

# DEAD-SHOT DICKINSON!

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

.. By ..

## OWEN CONQUEST.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Jimmy Silver's Services Are in Request.

**S**NOOKS of the Second put his shock head into the end study, and bawled:

"Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy Silver frowned majestically. It was a decided infraction of the dignity of the captain of the Fourth to have his name bawled at him in that unceremonious manner by a scrubby little fag of the Second Form.

But Snooks seemed quite unabashed.

"Is that ass Silver here?" he continued.

"Oh, here you are!"

"Cut off, you cheeky little ruffian!" exclaimed Lovell, turning a ruddy face from the fire, where he was making coffee.

Snooks gave a sniff. It was true that the toffee was scorching a little, and some of it had run over into the fire, but there was no occasion whatever for Snooks' emphatic sniff.

"Oh, I'll cut off fast enough!" said Snooks. "What is it you are cremating, Lovell?"

Lovell did not reply. He let go the frying-pan, and picked up a ruler. Snooks executed a strategic retreat into the passage.

"Dickinson of the Sixth wants Jimmy Silver!" he called back. "You'd better buck up, Jimmy Silver. Dickinson is looking waxy. Mind, I'm not calling you again. I've got no time to waste over Fourth Form fags!"

And the cheeky Snooks sprinted down the passage just in time to escape slaughter.

"What the dickens does Dickinson want?" growled Jimmy Silver. "Just when I'm doing the leading article for the 'Journal,' too! Just like these prefects! Blessed if I go!"

"Licked if you don't!" remarked Raby.

Jimmy Silver growled again.

"You go, Newcome," he suggested. "I dare say Dickinson wants the chap who put the ink in his slippers. You can say it wasn't you. I can't say it wasn't me!"

"He might think it was me!" grinned Newcome. "Dickinson is rather nasty sometimes."

Jimmy grunted.

Upon the whole, he decided to go. A prefect of the Sixth did not like being kept waiting by a junior; and if it was that unfortunate matter of the ink in the slippers, there was no use in putting it off. So Jimmy Silver made his way to

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Dickinson minor stuck the candle on his washstand, and returned to bed—but not to sleep. Resting on his elbow, he started reading his lurid literature by the dim and flickering light of the candle. (See page 12.)

the Sixth Form passage, and tapped meekly at Dickinson's door.

"Come in!" growled a voice within.

That voice did not sound encouraging.

Jimmy Silver entered, and warily kept near the door.

Dickinson was seated at his table, with a letter in his hand and a frown on his face. Dickinson of the Sixth was a prefect, a tower of strength in the First Eleven, and a great chum of Bulkeley, the captain of the school. He was generally popular with the juniors; but he did not look agreeable now, and Jimmy Silver was on his guard.

"I—I say, I've come, Dickinson," said Jimmy meekly. "I—I say, if you'll let me explain—"

"Eh?" said Dickinson, staring at him.

"I mean, I know what you want me for."

"You do!" exclaimed the senior, in surprise.

"Ye-es; and it was all a mistake."

"Eh?"

"You see, it was dark, and I came into this study in mistake for Merton's," Jimmy Silver explained. "I really meant the ink for Merton's slippers!"

Dickinson's face became terrific in its expression. He reached out his hand for a cane.

"So it was you who put the ink in my slippers, you young rascal!"

"Oh, scissors! I—I thought you knew!" stammered Jimmy. "Wha-at do you want me for, then?"

Dickinson of the Sixth rose to his feet, and swished the cane. Then, to

Jimmy's astonishment, instead of commanding him to hold out his hand, the prefect sat down again abruptly, and laid down the cane.

"Never mind!" he said.

"Thanks awfully!" said Jimmy gratefully. "You see, it was all a mistake. I meant it for Merton, and I only knew too late—"

"Let me catch you putting ink in Merton's slippers!" growled the prefect. "Shut up! I didn't send for you to hear you talk. I've got something to say to you. Lemme see, you're head of the Fourth, ain't you?"

"I'm captain of the Fourth," said Jimmy Silver, with dignity.

"Oh, you have a captain in the Fourth, do you?"

"We do," said Jimmy, in his most chilling tone.

Really, it was absurd for Dickinson to be unaware that the Fourth Form at Rookwood elected a Form captain with the most impressive rites and ceremonies.

"Well, all the better, perhaps," said Dickinson, after some thought. "I suppose you have a lot of influence among those young rascals—what?"

"Lots."

"Well, my minor's coming to Rookwood."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"He's coming on the Classical side, and he will be in the Fourth Form."

"Will he?" said Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver was not in the slightest degree interested in Dickinson minor.

He wondered why on earth the senior was telling him about it. To the captain of the Fourth a new kid more or less was a trifle light as air.

"That's why I've sent for you," said Dickinson. "Now, I've been rather decent to you, Silver. I haven't licked you half as often as you've deserved. You know that."

Jimmy Silver coughed in a noncommittal way. He was not disposed to admit it, but arguing with a prefect was a perilous business, so he coughed.

"My minor, Sidney, is rather a young ass in some respects," went on Dickinson.

"Is he?"

Jimmy Silver's tone did not indicate surprise.

"He's not much like me."

"No? I thought you said—"

"I did not send for you to be funny, Silver!"

"Ahem!"

"The young ass has been a bother at home, and most likely he'll be a bother here," continued Dickinson. "Of course, I shall look after him a bit—lick him every now and then, and all that. But I sha'n't have much time to waste on him. I should like you to look after him a bit."

"Oh!" said Jimmy Silver.

It was very flattering; but Jimmy Silver had already gathered that Dickinson minor was some sort of a queer animal, and, though flattered, he was not exactly pleased.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked.

"Nothing. Only a bit queer."

"Dotty?" asked Jimmy.

"No!" roared Dickinson ferociously.

"Oh, all right! But a chap wants to know what he's taking on," said Jimmy.

The senior was silent for some moments.

