

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The New Boy!

JIMMY SILVER of the Fourth came upon him suddenly in the quad. In fact, he came upon him very suddenly.

The chums of the end study were getting tea in that famous apartment, when it was discovered that there was no tea.

So while Lovell and Raby and Newcome went on with the preparation, Jimmy Silver cut off at top speed to the school shop. He descended the stairs by way of the banisters, fortunately landed upon his feet, and bolted out of the School House like a stone from a catapult.

It was then that he came upon the new boy. He came upon him like a charging Highlander. The new boy was standing there looking at the place, with his hands in his pockets, and a downcast expression upon his face. Jimmy Silver was upon him before he saw him, and the new junior went over like a skittle.

There was a loud bump and a yell as he landed on the ground. Jimmy Silver staggered back from the shock.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Silver.

"Oh! Ah! Yah! Ow! Groooh!" said the new boy.

"You fathead! What were you standing there like a stuffed dummy for?" demanded Jimmy Silver indignantly.

"Oh dear!"

"Didn't you see me coming, you ass?"

"Oh! Ah!"

Then Jimmy Silver realised that perhaps the fault had been partly his. Probably the new kid had not expected a fellow to come bolting out of the House like a runaway locomotive. So Jimmy Silver generously resolved to forgive him, and he even gave him a helping hand, and yanked him to his feet.

The new boy appeared in a somewhat

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dazed state, which was not surprising under the circumstances. He was a good-looking lad of Jimmy's own age, and of sturdy build. He blinked round for his cap, and Jimmy picked it up for him, and dabbed it on his head backwards.

"Well, you must be an ass!" said the new boy at last.

"I!" exclaimed Silver indignantly.

"Yes. What did you bang into me for?"

"How was I to know that a silly ass was standing there like a boiled owl?" demanded Silver. "Fellows are supposed to keep their eyes open."

"You didn't keep yours open."

"Well, perhaps I didn't," admitted Jimmy Silver. "But I'm in a hurry. I hope I haven't hurt you," he added.

"Well, you have, as a matter of fact," said the new boy. "But it doesn't matter." He dabbed his nose with his handkerchief. "It's all right!"

Jimmy Silver nodded and passed on. He whipped into the tuckshop, and secured a packet of tea from old Sergeant Kettle, and came back towards the School House at a run. The new boy was still dabbing his nose.

The end study was waiting for the tea, and Jimmy Silver was in a hurry; but a kindly impulse made him pause. It was not so very long since he had been a new boy, and had not known a soul at Rookwood. This new kid looked rather forlorn, and there was no doubt that his nose was damaged owing to the hurry Jimmy Silver had been in. Jimmy resolved to let the end study wait a minute or two.

"Proboscis damaged?" he said sympathetically.

"Yes, a bit."

"New kid—what?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Oswald—Dick Oswald!"

"Classical or Modern!"

SMYTHE'S REVENGE!

A Magnificent Long
Complete Story of
JIMMY SILVER
& Co., the Chums
of Rookwood.

By.....

OWEN CONQUEST.

That was always one of the first questions put to a new fellow at Rookwood—whether he belonged to the Classical or the Modern side of the school. Jimmy Silver was one of the ornaments of the Classical side, and he was prepared to be kind to the stranger if the latter was also a Classical. If he was a Modern, of course, there was nothing for it but to knock his cap off and leave him.

"Classical," said the new boy.

"Oh, good!" said Jimmy Silver approvingly.

Oswald looked at him.

"You're a Classical?" he asked.

Jimmy Silver sniffed.

"You young ass! If you weren't a green new kid you wouldn't ask that question! Do I look like a Modern?"

"I don't know."

"Well, young hopeful, when you've been at Rookwood a bit longer you'll know that the Classics are the decent side, and the Moderns a set of worms and wasters," said Silver. "F'rinstance, if you thought I looked like a Modern it would be my duty to wipe up the quad with you. What's your Form?"

"Fourth!"

"Seen Bootles?"

Mr. Bootles was the master of the Fourth.

"Yes, I've just been with him," said Oswald. "I was having a look round, when you bumped me over."

"Been to school before?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

Oswald coloured.

"Do you always ask new fellows all these questions?" he inquired.

"Yes, as a rule, and they answer them unless they've got something to hide," said Jimmy Silver. "But I'm only asking you out of politeness, as a matter of fact. I don't really care twopence whether you've been to school or not, or where it is, or where it isn't. Just politeness!"

Oswald laughed.
 "Know anybody here?" asked Jimmy.
 "No."
 "Feeling a bit lonesome—what?"
 "Yes," said Oswald frankly.
 "Had your tea?"
 "No."
 "Then trot along with me," said Jimmy Silver. "We're just going to have tea in our study, and you can come if you like."
 "I say, that's awfully decent of you," said the new boy gratefully.
 "Well, come on!"
 And Jimmy Silver marched his new acquaintance up to the end study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Quite a Good Sort.

LOVELL and Raby and Newcombe turned inquiring glances upon Jimmy Silver and his companion as they came into the end study.
 "Got the tea?" asked Lovell.
 "Here you are," said Jimmy Silver. "And this is a new kid."
 "Where did you dig it up?" asked Raby, with a curious glance at the new junior, who was dabbing his nose again.
 "In the quad! He had gone to sleep standing up like a horse, and I biffed into him and woke him up."
 "I wasn't asleep," said Oswald indignantly. "I was just looking round."
 "Did you bring that nose to Rookwood with you, young 'un?" asked Newcombe.
 "I did that," said Jimmy Silver. "My shoulder, I think. Just like a new kid to shove his nose in the way of my shoulder. But he'll learn more sense in time. His name's Oswald, he comes from goodness knows where, and he's as green as grass, and I've brought him in to tea. I hope there are enough sausages to go round."
 "Just one of your weird ideas, planking down a new kid on the study," said Lovell.
 Oswald coloured.
 "I—I don't want—" he began.
 Lovell stared at him.
 "Don't be an ass! You're welcome. I suppose I can tell Jimmy Silver what I think of him without you chipping in, can't I?"
 "Oh!"
 "Don't mind Lovell, kid," said Jimmy Silver. "His bark's worse than his bite, and his manners are quite Modern."
 "Why, you silly ass," began Lovell wrathfully, "if you want to start tea with a nose to match that new kid's—"
 "Bow-wow! Get on with the sosses! I've brought the tea, and the sosses ain't ready!" said Jimmy Silver. "Here, sit down, you new kid! Don't stand on ceremony! Sit on a chair, my infant! How's your nose now?"
 "Getting on all right, thanks!" said Oswald, laughing.
 He began to feel at home in the end study already. Jimmy Silver would have made anybody feel at home.
 The sausages being done to a turn, and the toast finished, and the tea finally made, the Fistical Four sat down to tea with their guest. Dick Oswald had to pause to dab his nose occasionally, but he was taking that little accident with such cheery good-humour that it raised him in the opinion of the chums of the end study. Those tough young gentlemen did not like persons who were "soft," but it was clear that Oswald was not very soft.
 Although Lovell had pronounced Silver's idea of befriending the new boy "weird," all the four chums did their best to make him feel comfortable on his first day at Rookwood. They took their cue from Jimmy Silver, who, though not generally a philanthropist,

had a very kind heart; and, besides, Jimmy felt that something was due to Oswald in compensation for his swollen nose.

