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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending January 19th, 1924.]



TONY BUNTING DEFIES THE MOORISH CHIEF AND IS ORDERED TO BE WHIPPED!

(A breathless incident from our great sea adventure story in this issue.)

THIS STORY OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS IS SIMPLY GREAT!

Fed Up With Rookwood!

By Owen Conquest

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

Unable to settle down to school life Texas Lick sighs for the land of his birth!



The 1st Chapter. Lick Takes the Lead!

"You galoots game?" Jimmy Silver & Co. were discussing matters in the end study at Rookwood when Texas Lick butted in with that question.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and the subject under discussion was what was to be done with the afternoon.

The weather was bad—in fact, "rotten." It was far too rotten for football. A "rag" on the Moderns was the next best resource, but as it happened, Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Side, had gone out of gates for the afternoon, so they were not available for a rag. "Passage football" was another resource, but that was strictly forbidden by the powers, and involved considerable risk of lines, lickings, and gatings.

So, for once, the chums of the end study were prepared to listen to a suggestion from Texas Lick. Usually, they frowned upon the bright ideas of the junior from Texas. Now they gave him his head, so to speak.

"Game for what?" asked Lovell. "I guess you don't want to sit roosting in this old study all the pesky afternoon—what?"

"No fear!" said Raby. "There's the cinema at Latcham," suggested Newcome.

"Or we might get through some of our lines," remarked Jimmy Silver. "We've all got lines on hand."

There was a general grunt of dissent. Lines had to be done, sooner or later, but the juniors preferred later to sooner.

"Give a galoot a chance to speak," said Texas Lick. "I guess I can fill the bill, if you 'uns are game."

"Well, what's the programme?" asked Jimmy.

"Brighton," said Lick. "Brighton!" yelled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Yep!" "You're thinking of going to Brighton?" stuttered Raby.

"Why not?" "Oh, about a thousand reasons why not. Brighton is about fifty miles out of bounds."

"I guess school bounds cut no ice with me," said Texas Lick disdainfully. "I was raised on a ranch as big as the whole of this mouldy old island—"

"Br-r-r-r-r!" interjected Lovell. "I guess I've looked out the timetable," continued Texas Lick. "We can get to Brighton in time for an afternoon show at the theatre—"

"Oh, my hat!" "Then we can roll round the town a bit, and get home by the evening train—"

"Phew!" "Waal, are you game?" "You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "It would mean a licking all round—a Head's flogging, very likely."

"Oh, guff!" "Then there's call-over at five o'clock—"

"I guess we'd give it a miss." "We shouldn't get back in time for evening call-over—"

"What's the odds if we don't?" "Mightn't get back before bed-time, even—" said Newcome.

"Waal, suppose we didn't?" "Oh, you're an ass!" "A howling ass!" said Lovell. "Take your wonderful wheezes along to some other study, Lick."

Texas Lick gave a scornful sniff. "You ain't game?" he asked. "We're game enough, if it comes

to that," snapped Lovell. "But we're not asses enough. What's the good of asking for trouble?"

"Rot!" said Lick. "I'm going, anyhow." "Gas!"

"I guess you'll see. And if you fellows ain't suffering from cold feet, you'll hustle along with me," said Texas Lick. "Why, it would be only a step from Rookwood to Brighton, if you had real railroads in this country. Even on our mouldy old prehistoric lines you can do the trip in fifty minutes."

"It's out of bounds!" bawled Lovell. "Oh, guff!"

"We're not allowed to go to theatres without special permission." "I guess you make me tired."

"Oh, get out!" grunted Lovell. Texas Lick shrugged his thin shoulders. He lounged to the door of the end study, and stopped there to bestow a glance of scorn on the Fistical Four.

"I guess you guys was born with cold feet," he said. "Jevver hear of such a set of funks?"

"Funks?" howled Lovell. "Just that!" said Texas Lick. "Funks—that's what you galoots are. I'm goin', and you're afraid to come! I guess you haven't as much sand as a gol-darned greaser."

Arthur Edward Lovell jumped up with a crimson face. "If you're going, you bragging ass, I'll come. I'll show you whether I'm funking!"

"Good!" said Texas Lick. "I hate going on a trip alone. You other galoots got as much sand as Lovell?"

Jimmy Silver frowned. "Chuck it, Lovell!" he said. "No good playing the ox. We should be missed at five roll-call, and there would be no end of a row."

"I'm going if Lick does," said Lovell obstinately. "Come on," said Lick. "Leave them galoots at home to kow-tow to the prefects, and say, 'Yes, sir,' and 'No, sir,' to the masters! If they've got cold feet let 'em sit at home and nurse 'em!"

"You cheeky ass—" began Jimmy wrathfully. "I guess it's time we were off, Lovell."

"Look here, Lovell—" said Jimmy. "I'm going."

"There'll be a row—" "I'm going."

"It means trouble with Mr. Dalton, and—" "I'm going."

"And very likely with the Head as—" "I'm going."

"You're a silly ass!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver angrily. "But if you go, you chump, you're not going without me."

"That's better," said Texas Lick approvingly. "You've got some sand, after all. What about the other galoots?"

"Oh, we're coming," said Raby. "It's a mug's game, and there'll be a row. But sink or swim together."

Newcome nodded assent; and the Fistical Four went for their coats and caps. Five minutes later Jimmy Silver & Co. emerged from the School House, and started for the gates.