"I'd better tell you out," he said. "The fact is, the kid has been allowed to run a bit wild at home. He's got a taste for rotten books—that fat-headed rubbish that is exported from America in lurid covers—things about Dead-shot Bill and Deadwood Dave and Blood-bedabbed Jack, and the rest of it. The silly little idiot has devoured that rot till his silly head's full of it, and he thinks and dreams about coal-black chargers, and masked highwaymen, and so on. He talks in a queer, high-faluting way, and his present ambition is to become a pirate!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver whistled. He had met and known all sorts and conditions of fellows, but he had never happened upon exactly that kind of fellow before.

He did not wonder that Dickinson of the Sixth was worried about the forthcoming advent of his minor at Rookwood.

If Dickinson minor was as his major described him, it was certain that he would be most mercilessly chipped in the Fourth Form.

"The pater thinks Rookwood will do him good, and help to make him a bit more sensible," the prefect continued. "I've no doubt it will in the long run. But I don't want the kid ragged to death to begin with, and I can't always be jawing him myself. I was thinking that, considering the number of times I've let you off lickings you've fairly asked for, you might take the kid in hand for a bit at first, and—talk sensibly to him, you know—put him into the junior football, and so on, and help him generally. And don't let him become the butt of the Form if you can help it."

Jimmy Silver nodded. It was a peculiarity of Jimmy Silver that he was always ready to help a lame dog over

a stile. Any fellow who was down was sure of a helping hand from Jimmy; and it was evident that Dickinson minor, when he made his appearance in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, would be badly in want of a helping hand.

Apart from the question of the many lickings which, according to the prefect, Jimmy Silver had asked for and never received, he was quite willing to oblige.

Dickinson was watching him rather anxiously.

He felt himself in a difficulty, in which a good-natured and level-headed junior in the Fourth could help him more than anybody else. And he had judged Jimmy Silver's character correctly.

"I'm your man!" said Jimmy cheerily. "Leave him to me! I'll talk to him like a Dutch uncle! Only one condition."

"Well?"

"Don't plant him on us in the end study. We've four already. Anything short of that."

Dickinson grinned.

"I'll see that he's not planted in your study," he said.

"Then it's a go."

"He gets here to-morrow at three. You might like to meet him at the station?" the prefect suggested.

Jimmy Silver made a slightly wry face. His afternoon's holiday was already arranged for. But he nodded.

"Right you are, Dickinson!"

"Then that's all," said the Sixth-Former. "You can cut off."

Jimmy Silver cut off.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Just Like Jimmy!

"ROT!"

"Bosh!"

"Tosh!"

Thus the Co.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were not enthusiastic when Jimmy Silver, on his return to the end study, announced what it was that Dickinson of the Sixth wanted.

"It's simply piffle!" growled Lovell.

"Blow Dickinson, and blow his precious minor! You're an ass, Jimmy!"

"And a fathead!" remarked Newcome.

"And a burbling duffer!" added Raby.

"He's always doing it!" went on Lovell, in an aggrieved voice. "Find any chap that's queer, or off his rocker, or down on his luck, and you find Jimmy Silver backing him up! He's always doing it! I'm fed-up with it!"

"Well, Dickinson asked me," said Jimmy defensively.

"Couldn't you say no?"

"Well, I never thought of saying no," admitted Jimmy. "Besides, I didn't want to say no. Why shouldn't I help a lame dog over a stile?"

"Tain't a lame dog—it's a silly idiot, by your description! This study will get called a home for idiots!"

"Well, that's what it was before I came!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully.

"Why, you fathead—"

"Dickinson is a good sort, and it ain't bad policy to be on the right side of a prefect, either," said Jimmy Silver. "Dash it all, let's look after his young idiot of a minor a bit!"

"Blow this young idiot of a minor!" growled Lovell. "What about the footer to-morrow afternoon? Have you forgotten that?"

"Well, that's rather hard cheese, I admit," said Jimmy. "I won't ask you fellows to cut it to come with me—"

"Better not!" grunted Raby.

"You can captain the Classical team, Lovell. After all you can beat the Moderns without me for once."

Lovell looked a little mollified.

"Well, that's all right," he said. "But we want you in the front line. Tommy Dodd & Co. are in great form. But I know it's no good talking to you Br-r-r-r!"

So the discussion ceased, and the Fistical Four had tea.

As a matter of fact, Jimmy Silver was not looking forward with any great joy to the arrival of Dickinson's peculiar minor. But he had said that he would look after the young duffer, and he was going to do it.

But on the following afternoon it came as a wrench to the captain of the Fourth to turn his back on the football-field for the sake of Dickinson minor.

There was a junior match between Classics and Moderns, and Jimmy Silver ought to have been in command of the Classical team.

He went down to the ground with his comrades, and watched the teams line up for the game.

Lovell won the toss, and kicked off, and Jimmy Silver looked at his watch, and then looked on anxiously.

Tommy Dodd & Co.—the Moderns—were attacking hotly.

There was no doubt that the Modern juniors were in great form, and that the Classics needed their strongest side to oppose them.

Jimmy Silver silently blessed Dickinson minor.

The Moderns attacked hotly, and within ten minutes Tommy Dodd had put the ball in the net, in spite of Raby's efforts to save.

"Looks like a Modern win, dear boys," drawled Smythe of the Shell, who had sauntered down with Howard and Tracy to look on with a patronising eye. "That's what these Fourth-Form kids call footah! By gad!"

"Classical footer ain't much since we stood out of it," remarked Howard, with a shake of the head.

Jimmy Silver manfully resisted the desire to knock Howard and Smythe's heads together, and walked away to the gates. He was badly wanted in the Classical team, but it couldn't be helped.

He reached Coombe well before three, and entered the railway-station to wait on the platform for Dickinson minor.

The train was signalled, and a few minutes later it came in. It was a slow local train from Lantham. It crawled in, and stopped, and several passengers alighted. Jimmy scanned them, but it was evident that the new boy for Rookwood was not among them. He glanced into the carriages, thinking that perhaps the new kid had not observed the name of the station.

In a corner of a first-class carriage a lad of about his own age was seated.

He was dressed in Etons, with a silk hat pushed on his head, and he was reading.

Devouring was rather the word.

His eyes were glued upon the book in his hand—a book with a cover in lurid colours, upon which was depicted a long-haired trapper with a revolver in each hand, killing Red Indians at a great rate. Evidently the youth had forgotten time and space in his keen interest in the gory adventures of "Trapper Bill, the Dead-shot Desperado of the Rocky Mountains!"