Jimmy Silver & Co. talked football, and especially the forthcoming match with St. Jim's; but they did not forget their guest. Oswald knew nothing as yet about Rookwood or Rookwood games, and could not very well enter into the deep questions discussed so knowingly by the Fistical Four.

"You play footer, kid?" asked Lovell patronisingly.

"Yes," said Oswald. "I hope I shall have a chance to play here. I was considered rather good."

"In the nursery?" asked Lovell.
 "At my old school, I mean," said Oswald.

"Where was that?"

The new boy paused a moment. The question was asked quite casually, not at all curiously. A similar question asked by Jimmy Silver had been evaded, though Jimmy had not noticed that.

"Minhurst," said Oswald at last.
 "Minhurst?" said Lovell carelessly.
 "Never heard of the place."

"I have," said Raby. "It's in the West Riding, isn't it?"
 "Yes," said Oswald.

"Smythe's got a brother there," said Raby. "I've heard him speak of it."
 Oswald started.

"Who's Smythe?" he asked nervously.
 "Smythe of the Shell!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "He's our prize idiot! A great nut! He used to be junior captain till we kicked him out! Smythe is *Arbiter Elegantiarum*. I suppose you know what that means, as you're a Classical?"

"Arbiter of Elegance," said Raby, for the benefit of the new boy, who was looking curiously thoughtful.

"You needn't translate to Oswald, Raby—he isn't a Modern," said Jimmy Silver. "I didn't know there were two Smythes. What a mercy and a blessing they ain't both at Rookwood!"

"What an escape for Rookwood!" said Lovell. "I've heard of Smythe's brother. He's younger than Adolphus, but he licks him in the holidays. I suppose that's the way his pater keeps peace in the family, shoving Smythe the major here and Smythe the minor up in Yorkshire. Did you know the chap, Oswald?"

"I knew a Smythe—I mean, just by sight," said Oswald. "He wasn't a friend of mine. He wasn't much of a nut—chap who was always going out with a camera."

"Well, if he was the only Smythe there, he was Adolphus' minor," said Raby.

Oswald compressed his lips.
 "Does he ever come here?" he asked.

"Here? No! Why the dickens should he come here?" said Lovell. "It's a bit too far for a bike-ride, isn't it?"

"And there isn't much love lost between Adolphus and his minor from what I heard!" grinned Raby. "They write to one another, though. Adolphus writes to him for a quid he lent him last vac, and Algy writes back to ask him if he won't be happy till he gets it? It's a regular joke in Smythe's study."

"Your nose hurting you, young 'un?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"My nose? No."
 "You're looking jolly down in the mouth all of a sudden."

"Am I?" said Oswald, with a smile.
 "Perhaps it's my nose, after all."

"Have another soss," said Lovell hospitably. "I say, have they put you into a study yet?"

"No. Mr. Bootles is going to tell me about it."

The Fistical Four exchanged glances.

When a new boy dropped in at Rookwood there was a danger of the sacred precincts of the end study being invaded by an outsider. The Classical four rather liked Oswald's looks, but they didn't want a fifth in their study. That wasn't to be expected.

"Then I'll tell you what," said Lovell. "Don't let Bootles put you in here. You see, we're four now, and I'm afraid you'd be uncomfortable."

"There's only two in the next study," Newcombe remarked — "Hooker and Jones minor. Hooker is a really nice chap, and Jones is a regular ripper. You'd like both of them."

"A nice study, too," said Raby. "Not so big as this, but cosy—very cosy."

"Nice pink wallpaper, too," said Jimmy Silver. "Jones minor did that. You'd like that study, Oswald, right down to the ground."

Oswald burst into a laugh.
 "I understand. I'll keep out of this study if I can."

"Ahem! Of course, we don't want to be inhospitable," explained Jimmy Silver, "but the family circle is the family circle, you know. An Englishman's study is his castle."

"Exactly! I'll do my best."
 "I must say the young 'un is quite a decent chap for a new kid," said Lovell.

"More sense than most new kids. If you've finished, we'll take you for a walk round the place, and show you our picturesque views and famous sights."

The Fistical Four felt extremely friendly towards the new fellow who was willing to spare their study. They felt that they could not make too much of him—at least, until the question of his study was settled. Tea being over, and Oswald having given his damaged nose a final dab, the five juniors sallied forth together, the Fistical Four and the new kid on the best of terms with one another.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Adolphus Wakes Up the Wrong Passenger.

"BY gad! What have you got there, dear boys?"

It was Smythe—the great Smythe—Adolphus Smythe of the Shell, who asked the question, in his languid, drawing voice. Smythe and Howard and Tracy, the leading spirits of the Noble Society of Giddy Goats, were lounging gracefully under the old beeches when the Fistical Four and their protegee came along. Adolphus extracted his eye-glass from his pocket, and jammed it in his eye, and took a survey of the new junior.

The Fistical Four paused. They were always ready for a rag with Smythe & Co. The Fistical Four were energetic youths, and they were down on nuts.

"We've been looking for you, really," said Jimmy Silver. "We wanted to show you to the new chap. We're showing him the sights, you know. Oswald, my son, here you behold the great chief of the nuts—the rarest animal to be found outside the Zoo. The Head has received tempting offers from the Zoo, but he won't part with him on any terms."

Smythe of the Shell glared, and Howard and Tracy chuckled. Smythe turned his glare upon them, and they left off chuckling. The new boy burst into a laugh, and Adolphus then bestowed his glare upon him.

"What are you cacklin' at?" he inquired. "Do you want me to give you an ear to match that nose? I'd do it for two pins!"

Oswald fumbled in his jacket, and then held out his hand towards Smythe. Two pins reposed in his palm. Adolphus

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turned his eyeglass upon them with a puzzled look.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "There's the two pins, Smythey."

"By gad!"

