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# The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

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No. 1,133. Vol. XXIII.—New Series.]

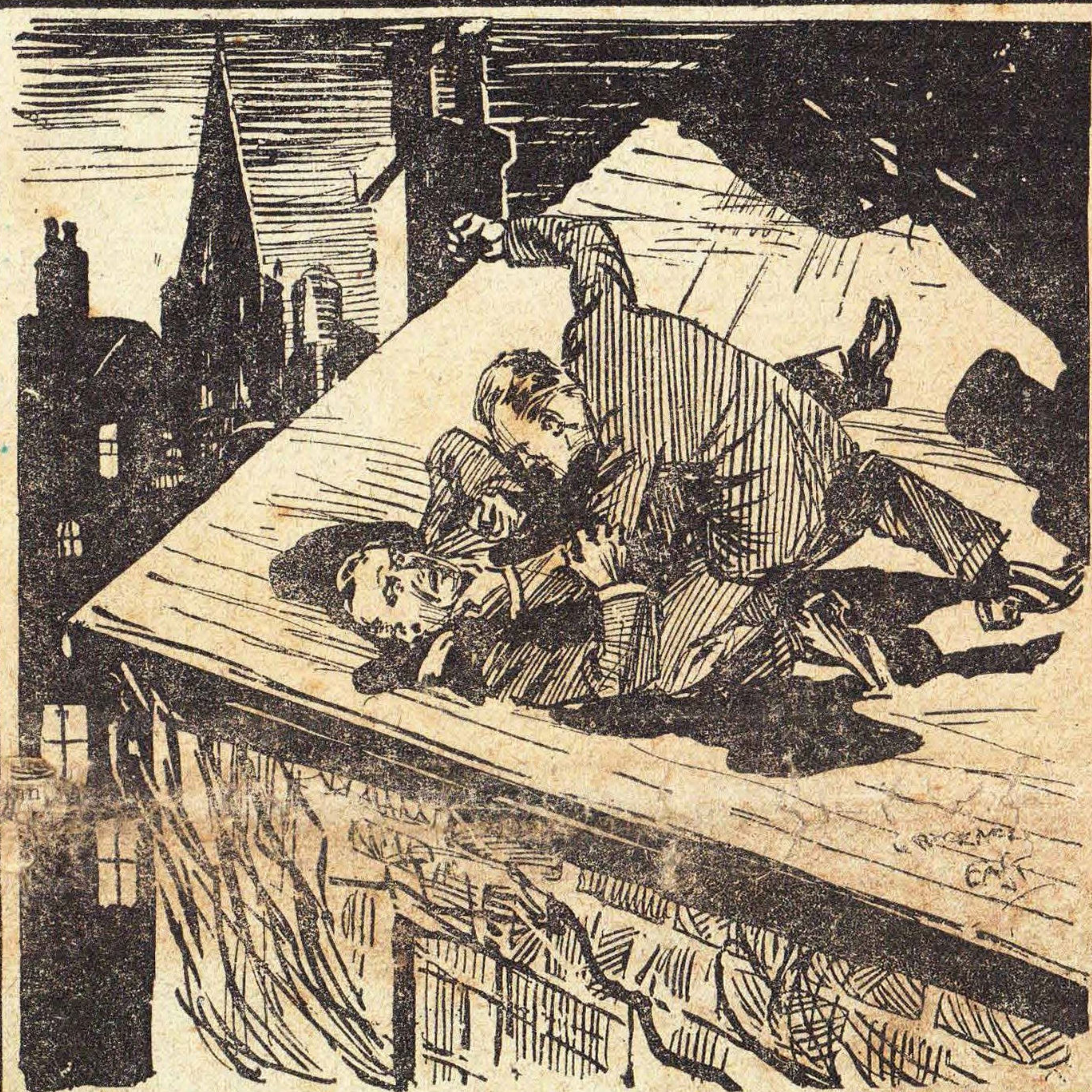
THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending February 24th, 1923.



THREE IN A FIX!

(An amusing incident in "A Rift in the Lute!" this week's splendid Rookwood story.)



A STRUGGLE FOR MASTERY!

(A thrilling moment in "The International's Secret!" included in this issue.)



BEATING OFF THE PIRATES!

(A breathless incident from "Dead Man's Gold!" in this number.)

## THIS WEEK'S GRAND NEW PROGRAMME

"A RIFT IN THE LUTE!" Another Grand Yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co., by OWEN CONQUEST.

"THE INTERNATIONAL'S SECRET!" A Splendid 12,000-word Story of Footer and Mystery, by CECIL WROXHAM.

