

GREYFRIARS—ST. JIM'S—ROOKWOOD!

The
**Penny
Popular**

No.
247.

Three Complete Stories of—
HARRY WHARTON & Co.—JIMMY SILVER & Co.—TOM MERRY & Co.



“OW—OW—OW—ATCHOOOOH!”

An Amusing Incident from the Grand Long Complete Tale of Tom Merry & Co.,
contained in this issue.

A Grand
Long Complete
Story, dealing
with the
Early Adventures
of
Jimmy Silver & Co.

BACK TO THE LAND!

By
Owen
Conquest

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Schoolboy Gardeners!

"IT'S a ripping wheeze!" said Lovell.
"Hear, hear!" chorused New-
come and Raby.

"Well, if we can only get the
Head to give us a plot we're all right,"
said Jimmy Silver.

The Classical chums were seated in the
end study at Rookwood discussing the
new scheme.

The "ripping wheeze" was Jimmy
Silver's, of course. Most of the good ideas
were evolved by the leader of the Fistical
Four.

Jimmy had suggested that he and his
chums should go in for gardening, and the
proposal had been enthusiastically accepted
by Lovell, Newcome, and Raby.

The juniors proceeded there and then
to Dr. Chisholm's study, and were agreeably
received.

The Head supported their idea whole-
heartedly, and promised to give an order
to the gardener to the effect that the juniors
were to have a plot of ground
assigned to them.

Lovell promptly armed himself with a
book on gardening, and persisted forth-
with to pore his chums with extracts from
it.

"If everything goes on all right," said
Jimmy Silver, "we shall put those Modern
rotters in the shade!"

"Absolutely!"

Mr. McNab, the gardener of Rookwood,
put his head into the end study after
afternoon school that day, and the chums
looked at him eagerly. They knew what
he had come to tell them, and they were
on their feet at once.

"Good-afternoon, Mr. McNab!" said
Jimmy Silver. "Will you have a cup of
tea with us?"

The gardener looked at the study tea-
table. The stove was out, and the leader
of the Fistical Four was adding tepid
water to the leaves in the pot, which had
been drained dry. Perhaps the sight did
not tempt Mr. McNab. At all events, he
shook his head.

"Heh, no!" he said. "Thank you,
Master Silver, I've had my tea. If you
young gentlemen will come with me, I'll
show you the plot which the doctor has
told me to allot to you."

"We'll come at once, McNab."

The Fistical Four eagerly followed the
gardener. Tommy Dodd & Co. spotted
them in the quad, and looked amazed at
the sight of the gardener with them.

"Hallo, what's on?" exclaimed Tommy
Dodd. "Are you going weeding, Silver?"

"You'll see soon," said Jimmy Silver
loftily.

"I'm going to show the young gentle-
men the plot," said Mr. McNab.

Tommy Dodd stared.
"The plot! What the dickens—"

The Fistical Four walked on with the
gardener, leaving the Modern chums
staring at one another.

"What was he driving at, kids?" said
Tommy Dodd.
"Blessed if I know!" said Tommy
Cook.

"Nor I!" said Tommy Doyle.
"McNab can't be in a plot with those
rotters."

"Of course not!"
Tommy Dodd made a sudden gesture.

"My Aunt Jane Jemima! Of course!
I've got it!"

"Got what?"
"The wheeze!" exclaimed Tommy
Dodd. "Those kids are going in for
gardening, and they've got a plot of
ground."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tommy Cook.
"I shouldn't be surprised."

"Ha, ha! So they're going in for
gardening, are they? Let's follow on!"

The Modern chums hurried out on the
track of the Fistical Four. Tommy Dodd's
eyes were gleaming with the light of
combat.

"They fancy this will take a rise out of
us," he exclaimed. "I suppose Jimmy
Silver reckons he will raise vegetables to
cook in the study, and so on. He's con-
ceited enough for anything. We're on in
this act, you chaps!"

"Rather!"
"They think they'll take a rise out of
us, and get a lot of praise," said Tommy
Dodd, with a sniff. "Well, we'll see!
Perhaps their amateur gardening won't be
a howling success, after all. Hallo, there's
Lovell! What's that he's reading?"

The Fourth-Formers had entered the
garden at the upper end of the quad. In
the distance McNab could be seen talking
to Jimmy Silver, Newcome, and Raby, but
Lovell had stopped under a tree and was
reading. The Modern chums joined him.
Tommy Dodd tapped him on the shoulder.