Adolphus put his eyeglass back into his pocket, and pushed back his immaculate white cuffs. He was a head taller than the new boy, and had no doubt about being able to handle him. If he had had any doubts about it, he would have sneered off, for Adolphus was not of the stuff which heroes are made. But although he was not a fighting man, he was by no means averse to earning a little cheap glory by licking a fag who was not his match.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

Oswald chuckled.

"Anywhere you can put it," he replied.

"Look out for your nose!" said Smythe.

"I'm looking out."

The Fistical Four and Howard and Tracy stood round in a ring. Tommy Dodd & Co. came scooting over from the Modern side at the first whiff of battle in the air.

It was surprising, indeed, how fast juniors gathered upon the spot. It was an unusual sight to see Adolphus engaged in fisticuffs. His tastes were not generally fistical, and the Rookwood fellows were interested.

The sight was indeed interesting, but it was unfortunately brief. Adolphus made a rush at the new junior, his fists sailing about like flails.

Oswald did not budge an inch.

His left came up and knocked Smythe's wildly-sailing fists into the air, and then his right came out and caught Smythe on the chin.

Smythe staggered back, and brought up against the trunk of a beech, and put his hand to his chin, and gasped.

"Bravo, young 'un!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"By gad!" ejaculated Smythe.

"Go it, Smythey!" chorused the nuts.

"Mop up the ground with him, Smythey!"

"I'm waiting to be mopped!" said Oswald.

"Now look out for blood and thunder!" yelled Tommy Dodd. "Smythe is going to slaughter him! I can see it in his eye! He's thirsting for gore!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd's remarks were intended in a humorous sense. For the great Adolphus, so far from being bent on slaughter, shook out his cuffs, and turned away. That one doughty blow had been enough for Adolphus. He realised that he had woke up the wrong passenger, so to speak, and he had had enough.

"Well, my hat!" said Lovell, in disgust. "Don't go yet, Smythey. You ain't licked!"

Even Howard and Tracy looked ashamed of their chum. Never had so inglorious a climb-down been seen in the quadrangle as Rookwood. Smythe had picked a row with the new kid, he had sailed in without provocation, and he had surrendered at the first whack. There was a howl of derision from Tommy Dodd & Co.

"The Classical side in this school is simply going to rot!" said Tommy Dodd scornfully. "Blessed if I ever saw anything like that!"

"Dash it all, Smythe—buck up and go for him!" whispered Howard.

"I decline to be mixed up in a hooligan scramble!" said Smythe, as loftily as he could. "I'm not lookin' for scraps with Fourth Form fags!"

"Nor with anybody, you Classical fink!" howled Tommy Dodd.

"Smythey, old chap—" urged Tracy.

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"Oh, rats!" said Smythe.

And he walked away, his face a little red, but his step as swaggering as ever.

Howard and Tracy followed him slowly. Never had the great chief of the Giddy Goats cut so painful a figure.

"Well, that takes the cake intirely," said Doyle. "What's Rookwood coming to?"

"Rookwood!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "Rookwood's all right—the Modern side. But I must say these Classicals are miserable funks!"

"Why, you Modern worm," said Jimmy Silver angrily, "we don't own Smythe! He ought to be a Modern! He's just suited for your side!"

The Fistical Four had nothing whatever in common with Smythe. But he was a Classical, and they were deeply mortified by the exhibition he had put up under the eyes of the Moderns. Smythe's pusillanimity reflected upon his side. They were inclined to prove to the Moderns, in the plainest possible way, that all the Classicals weren't funks, anyway.

"Backing down before a new fag—a kid that hasn't been here a couple of hours!" said Tommy Cook. "Well, I never did think much of these measly Classicals, but this does take the biscuit!"

"The sooner they abolish the Classical side the better for Rookwood!" remarked Tommy Dodd. "I think—"

"You think!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "You can't think! Why, you Modern worm—"

"You Classical ass—"

"If you want a pink eye, Tommy Dodd—"

"Ha, ha! You Classical funks—"

That was enough for Jimmy Silver. He rushed at Tommy Dodd to bestow upon him that weird article—a pink eye. Tommy Dodd was nothing loth. It was a whole day since he had had a scrap with a Classical, so he was more than ready for war.

In a twinkling they were going it hammer and tongs, and the Classical Co. joined in, and a Modern crowd, and then more Classicals and more Moderns, till a battle royal was raging under the old beeches.

Oswald stood looking on in wonder. It was his first experience of Rookwood and the state of warfare that existed between the juniors of the rival sides. But he was not allowed to stand neutral.

Towle of the Modern side collared him, and he was quickly scrapping with the rest.

"Go it, Moderns!"

"Buck up, Classics!"

"Yow! You worm! Take that!"

"Oh, my eye! Yah! Back up!"

"Give 'em socks!"

It was then that Bulkeley of the Sixth came on the scene, with a frowning brow and a heavy ashplant. Bulkeley laid out with that ashplant on all sides, and the fiery combat came to a sudden stop.

The juniors stood not upon the order of their going—they scattered and fled in all directions. A few minutes later the Fistical Four found themselves safe in the refuge of the end study. They had lost the new boy, but they were not thinking of him. They nursed their noses and caressed their eyes.

"Oh," gasped Lovell, "we should have licked that Modern gang if that silly idiot Bulkeley hadn't chipped in!"

"Licked 'em hollow, of course!"

groaned Jimmy Silver. "I've got a nose now! Look at it! And Smythe's fault!"

"Did you ever see such a rotten funk?" growled Raby. "And now the Moderns will have that up against us! They're always after some handle to use against us because we're top side!"

"Awful funk! He ought to be made to fight that new kid," said Lovell. "If his pals have any grit at all, they'll make him do it. Why, he's twice as big as Oswald!"

"Oh, my nose!"

"Oh, my chin!"

"Hallo! What the dickens is that?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as a stone dropped in at the open window, evidently tossed in from the quadrangle.

He picked up the stone. There was a slip of paper attached to it. On the slip was written, in large letters:

"Classic funks!"

The Fistical Four glared at one another furiously, and rushed to the window. Leggett of the Modern side was travelling away round a corner.

"We shall never hear the end of this! I wish that new kid had stayed at—where was it?—in Yorkshire! Of course, everybody knew that Smythe was a funk. But—"

"He's a disgrace to the side!"

"He's got to fight Oswald!" said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "That will shut the beasts up!"

"He won't!"

"We'll make him!"

Jimmy Silver spoke in a tone of finality, and when Jimmy Silver spoke in that tone, there was no more to be said.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Mysterious.