"Hallo!" Jimmy Silver shouted into the carriage.

The youth did not heed.

Jimmy jerked at the book. Then the youth started, and blinked at him.

"Are you the new kid for Rookwood?" demanded Jimmy.

"Eh—what? Yes."

"Then here's your station."

"Oh, all right!"

The new boy scrambled out of the car-

riage only just in time. The train was already on the move. The guard shoved him aside wrathfully and slammed the carriage door.

"Hold on!" yelled Dickinson minor excitedly. "I've left my books in the carriage! Guard! Guard!"

"Come back, you ass!" yelled Jimmy Silver, grabbing the new boy by the shoulder as he jumped towards the carriage. "Do you want to be killed?"

"My books—"

"Keep off, ass!" Jimmy Silver held the new junior back by main force. The train glided on along the metals, and disappeared down the line. Dickinson minor gave a sort of howl, like an animal robbed of its young, and glared at Jimmy Silver.

"You fathead!" he exclaimed wrathfully.

"Ass!"

"You dummy—"

"Do you want a thick ear, you new bouncer?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver wrathfully. "If I hadn't yanked you out, you'd have gone on to the next station!"

"Now I've lost my books!" howled Dickinson minor.

"Plenty more at Rookwood," said Jimmy. "Serve you right, too! Besides, you can get the books back. Nobody wants to steal a set of school books, I suppose?"

"School books?" Dickinson minor morted. "Who's talking about school books? They weren't school books!"

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "More stuff like that you've got in your paw—what?"

"Yes," said the new junior mournfully. "A rippin' set! There was Dead-shot Dave, the Dashing Desperado of Dead Man's Gulch!" and Sweeney Todd, the Bloodcurdling Barber!" and 'Pink Pirate—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And 'Bloodstained Bill; or Barrels of Blood!" said Dickinson minor. "That was a real topper!"

"It must have been," agreed Jimmy Silver. "You're jolly lucky to have lost them. I should say! You'd get into a row if you were seen reading them at Rookwood."

"Well, I've got some more in my box," said Dickinson minor, taking comfort. "I'll lend you some, if you like."

"I'll lend you a thick ear if you do," growled Jimmy Silver. "Look here! I've come here to meet you, and take you to the school. Come and look after your box."

"Oh, all right!"

Dickinson minor shoved his lurid volume into his pocket, and followed Jimmy Silver. The trunk was taken out by the old porter, and instructions given for sending it on to the school, and then Jimmy Silver walked off his new acquaintance towards Rookwood.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER. A Very Peculiar New Boy.

DICKINSON minor had not impressed the captain of the Fourth very favourably.

He was a weedy youth, with a pallid complexion, and his appearance showed that he was not much given to healthy outdoor exercise.

However, Jimmy Silver intended to make the best of him, so he talked to him as cheerily as possible on the way to Rookwood.

He tried the new junior on every subject interesting to himself, but found him wanting in all of them.

Dickinson minor did not play football, and did not want to. He had hardly ever played cricket, and didn't care for it. He

did not swim, he did not row, he did not box. Indeed, Jimmy couldn't see what excuse he had for being alive at all.

Talk on those subjects quickly palled upon Dickinson minor. His book came out of his pocket, and he began to read it as he walked along the lane.

Jimmy Silver whistled.

Deep in the engrossing adventures of Trapper Bill, Dickinson minor forgot his companion. He slowed down, his eyes glued on the book. Once Jimmy had to jerk him out of the way of a market-cart.

"What's that piffle you're reading?" asked Jimmy, at last.

"Eh?"

"What's that rot about?"

"It isn't rot," said Dickinson minor, his eyes gleaming. "It's gorgeous! Just listen to this bit—I'll read it out"

Jimmy Silver listened.

"Trapper Bill stood with his back to the wall, a revolver gleaming in each hand. Dead Redskins lay in heaps before him. The revolvers sputtered forth fire and death, amid shrieks of horror, and rage, and agony, and fury. Blood was drenching the floor of the ranch. The wounded Redskins rolled and writhed at the bloodstained feet of the intrepid trapper. Blood gushed forth from gaping wounds. Huge and ghastly splashes of blood—"

"Chuck it!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Isn't that ripping?"

"Groogh!"

"What's the matter with you?"

"It makes me feel sick."

"Well, you are a duffer!" said Dickinson minor disdainfully. "That's splendid! When I grow up, I'm going to be a trapper in the Rocky Mountains."

"The dickens you are!" said Jimmy.

"Or else a pirate."

"I thought pirates were out of date." "A bold, daring spirit might revive the glories of the black flag. Perhaps some day Dead-shot Dickinson will sweep the seas—"

"Dead-shot Dickinson!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather! You see how I'll make 'em walk the plank, when I'm known as the Terror of the Pacific!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"I don't see why I should stay at school, either. Black Flag Billy became a pirate when he was fourteen," said Dickinson minor. "I'm nearly fifteen."

"Quite old enough to be a pirate," grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Why should not I lead them on—fire flashing in my red right hand?" demanded Dickinson.

"Ha, ha, ha! Lead who on?"

"My trusty band, of course!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver was near the verge of hysterics. To think of this weedy, pallid duffer with a red right hand, and a trusty band, was excruciating. Dickinson minor blinked at him, and scowled, and returned to his book.

Jimmy Silver whistled. Dickinson major's description of his minor had fallen short of the reality. That any fellow could be such an arrant ass seemed almost incredible. Jimmy really wondered whether the boy was a little wrong in his head.

"Look here! Buck up a bit!" said Jimmy restively. "I want to see the finish of the footer-match. No good crawling like this!"

"You buzz off, then!" said Dickinson.

"You'd better come with me. You can read that rot afterwards."

"Rats!"

"Jolly good mind to run you along by your neck!" growled Jimmy.

"Unhand me!"

"Eh?"

"Unhand me!" repeated Dickinson.

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver unhanded him. Dickinson minor's language savoured of the thrilling yarns in which he delighted.

"My only Uncle Peter!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "If you talk like that at Rookwood, Dickinson, you'll be chipped to death."