Texas Lick was in high spirits—as he generally was when he was setting the rules and regulations of Rookwood at defiance. Lovell and Raby and Newcome began to think that the expedition was rather a "lark." Only Jimmy Silver's face was serious.

"Uncle James" of Rookwood was a little more thoughtful than his comrades, and he could not help reflecting that after the feast came the reckoning. But he was in for it now, and

"Uncle James" put as cheerful a face on it as he could.

The 2nd Chapter. A Bad Start.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was standing in the old gateway of Rookwood, in conversation with Knowles, the Modern prefect. Knowles was in hat and overcoat, and had a bag in his hand. Apparently Knowles, of the Modern Sixth, was starting on a journey. His glance fell on the Fistical Four as they came along with Lick,



DEALING WITH KNOWLES! Quick as lightning Lovell and Raby and Newcome grasped Knowles and dragged him away from Texas Lick. Knowles roared and struggled. "Let go—!-I-help-ow-oh-whoooooop!" Bump! Knowles of the Rookwood Sixth suddenly sat down on the platform—hard!

and his eyes gleamed a little. There was no love lost between the Classical chums, and the captain of the Modern side at Rookwood. Bulkeley did not notice them for the moment; he was speaking to Knowles in quiet earnest tones.

"I'm sorry Knowles, I hoped we should start the new term without all this bickering beginning again. No reason that I can see why the two sides at Rookwood shouldn't pull together."

"If you encourage fags on your side to cheek prefects on the Modern side—" said Knowles.

"That's all rot, Knowles, and you know it," said Bulkeley. "You're in the Modern Sixth, and you've no right to fag Classical juniors. That's a rule as old as the Modern side itself at Rookwood."

"All very well," sneered Knowles. "You backed up that young cad Lovell the other day—"

"Lovell was right in refusing to be caned by a Modern prefect. You had only to report him to me."

"Well, we sha'n't improve matters at this rate, and I've got a train to catch," said Knowles sourly. "Here, one of you kids, carry this bag for me!"

The Fistical Four stopped. They did not like Knowles; and it was a matter of principle with them to refuse to fag for Modern seniors.

That was an immemorial right of fellows on the Classical side.

Bulkeley frowned. "Do you hear me?" demanded Knowles.

"We're not deaf," answered Jimmy Silver politely. "But we're not looking for porters' jobs, thanks!"

"No fear!" said Lovell emphatically. "I guess not!" said Texas Lick.

"That's the way you teach your fags to talk to a Sixth Form prefect, Bulkeley!" sneered Knowles.

"Well, they're within their rights," said Bulkeley. "You should call on a fag of your own House. Still, it seems that you are going down to Coombe, Silver!"

"Yes, Bulkeley." "Well, then, take Knowles' bag for him!"

"Certainly, if you say so," answered Jimmy Silver at once. "Well, I do say so."

"Right-ho!" Jimmy Silver took the bag cheerfully enough. Bulkeley was head of the Classical side, and captain of the school, and his word was law; but besides that, he was the most popular senior at Rookwood, and any junior in either House was ready to please him. Knowles gave Bulkeley a short nod and started down the road, with Jimmy Silver shouldering his bag.

Knowles did not speak to the juniors on the way to Coombe. He gave them one or two sour looks, but otherwise did not deign to take note of their existence.

The Fistical Four were feeling a

"I guess the train's signalled," he said. "Hustle, you galoots!"

"Hold on!" said Jimmy. "Oh, get a move on."

"Knowles is going by that train and—"

"Room for us, too, I suppose?" "Even Latcham's out of bounds—let alone Brighton—"

"Getting cold feet again?" asked Texas Lick agreeably. Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"It's not good enough, you ass! Knowles is bound to spot us in the train, and he will report us at Rookwood."

"Let him!" "Look here, Lick, you thumping ass—"

"There's the train." Lick started for the platform, and the Fistical Four exchanged looks of exasperation. But they followed Lick. Knowles, fortunately, was already in the train when they reached it, and they bundled into a third-class carriage. Knowles, as they knew, travelled first-class, so they were safe so far.

"All O.K., I guess," said Texas Lick cheerfully, as the train moved out of the station. "Keep a stiff upper lip! We're all right!"

"Knowles will spot us at Latcham," growled Lovell. "Let him!"

"Oh, you're a silly ass!" The juniors could not help feeling anxious as the local ran on to Latcham. There was rather a crowd at the junction when the train came in, and the Fistical Four hoped to escape the keen eyes of Cecil Knowles by mingling with the crowd. They cut across the bridge for the express platform; the express was already in the station. As they scudded along the train a voice shouted:

"Silver! Lovell! Stop there!" It was the voice of Cecil Knowles.

The 3rd Chapter. Knowles Asks For It!

Jimmy Silver stopped in dismay. Knowles of the Sixth was coming along the train, bag in hand. Evidently he, too, was going to Brighton. It was cruel luck!

Knowles came up to the group of dismayed juniors, with a grin on his face. "Out of bounds, what?" he said.

The Classics did not reply. It was obvious enough that they were out of bounds; and that their intention was to go much further out of bounds.

"Catching the Brighton express, by Jove!" said Knowles, with a whistle. "My hat! I never heard of such cheek. I shall report this to the Head, of course."

"Report and be blown," growled Lovell. Knowles looked at his watch.