OSWALD took his place in the Fourth Form at Rookwood the following day. He had been assigned to the study of Hooker and Jones minor—much to the relief of the Fistical Four.

Oswald was well up in his Form work, and he won a few words of approval from Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth. Under normal circumstances, a new fellow in the Fourth would not have attracted much attention. But Oswald, as it happened, had got into the limelight at once.

The Fistical Four had taken him up, and were friendly to him, which was a distinction. Then the fact that he had coolly tackled a Shell fellow so much bigger than himself made him remarked. But the chief cause of the limelight that was shed upon him was the conduct of Adolphus Smythe.

Quite a number of fellows in the Fourth advised him to pull Smythe's nose or punch his head, or otherwise proceed in a warlike manner to the complete discomfiture of Adolphus. Adolphus Smythe was not popular outside his own select circle.

But Oswald, though able to take care of himself, as he had proved, was evidently of a peaceable nature, for he steadily declined to have any more trouble with Smythe.

The captain of the Shell, on his side, was only too glad to avoid further trouble. He carefully ignored the new boy, and seemed quite blind when he came across him, and probably severely repented him of having bothered Oswald at all. Never had an essay at bullying ended so unluckily.

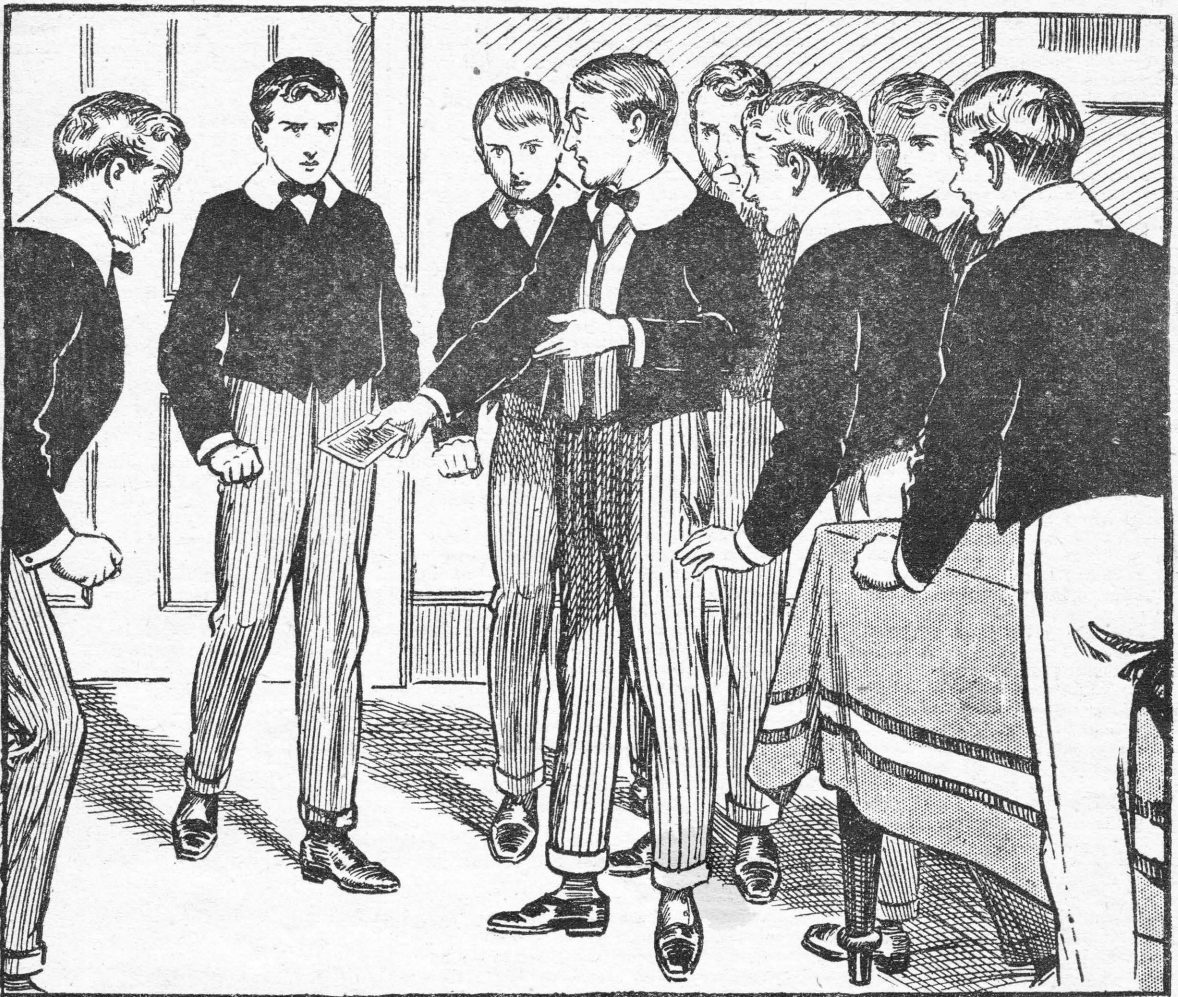
But Smythe was feeling very uncomfortable.

Even the nuts of the Shell, the Noble Society of Giddy Goats, were ashamed of him. There were limits.

But it was in vain that Adolphus's friends urged him to make mincemeat of the cheeky new kid.

Adolphus declined to be drawn.

Meanwhile, the Modern juniors did not let the matter rest. As a rule, they did not trouble their heads about a slacker like Smythe, and a new Classical kid was nothing to them. But it was a "handle" against the Classicals.



"Here's the photograph!" said Smythe. "I just want you to see I was telling the truth the other night!" A dead silence followed. The central figure in the picture was easily recognised as Oswald, his face downcast, his whole attitude suggestive of shame and humiliation. (See page 14.)

The slur of having an outrageous funk in their ranks was felt deeply by the Classic youths, and the Moderns took a fiendish delight in rubbing it in.

The more the Classics were exasperated, the more the Moderns delighted in rubbing it in, and there were probably more "scraps" over the matter than over any other cause of contention that had ever risen between the rivals of Rookwood.

The fiat had gone forth from the end study that Smythe of the Shell should wipe out the disgrace by "standing up" to the new kid in the gym with the gloves on.

The Fistical Four had threatened him with a record ragging if he refused.

Smythe shrugged his shoulders, and kept his own counsel. But when four warlike juniors came along to his study after lessons, somehow or other a perfect met them in the passage, inquired into their business, discovered what it was, and gave them two hundred lines each.

The Fistical Four retired to their study with feelings too deep for words. There was no doubt that Adolphus had "sneaked," and invoked the protection of the higher powers. There was no proof, but there was no doubt.