"Bah!"

"Well, keep straight on, and you can't miss the school gates," said Jimmy.

"There's Rookwood straight ahead of you!"

"All right! Don't jaw!"

Jimmy Silver had meant to be patient. But crawling along the lane while Dickinson perused "Trapper Bill," at a snail's pace, required more patience than Jimmy possessed. He cut off, leaving the new junior to come on at his own sweet will. He reached the school, and hurried down to Little Side in time to see the finish of the junior match.

The Classics came off the field at last with glum faces, beaten by two goals to one. Tommy Dodd & Co. were chirping gleefully. The Modern leader clapped Jimmy Silver genially on the shoulder.

"Licked again!" he remarked. "Pity you weren't in the game, Silver. We'd have had a different result."

"You would!" growled Jimmy.

"I mean, we'd have had three to nil, instead of two to one," said Tommy Dodd sweetly.

"Fathead!"

Jimmy Silver joined his chums.

"Well, we've lost," grunted Lovell. "Have you brought in your prize idiot safe and sound? It doesn't matter about the footer, of course."

"Can't be helped," said Jimmy Silver.

"Keep smiling!"

"Oh, rats!"

And the Fistical Four went in to tea.

### THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Brought In.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were finishing tea in the end study, when Dickinson of the Sixth looked in. Jimmy gave a rather guilty start.

He had forgotten all about Dickinson minor.

"Hallo, Dickinson!" he said affably. "Come in! Try these jam-tarts—"

The prefect grunted.

"Where's my minor?" he asked.

"I—I met him at the station, and brought him along," said Jimmy.

"Well, where is he, then? He hasn't reported himself to Mr. Bootles."

"Ahem! I came on a bit ahead," said Jimmy. "But he was in sight of the gates when I left him. He can't have missed the place."

"Well, he hasn't come in," grunted the Sixth-Former. "I suppose it serves me right for trusting a fag to do anything."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Jimmy, jumping up. "I'm sorry. I'll go and look for him now, Dickinson."

"You needn't trouble!" growled Dickinson.

He strode away, evidently offended. Jimmy Silver picked up his cap.

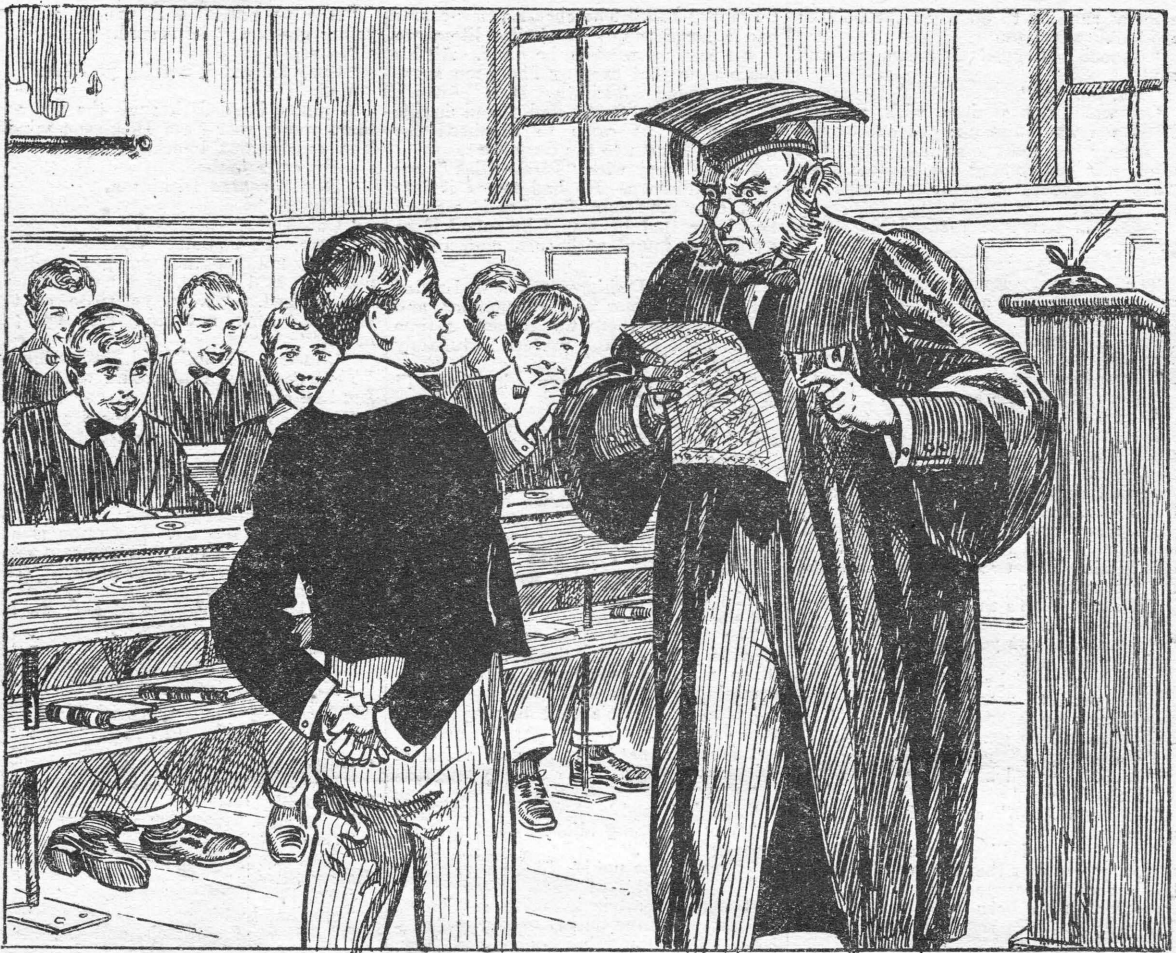
"You haven't finished your tea," said Lovell.

"I'm going to look for that silly idiot," said Jimmy. "He was reading a blood-curdling book, and I'll bet a doughnut that he's passed the gates without noticing. He may be at Rookdale by this time."

"Oh, my hat!"

"We'll come!" said Raby.

