so near. Why doesn't that thumping ass come out with it?"

"Gone to sleep, I tell you!" said Lovell.

"Hallo! Here he comes!" exclaimed Newcome, glancing back into the house. "He hasn't got the glass, though."

Jimmy Silver appeared at last. His face was rather flushed, and rather wrathful.

"Tain't there!" he announced.

"The telescope—"

"It's gone!" said Jimmy Silver. "I've hunted through the dashed study for it, and it's gone! Some silly owl has bagged our telescope!"

"I suppose I'd better go and look for it!" said Lovell, in his resigned tone. Lovell seemed to be very resigned that afternoon.

Lovell grunted. "I expect you've shoved something over it in looking for it!" he answered. "You know what you are!"

"Ass!"

"Well, it's gone!" said Lovell.

"No doubt about that!" agreed Jimmy. "It's dashed annoying!"

Tubby Muffin chimed in. "That telescope was worth a lot of money, Jimmy. Higgs said you could sell it for pounds, if you liked. You got it cheap, because it was Government stuff. But usually they cost quids!"

"I know all that, Fatty."

Reginald Muffin looked very serious. Thoughts of deep import seemed to be working in his fat brain. "What I mean is, that telescope has vanished," he said. "Telescopes can't walk away by themselves. That stands to reason. My idea is that some fellow has bagged that telescope, because it was jolly valuable, and sold it."

"Fathead!"

"It's been stolen," said Tubby Muffin, unheeding the glares of the Fistical Four. "I'm pretty certain

"I shall take up the case," said Tubby Muffin calmly. "This is my first real opportunity of showing my powers, and I'm not going to let it slip. Will there be any reward, Jimmy, if I recover your valuable telescope?"

"There'll be a thick ear if you start any yarn about my telescope being stolen!" answered Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"Look here—"

"Oh, scat! Let's get off to the tower, you fellows."

The Fistical Four quitted the study, leaving Tubby Muffin frowning. But Reginald Muffin was in a determined mood. There didn't seem to be much encouragement for a second edition of Ferrers Locke, at Rookwood; but Tubby was not to be beaten.

He sat in Jimmy Silver's armchair, and produced a pocket-book and a stump of pencil. And with a wrinkled brow—deeply wrinkled with thought—Tubby Muffin proceeded to make notes of the case, in a scrawling hand, and in remarkable spelling; and he headed the notes with the imposing heading:

"The Case of the Missing Telescope."

made voluminous notes. Then he wandered up and down the Fourth Form passage making inquiries.

He questioned every fellow in the Classical Fourth that afternoon, and every fellow denied having borrowed the telescope.

Then, in order to make assurance doubly sure, Detective Muffin crossed over to Mr. Manders' House, and questioned the Modern Fourth. But nobody in the Modern Fourth knew anything about the telescope.

It was clear to Tubby's mind that it had been stolen. The question was, to find it, or to find the thief if he had already disposed of it.

That was the problem.

About tea-time, Tubby Muffin dropped into the end study, with a notebook and pencil in his fat hand. The Fistical Four were sitting down to tea, and they did not seem pleased to see Reginald Muffin; which was rather ungrateful, considering that the Rookwood detective had taken up the case of the missing telescope without bargaining for fee or reward.

"Heard anything of the telescope, Jimmy?"

"No!" grunted Jimmy.

"Nobody in the Fourth knows anything about it."

"Oh, it will turn up!" said Raby.

Tubby shook his head sagely.

"That's exactly what it won't do," he said. "The thief won't give it up unless he's found out."

"There isn't any thief!" bawled Jimmy Silver.

"My dear fellow," said Tubby patronisingly. "I've worked the matter out on my best methods, and I've proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that the telescope was stolen. Whether it's been sold yet, I can't say for the moment, but I'll soon find that out."

might have been any one of them, of course."

Three ferocious glares were fixed upon the amateur detective of Rookwood. But Tubby rattled on in happy unconsciousness.

"Lovell seems to have seen the telescope last!" he said. "What time exactly did you see it on the mantelpiece, Lovell?"