"Five minutes before the train goes," he said. "I've got time to see you off in the return local to Coombe. Come on!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. It was true that Knowles, a Modern prefect, had no authority to order them about at Rookwood. But they were already caught out of bounds, and it was quite certain that the Head would have expected any prefect, Classical or Modern, to prevent them from going further.

"Come on," snapped Knowles. "I guess I ain't coming," drawled Texas Lick.

"What?" "I guess I'm taking this train."

"It's my duty to see you back to the school," said Knowles. "I warn you that you'd better come quietly. You young rascals—this is the way Bulkeley keeps you in order, is it?"

"Bulkeley knows nothing about it," growled Jimmy Silver. "It's his duty to know," said Knowles. "I fancy the Head will have something to say to him when I report this. But get a move on! I'm seeing you off before I take my train."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard and deep. It went severely against the grain to be ordered about by the bully of the Modern side. But he felt that there was no help for it.

"Come on, you fellows!" he said. "I guess I ain't coming!" remarked Texas Lick. "This hyer is my train, and I'm sure taking it!"

"Look here, Lick—" "Oh, guff!"

Texas Lick had opened the door of an empty carriage, and now he jumped in. Knowles looked astonished, and the Fistical Four blinked at Lick, not knowing what to do.

"Hop in, you galoots!" called out Lick. "Get out of that carriage!" roared Knowles.

"Can it!" retorted Texas Lick. (Continued overleaf.)

(Continued from
previous page.)

"Do you want me to yank you out, you cheeky young sweep?"

"Go and chop chips!" Knowles' eyes glittered. He dropped his bag to the platform and jumped into the carriage.

"Now, you young rascal—" He grasped Texas Lick and swung him bodily to the door. There was a yell from the Texan.

"Lend a hand, you galoots!"

Bump! Knowles of the Sixth and the Texan came bundling out of the carriage together, and they sprawled on the platform. Lick tore himself loose and leaped for the train again.

Knowles bounded after him, red with rage, and seized him by the collar. Lick clung to the handle of the carriage-door, and yelled.

"Play up, you galoots! Ow!"

Porters and passengers were gathering round. The scene attracted attention on all sides. Knowles, in his fury, boxed Lick's ears right and left, and Lick yelled louder than ever. Jimmy Silver caught the Modern senior by the arm.

"Stop that, Knowles—" Smack!

Jimmy gave a roar, and reeled back from Knowles' smiting hand.

That was too much for the Classical juniors.

They forgot for the moment that they were breakers of bounds, and booked for a report to the Head, and remembered only that they were Classics, and up against the Modern Sixth bully.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome grasped Knowles and dragged him away from Lick. The next moment Jimmy Silver's grasp was on him, too.

Knowles roared and struggled. "Let go! I—I— Help! Ow! Oh! Who-o-o-p!"

Bump!

Knowles of the Sixth rolled on the platform. Texas Lick, breathless and dishevelled, bolted into the carriage again.

"Come on, you galoots!" he panted.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed him in. Knowles sat up on the platform, his hat gone, his tie streaming out, gasping for breath.

"Ow! Groogh! You—you—you—I—" He staggered to his feet. "Come out! I—I'll—" "Go and eat coke!" panted Lovell. "Stand back there!" shouted a porter.

Knowles made a savage spring for the carriage. He got half in, and then three or four boots met him, and he went back to the platform—in a heap!

Slam! The guard slammed the carriage door; there was a shrill whistle from the engine. Knowles of the Sixth scrambled up, seeing red. But a porter caught his arm and jerked him back as the train began to move.

"Let go, you fool!" yelled Knowles. "That's my train!" "You've lost it now!" "I—I—I—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared out of the carriage window as the express glided out of Latham. Knowles was almost dancing with rage on the platform, hatless, crimson, and dusty. Texas Lick burst into a chuckle.

"I guess that guy wishes he hadn't butted in!" he remarked.

Jimmy sank into a seat.

"Oh, my hat! We're in for it now!" he gasped.

"Knowles has lost his train, anyhow!" panted Lovell. "He won't be able to worry us at Brighton!" "Brighton!" groaned Raby. "Lot of good going on to Brighton now! Best thing we can do is to get out at the next station and take the first train back to Rookwood!"

Texas Lick chortled.

"What are you cackling at, you silly image?" roared Raby.

"I guess this is a non-stop!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Then we're booked for Brighton!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Sure!"

"That does it!" said Newcome.

"I guess it's all O.K.!" said Texas Lick. "We'll have our day out, and bother Knowles! Then we'll mosey back to Rookwood and face the music!"

"You silly ass!" said Lovell. "The whole thing's out now, and it will mean a flogging all round!"

"I guess they won't flog me!" said Texas Lick disdainfully. "I guess a free American citizen—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I guess—" "Shut up!" roared the Fistical Four, in great wrath.

And Texas Lick for once gave his untiring chin a rest.

The 4th Chapter. Bagged!

"Brighton!" "Well, here we are!" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

There they were—there was no doubt about that! They had arrived in London-by-the-Sea, though whether they were going to enjoy the delights of that popular resort was another question.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had felt—and looked—glum enough during the run in the express.

The expedition out of bounds—reckless enough in the first place, and full of risk for juniors of the Lower School—had become simply disastrous since the intervention of Knowles.