"Buck up, then! I didn't mean to leave the born idiot in the lurch," said



Mr. Bootles took the gory volume from Dickinson minor's hand, and looked at it, with thunderous brows. The Classical Fourth looked on, waiting for the storm to burst. "Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "Dickinson, I am surprised at you! I am shocked! I am disgusted!" (See page 13.)

Jimmy Silver repentantly. "But how was a chap to know he was such an idiot?"

The Fistical Four left their unfinished tea—Lovell growling—and went out into the quad, where the dusk was falling. The gates were not yet closed, however, and the chums of the Fourth hurried out into the road to look for Dickinson minor. It was an hour since Jimmy Silver had left him, and ten minutes would have been enough for him to reach the school. The only explanation was that, immersed in the thrilling adventures of Trapper Bill, he had passed the school and gone on.

The Co. hurried down the road towards Rookdale.

A quarter of a mile from the school they came upon the new junior. He was still walking slowly on, his head bent over his book, straining his eyes in the dusk to see the print.

"There's the balmy duffer!" growled Jimmy Silver.

He ran on, and woke up Dickinson minor with a thump on the shoulder.

The new junior gave a yell, and dropped his book, and spun round, his eyes blazing.

"Aha! Stand back!" he yelled. "Stand back, catiff, or with my trusty blade— Oh! Ah! Ha! Oh!"

"Well, of all the silly idiots!" ejaculated Lovell in astonishment.

"You—you startled me," mumbled Dickinson. "I thought it was Red-handed Dick, the Terror of the Prairies,

for a moment! I was just at the place where he's creeping into Trapper Bill's tent, knife in hand."

"You thumping ass!" shouted Raby. "Look here—"

"Come along," said Jimmy Silver. "Your major's waiting for you, and he's ratty. Get a move on!"

"Have I passed the school?" asked Dickinson, looking round vaguely.

"Yes, a quarter of a mile, fathead!"

"Have I, by blazes?"

"By what?" yelled Newcome.

"Blazes!" said Dickinson.

"Is that the kind of language you've learned at home?" asked Lovell. "It won't do for Rookwood."

"Trapper Bill always says blazes."

"It may do for Trapper Bill, but it won't do for the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And if you say it again I'll dot you on the nose!" said Lovell wrathfully.

"Oh, you're a tenderfoot!" said Dickinson contemptuously.

"A—a what?"

"A greenhorn!"

"What on earth language is he speaking?" said Lovell, in wonder.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"That's the American language as printed in books for budding youth," he said. "Dickinson, you ass, you'll be the guy of the Form if you jaw like that!"

"Bah!"

"Don't baa at me like a silly sheep!" "I didn't say baa—I said bah!" growled Dickinson. "The Black Pirate

always says 'Bah!' and grinds his teeth."

"Never mind the Black Pirate now. Get a move on!"

"I'm not going to hurry. I'm reading."

"Chuck reading for a bit. The gates will be locked in a few minutes."

"Bah!"

With that scornful "Bah!" Dickinson resumed his volume. The Fistical Four glanced at one another.

It was evidently a time for action, not for words.

Jimmy Silver seized the new junior by the right arm, and Lovell took the left. Raby jerked his book away, and tossed it over the hedge. Newcome helped him from behind with a goal-kick.

"Yaroooh!" roared Dickinson.

"Kim on!"

"My book—"

"Kim on!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Unhand me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not "unhand" the new fellow. They rushed him along the dusky lane at top speed. Dickinson had no choice about going. He had to run, with an iron grasp fastened upon both his arms.

"Grooogh!" he gasped. "Yow! Leggo! I'm out of breath! I kik-kik-kan't keep it up! Leggo!"

"My dear chap," grinned Jimmy Silver, "if you're going to be a pirate you'll have to learn to run. You'll have

a lot of running to do when the bobbies are looking for you."

"Groooh! Leggo! I mean, unhand me!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

On went the juniors with a rush. Dickinson was quite pumped out by the time they reached the school gates. Old Mack was just coming out to close them when the Fistical Four arrived with the new junior.

"Just in time!" remarked old Mack grimly.

"Groooh!" gasped Dickinson.

The Fistical Four marched their prisoner across the quadrangle, and into the School House. There they slackened down. The new junior was taken to the door of his elder brother's study. Jimmy Silver opened the door.

"Here he is!" he announced.

"Groooh!"

Dickinson minor was shot into the study like a stone from a catapult. He crashed on the table, and rolled off, and sprawled on the floor. Jimmy Silver & Co. beat a hurried retreat.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, was in the study talking to Dickinson of the Sixth. The two prefects stared at the sprawling new boy.

"Hallo! Who's that?" said Bulkeley..

"My minor!" growled Dickinson.

"Get up, Sid, you young idiot!"

Sidney sat up.

"Gerroooh!" he said.

The prefect grasped him by the shoulder, and jerked him to his feet. Dickinson minor gasped for breath.

"Unhand me!" he snapped.

"What!" yelled his major.

"Unhand me!"

"Is he dotty?" asked Bulkeley, in astonishment.

"Jolly near it!" groaned Dickinson major. "He gets that rot out of Yankee books about buccaneers and pirates, and Redskins. He's been whopped for it—I've whopped him regularly every vacation. I suppose I'd better whop him now."

"Stand back!" said the cheerful minor. "If I had my trusty rifle—"

"Your what?" shrieked Bulkeley.

"You wait till I'm a bit older, George!" said the new junior. "Wait till I get a trusty rifle, that's all!"

"That's how he goes on," said the major hopelessly. "I suppose he's a bit cracked."

Dickinson minor snorted.

"Pirate Dick was supposed to be cracked when he killed his uncle, and ran away to sea," he said. "But he became the Terror of the Pacific."

"Well, my hat!" said Bulkeley.

Dickinson major looked round for a cane. But he changed his mind.

"You're late, Sid," he said. "I'll take you to your Form-master. Come on! See you later, Bulkeley!"

The prefect marched his hopeful minor off to Mr. Bootles' study, and Bulkeley stared after them blankly. Then he chuckled. Dickinson minor was quite a new thing in his experience. And the captain of Rookwood felt exceedingly glad that he was Dickinson minor and not Bulkeley minor.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Not Popular!

"HERE'S the giddy pirate!" All the Classical Fourth stared at the new junior when he came into the dormitory that night.