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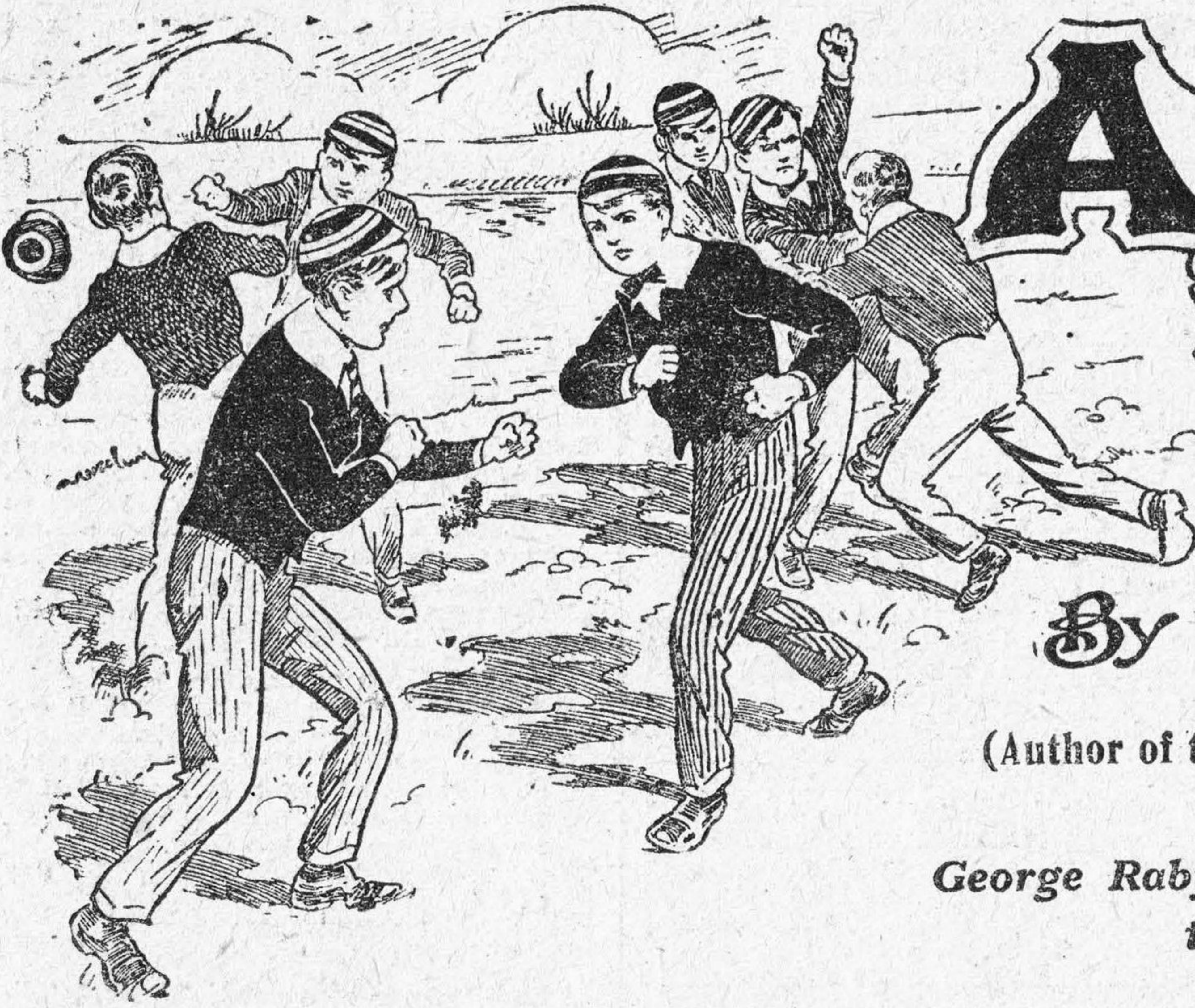
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A NEW FOOTER PICTURE-PUZZLE COMPETITION—£10 IN PRIZES—EVERY WEEK.

"The Third Round!" A Great Footer Yarn Featuring Rollo Dayton and the Duke, in this Issue.

HERE YOU MEET YOUR OLD PALS JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD

SCHOOL.



# A Rift in the Lute!

By Owen Conquest

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

George Raby appears to funk a fight with the Bagshot juniors!

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Left in the Lurch!

"Look out for trouble!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

Three juniors of the Rookwood Fourth were sauntering along the towing-path by the river, when trouble appeared in the offing.

Trouble loomed up in the shape of four Bagshot juniors.

It was a half-holiday at both schools; and destiny had led the footsteps of Jimmy Silver & Co. along the river from one direction and those of the Bagshot Bounders from the other.