"Hallo!" said Lovell, without looking
up. "Is that you, Jimmy? I say, this is
worth knowing, old chap. This month
there is a great deal to be done by the
amateur gardener. Watering will be
required as the weather becomes drier,
and with the quick growth of the young
shoots there will be a great increase in
the insects which prey upon them, and of
the weeds that choke their growth. The
young gardener must be watchful for
greenfly and slugs, and never—Hallo!"

Tommy Dodd's chuckle made Lovell
look up.

"Hallo, what are you silly asses doing
here?" he said. "I thought it was Jimmy
Silver. Why don't you go and get some
cricket practice, you two? You need it."

"Hallo, Lovell!" called out Jimmy
Silver. "Come on!"

Lovell hurried away to join his chums.
Mr. McNab had shown them the allotted
plot, and had gone about his work. It
was a pleasant little piece of ground, in a
rather obscure corner, Mr. McNab perhaps
thinking that junior gardening would not
be ornamental, and wishing to keep the
efforts of the Fistical Four out of public
view. But there was no fault to be found
with the ground.

"This is ours," said Jimmy Silver,
waving his hand over it. "All within the
chalk-lines is for us, and we can grow
what we like—cabbages, and camellias,
and vegetable marrows, and orchids—"

"I think a good crop of orchids would
be a good idea," exclaimed Raby. "Some
orchids fetch a guinea each, you know,
and we could soon pay our expenses with
them, and have something left in hand."

Jimmy Silver grunted.
"Do you think we could raise that
kind of orchid, ass?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't. I don't
believe in wasting one's time raising
geraniums when orchids sell at a guinea
each—"

"We should want glass, and expensive
things of all sorts."

"But there would be a big profit—"
"Oh, rats!"

"You can have your own way, Jimmy,
as it's your idea," said Raby. "But, if
you ask me, I think we ought to raise
orchids, and sell them at a guinea each.
It would pay best in the long run."

"Tommy Dodd & Co. were talking to
you just now, weren't they, Lovell?"
asked Jimmy Silver, changing the subject.

"Yes; they seem to have got on to the
wheeze."

"Well, it doesn't matter now. We're
first in the field. If they take up amateur
gardening, we can chip them about
imitating our ideas, and make them sit up,
I reckon."

"You're right!"
"McNab has lent us these spades and
things. The first job is to dig the ground
well, and turn it over. May as well start
now."

The four juniors threw off their jackets,
and, with shirt-sleeves rolled up, grasped
the spades and began to work industriously.
Tommy Dodd & Co. had disappeared.
But not for long.

In a momentary pause from labour, the
Fistical Four looked up, and found the
Modern chums on the spot again, with
about a dozen fellows belonging to the
Modern side, looking on with great interest
at the proceedings.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

A Little Watering!

TOMMY DODD nodded to the Fistical
Four with a grin.

"Behold the amateur gar-
deners, gentlemen!" he ex-
claimed. "There is absolutely no charge
whatever for looking at them, though
they're funnier than most of the things
you pay to see at a show."

"Rather!"

The Fistical Four turned red. They
were red already with manual labour in
the warm sun, but now they grew redder.
Their audience was a large one, and
increasing every minute. Fellows came
from near and far to watch the efforts of
the amateur gardeners.

"Oh, clear off, you silly ass!" ex-
claimed Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, come now," said Tommy Dodd,
"don't deprive us of an exhibition that
beats a monkey-show into a cocked hat."

"It's all right, Silver," said Lacy,
"we're interested."

"Yes, rather!" exclaimed Towle.
"Keep it up for a time while I go and
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now," said Tommy Dodd. And the chums walked down to the gates of Rookwood. From the windows of the end study the Fistical Four, who were having their tea, saw Tommy Dodd & Co. go down to the gates.

"We've done those rotters!" Jimmy Silver remarked, with a grin. "They don't know anything about gardening, and they can't keep level with us this time!"

"You're right, Jimmy," declared Raby. "But I think we ought to go ahead a bit more. If we made a profit out of the garden—"

"I've no objection to that, if it can be done," said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, then, why not adopt my suggestion and grow orchids, and sell them at a guinea apiece?"

"Ass! I tell you it can't be done!"

"I don't see why it can't be done. Where there's a will there's a way, and surely it's worth trying when there's so much to be made out of it."

"You're an ass, Raby!" said Lovell, opening his famous book. "Listen to this—"

"I'd rather not."

"But I want to convince you."

"I'd rather not be convinced—I give in now."

"Oh, ring off, and listen! 'Orchids, especially Epiphytes—'"

"I say—"

"Require considerable heat, and are only suitable for culture where considerable attention can be paid to the requirements of each individual plant. The Cypripediums are the hardiest class, requiring the least refinement in their cultivation—"

"Cheese it!"