The fame of Dickinson minor had already spread in the Lower School.

His absurd style of talking had been at once noted. It was in vain that the Fistical Four had relieved him of

"Trapper Bill." The cheerful new-comer had a large supply of similar literature in his box, upon which he drew. All his spare time that evening had been spent in perusing "Pirate Dick"—which Neville of the Sixth had found in his hand when he came to shepherd the Classical Fourth to the dormitory.

Neville's way with "Pirate Dick" was short and sharp. He had tossed it into the common-room fire, and warned Dickinson that he would be caned if he were ever found with such stuff in his possession again.

Whereupon Dickinson minor had rolled his eyes in proper piratical manner, and muttered that there would come a time—a remark that the prefect fortunately did not hear.

"Here's the merry buccaneer!" chortled Flynn.

"Where's your giddy black flag?" asked Townsend.

"And your trusty dagger?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dickinson minor blinked at the grinning juniors. He was trying to make his eyes flash in the manner of Pirate Dick. But his eyes didn't flash—they only looked like boiled gooseberries.

"Now, then, turn in!" said Neville, at the door.

The chuckling juniors turned in. Neville put out the light, and retired. Then a sound was heard of somebody scrambling out of bed.

"Hallo! Who's that turning out?" said Jimmy Silver.

"Tremble not!" came the voice of Dickinson minor.

"Eh?"

"'Tis but me!"

"You thumping idiot! What are you getting up for?"

"Trouble me not!"

"Oh, my hat!"

A match scratched, and a candle-end glimmered in the darkness of the dormitory. Dickinson minor opened his box, and extracted a volume, upon the cover of which a hanging man was depicted in lurid colours. He stuck the candle on his washstand, and returned to bed—but not to sleep. Resting on his elbow, he started reading by the dim and flickering light of the candle.

Half the Form were sitting up in bed, staring at him.

Reading in bed, was, of course, strictly forbidden in the school. Dickinson minor's watery and blinking eyes were accounted for now.

"Dickinson!" rapped out Jimmy Silver.

"Don't bother!"

"You young ass!"

"Silence!"

"What?"

"Cease this idle chatter. I am reading."

"You're not allowed to read in bed!"

"Bah!"

"If a prefect should come in and catch you, you'd be whopped!"

"Bah!"

"Don't you know you're ruining your eyesight, you unspeakable idiot, reading by candle-light?"

"Bah!"

"Oh, let the silly idiot alone!" growled Lovell. "I want to go to sleep!"

"Sure the light'll be seen in the dorm," said Flynn. "They'll think it's a dorm feed. Put that candle out, Dickinson!"

"Bah!"

"Don't bah at me, you silly spalpeen! Put that candle out!"

Dickinson minor did not trouble to reply this time. Flynn glared at him from his bed. His bed was next to Dickinson's.

"Are ye puttin' that candle out, ye young gossoon?" he roared.

No reply.

"Sure I'll put it out for ye, then."

Whiz!

A pillow hurtled through the air, and there was a roar from Dickinson minor. The candle was knocked over and instantly extinguished.

"Dog!" roared Dickinson.

"Phwat!"

"Caitiff!"

"Sure, he's dotty intoirly. But, dotty or not, he's not going to call me names!" said Flynn, and he scrambled out of bed. "Now, ye thafe of the worruld, turn out and put up yer hands!"

"Chuck it, Flynn," said Jimmy Silver. "That pasty ass can't stand up to you. Let him alone!"

"Faith, hasn't he called me a dog?" demanded Flynn indignantly.

"Well, he's potty!"

"Are ye gettin' up, Dickinson?"

"Bah!"

Flynn groped for his pillow, and whirled it in the air. Dickinson minor was striking a match. It came in time to give light for a telling swipe. The pillow smote the youthful disciple of Pirate Dick, and he rolled over on his bed with a resounding yell.

"Yaroooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now go to sleep, or sure I'll give ye names!" said Flynn, and he scrambled back into bed.

"Ha!" hissed Dickinson minor.

"Wait!"

"Howly Moses! What am I to wait for intoirly?"

"Revenge!"

"Great pip!"

"Shut up, you mad duffer!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"Bah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Scratch went a match, and Dickinson minor lighted his candle again. Whiz came a slipper, and the candle went out, and the new junior gave a howl. There was a chuckle from all the beds.

"Better give it up, kid!" chuckled Oswald. "You'll get a boot or a pillow every time you light the candle. Go to sleep!"

"Bah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Dickinson minor's melodramatic "Bah!" almost sent the juniors into convulsions. But the new boy gave up his attempt to keep the candle alight. It was evidently N.G.

"I say, you chaps," he called out, after a short silence.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy sleepily.

"Look here, I can't go to sleep! I never go to sleep till twelve. I always read in bed at home."

"More duffer you!" said Jimmy.

"That's what makes you such a pasty-faced monkey," said Hooker politely.

"I'll tell you a story if you like," said Dickinson.

"Oh, let's go to sleep!"

"No; let's hear the story, if it's a good one," said Raby considerably. "Is it about footer, Dickinson?"

"Bah! No!"

"A yarn about a jape?" asked Newcome.

"Certainly not!"

"Well, go ahead, and we'll sample it," said Jimmy Silver.

"It's about Red-handed Dick," said Dickinson. "He was called Red-handed Dick because his hands were generally blood-stained."

"Groooh!"

"When he was ten years old, he shed blood for the first time—"

"Nothing like starting early, bedad!"

"His first victim was his uncle. His uncle insisted upon Dick going to school, but the wild, free heart of the rover disdained lessons. In the dead of night he rose from the bed, and seized an axe—"

"Chuck it!"

"With creeping steps, like a panther stealing upon his prey, Red-handed Dick crept towards his uncle's room. He pushed open the door, and heard the heavy breathing of the tyrant within. For a moment he hesitated."

"Only a moment?" chuckled Lovell.

"Only a moment! He thought of the old man lying sleeping at peace, and for a moment his heart smote him. Then he ground his teeth, and his eyes flashed fire. The tyrant must die! He crept on—"

"Ring off!"