Not only were the juniors going out of bounds—many a long mile out of bounds—but they had handled a Sixth Form prefect who had sought to turn them back!

After that they could scarcely expect less than a Head's flogging—indeed, Raby darkly hinted at possibilities of the "boot!"

A certain flogging, and the possible "sack," seemed rather a heavy bill to pay for a harebrained excursion about which they did not really care twopence. It was Texas Lick's boastful challenge that had landed the Fistical Four in this scrape, and they were strongly inclined to rag Lick all the way to Brighton.

But Lick was cheerful enough. "There's going to be a shindy when we get back, since that mug-wump Knowles butted in," he said. "Waal, we may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb! We'll have our day out, I guess, and face the music afterwards! What?"

"Something in that!" said Jimmy Silver, with a faint grin. "We're booked for trouble, so we may as well make the best of it!"

"Better take the first train back," grunted Lovell. "Oh, guff!" said Lick. "Look here—" "You should have stayed at home if you had cold feet," said Texas Lick coolly. "Now we're in for it! Come on, you galoots!"

Lick jumped from the carriage as the train stopped. The Fistical Four followed him, and they mingled with a crowd heading for the exit.

A constable was standing by the ticket-collector, eyeing the crowd as they came out.

A grin came over his face at the

sight of the five Rookwood juniors. He stepped towards them.

"You young gents from Rookwood School?" he asked, civilly enough.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver.

"Five of you?" said the constable. "That's right! Please come into the stationmaster's office!"

"Wha-a-at?" "Oh, my hat!"

"I say, what's this pesky game?" demanded Texas Lick indignantly.

"You know your game better than I do," said the constable stolidly.

"Running away from school, eh?" "Running away from school!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Well, your headmaster's telephoned along the line, asking the stationmaster to detain you till a master can be sent to take you back to school. That's all I know."

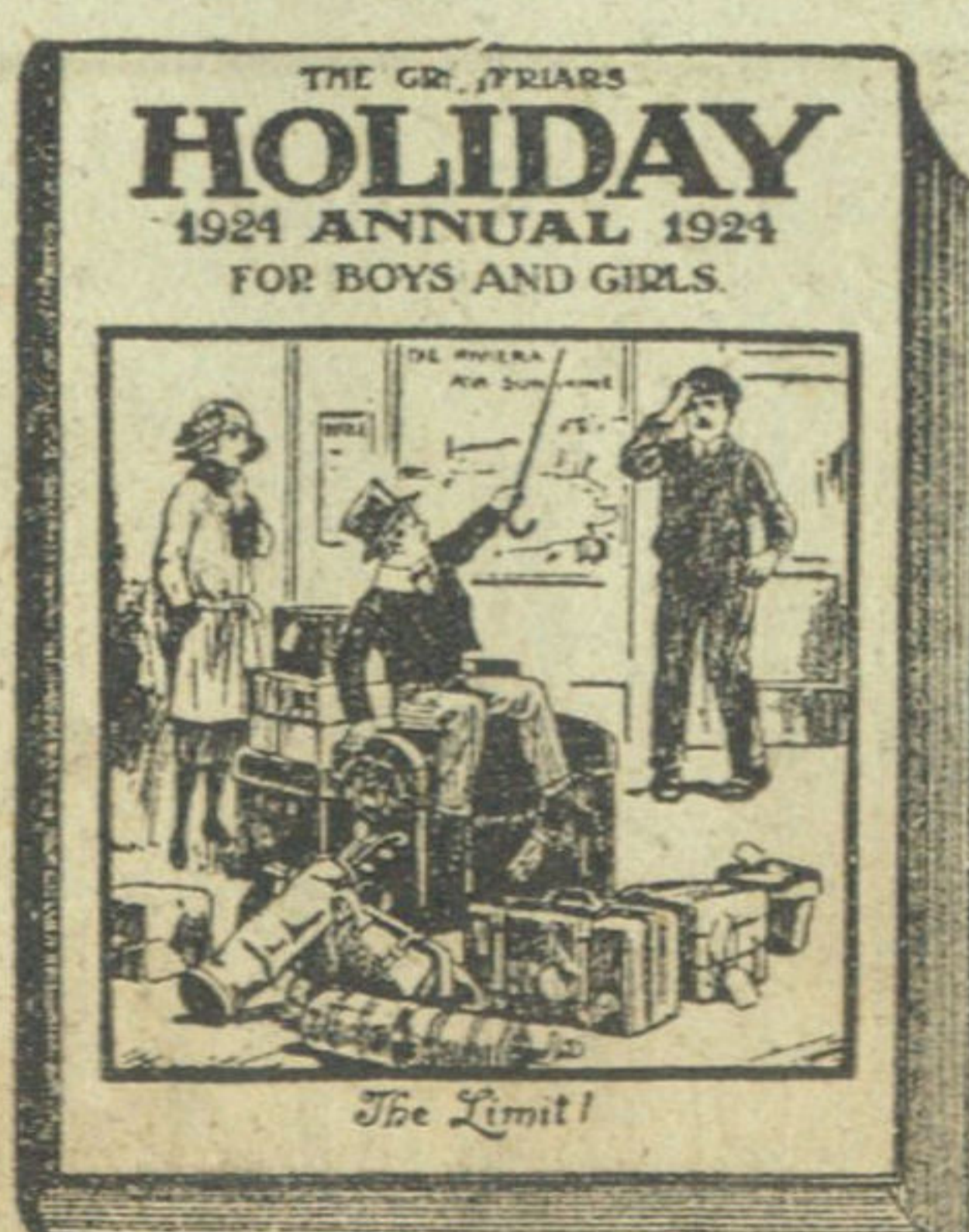
"Oh crumbs!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at the constable. Texas Lick's jaw dropped. With all his wonderful cuteness, the American junior certainly had not thought of that. And yet it was only what might have been expected, after Knowles had made his report to Dr. Chisholm at Rookwood.