"But you're—"

"But they can only be grown in a special soil of fibrous peat under glass. They must always be kept moist and warm—"

"Ow! Cheese it! I give you best!"

"In summer they require an abundant supply of water—"

Jimmy Silver grasped the teapot.

"Are you going to chuck that, Lovell, or shall I chuck this?" he demanded.

"Oh, all right; if you prefer to remain in ignorance—"

"We do!"

"Well, I don't see why we can't cultivate orchids, and make a fortune," Raby remarked, as if he had not heard or heeded a word of Lovell's reading.

"If you say the word orchid again, you get this teapot on your napper," said Jimmy Silver darkly.

"Well, I—"

"Shut up, and pass the jam!"

And no more was heard of either Lovell's book or Raby's orchids during tea.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
A Wonderful Crop.

"GARDEN getting on all right?" Tommy Dodd asked carelessly the next morning. The Fistical Four had just come in from an early morning visit to the plot, and they were looking extremely pleased.

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver. "We haven't had much experience in this sort of thing, but I must say we're getting a ripping success—"

"Anything come up yet?"

"Yes; the wallflowers are just showing."

"Eh? When did you plant them?"

"Yesterday."

"And they're coming up already?"

"Absolutely."

Tommy Dodd closed one eye significantly.

"You can come and look at them if you like," said Lovell testily. "I know it's wonderfully quick work, but I attribute it to the careful way we manured the ground."

"You can come and see the garden for yourself, Doddy," said Raby. "I was surprised to see them coming up, but there's no doubt about it."

"Well, I don't want to doubt your word," said Tommy Dodd, with a shake of the head, "but I must say I'll believe that when I see it."

"Come and see it, then!"

"Certainly, if it's to be seen. Come on, kids! We'll believe this when we see it, eh?"

"Rather!"

The Modern chums followed the Fistical Four to the garden plot. Jimmy Silver, with a lofty smile, pointed out tufts of green showing above the soil where the wallflower seeds had been put in the previous day.

"That settles it!" he remarked.

Tommy Dodd nodded dubiously.

"Yes, I suppose so," he assented.

"Unless you fellows have shoved those in there just to take us in."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were late for afternoon school. Mr. Manders, the Form-master, was heavily down upon them, and the Modern chums received impots of a hundred lines each. But they took those impots cheerfully. Perhaps they thought the game was worth the candle.

After school, Raby ran down to the garden plot to see how the wallflowers were getting on, while Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome were getting the tea in the study.

The junior was back in a few minutes, and he burst into the study so suddenly that Lovell dropped the teapot he was holding, and there was a crash of breaking china.

"I say—"

"You ass!" howled Lovell. "Look at that!"

"Never mind looking at that. Come and look at the wallflowers!"

"Anything wrong with them, Raby?" asked Jimmy Silver anxiously.

"Wrong? No; they're out!"



"Let's see you— Ow! ow! You're pouring the water on me!" yelled Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver grinned. "I'm watering the crops," he remarked. "There's a fine crop of idiots here, and I'm watering them!"

"Yes, we should be likely to muck up our garden on your account," he said. "Anyway, you'll see the wallflowers themselves soon."

When Tommy Dodd & Co. were alone again they hugged each other in unspeakable mirth.

"Not a suspicion," murmured Tommy Dodd.

"Not in the least."

"They wouldn't dream that we paid the plot a visit overnight and stuck those sprigs in there."

"Hardly!"

"My hat! This gardening wheezes grows funnier every day," said Dodd.

"There's a big laugh coming, but it won't be for the Fistical Four, I fancy."

"No fear!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. paid another visit to the flower-bed after morning school. They worked there for some time, carefully avoiding disturbing the wallflowers.

After they had left the spot, the Modern chums appeared from behind the nearest cover, with huge grins upon their faces, and paper parcels in their hands.

"Out of the ground?"

"No; out in blossom!"

"Impossible!"

"I tell you it is so."

"Now, don't rot, Raby."

"I'm not rotting! I tell you the wallflowers are in full bloom, all a-growing and a-blowing!" exclaimed Raby excitedly.

"It can't be."

"Come and see them!" exclaimed Raby, and he caught his chums by the arms and dragged them by main force out of the study.

"I say, the kettle will boil over."

"Blow the kettle!"

"But—"

"Come on!"

Jimmy Silver and the other juniors were catching Raby's excitement. It seemed impossible that the wallflowers had come up already, yet the early springing from the ground had been unusual. Who could tell what might not come of careful gardening, such as they had bestowed upon the plot?

The four juniors hurried out of the house.