If Dick Oswald had been in the least aggressive or assertive, Adolphus would not have been able to avoid an encounter. But the new boy appeared to

be more anxious to keep the peace even than Adolphus.

It was noted that he avoided every chance of encountering Smythe, and, indeed, would turn deliberately away if he saw him coming.

This led some of the fellows to opine that he was as big a funk as Adolphus, and as much afraid of Smythe as Smythe was afraid of him.

A couple of days later, when Smythe and Howard and Tracy came into their study to tea, they found a prominent inscription inked across their looking-glass:

"HOME FOR FUNKS!"

Smythe scowled, and Howard and Tracy fumed.

"This study is getting a good name—I don't think!" growled Howard. "Look here, Smythe, you ought to tackle that kid!"

"Oh, rot!" said Adolphus uncomfortably.

"You're bigger than he is," said Tracy.

"Yaas. It wouldn't be fair to pile on him," said Smythe. "That's really what I've been thinkin' of!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Look here, Tracy—"

"You should have thought of that before you piled on him in the first place," said Tracy. "You look here, Smythe. That kid's afraid of you!"

"Do you think so. by gad?"

"I know he is. I've seen him dodging away when you come along. He's afraid that you're to go for him!"

"I never do seem to come across him somehow, since the first day," Adolphus remarked, very thoughtfully.

"He's a funk," said Howard. "You'd have an easy thing. And, dash it all, Smythe, this isn't pleasant for us!"

"If you think I'm a funk—" began Smythe.

"Ahem! Of—of course not! But—"

"This scrapping is rotten low," said Smythe. "I'm not a hooligan. I'm not going to be always punching and scrapping like those Fourth-Form fags. It's low!"

"Ye-e-es; but you ought to give the cheeky young cad a lesson," said Tracy. "And I know he's afraid of you. What does he dodge you for, if he isn't?"

"He does dodge me," said Smythe, with a nod.

"I know he does."

"It's a jolly odd thing," said Smythe, "but I've seen him before somewhere. I've heard his name, too—Oswald, you know. 'Tain't a common name. Can't remember where I've heard it, but I have. And I've seen him, though I really don't know him from Adam!"

"That's jolly queer!" said Howard, with a stare.

"Yaas, ain't it?" said Smythe, lighting a cigarette. "Don't run away with

the idea that I know the cad—I don't. But I've seen him somewhere, I know that—or a photograph of him at least. Anybody know where he comes from?"

"I've heard that he came from a school in Yorkshire."

"Yorkshire!" said Smythe reflectively. "Oh, my hat! I've got a minor at a school in Yorkshire. Was it Minhurst this cad came from?"

"Yes, that's the place."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Smythe, with a sudden burst of merriment that astounded his two study-mates.

"What the thunder—" said Howard.

"What the merry dickens—" ejaculated Tracy.

"By gad!" said Smythe exultantly. "No wonder I remember his face! The cheeky young cad, to come here! The cheek of it!"

"Eh? Why the dickens shouldn't he come here?" demanded Tracy.

Smythe chuckled.

"The cheeky cad! I'll jolly soon put him in his place! As for fightin' him, I decline to do anythin' of the kind! And I'm quite ready to give all the fellows my reasons!"

"They fancy they know your reasons!" growled Howard.

"I've got jolly good reasons!" said Smythe. "There are some fellows that a gentleman couldn't touch!"

"Do you mean to say that you know something against that chap?" asked Howard in perplexity.

"You'll see if you come along to the common-room with me after tea," said Smythe. "The cad always shows up there in the evening. Those cads in the end study make him come there, thinkin' he'll run across me one evenin', and there'll be a row. Well, I'll let 'em see that I'm not afraid to meet the rotten outsider!"

And Smythe declined to explain any further; but he chuckled several times over tea, very much puzzling his study-mates. But they were glad, at all events, that the great Adolphus had decided to meet the new junior face to face. The stain upon the escutcheon of the Giddy Goats was to be wiped out, at least.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Accused!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were looking cross.

They were sitting in a row in the window-seat in the common-room. Evening preparation was over, and most of the Classical juniors were in the common-room.

The new Fourth-Former, Dick Oswald, was playing chess with Hooker, and looking quite cheerful.

Oswald had made many friends during the few days he had been at Rookwood. Jimmy Silver & Co. were very chummy with him, and he was on the best of terms with his study-mates, Hooker and Jones minor.

There was only one fault to be found with him—that he did not seek to draw Adolphus of the Shell into an encounter in the gym. But other encounters he did not seem to shrink from, for he had joined in several rows with the Modern juniors, and kept his end up in a style that was worthy of the Fistical Four themselves—than which there was no higher praise.

The clouds upon the youthful brows of the Fistical Four at this moment were caused by the chipping of the cheery Moderns. Why shouldn't the beasts let the matter drop? Jimmy Silver wanted to know. They had funks on their side, too—Leggett, for instance?

Why couldn't they go easy on Adol-

phus? As a matter of fact, it was simply because it exasperated the Classical Co. that the Moderns were keeping the matter of Adolphus alive.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Lovell suddenly. "Here he is!"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

Smythe of the Shell came into the common-room, with a choice bunch of the nuts—Howard, and Tracy, and Selwyn, and Chesney. Smythe had his monocle in his eye, and his usual lofty expression upon his face.

"Coming up to the scratch, by Jove!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "What's the giddy proverb about contempt piercing the shell of the tortoise? It's got through Smythe's thick hide at last!"

There was quite a buzz in the common-room. The juniors had not failed to observe that Smythe of the Shell had avoided that apartment of late, because evidently Oswald was generally there in the evening. Smythe's arrival now could mean only one thing—that he had screwed up his courage to the sticking-point at last.

There was satisfaction in the faces of all the nuts now. Their great leader was going to wipe out the stain at last. Townsend and Topham and several more of the choice fraternity joined Adolphus at once. Jones minor and Buller closed the door, and put their backs to it. Now that Smythe was there, he wasn't going to get away without a scrap, if they could help it.

Oswald did not look up from the chess-table, but Hooker jumped up at once. What was chess at a moment like that?

"Hallo! Here's somebody to see you, Oswald!" exclaimed Hooker, with a chuckle.

"Let's get on with the game," said Oswald, with his eyes still on the chess-board.

"Blow the game! Here's Smythe!"

"Don't let me interrupt you, pray," said Smythe, in a drawing tone. "You needn't keep your face glued to the board though, Oswald. Look me in the face, if you've got the cheek, by gad!"

"Bravo, Smythe!" chortled Selwyn.