"This way!" added the constable.

In deep and dismal silence the juniors followed the man in uniform. They were utterly dismayed.

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They were led into the stationmaster's office. There they looked at one another dismally.

The stationmaster was not present, but the constable remained, apparently to see that the runaways did not bolt.

"Well, this is a go!" murmured Newcome.

"We're going to enjoy this day out—I don't think!" groaned Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You ass, Lick!"

"Lick, you crass ass!"

Texas Lick snorted. "Look here, you guys," he said in a low voice, "we ain't beat yet! There's five of us—"

"What?"

"What price collaring that bobby?"

"Collaring the bobby!" repeated Jimmy Silver almost dazedly.

"Yep, and up-ending him—" "Up-ending him!" gasped Lovell.

"Sure! And levanting! We can do it!" said Texas Lick confidently.

"I guess he isn't expecting anything of the sort, and we shall sure take him by surprise!"

"You—you—you dummy!" gasped Lovell.

"I guess— Oh Jerusalem!" yelled Lick, as the exasperated four collared him.

The Fistical Four did not think of "up-ending" the representative of law and order. But they had no scruples about up-ending Texas Lick—and they did so.

Bump!

The Texan smote the floor of the stationmaster's office, and roared.

"Oh! You galoots! Whoop!"

Bump!

"There!" gasped Lovell. "Now, if you open your silly mouth any more we'll give you another!"

"I guess—" Bump!

"Oh Jerusalem crickets! Let up!" yelled Texas Lick.

"Keep your silly mouth shut, then!" snapped Lovell. "We're fed-up with you and your silly wheezes, Lick—right up to the chin!"

Texas Lick groaned, and did not propound any more wheezes. The juniors waited for the next train to come in from Latham Junction.

At last the stationmaster entered the office, and with him came a stalwart young man whom the juniors knew well. It was Mr. Richard Dalton, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Mr. Dalton gave the juniors a stern look.

"These are the boys," he said.

A few minutes later the Fourth Form master led his flock to the platform for Latham. He had spoken hardly a word to them, but his face was very grim.

There was a quarter of an hour to wait for the train back to Latham Junction. The juniors sat in a dismal row on a seat and waited. Mr. Dalton stood like a statue at the end of the seat.

The train came in at last.

The Fourth Form master shepherded the five juniors into a carriage and followed them in.

He sat in the corner seat by the door. Texas Lick sat in the corner opposite.

Several more passengers entered the carriage.

Texas Lick rose, as if to give his seat to one of them. A second more, and he had jumped from the carriage. "Lick!" gasped Mr. Dalton.

He sprang to his feet and collided with a stout gentleman who was climbing into the carriage.

"Oh!" gasped the stout gentleman, clinging to the doorway. "Oh! Ah! Young man, you are—ah—oh—clumsy! What do you mean, sir, by crashing into me like that?"

"I beg your pardon! Pray allow me to pass!"

"Pray allow me to pass!" retorted the stout gentleman. "I do not want to lose this train!"

Mr. Dalton impatiently allowed the stout gentleman to climb in, and then jumped out. Lick had vanished in the crowd on the platform, and the guard was waving his flag.

Slam! Slam! Slam! rang along the train.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell. "That ass—that dummy—that duffer—he's bolted!"

Mr. Dalton stood outside the carriage, his face pale with anger. Texas Lick had vanished from under his very eyes, and the train was about to move.

"Lick!" shouted Mr. Dalton.

There was no answer from Lick. He had disappeared, and was probably off the platform by that time. Mr. Dalton hesitated, but he had not much time to think. To delay, looking for Lick, was to lose his train and the four breakers of bounds who were already in his hands.

"Now then, sir, hurry up there!"

Mr. Dalton turned hurriedly back to the carriage.

"Silver, I cannot go back without the foolish boy. Can I trust you to go back directly to Rookwood?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"I rely upon you to do so."

Mr. Dalton stepped away, and the guard slammed the door. The express rolled away, leaving Mr. Dalton and the elusive Lick in Brighton.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy. That was all he could say.

The 5th Chapter.

After the Feast the Reckoning!

"Here they are!"

"Here are the giddy runaways!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Where's Lick?"

"Where's Dicky Dalton?"

A crowd of fellows surrounded Jimmy Silver & Co. as they came into the School House at Rookwood in the falling dusk of the winter afternoon.

The Fistical Four were not looking happy. But the crowd of fellows seemed to look on the affair as a great joke.

"Where have you been?" asked Smythe of the Shell. "No races on at Brighton now—what?"

"You cheeky ass!" hooted Lovell.

"They were going to run away and be pirates!" chortled Tubby Muffin.

"Isn't that it, Jimmy?"

"Fathead!"

"What was the game, anyhow?" asked Mornington. "You seem to be up against it, you fellows."