It was but seldom that Rookwooders and Bagshot fellows met without a "rag." On such occasions as football and cricket matches, they buried the hatchet. On most other occasions they brandished it.

Pankley, Price, Poole and Sanderson of the Bagshot Fourth smiled genially as they bore down on the three.

Had the Fistical Four of Rookwood been all there probably a scrap would have resulted.

But one member of the four—George Raby—was not there, so the odds were in favour of the Bagshot heroes.

Consequently, instead of a sparring-match, Pankley & Co. contemplated a rag.

Their looks indicated as much as they quickened their pace at sight of Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome.

Arthur Edward Lovell pushed back his cuffs.

"We'll lick 'em!" he said. "We'll try, anyhow!" remarked Newcome.

"Oh, we'll lick 'em!" said Lovell confidently. "I'll take two, and you chaps can take one each!"

Newcome grunted, and Jimmy Silver smiled.

"I wish Raby would come up!" said Jimmy, with a glance over his shoulder. "He can't be far away."

"Oh, never mind Raby! Leave two of 'em to me!"

"Willingly, old chap, if you could handle them," said Jimmy Silver affably. "But you couldn't, you know."

"Look here—"

Jimmy Silver did not "look here"—he looked back along the towing-path. George Raby had started out from the school with his comrades, but had lingered behind on the towing-path. Jimmy would have been very glad to see him arrive just then on the spot, to make the odds equal.

But it was Pankley & Co. that arrived. "Fancy meeting you chaps!" said Pankley politely. "Unexpected pleasure, and all that! Seen my minor about?"

"Haven't seen any monkeys at all, till you fellows came up!" said Lovell, with equal politeness. "Perhaps somebody's found him, and sent him back to the Zoo!"

Pankley's comrades smiled; but Pankley frowned.

"You see," said Price, "we came along to look for Panky's minor, who's always landing into trouble. But Panky minor can wait while we duck you Rookwood rotters."

"Poor Panky minor!" said Lovell. "He's booked for a long wait, then—say about a thousand years!"

"Not quite so long as that, I fancy!" grinned Pankley. "Anyhow, we'll see. Go for 'em!"

And the four Bagshot fellows made a rush.

Three Rookwooders stood up gallantly to the rush. All three were good fighting-men; but the heroes of Bagshot, too, were quite distinguished in that line.

Jimmy Silver was hotly engaged with Cecil Pankley. Price tackled Newcome. Poole and Sanderson devoted themselves to Arthur Edward Lovell.

That was what Lovell had wanted, according to his statement. But when it came about, Lovell found that it was rather too large an order.

In theory, Arthur Edward Lovell felt himself a match for two Bagshot Bounders or even three or four. In actual practice, two of them were precisely twice as many as Arthur Edward could tackle with success.

Lovell put up a great fight; but he found himself whirled off the ground, and a few seconds later he found himself on his back, with Sanderson sitting on his chest.

Lovell wriggled and struggled. "Take it easy, old scout!" said Sanderson.

"Gerroff!"

"You see, I shall tap your nose like that if you wriggle—"

"Ow!"

"And like that!"

"Whoooooop!"

Poole, grinning, ran to Pankley's help. Jimmy Silver was jerked off, having his hands too full with Pankley to attend to Poole. He was extended in the grass, and Poole sat on him, smiling, leaving Cecil Pankley at liberty.

Pankley immediately collared Newcome, and Newcome joined his chums in the grass, and Price sat on him.

Three Rookwooders lay on their backs and wriggled, firmly sat upon, while Pankley, with his hands in his pockets and a smile on his face, surveyed them.

"Looks like a win for us!" he remarked. "What's your opinion, Silver?"

"Gerroff!"

"What do you think, Newcome?"

"Ow!"

"How does it strike you, Lovell?"

"I'll smash you!" roared Lovell. "Mustn't lose its 'ickle temper!" said Pankley soothingly. "Only our fun, you know—merely a little jape! It was really kind of you fellows to happen along like this, and provide us with a little harmless and necessary entertainment!"

"Gerroff! I'll—"

"Rescue, Rookwood!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Pankley looked round quickly. "Any more of your crowd hanging about?" he asked.

"Raby!" yelled Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver hoped that Raby was within hearing. He twisted up his head and stared round for him. The arrival of the fourth member of the Fistical Four would have made all the difference.

"Raby!" shouted Lovell. "Raby!" howled Newcome.

"Hallo—there he is!" exclaimed Sanderson. "Look out, Panky!"

"I'll take care of him!" said Pankley, with a grin.