Adolphus was fairly coming out at last, that was clear.

Oswald's cheeks burned, and he rose to his feet.

"Look you in the face!" snorted Jimmy Silver. "Why you've been sneaking about for days, not giving him the chance, you funk!"

Smythe laughed.

"Come on, Oswald, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver, dragging the new boy forward. "Look the silly ass in the chivvy! 'Tain't a very pretty chivvy to look at, but it won't kill you!"

"Look here, I don't want a row," said Oswald.

"My only hat! You're not funkng as well as Smythe, I suppose?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"He'd rather not see me now he knows that I know him," said Adolphus, with a grin. "I've got an explanation to make to you fellows. I've declined to have anythin' to do with this—this person—"

"You've funkng, you mean," said Lovell.

"There are some persons it is impossible to touch," said Adolphus loftily.

"This is one of them. I might have explained this before, but I haven't taken the trouble. But to avoid misunderstandin', I'm willin' to tell you fellows my reasons."

"We know, your reasons," said Hooker. "You're a rotten coward!"

"Yes, rather!"

Smythe sneered.

"That fellow isn't fit to touch!" he said. "I'll fight with any decent chap, but not with him!"

There was a buzz.

"And what have you got against Oswald?" demanded Jimmy Silver angrily and scornfully.

"Ask him," said Smythe. "He knows."

All eyes were turned upon Oswald. For a moment the new junior's face had worn a strangely troubled and harassed expression. But now he stood erect, his eyes gleaming and fastened upon Smythe. Certainly he did not look afraid of the big Shell fellow.

"What the dickens is the fellow driving at?" exclaimed Lovell, perplexed. "Has Smythe got anything up against you, Oswald?"

Oswald shrugged his shoulders.

"If he has anything to say, I suppose I can answer it," he replied—"or, rather, I sha'n't take the trouble to answer it. I'm ready to give him a licking, if that's what he wants!"

"That's what he needs, whether he wants it or not," said Jimmy Silver. "Cut off the gas, Smythe, and come to the hosses!"

Smythe drew away a pace. There was a dangerous gleam in Oswald's eyes that he did not like.

"One has to draw the line somewhere," said Smythe. "That fellow disgraced his own school, and he's come here to disgrace ours. He must have told lies to the Head to get admitted."

"What?"

"Rats!"

"Rubbish!"

"Tell him he's a liar, Oswald!" Jimmy Silver shook the new junior by the shoulder. "Don't think we believe a word of it, kid; we know you're the right sort. He's telling this yarn because he's a funk and a cad. Tell him he's a liar, and then wallop him!"

Oswald drew a deep breath.

"He is a liar if he says I've done anything to disgrace my old school, or that I told any lies to get admitted here," he replied, in a clear voice.

Smythe's lips curled.

"I've got it from my brother," he said, "my minor at Minhurst."

"If your brother says what you've said, he is a liar, too!" said Oswald.

"That's plain English!" grinned Lovell. "Bravo, young 'un! What have you to say to that, Smythe? What yarn are you going to make up next to sneak out of a fight?"

"I'm going to prove what I say," said Smythe. "That fellow was expelled from Minhurst."

"Bow-wow!"

"He was sacked for disgracing his school—acting like a rotten cad, breaking bounds at night, and going to public-houses," said Smythe.

"Pile it on!" jeered Lovell.

"Didn't he commit any burglaries or murders?" asked Raby sarcastically.

"He won't dare to deny it," said Smythe. "I know the whole story, though I'd almost forgotten it, only he's brought it back to my mind by coming here. My brother at Minhurst dabbles in photography, and he took a snap of this fellow when he was sacked. He sent a copy of it to me. I had it knocking about for a long time, but it went—"

"You haven't got it now, of course?" jeered several voices.

"No. I never took any care of the thing," said Smythe. "Why should I? I'm not gone on photographs. Of course it never occurred to me that the fellow would have the cheek to come here!"

"Roll 'em out!" said Jimmy Silver. "Pile 'em on! You beat Ananias at his own game!"

"I remember the photograph distinctly!" said Smythe angrily. "Young Algy snapped him when he was clearing out. He was sneaking away like a whipped cur, with the fellows staring at

him—blubbing, too. You could see in the photograph that he was blubbing."

"Pile it on!"

"Young Algy told me all about it in his letter. The fellow's name was Oswald, and he was caught comin' in after midnight, and it came out that he was in the habit of hauntin' pubs, and had been seen squiffy—"

"Hear, hear!"

"What a giddy imagination!" said Jimmy Silver admiringly. "You ought to live by the seaside and write short stories, Smythey!"

"And he was sacked," said Smythe. "If I'd had the least idea the cad would have the nerve to shove himself in here I'd have taken care of that photograph to show him up. Of course I never thought of such a thing!"

"Pity you didn't!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We might have believed a word or two of the yarn if you had."

"Hold on!" said Howard. "I've seen that photograph knocking about the study in a drawer some weeks ago. I didn't notice it specially, but it was just such a picture as Smythe describes."

"I think I've seen it, too!" said Tracy.

"Is that all?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"That's all," said Smythe. "I've stated the exact facts—"

"The facts! Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I utterly decline to have anything to do with a fellow who was expelled from his school for blackguardly conduct," said Adolphus. "I wouldn't touch him with a barge-pole. Come away, you fellows!"

But Smythe of the Shell was not to get away just yet. Oswald stepped forward, and struck him across the face with his open palm.

"There's my answer," he said. "I shan't make any other, and the fellows can think what they like."

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Adolphus Faces the Music.

"BY gad!" stuttered Smythe. The smack across his face had sounded with a crack like a pistol-shot.

The Shell fellow staggered back, panting.

Oswald faced him, his hands clenched, his eyes glittering. There was nothing peaceful-looking about him now.

"You cad!" he said, between his teeth. "I never wanted a row with you. You started a quarrel with me the day I came, and it isn't my fault if you funk'd seeing it through. Now, if you're not a cowardly hound, you'll put up your hands."

"Go it, Oswald!"

"Play up, Smythey!"

Smythe stood trembling with rage. He cast a longing glance towards the door, but the juniors were crowded in the way. Apparently it had not occurred to the lofty Adolphus that his story might not be believed.

If the Rookwood fellows had credited his statement that Oswald was an arrant blackguard, who had been kicked out of his former school for disgracing it, it would have made all the difference. They would naturally have resented his coming to Rookwood, and they would undoubtedly have made things warm for him. But, as it happened, nobody believed a word of the story.