"It was that dummy Lick!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "We've played the goat and had a rotten time, and now we're going to get a licking. I wish that born idiot had stayed at home in Texas!"

"Yes, rather!" said Raby, with deep feeling.

"You weren't running away from school?" asked Gunner of the Fourth.

"No, you silly owl!" hooted Newcome.

"I've heard that Knowles bagged you in the express for Brighton," said Townsend.

"Blow Knowles!"

"Hallo, here's Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came through the grinning crowd. His rugged face was very stern.

"You're to come to the Head at once!" he said curtly. "Where is Lick?"

"In Brighton, so far as we know."

"Didn't he come back with you?"

"No."

"Or Mr. Dalton?" asked Bulkeley.

"No; he packed us into the train and sent us back. And here we are!" said Lovell dismally.

"Well, get along to the Head; he's waiting to see you."

Bulkeley saw the four juniors along the corridor to the Head's study. They entered that dread presence with dismal forebodings.

Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes on the four.

"So you have returned!" he said, in an awful voice.

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"Where have you been?"

"To— Brighton!"

"Bless my soul! How dare you go to Brighton?"

The Fistical Four did not answer that question. Indeed, now they stood under the grim eyes of their headmaster they wondered themselves how they had dared. Dr. Chisholm eyed them over his gold-rimmed glasses, with the eye of a basilisk.

"You had a companion, I think," said the Head—"the new boy, Kick—that is to say Lick? You, Silver, are head of your Form. Are you not ashamed of leading a new boy, unacquainted with our customs, into an escapade like this?"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver involuntarily.

"Do not utter ridiculous ejaculations in my presence, Silver!"

"Oh! No, sir!"

"Has not Lick returned to Rookwood with you?"

"No, sir! I—I think Mr. Dalton is—is still looking for him!" stammered Jimmy.

"Bless my soul! Lick, as a new boy here, is certainly less to blame than you four, who certainly knew what you were doing! I shall punish you most severely!"

"We—we—" stammered Lovell.

"Well? If you have anything to say, after this reckless defiance of the rules and laws of your school, I will give you a hearing!" said the Head, with majestic wrath.

"It—it was only a lark!" stammered Arthur Edward.

"A—a what?"

"A lark—I mean, a jape—I—I mean—"

"You do not appear to be quite clear as to what you actually mean. Lovell. Did you suppose that a distant town like Brighton was within school bounds?"

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"Oh, no, sir!"
 "Did you imagine that school bounds could be disregarded by Lower boys, and the authority of your headmaster set at naught?"
 "Oh! C-c-certainly not, sir."
 "This lawless escapade," went on the Head, "might never have come to my knowledge, but for the circumstance that Knowles of the Sixth Form was visiting Brighton to-day, to pass the week-end with his relatives there. But for this very fortunate chance, you might have escaped discovery."

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not answer that. Certainly they could not regard the chance as a fortunate one.

"Fortunately—very fortunately, it has come to my knowledge," went on the Head. "I shall now deal with you in such a manner that—I hope—such an escapade will never be repeated!"

He touched a bell, and the shock head of Tupper, the page, was inserted into the doorway.

"Kindly ask the sergeant to step here, Tupper!" said the Head.

"Yessir!"
 Jimmy Silver & Co. waited, in the lowest possible spirits, till the heavy tread of Sergeant Kettle was heard in the corridor. The sergeant strode into the study, and saluted.

Dr. Chisholm selected his stoutest birch.

What followed was painful—very painful.

The Fistical Four were well aware that they had asked for it, and that, after asking for it, they must naturally expect to get it.

Nevertheless, it was painful.

One after another, the hapless four were hoisted by the sergeant, and the Head laid on the strokes with the deftness that comes of long practice.

He did not spare the rod—indeed, he was a little tired when he had finished. He was not, however, so tired as Jimmy Silver & Co.

He breathed hard as he laid down the birch at last.

"I trust," he said, "that this will be a warning to you! You may go."

And the Fistical Four went—wriggling! They wriggled their way down the passage—they wriggled almost like snakes, their way up the staircase to the end study! In the study they continued to wriggle and writhe.

Fellows looked in occasionally during the evening, some of them to sympathise, some of them to chortle. To their remarks and inquiries, the replies generally were:

"Ow! Wow! Ow!"

Other fellows were curious to know what had become of Texas Lick and when he would turn up at Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. did not worry about that. They had nearer things to worry about; and they did not care twopence when Texas Lick would turn up, or whether he should turn up at all.

The 6th Chapter.

Fed-Up With Rookwood.

"Bed-time!" said Mornington.
 "And Lick hasn't come in!" chuckled Topham.

"He's stickin' it out!" grinned Townsend. "By gad, that fellow's got a neck!"

"And where's Dicky Dalton, I wonder?"

The Fistical Four were keeping in the end study. They were still feeling the effects of their visit to Dr. Chisholm. But in the junior Common-room most of the Classical Fourth and Shell were gathered, when the clock indicated half-past nine. And all of them were interested in Texas Lick and his amazing absence.

It was bed-time, and the Texan had not turned up at Rookwood. Apparently he had lost his train back from Brighton; possibly while occupied in dodging Mr. Richard Dalton, his Form master. The juniors discussed his escapade almost breathlessly.

Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the room, with a frowning brow.

"Dorm!" he said briefly.

"I say, hasn't Lick come in, Bulkeley?" squeaked Tubby Muffin.