George Raby had appeared at last. He came in sight round a clump of thickets on the towing-path at a little distance, evidently having heard his name shouted.

All the juniors could see him, and Raby could see his chums in the hands of the Bagshot Bounders. He made a step towards the scene.

Pankley waved a hand to him. "Come on!" he called out. "Ready for you, Raby!"

George Raby stopped.

Instead of coming on, he suddenly looked back over his shoulder, as if something on the other side of the thicket had called his attention. Then he turned again towards the scene of the struggle, and seemed to hesitate a second.

But it was only for a second. The next moment Raby had turned his back on the scene, and was running away up the towing-path as fast as he could go.

### The 2nd Chapter.

#### "Funk!"

"Great pip!"

Pankley uttered that exclamation in sheer amazement.

It was only for a moment or two that George Raby remained in sight; he was running as hard as he could go, and he vanished from view in a few seconds.

Jimmy Silver & Co., in their blank amazement, ceased to struggle in the grasp of their captors.

They had all seen Raby's flight, and it astounded them—utterly. Never, in the career of the Fistical Four, at Rookwood, had a member of that celebrated Co. shown the white feather.

Raby, it was true, was a much less belligerent fellow than Lovell, and

certainly not such a fighting-man as Jimmy Silver. But nobody had ever suspected him of funk.

The chums of Rookwood could scarcely believe their eyes.

Pankley whistled.

Pankley of Bagshot was a hefty fellow, and more than a match for Raby; but that was no excuse or explanation. He had taken it for granted that Raby would come up at top speed to the rescue of his chums. Four to four—there would have been an equal battle.



**DODD THINKS IT FUNNY!** "For goodness sake cut this cord, and don't cackle!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Modern junior as he took out his pocket knife to release the three unfortunate schoolboys!

And Raby had fled! "Well, my hat!" said Pankley. "This beats it! Jeyver see such a frightful funk?"

"Never!" grinned Price. "Hardly ever!" chuckled Poole.

"You fellows seem to be left in the lurch!" remarked Sanderson. "If you go home through Coombe, drop in at the poultryer's. He'll let you have some white feathers for your pal!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the four. Jimmy Silver crimsoned with rage. Lovell gasped and spluttered.

"The awful funk! The rotter! I'll punch him! I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Arthur Edward Lovell. "He'll come back!" gasped Newcome. "Doesn't look like it!" chuckled Pankley. "Blessed if I should care to compete in a foot-race with Rookwood chaps. They're too good at running."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Certainly there was no sign of George Raby coming back. He had vanished at top speed, and he did not reappear.

"Now, we can't waste time on these fags," said Pankley. "I've got to look for my dashed minor. I've got some whipcord here."

"Look here—" began Jimmy Silver savagely.

Pankley waved a soothing hand. "You're dead in this act," he explained. "We've got you. Give me your wrist, dear boy!"

"Go and eat coke!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Naughty!" chided Pankley.

Jimmy struggled desperately, but with Poole sitting on his chest he had no chance. The end of the cord was firmly attached to his wrist. Then Newcome's wrist was pulled close and tied to it.

"Newcome's other wrist was tied to Lovell's; then Lovell's other wrist was tied to Jimmy Silver's other."

The three Rookwood juniors were now tied in a circle, facing one another, and utterly helpless.

They were lifted to their feet, and they stood in a circle, with red and wrathful faces.

Pankley & Co. stuffed their caps down their backs, and jerked out their collars, smiling genially as they bestowed these kind attentions on the hapless Rookwooders.

"I think that will do!" said Pankley thoughtfully. "Think you can get home like that, you fellows?"

"No, you beast!" roared Lovell. "That's rather rotten, then," said Pankley sympathetically, "for if you can't get home like that you're booked to pass the rest of your natural lives standing here in a giddy circle."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good-bye, old dears!"

Pankley & Co. walked on cheerily, leaving the three Rookwooders fairly spluttering with wrath. It was only a little Bagshot joke—such a little jape as the Fistical Four might have played on Pankley & Co. in different circumstances. But in matters of this kind, it was more blessed to give than to receive.

"The rotters!" gasped Lovell. "I'll smash 'em! And—as for that rotter, Raby—"

"They couldn't have handled us like this if Raby had chipped in!" groaned Newcome.

"They couldn't!" agreed Jimmy Silver. "I wonder why Raby scooted like that!" Lovell snorted with fury.

"He scooted because he's a funk!" he roared. "What else should he scoot for, you thumping ass!"

"I can't think—" said Jimmy.

"You can't," said Lovell; "not if you think Raby isn't a funk! And we've called that fellow our pal! I'll give him 'pal!'"