"Find out!"

"I require an answer to that question, Lovell."

"Go and eat coke!"

Tubby made a note in his book. "Lovell prevaricates!" he remarked. "Although not a complete proof, it indicates that Lovell is probably the thief!"

The Rookwood detective got no further than that.

Arthur Edward Lovell made a jump from the tea-table, and his powerful grasp closed on the disciple of Ferrers Locke.

Tubby Muffin found himself sprawling in the passage, with a suddenness that quite took his breath away.

"Gurrrrrrrrghh!" spluttered Tubby. His mouth was unfortunately full of cake at the moment; and some of the cake went the wrong way. Reginald Muffin sprawled on the floor and gurgled.

Tubby Muffin squirmed away, just escaping Lovell's angry boot, and scrambled up and fled.

Evidently there was no encouragement for the Rookwood detective in the end study.

The hapless detective burst into Study No. 2, and slammed the door behind him. Putty Grace and Higgs and Jones minor were at tea there, and they stared at Muffin.

"What the thump's the row?" demanded Putty of the Fourth.

"Groooh! That beast Lovell—"

Tubby spluttered. "Yurrrgh! The awful rotter—kicking a chap, you know, just because I found out that he'd stolen Jimmy Silver's telescope! Yurrrrrghh!"

"What?" yelled Putty, and there was a howl of laughter from Jones minor and Higgs.

Tubby Muffin sat down, gasping.

"It's a pretty clear case," he said breathlessly. "Lovell was the last person to see it alive—"

"Eh?"

"I—I mean he was the last person to see the telescope. He refused to answer my questions—but professionally. He broke out into violence when I accused him of the crime—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Putty. "So would any other fellow, I fancy."

"Rot!" said Tubby. "That's a proof of guilt. Now, the question is, has Lovell hidden the telescope somewhere, or sold it? He can't have sold it yet; he hasn't been out of gates since it was missing. It's hidden in his box, most likely. It's dashed awkward not having a skeleton-key to open his box. Ferrers Locke has a bunch of skeleton-keys, you know, and can open anything with them, from a Yale lock to a—a—"

"An oyster?" asked Putty.

"No, you ass; of course not! I mean he can open any old kind of a lock. But I'm not really equipped for the profession," said Tubby sadly. "So far as brainwork goes, I'm all there! But I haven't any skeleton-keys, and it's rather a problem how to search Lovell's box."

"It won't be a problem what will happen to you, if Lovell catches you nosing into his box," grinned Jones minor. "There'll be a slaughtered porpoise lying about afterwards."

"Have you done your impot for Mossco, Tubby?" asked Putty Grace.

"Bother my impot! I've no time for impots when I'm working on this case," answered the Rookwood detective irritably.

Putty chuckled.

"You had to take it in by tea-time," he said. "Mossco will speak to Mr. Dalton if you don't. You'll get a licking! Better do your impot and give Ferrers Locke a rest."

Tubby snorted angrily. He had forgotten, in his keen interest in the case of the missing telescope, that he had lines to do for the French master.

But he realised that those lines had to be done, even if he had to delay in bringing home the guilt of Arthur Edward Lovell to him. Monsieur Monceau was not likely to make any allowances on account of his important detective work.

"Isn't it rotten!" demanded Tubby. "Fancy a chap having to do lines when he's engaged on an important case! Ferrers Locke is never handicapped like this. Neither is Sherlock Holmes! Fat lot of chance a fellow has of distinguishing himself at Rookwood."

"Fathead!" said Putty.

"Ass!" said Higgs.

"Chump!" said Jones minor.



THE ROOKWOOD DETECTIVE AT WORK! Tubby Muffin was glad to offer his services as a detective to any of the juniors at Rookwood but somehow the juniors weren't having any. They positively would not recognise in him a modern Sherlock Holmes, and even Tubby himself had to admit that there were more "kicks than ha'pence" in the "detecting" game!

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"You won't find it. I tell you it isn't in the study!"

"Rot, old chap!" answered Lovell.