Smythe of the Shell was known to be not over-particular in truth-telling, and the story came too aptly as an excuse for avoiding a fistic encounter with the new junior. That, indeed, was Smythe's reason for telling the story, and it had not occurred to him that that fact would throw doubt upon it. But the juniors

did not even give Smythe credit for believing it himself.

Smythe stared round at the mocking, incredulous faces, and realised that he had made a blunder. He was not believed, and he was regarded as a slanderer as well as a coward. That was all he had gained.

The juniors were pressing round in a ring, and there was no escape for the dandy of the Shell. Even his own chosen disciples, the Giddy Goats, looked incredulous. Smythe made a movement to back out of the ring. Jimmy Silver promptly shoved him back, and none too gently.

"I tell you I won't fight that cad!" exclaimed Smythe furiously. "He's a dirty blackguard, and was sacked—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Try a new yarn, Smythey!"

"Rotten funk!"

"Dash it all, you can't let him smack your face!" whispered Howard. "You've got to stand up to him."

Smythe rubbed his cheek, where the smack had fallen. It was burning. Oswald had declared that that was his answer, and that he would make no other. But the Rookwood fellows did not need any other. If Adolphus Smythe took that "lying down," the contempt that would be poured upon him would be so overwhelming that he would never be able to hold his head up again at Rookwood. Nobody would be likely to listen to any accusation from him after that. Smythe realised that he was in for it—that unless he showed some courage, his own chosen followers would fall away from him. Even slackers like Townsend and Topham were already looking at him with contempt.

"I—I'm not afraid of that cad," said Smythe. "I've stated my reasons—he ain't fit to touch!"

"Funk!"

"Rotter!"

"Rag the cad!"

"But if you fellows don't believe me—"

"Of course we don't!"

"Then I'll fight him," said Smythe, realising that there was no help for it. "My reasons—"

"Oh, blow your reasons! Let's have a bit of pluck, and not so many reasons," said Lovell.

Smythe peeled off his jacket. It came off very slowly, perhaps on account of its excellent fit. The face of the great Adolphus was sickly. Oswald tossed his jacket to Jimmy Silver. Hooker locked the door. No prefects were wanted to come in bothering just then.

"I'm your second, Smythey, old chap," murmured Howard. "Now, mind you put up a good fight. You're bigger than he is, and if he's the kind of fellow you say, he can't have much pluck."

"If!" growled Smythe. "Don't you believe me, then?"

"Ye-es," said Howard, "I—I suppose so. Well, go in and win. If he's a puppy beast, as you say, he can't have much stamina, and you'll lick him. If you don't put up a good fight, anyway, you're done for at Rookwood. The fags of the Second will rag you in the quad if you show the white feather after this."

Smythe sullenly rolled up his sleeves.

He had made up his mind to it, and though he shrank from damage to his classic features, and disarrangement of his beautifully-parted hair, he resolved to do his best. Howard had spoken so plainly that it was clear that even the Giddy Goats would have nothing more to do with him if he disgraced their select society by funking now.

"Not too much row," said Jimmy Silver. "We don't want Bulkeley or Neville, or old Bootles dropping in. I'm your second, Oswald."

"Thank you!" said Oswald.

"You've got to knock his lies back down his throat," said Jimmy Silver, looking at the new boy's troubled face. "Cheer up, kid—nobody here believes a single word the cad has said. We all know it's only a yarn. Don't be down in the mouth—we all stand by you."

The new boy nodded.

"Even Smythe's own set don't believe him," said Lovell. "It's a rotten trick to tell a yarn like that, rotten even for a cad like Smythe. But you needn't be afraid anybody will believe it, Oswald. We know you by this time."

"I can say that I've never done anything to be ashamed of," said Oswald, in a low, earnest voice.

"You needn't tell us that; we know it," said Jimmy Silver. "Now, roll up your sleeves, and mind you hit hard."

"I'm going to," said Oswald grimly.

Lovell took out his watch.

"Ready, gentlemen? Keep the ring there! Now then, seconds out of the ring!" Lovell was quite business-like.

"Time!"

Oswald stepped briskly forward, and Smythe came on more slowly. The juniors looked on eagerly as they began.

Nobody would have been surprised if Smythe had allowed himself to be knocked down, and had then declined to come up to the scratch again. But Adolphus realised his position too clearly for that. To fall from his high estate, to be an object of scorn, pointed at with derision by the smallest fags—that was too bitter. Smythe of the Shell screwed up all the courage he had, and fought hard.

He had many advantages—he was a head taller than the new junior, he was longer in the reach, he was a good year older. He knew something of boxing, too—in the gym. But facing a pair of hard rapping fists, somehow, knocked his knowledge out of his head.

The juniors were surprised, and Adolphus' friends were pleased by the fight the dandy of the Shell put up in the first round.

Both the combatants received punishment, and both looked somewhat the worse for wear when Lovell called "Time!" and they separated.

Howard pulled his principal into a chair and fanned him. Smythe was looking very warm, and breathing hard. His wind was failing him, and Smythe bitterly regretted the cigarettes he had smoked since tea. Oswald was in perfect condition—which in itself seemed a good answer to the accusation Adolphus had brought against him.

"Time!"

Hammer and tongs in the second round. There were subdued cheers from the juniors, watching eagerly. They were very anxious not to be interrupted by a prefect or a master. The common-room was not really the place for affairs of this kind, and old Bulkeley would have been angry at seeing a fight without gloves. The special circumstances of the case would not have appealed to Bulkeley, probably.

Third round, and fourth: The Giddy Goats murmured approval of their chief, as the noble Adolphus stood up through round after round. Smythe of the Shell was surprising all the fellows, friends and foes, by putting up a good fight. Now that his courage was up to the sticking-point, it seemed to stick.

But the Shell fellow was steadily getting the worst of it. He was getting very flurried, too.

In the fifth round, he was knocked right and left, and his wild drives came nowhere near the Fourth-Former.

He sank into the chair, gasping, at the end of the round, and Howard whispered encouragement.

"Stick to him, old chap—you'll beat him yet!"

Adolphus groaned.
"You're putting up a splendid fight," said Tracy. "Let those rotters see that you're jolly well not a funk, Smythey."
"Time!"

Smythe stepped up reluctantly for the sixth round. Oswald came up coolly and cheerfully. His face showed signs of hard knocks, but he was quiet and determined, and evidently far from beaten.

"Our man wins!" Jimmy Silver murmured to his chums. "This will be a giddy lesson for the Giddy Goat. But he's got more grit than I thought, by Jove!"

"Time!"
Seventh round—and the last! The unfortunate Adolphus was knocked right and left. He finished the round on his back, laid there by a powerful drive on the chin which rattled every tooth in his head. Lovell counted, and Adolphus did not rise. He gasped and panted, and groaned.