"No!" snapped the captain of Rookwood.

"Can't we stay up till he does?" asked Tubby persuasively.

"Get a move on, you young ass."

Jimmy Silver & Co. joined the Classical Fourth on their way to the dormitory. They learned that Texas Lick was still absent, without interest. They were still deeply interested in themselves and their personal reminiscences of the Head's birch.

The Classical Fourth turned in, and Bulkeley put out the light in the

dormitory. Then there was a buzz of talk.

There was only one topic—the amazing conduct of Texas Lick.

"Askin' for the sack, you know," said Townsend. "I fancy he'll get it, too!"

The talk was dying away, and the juniors dropping off to sleep, when the dormitory door opened, and the light was turned on. Most of the juniors sat up in bed, blinking. In the doorway appeared Texas Lick, looking a little tired, but quite self-possessed and cheery.

"Hallo! You've turned up!" exclaimed Oswald.

"Sure!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth followed Lick into the dormitory. He waited for the Western junior to turn in, and then extinguished the light and departed.

A rain of questions poured on Lick from all sides:

"Did Dicky Dalton catch you?"

"Where have you been?"

"Have you seen the Head?"

"Are you goin' to be bunked?"

"Flogged?"

"I guess I'm all O.K.," drawled Texas Lick. "I couldn't get an early train back. I've had a top-hole time. Say, has that guy Dalton turned up yet?"

"I think not," said Jimmy Silver.

"He didn't bag you, then?"

"Nope! Oh my!" chuckled Texas Lick. "I guess he's still in Brighton looking for me. Ha, ha, ha!"

And Lick roared with laughter at the idea.

"Haven't you been licked?" exclaimed Lovell. "Haven't you seen the Head?"

"I guess I've seen his nibs," assented Lick. "He told me it was late—I guess I knew that—and he would deal with me in the morning. What's he given you galoots?"

"Flogging all round," grunted Raby.

"I guess he won't flog me!"

"He will, you ass, unless he decides to sack you instead!" growled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Oh, guff!" said Texas Lick. "I guess he can't expect to tie me up with rules same as he does you green-horns. Why, on the ranch in Texas—"

"Oh, blow the ranch in Texas!"

"In Texas, I've often ridden with the cowpunchers on a bender, and not turned up for bed till three in the morning, after shooting up the town," said Lick. "This little run to-day is nothing! I should smile! I guess if the Head cuts up rusty I shall tell him straight that I'm fed-up with Rookwood and this mouldy old island, and he'd better send me back to Texas."

"Perhaps he'll do that without your telling him," grunted Lovell.

"All the better," said Lick cheerfully. "Say, I feel sort of suffocated in this poky little country. Don't you fellows?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

From the point of view of the Fourth there was an alarming prospect before Texas Lick in the morning. But Lick did not seem to be alarmed. He slept peacefully, and his resonant snore was heard through the night by any fellow who happened to wake.

In the morning he turned out merry and bright. Jimmy Silver & Co. were feeling better—the effect even of a Head's flogging did not last for ever—and they were feeling a little concerned for Texas Lick. It was true that the whole affair and its misfortunes had to be laid at his door; still, he was up against it now, and they sympathised.

As that day was Sunday there was no flogging to be expected; and that gave Lick twenty-four hours more in which to anticipate his punishment. It was like a sword of Damocles hanging over his head; and certainly any other fellow's spirits would have been affected by it. But it did not seem to worry Lick.

At breakfast Mr. Dalton spoke to him, with a stern brow. The juniors had learned that Mr. Dalton had returned to Rookwood by the last train the night before.

"Lick!" said the Fourth Form master.

"Yep!"

"As to-day is Sunday the Head will not deal with you. You will be taken before him after prayers to-morrow morning."

"I guess I don't mind, sir," said Texas Lick affably.

"It is quite immaterial, Lick, whether you mind or not," said the Form master severely. "You will receive a very severe flogging for your outrageous conduct yesterday."

"I guess not, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"I calculate I ain't taking any, sir," said Texas Lick cheerfully. "I kinder reckon I'd prefer the long jump, sir."

"Silence!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton angrily.

That day Jimmy Silver & Co. were very kind to their somewhat trying study-mate. But Texas Lick certainly did not seem to be in need of sympathy.

Indeed, he was particularly cheerful.

The sword of Damocles impending over his transatlantic head had no effect on his spirits whatever.

"Blessed if I can make the fellow out!" Arthur Edward Lovell remarked. "I shouldn't be so jolly bright with a flogging waiting for me in the morning."

"He guesses he isn't going to be flogged," grinned Raby.

"I fancy if he gives the Head any of his cheek it will be the sack instead of a licking," said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"I wonder if that's it!" he said.

"If what's what?" asked Lovell.

"Lick says he's fed-up with Rookwood—he doesn't find the Old

out to Texas with me, I'll get you jobs on the ranch, and see you through. Better than this—what?"

The Fistical Four stared at Lick. But he was quite in earnest.

"You silly ass!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Do you think we'd be found dead in Texas?"

"Oh, come off!"

"Many thanks!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "I think we'll stick to Rookwood. And if you've got any sense, Lick, you'll stick to Rookwood, too. It's the chance of your lifetime."

"Oh, guff!" said Texas Lick.

**The 7th Chapter.
The Long Jump!**

Texas Lick was the object of considerable attention the following morning.