And Arthur Edward swung into the house, with an evident confidence in his powers of finding the telescope. Jimmy Silver breathed hard. For a moment he felt a strong impulse to take Lovell's collar, and bang Lovell's head on the banisters. Fortunately, he restrained the impulse.

"Let's all go and look!" suggested George Raby. "If we're going to see that dashed battleship we've got to buck up!"

"It isn't there!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "I've looked."

"Well, you see, it must be there!" explained Raby.

"Fathead!"

"Same to you, old top! Come on, and let's look!" said Raby amiably. And Raby went into the house with Newcome, and Jimmy Silver followed, looking quite cross. Tubby Muffin rolled in after the chums of the Fourth. Tubby seemed interested in the matter, for some reason.

The juniors arrived at the end study in the Fourth. Arthur Edward Lovell was already there, rooting about the room with a rather excited look.

"Found it?" inquired Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

of that. Where did you fellows see it last?"

"It was on the mantelpiece this afternoon!" growled Lovell.

"Somebody has pinched the thing," said Tubby. "Now, look here, Jimmy Silver. This is a serious matter. That telescope has been stolen, and it's got to be found, and the thief shown up."

"There isn't any thief!" howled Jimmy Silver. "Some cheeky ass has borrowed it."

"You say yourself it's queer. All the Fourth know that you're looking for it," said Tubby. "A fellow wouldn't come along from another Form and borrow it without asking. Tain't likely!"

The Fistical Four did not answer that. It was, indeed, an unlikely occurrence, and they had to admit it.

Tubby blinked at them victoriously.

"Now, you leave this matter to me," he said. "I've been reading up Sherlock Holmes and Ferrers Locke lately, and I'm convinced that, as a detective, I could play both their heads off. I'll take up this case, Jimmy—"

"Oh, go and eat coke!" snapped Jimmy Silver ungratefully. Apparently he was not prepared to close with the offer of the amateur Ferrers Locke of Rookwood.

The 2nd Chapter. The Sleuth at Work!

Tubby Muffin was busy that afternoon.

And as soon as the Classical Fourth knew that Detective Muffin was on the trail again, most of them showed some interest in the proceedings of Tubby.

Tubby's fat brain was full of Ferrers Locke and the exploits of that wonderful detective. Tubby had discovered that he had the gift himself; that he was, in fact, a born detective, rather better, if anything, than Ferrers Locke himself. All he needed was an opportunity—scope, as he told the grinning juniors. Given scope, Tubby was confident that he would soon display his powers to an amazed Rookwood. He had the clear, cool intellect—the unique concentration of mind—the unfailing intuition—the marvellous power of deduction; and all he needed was scope. At least, Tubby was sure of all that himself.

Now the case of the missing telescope afforded him the long-desired scope, and Detective Muffin set to work.

He spent an hour in the armchair in the end study, thinking it out; a "deep think," as he told one or two grinning juniors who looked in. He

"Let that cake alone!" growled Lovell.

"I think it's rather mean to grudge a fellow a little cake when he's spending his time searching for your stolen telescope. I haven't asked you for a fee, Silver. If you care to spring a guinea, say, I shall not refuse it."

"You won't have the chance!" grunted the captain of the Fourth.

"Run away and play, Muffin."

"I shall not expect a fee until after I've recovered the telescope for you," said Muffin calmly. "I don't bother much about fees, either; Ferrers Locke never does. I'll tell you what, Jimmy. I'm willing to take you on as my boy assistant in this case, if you like, and explain my theories to you as we go along. What?"

"Ass!"

"I want to ask you fellows a few questions," said Tubby, with his mouth full of cake. "The telescope was taken from this study, and, of course, suspicion rests on you fellows in the first place."

"What?" yelled the Fistical Four, in chorus.

"Not you, Jimmy!" said Tubby reassuringly. "As the telescope was your property, you are exonerated."

"Thanks!" said Jimmy sarcastically.

"But Lovell and Raby and Newcome," said Tubby thoughtfully. "It

(Continued overleaf.)