"Hallo! What's the row?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd.

But they ran on without heeding him. The Modern chums followed, and the sight of the juniors running excitedly naturally drew other fellows after them, and quite a crowd arrived on the scene with the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Newcome uttered exclamations of amazement. True enough, the wallflowers were in full bloom.

The border planted with them was in a blaze with brown and yellow, all of them quite fresh and lively, and in the best condition.

"My hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Splendid!" said Tommy Dodd. "I think that's a record, unless you fellows are having a joke on us."

"Of course they are," said Lacy. "Wallflowers couldn't grow up in that time."

Jimmy Silver turned upon him.

"They have. I swear we put nothing but seeds into that border. It's the ripping way we manured it, I reckon. We've accidentally made a great discovery in gardening, that's what it amounts to. It must be the way we manured the bed that made the plants spring up in this wonderful way, and I'm going to make notes of the method and send them to the gardening papers. Everybody ought to know."

"You're right, Silver," said Raby. "We can't be selfish enough to keep a discovery like that to ourselves, though perhaps we might patent it."

"It's marvellous, that's what it is," said Newcome. "Yes, you fellows can cackle. Great discoverers always get cackled at. I think none of you ever know us to tell lies, and we give you our word, honour bright, that we planted the seeds only yesterday, and haven't touched them since."

"Then it's a blessed miracle," said Lacy.

The juniors, some believing and some disbelieving, all puzzled, moved away, leaving the amateur gardeners to admire their wonderful crop of wallflowers.

The news spread, and fellows came from all parts of Rookwood to look at them. Seniors and juniors alike came to look, and the Fistical Four deemed it advisable to remain on the spot, in case curious fingers should pluck specimens up, and denude that flower border.

They explained to successive comers how they had put the seeds in only the day before, and in most cases were re-

warded with bursts of ribald laughter. Apart from the wallflowers, the visitors to the garden plot seemed to have some joke up amongst themselves, and at last one of the Fifth-Formers gave the Fistical Four the clue to it.

"There's something that concerns you chaps on the notice-board," he remarked, after listening with a broad grin to Jimmy Silver's explanation of the way he had manured that border, which accounted for the wonderful growth of the flowers.

"The notice-board!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, puzzled. "How—"

"Better go and look at it."

The fellows standing round roared. A sudden sense of something in the wind smote the Fistical Four with a chill of dismay. They walked away quickly, leaving the fellows yelling. They entered the hall quickly. A crowd was gathered round the school notice-board, chuckling and grinning and cackling. There was a shout.

"Here they are!"

The Fistical Four were allowed to approach the board.

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Long Complete Tale
of
Jimmy Silver & Co.

in
Next Monday's issue
of the
BOYS' FRIEND,
entitled:

"THE SHADOW OF
SHAME!"

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A paper was pinned up along with the notices, a paper that caught Jimmy Silver's eye at once.

It was a bill made out by Blum, the florist, and ran as follows:

To wallflowers supplied to Master

Thomas Dodd, on account of James Silver, Esq., 6s."

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"What—"

"Done!" groaned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tommy Dodd & Co. "It cost six bob, but it was worth it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the crowd of juniors.

The Fistical Four stood absolutely speechless for a minute or so. The truth sank into their minds. The wonderful growth of wallflowers was not due to their marvellous gardening, but to the joking propensities of Tommy Dodd & Co. The flowers had been planted there over the seeds, and that was why the modern chums had been late for afternoon school that day.

"My—my only hat!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Grand old gardeners!"

"What price wallflowers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You rotters!" yelled Jimmy Silver, and he made a rush at the convulsed Moderns. But the crowd closed round, and bore the furious Fistical Four back.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With the loud laughter ringing in their ears the Fistical Four moved away. The utter ridicule was too much even for their nerves. But roars of laughter followed them up to their study. There they looked at one another in grim silence for some moments.

"It's a do," said Jimmy Silver. "We ought to have known better."

"It would have been all right if you'd taken my advice and grown orchids instead of wallflowers," declared Raby.

"It all comes of not following the directions in the book," said Lovell, pulling the precious volume out of his pocket. "Here's the chapter on wallflowers; if you had read it carefully it would have been all right. Listen to this."

"No fear! Cheese it, both of you! We're done, and we can't wriggle out of it. Hark! They're still laughing!"

Faintly from below came the merry echo.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I reckon I'm done with amateur gardening for a bit," he remarked.

And Lovell, Newcome, and Raby "reckoned" the same.

THE END.

Another Magnificent Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in Next Friday's Issue of the PENNY POPULAR, entitled:

"THE VANISHED SCHOOLBOY!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

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