His open and oft-repeated statement that he wasn't going to be flogged excited great interest. Most of the fellows termed it "gas," and expected to see the Westerner climb down at the last moment. Others wondered what would happen when Lick found himself in the awe-inspiring presence of the Head.

While the fellows discussed the

You figured it out that you was going to flog me this morning, old sport?"

"What? What?"

"Is it a fixture?"

"A—a what?" stammered the Head.

"Oh, yes. Certainly I am going to flog you very severely—most severely."

"I guess not! You see, this is the how of it," said Texas Lick. "I promised the popper to stand Rookwood as long as I could! I reckon I've played up to that. But I ain't being flogged—not if this hyer infant knows anything on the subject. Got that?"

"Bless my soul!"

"Call off the flogging, and I'm your antelope—I'll stand it as long as I can, just as I told the popper. Is it a trade?"

"You—you insolent young rascal!" gasped the Head. "If you do not immediately return to the school, and submit to the most exemplary punishment, I shall expel you!"

"Is that straight?"

"What? What?"

"Do you mean it, honest Injun?"

"What? Certainly I mean it!"

"Then it's me for the long jump. Good-bye, old scout!"

"Boy!"

"I guess the popper will let you know where to send my truck. I'm hitting the trail from now on. It's ine for Texas!"

"Boy! I command you—"

"Ease off!"

"I—I—I—"

The Head of Rookwood put up the receiver with a dazed look. Texas Lick, at the other end of the wire, had rung off.

"I—I—I—" The Head stammered.

"Mr. Dalton, that—that boy must be found, and—and brought back to the school, and—and then expelled—expelled from Rookwood. Bless my soul!"

"Certainly he seems out of place here, sir," said Mr. Dalton. "I think he will be more at home in Texas."

"Bless my soul!"

Rookwood was in a buzz that day on the topic of Texas Lick.

That he had bolted was widely known—and that he was being sought for far and wide the fellows also knew.

But Rookwood School never saw him again.

The promised flogging never was administered. Texas Lick was never there to receive it. He had taken the "long jump"—and Rookwood knew him no more.

It was long before Jimmy Silver & Co. quite knew what had happened to their missing study-mate. It came out that Dr. Chisholm received a communication from Mr. Lincoln Polk Lick, in Texas, and Texas Lick's "truck" was despatched to his home. That the self-possessed and self-assertive youth was quite capable of travelling across the Atlantic "on his own" the juniors knew; and undoubtedly he had done so. A letter with the U.S.A. postmark arrived at last for Jimmy Silver, and in that letter Texas Lick informed the chums of the end study that he was back in Texas, and felt that he could breathe again. And with great kindness he repeated his offer to find them jobs on the ranch if they decided to quit a mouldy old island and take their chance in a real country.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled over that letter. They did not think of accepting Texas Lick's generous offer; the mouldy old island was good enough for them, and they would not have exchanged a square inch in it for a square mile in Texas. Indeed, they found the end study much more comfortable after the departure of the breezy youth from the wild and woolly West, and though they remembered him kindly enough, they could not regret that Texas Lick had taken the "long jump."

THE END.

"Working the Oracle!" is the title of next Monday's stunning story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood School. Make certain of reading it by ordering your BOYS' FRIEND in advance!

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THE RUNAWAYS! In deep and dismal silence the Rookwood juniors followed the constable who led them to the stationmaster's office. It was then borne in upon the minds of Jimmy Silver & Co. and Texas Lick that their little excursion to Brighton had been nipped in the bud!

Country equal to what he left behind in Texas," grinned Jimmy Silver. "He only came over here to please his father. Perhaps he's rather keen to be sacked, to get back to jolly old Texas."

"But it's a disgrace to be sacked—"

"They mightn't think anything of it in Texas," said Jimmy. "Goodness knows what they think of anything in Texas."

"You've hit it!" Texas Lick grinned in at the doorway of the end study, where the Fistical Four were discussing him. "You see, you galoots, I guess I'm fed-up. I reckon I told you once that I'd put in weeks among the Redskins, picking up information about their pesky manners and customs. Now, I've done the same here. I guess I've learned all I want to learn of the Old Country. I guess it's done your old school good to see a real live American—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I guess I'm sorry to leave you in the lurch," said Texas Lick, with feeling. "I'm sorry to leave you behind in this mouldy old island when I go. You're good sorts in your way, though you haven't much hoss-sense. But I'll tell you what! I'll put it to the popper, and if you like to come

matter, it was suddenly observed that Texas Lick was absent. He was not seen at early prayers; and after that, when Mr. Dalton looked for him to take him before the Head, he was not to be found.

Up and down and round about Rookwood went the Form master and the prefects, looking for Texas Lick.

But they did not find him.

Mr. Dalton went to the Head's study at last, with a frowning brow, to acquaint him with the fact that Lick could not be found, and was not apparently any longer within the walls of Rookwood.

Dr. Chisholm listened to that information with a brow of thunder.

Buzzzzzz!

The telephone bell interrupted the discussion. Dr. Chisholm turned angrily to the instrument and jerked off the receiver.

"Hallo!" It was a nasal voice that came through the telephone. "Is that Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes. Bless my soul, I know that voice! Is that Lick?"

"Yep!"

"Where are you?" gasped the Head.

"I guess that doesn't matter," came Texas Lick's cool voice. "I ain't inside Rookwood, that's a cinch.