"Eight—nine—out!"
Howard and Tracy picked their man up. Smythe collapsed into a chair. Oswald put on his jacket with Jimmy Silver's assistance. The Fistical Four patted him on the back.

"Jolly good scrap," said Jimmy Silver, with the air of a connoisseur. Indeed, Jimmy Silver was something of an authority on "scrap." "And you've licked him, and it will do him good. Now get to the dorm, and bathe your nose."

Oswald regarded Smythe hesitatingly. Smythe was blinking at him savagely through half-closed eyes. Jimmy Silver read the thought in the new junior's mind, and smiled, and nodded.

"Go it!" he said.
Oswald stepped up to the dandy of the Shell, and held out his hand.

Smythe stared at him.
"We've had a scrap, Smythe," said Oswald. "It's all over, and I'm willing to shake hands over it if you are."

Smythe gave him a look of hatred.
"By gad! I don't shake hands with pub-haunting bounders who are kicked out of their school!" he replied.

"Why, you cad!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver hotly. "Are you still sticking to that yarn?"

"Yaas. It's true."
Oswald flushed crimson. Jimmy Silver clenched his hands hard.

"You can't stand any more licking now, Smythe. But if you say that over again to-morrow, you'll have the gloves on with me. I never heard of such a cad! Come on, Oswald—don't mind the brute!"

The Fistical Four marched Oswald away to the dormitory. Smythe limped away with Howard and Tracy, his eyes glittering through the bruises round them. Smythe had been licked to the wide, but in his spiteful breast there was a savage determination to make his vanquisher sorry for it. And Adolphus thought that he knew the way.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. Smythe's Triumph.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were prepared for some more of Smythe's "rot," as they called it, but during the next few days Smythe held his peace. Perhaps he understood clearly

what he had to expect if he renewed his accusations without proof. He did not utter a single word on the subject of Oswald outside his own study. But Smythe had not forgotten.

Only Smythe's own chums knew that he was biding his time.

The other fellows concluded that he had decided to "drop it," and the matter was almost dismissed from their minds.

More than once the juniors assured Dick Oswald that they didn't believe a word that Smythe had uttered; but their assurances were received in troubled silence for the most part.

In the days that followed the fight in the Common-room Dick Oswald seemed to have lost the happy cheerfulness which had been his marked characteristic.

It was nearly a week after the "scrap" when the blow fell. Adolphus was looking his former nutty and elegant self as he lounged into the Common-room one evening with his friends the nuts.

Oswald was there, sitting with a book. Jimmy Silver & Co. were talking football.

There was something in the manner of Adolphus & Co. as they lounged in that attracted general attention at once.

"Gentlemen," said Adolphus, unmoved, "the other night I made a few remarks upon the subject of our young friend Oswald."

Oswald started up.
"You did!" said Jimmy Silver, "and Oswald knocked your lies down your throat. And if you repeat 'em now, I'll do some knocking!"

"The day after that little argument," said Smythe calmly, "I wrote to my brother at Minhurst."

"Has he settled the quid he owes you?" inquired Raby, amid a general chuckle.

"Never mind that," said Smythe. "I asked him if he still had the negative of the photograph he sent me some time back, and if he had, to get a new print from it, and send it to me, with all the particulars in writing."

"My brother's sent me the print," said Adolphus. "He always keeps his negatives. He's sent me a letter, too. I'll read it out. I want you to see that I was tellin' the exact facts the other night—I've got my reputation to think of. You fellows called it a lie."

"So it was a lie!" said Jimmy Silver hotly, but his heart sank as he glanced at Oswald. What was Oswald looking like that for?

"Very well. We'll see who's the liar," said Smythe, gritting his teeth. "Listen to this, from my brother at Minhurst."

"The chap you mention, Dick Oswald, was in the Fourth here. He was caught out of bounds at midnight, and proved to be a regular bouncer and pub-haunter, and a gambler, and all that. There was an awful row. He was sacked in disgrace. I snapped him as he was going, to keep as a souvenir. I'm not a particular chap, but I draw the line somewhere. This Oswald was a real bouncer. If it's true that he's come to Rookwood, he must have a nerve. Your headmaster can't know the facts."

A dead silence followed.

Smythe broke it.

"Here's the photograph!" he said.

In silence the Rookwood fellows looked at the photograph. It represented a school Close, with grey old buildings at the back. The central figure was a boy, easily recognised as Oswald. In the picture his head was drooping, his face downcast, his whole attitude suggestive of shame and humiliation. Other fellows in the photograph were standing round looking at him, many with scorn and derision, some with pity. There were traces of tears on the face of the wretched boy who was the centre of the picture.

It was Oswald!

There was a frozen silence. Jimmy Silver & Co. waited for Oswald to speak. Their minds were almost in a whirl. The letter from Smythe's brother could hardly be untrue, and the photograph spoke for itself. It seemed only too clear now that Smythe's story, amazing as it was, had been true all along, and that it was the new junior who had deceived his school-fellows.

The look on Oswald's face was proof enough.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, at last, "Oswald? You've got something to say, I suppose?"

Smythe laughed jarringly.
"Shut up, you cad!" said Jimmy fiercely. "Let Oswald speak!"

Oswald's pale lips opened.
"I—I haven't much to say—nothing that you'd believe, anyway. I never did anything at Minhurst to be ashamed of, just as I told you."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Hooker.
"Were you sacked, or weren't you?"
Oswald did not speak.

"If you say that Smythe's manufactured that letter and faked the photograph—" began Jimmy Silver hesitatingly.

"If he says that," said Smythe venomously, "I'll write to the headmaster of Minhurst, and you'll get the truth from him!"

"Speak up, Oswald, old scout!" said Lovell uncomfortably.
Oswald did not reply.

His pale face flushed under the gaze that was bent upon it from all sides, and he moved away with a stumbling step towards the door. Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath.

Smythe of the Shell smiled. He had his revenge now for his defeat and his humiliation—a revenge as complete as he could have wished. It was the moment of Adolphus Smythe's triumph.

"Oswald!" muttered Jimmy Silver.
Oswald turned at the door, and looked at him for a moment—a hopeless look that went to Jimmy Silver's heart. But he did not speak. The next moment he was gone from the crowded room.

"I think that's settled," said Smythe, still smiling. "I think you fellows ought to be obliged to me for showing up that cad in his true colours, by gad!"

Jimmy Silver turned away in silence.
Oswald's footsteps had died away—the footsteps of the boy who was, from that moment, an outcast in his school!

THE END.

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