"He's never—"

on his bicycle, going to the village. Tommy Dodd almost fell off his machine at the sight of the three Classics.

"Stop!" shouted Newcome. Dodd jumped down.

"What on earth's this game?" he ejaculated.

"Let us loose, old man, and don't jaw!" said Jimmy Silver.

"But who's tied you up like this?" yelled Tommy Dodd.

"The Bagshot Bounders!"

"And you let 'em?" grinned the Modern junior.

"Looks as if we did, as we couldn't help it!" said Jimmy tartly. "For goodness sake cut this dashed cord, and don't cackle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd. "Look here, you Modern ass—" bawled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd took out his pocket-knife to cut the cords. But he chuckled and chortled all the time. He found entertainment in the episode, to which the Classics were blind.

"It wasn't our fault, you cackling ass!" growled Newcome. "They were four to three!"

"It was Raby's fault!" roared Lovell. "Raby ran away and left us in the lurch!"

"Shut up!" said Jimmy hastily.

Jimmy had no desire to publish the disgrace of the Co., especially to the Modern fellows. But Arthur Edward Lovell was too infuriated to think of considerations of that kind.

"I tell you Raby funkled and ran away!" howled Lovell. "I'm going to kick him for it! Rotten sneaking funk!"

"Well, you Classics ain't much good at scrapping, anyhow," said Tommy Dodd consolingly. "There you are!"

He remounted his machine and rode on to Coombe, grinning. Jimmy Silver & Co. tramped on to Rookwood with grim and lugubrious faces. All three of them were anxious to see Raby; Jimmy with a faint hope that the runaway might have some explanation to offer; Newcome, angry and resentful; and Arthur Edward Lovell in a towering rage, prepared to greet the runaway at first sight with a torrent of righteous wrath.

It was not a happy half-holiday for the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

### The 3rd Chapter.

#### Pals Parted.

"What's makin' you look so merry an' bright?"

Valentine Mornington of the Fourth asked that question as Jimmy Silver & Co. came into the School House.

The question was somewhat sarcastic; the chums of the Fourth were looking anything but bright and merry.

"Raby in?" asked Jimmy.

"Haven't seen him. Not been rowing, have you?" asked Morny, in astonishment. Rows in the end study were few and far between; though sometimes they happened, Jimmy Silver & Co. being human, like the rest of Rookwood.

"Not sneaked in yet?" said Lovell, fiercely. "Ashamed to show his face, I dare say."

"Wha-a-a-t?" ejaculated Mornington. And one or two other juniors looked round in surprise.

"What's that?" exclaimed Conroy. "B-r-r-r-r!" grunted Lovell, and he tramped on.

"We've had a row with Bagshot," Jimmy Silver explained. "They were four to three, and got the best of it."

"Is that why Lovell is like a bear with a sore head?" grinned Putty Grace.

Lovell looked round.

"No, it isn't!" he snorted. "I'm wild because of that rotter Raby funkling a row with the Bagshot Bounders, if you want to know."

"Rot!" said Putty of the Fourth incredulously. "Raby isn't a funk."

"He ran away!" roared Lovell. "Bosh!"

"Look here, Putty, if you want a thick ear—"

"Keep it for Raby, old man," answered Putty. "Keep your presents for your pals. I don't believe a word of it about Raby, either."

"I'll jolly well—"

"He did run away," said Newcome. "My hat!"

"Raby showed the white feather in a row?" asked Mornington. "Blessed if I'd have thought it."

"I don't think it, now," said Kit Erroll, in his quiet way. "You fellows are making some mistake."

"We saw him!" roared Lovell. "Well, it's jolly odd."

"He turned and bolted like a frightened rabbit!" breathed Lovell, "he's a funk—a beastly funk—funkier than Tubby Muffin—"

"Why, you cheeky beast!" exclaimed Reginald Muffin, in great indignation. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell strode on towards the stairs, and went up to the Fourth Form passage. Jimmy Silver and Newcome followed. They left the juniors in a buzz of talk behind them. The news about Raby excited a good deal of interest in the Classical Fourth, and a good deal of incredulity. Fellows like Peele and Gower were glad enough to believe anything against a member of the celebrated Co. but most of the Fourth, when they heard the news, felt incredulous.

Jimmy Silver was frowning when he came into the end study after Lovell.

"No need to shout it out to all Rookwood," he said tartly. "It doesn't do this study any good."

"Rot!" snapped Lovell. "Raby's one of us—"

"No, he jolly well isn't!" exclaimed Lovell. "A fellow who runs away and

A Startling Disclosure at Rookwood! See "THE FISTICAL FUNK!" Next Week's Great School Story, by OWEN CONQUEST!