"With both hands he raised the axe aloft—from his set lips came no sound, but—"

"Yaroooh—oh—ow—yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A slipper had smitten Dickinson minor on the side of the head at that point in his thrilling story, causing a sudden break in the narrative.

"Yow-ow-ow! What rotter threw that? Yoop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up, and go to sleep!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "We've had enough of Red-handed Dick!"

"And enough of Dead-shot Dickinson!" chortled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors settled down to sleep, and Dickinson minor grunted and followed their example.

#### THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

##### Mr. Bootles is Shocked.

**D**ICKINSON minor attracted a good deal of attention in the Fourth Form the next day, and the days that followed.

Jimmy Silver manfully kept his promise to Dickinson major, and looked after the new fellow as much as he could.

But Dickinson minor defied looking after.

The lurid rubbish upon which his mind had been fed had had an extraordinary effect upon his somewhat weak head. Apart from his mania—for it almost amounted to a mania—he was a good-natured and obliging fellow, whom nobody could dislike. But the high-faluting style of his talk made him an object of general merriment, and, as his elder brother had feared, it was not long before he became the butt of the Form.

It became the ordinary amusement for an idle hour to draw Dickinson out, and pull his leg, and the junior fell a victim every time. He would explain to grinning circles of juniors his ambition to become a pirate, or a brigand, or a rover of the Rocky Mountains, his ambition of the moment changing with every lurid book he read.

He was generally regarded as a little "cracked," but quite harmless. He was not exactly cracked, but he was certainly in danger of becoming so unless he changed his manners and customs.

Jimmy Silver, in the kindness of his heart, took him in hand, and endeavoured to induce him to take up footer. Footer, as Jimmy sagely opined, would blow all the unhealthy rot out of Dickinson's head, if the fellow could be induced to take the game up seriously.

But Dickinson minor firmly declined to play footer. He told Jimmy Silver that learning football would be quite useless in his future career; there would be no use for footer on the decks of the Black Pirate's schooner. Dickinson minor had planned already to have a schooner, which, of course, was to have rakish

masts, and a long, evil-looking 18-pounder mounted on the deck. Jimmy suggested that a sailing-ship wouldn't have much chance in modern times, and recommended Dickinson, when he should become a pirate, to look out for a second-hand motor-boat. But sarcasm and chipping were wasted on the cheerful new boy.

Some of the seniors, when they came to know of Dickinson's peculiarity, entered into the joke, and had him in their studies merely to make him talk, and furnish them with amusement.

The reputation of his minor was infuriating to Dickinson major. For a prefect of the Sixth to have a minor who was the laughing-stock of the Lower School was decidedly exasperating and undignified.

The prefect talked to the cheery Sidney in vain. He took the trouble to administer licking after licking in a spirit of brotherly regard.

But Sidney was impervious to lickings. He had to take them—that couldn't be helped; but he told his major candidly that when the right hour struck he would come back with a trusty rifle or a hunting-knife for red revenge. Whereupon Dickinson major, out of all patience, would kick him out of his study.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, came down on Dickinson after a few days for reading in class. It was Dickinson's habit to take "Pirate Dick," or some similar volume, into the Form-room, and read it under the cover of his desk. For some time he remained undiscovered, but Mr. Bootles spotted him at last. Dickinson minor was called upon to construe one morning, and he rose up with "Pirate Dick" in his hand instead of Virgil.

Mr. Bootles' eyes almost started from his head at the sight of the glaring cover of the volume.

"What—what," he gasped—"what is that? Bring that book to me instantly, Dickinson minor!"

"It's mine," said Dickinson uneasily.

"Bring it to me at once!" thundered Mr. Bootles.

Never had Dead-shot Dickinson—he was always called Dead-shot Dickinson in the Fourth—missed his trusty rifle so much. He had to obey. Mr. Bootles took the gory volume from his hand, and looked at it, with thunderous brows. The Classical Fourth looked on, waiting for the storm to burst.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "Dickinson, I am surprised at you! I am shocked! I am disgusted!"

Dickinson minor nearly said "Bah!" but he stopped just in time. It would not have been judicious to "Bah!" a Form-master.

"I am revolted!" said Mr. Bootles sternly. "Can you not find a healthy English book to read, Dickinson, instead of wasting money upon this vile American trash?"

Dickinson looked sullen.

"There is a paper called the 'Magnet,' which contains clean, healthy, wholesome stories," said Mr. Bootles. "You may read that, Dickinson."

Dickinson sneered.

"I've seen it, sir," he said. "Why, there isn't a single murder in it—not a drop of blood from one year's end to another!"

"You are a disgusting boy, Dickinson!"

"Oh!"

"Take this revolting book and put it into the fire!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Bah!" trembled upon the lips of Dickinson minor. But Mr. Bootles' eye was gleaming, and he had taken up his cane. Mournfully the junior rrammed into the fire that estimable product of New York enterprise.

"You will take a hundred lines, Dick-

inson! I shall cane you severely if you bring a book into the Form-room again! And if you are ever found with one of those disgusting American periodicals in your possession again, you shall be caned most severely! Go to your place!"

"Bah!"

That "bah!" came out involuntarily. Mr. Bootles jumped clear of the floor in his astonishment and wrath. Then he grasped Dickinson minor by the collar.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Swish!

"You impertinent young rascal!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! Leggo! Unhand me!" yelled Dickinson, wriggling wildly. "Ha! There will come a time—"

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Now go to your place!" said Mr. Bootles, quite out of breath.

Dickinson minor groaned, and crawled back to his place among the grinning Fourth-Formers. After morning lessons Jimmy Silver joined him.

"Why don't you chuck it, kid?" said Jimmy kindly. "What's the good of playing the giddy ox? Hallo, what's the matter with your teeth?"

Dickinson minor was grinding them.

"For goodness' sake don't do that! You set my nerves on edge!" said Jimmy. "Is there anything wrong with your teeth?"

"Bah!" growled Dickinson.

"Now, look here, old chap—"

"My time will come!" said Dickinson minor. "Revenge!"

"You silly young idiot!"

"Bah!"

Dickinson minor strode away, muttering. Jimmy Silver glanced after him hopelessly, and then joined his chums at footer practice. But Dickinson, in a quiet corner of the quadrangle, was still muttering and grinding his teeth, and rolling his eyes. Something was evidently working in his piratical brain.

#### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

##### Jimmy Silver Comes Down Heavily.

**A**NYBODY seen Dickinson minor?"

Jimmy Silver was asking that question up and down the School House after tea.

"Blow Dickinson minor!" said Lovell, with a grunt. "Come and get your prep done! Never mind the silly ass!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"I'm feeling a bit uneasy about him," he said. "I told his major I'd look after him. The young ass has been more queer than ever to-day."

"Well, you can't cure him. Let him rip!"

"I'm going to find him, and you're going to help me!"

"Oh, rats!"

But Lovell helped, and so did Newcome and Raby. Dickinson minor had disappeared for some time. He was not in the Fourth Form passage, or in the dorm, or in the gym, or the common-room.

"What about the top box-room?" said Raby, at last. "He shifted his gory books there out of his box when he found Bootles was coming to look in his box."

"Good! Come on!"

The Fistical Four ascended the stairs to the top box-room. A light gleamed from under the door.

"He's there!" grinned Lovell. "Hark! Oh crumbs!"

From within the box-room came a voice:

"Revenge! Ha, ha! Revenge!"

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Raby.

Jimmy Silver, with a frowning brow, threw open the door. Then he gave a violent start. A masked figure stood before him. For a moment he did not recognise Dickinson minor.

The junior was draped in a long black cloak, and a mask of black crepe was over his face.

"What the merry thunder—" howled Jimmy Silver.

"Away!"

"What?"

"Trouble not the brigand chief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you got up like that for, like a character in a cinema play?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Bah! Away! A blow!" said Dickinson minor in a deep voice. "I have received a blow! Bootles dies!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"He dies like a dog!" said Dickinson minor in a deep voice. "Masked, like a grim black shadow in the night, I will track him down! His blood—"

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"He's fairly off his rocker!" he said. "He'll be doing some mischief one of these days if he isn't stopped. Shut that door, Raby! We're going to educate Dickinson!"

"Here, you clear off!" said Dickinson, dropping into everyday language at last. "Don't you come here bothering me!"

"Shut up, fathead! We're going to cure you!"

Raby, grinning, locked the door. Then the Fistical Four gathered round the masked and draped brigand chief. Jimmy Silver felt that the time had come for drastic measures.

"Have that rubbish off him first!" he said tersely.

"Unhand me!" roared Dickinson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The youthful disciple of Pirate Dick and Peppo the Bandit was promptly collared. The crepe mask was jerked off, and the long black cloak, which was evidently home-made, followed. The chums of the Fourth proceeded to tear them up into fragments.

Dickinson minor glared at them in almost speechless wrath.

"Let my things alone!" he gasped.

"You rotters! Beware of the brigand's revenge! Bah! Unhand me! Yarooop!"

Four wrathful juniors collared the embryo brigand at once, and Dead-shot Dickinson came down on the floor with a terrific concussion.

Bump!

"Yow, wow, ow, wow!" yelled Dickinson, not at all in the style of Pirate Dick. But perhaps Pirate Dick had never been bumped.

"Sit on him!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Plump!

Raby, the fattest of the four, sat heavily on Dickinson minor, pinning him down by sheer weight.

Dickinson wriggled like an eel. But there was no escape for him.

"Lemme go!" he stuttered. "Yow, ow, low! You're squook-squook-squashing me!"

"And I'm going on squook-squook-squashing you!" grinned Raby. "Go ahead with the giddy conflagration, dear boys!"

Jimmy Silver lighted matches in the wide old grate. The fragments of the black cloak and the mask flared up and burned away merrily.

Then Dickinson minor's valuable library was seized upon ruthlessly.

To keep those precious volumes safe, Dickinson had transferred them to the top box-room. There they were secure from the eyes of masters and prefects, and especially from his senior brother. But they were not safe from the Fistical Four. Jimmy Silver & Co. were bent upon making a clean sweep.

"Here you are!" said Jimmy, handing them out from the big bag they were stacked in. "Here's Blood-stained Bill. Begin with him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Blood-stained Bill was promptly jammed into the fire. Dead-shot Dave followed, and then the Prince of the Pistols; and Red-handed Dick, the Boy Buccaneer; and Gory George, the White Scalper.

"Yow, you beasts!" groaned Dickinson minor, as gory volume after volume was added to the pyre. "I say, chuck it! I say, leave me that one; that's a real ripper—The Blood-hunters of Texas—leave that one!"

"No jolly fear!"

"And that one—The Night Hawks of New York—let me keep that!"

"Bow-wow!"

"Oh, you rotters!"

"We're doing this for your own good, Dicky!" Jimmy Silver explained. "You must know yourself that you're going cracked through reading this rot! Now, don't you?"

"Bah!"

"And if Bootles found it you'd be licked—"

"Villain!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The pile of smoking ashes in the grate was piled high now. The room was full of smoke and blacks. The chums of the Fourth were growing very dusty and smoky and warm.

But they were doing good work, and they did not slacken. As Jimmy Silver remarked, it was Dickinson minor's last chance of being saved from a lunatic asylum. They were Boy Scouts, and bound to do somebody a good turn every day. This time it was Dickinson minor—and it was a very good turn indeed.

But Dickinson minor did not see it in that light. He gazed mournfully at the

gory volumes as they disappeared one after another in flame and smoke.

"Groogh!" gasped Jimmy Silver, rubbing smoke out of his eyes. "That's the last! My hat, it's warm!"

"Finished!" said Lovell, in great relief. "Let's see if the duffer has any about him, though."

"Hands off!" yelled Dickinson. "I mean, unhand me!"

"I thought so!" grinned Lovell, as he turned three or four volumes out of Dickinson minor's pockets. "Here you are! 'Blood-bedabbled Bill, the Terror of Topeka—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Captain Crack-shot, the Red-handed Raider of the Rugged Rockies—'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fire flared up over the last burnt-offerings. Dickinson minor was almost weeping.

"Now, listen to me, my son!" said Jimmy Silver, in his most magisterial tone. "We've done this for your own good. See? You're going to give us your solemn promise never again to buy a book that's been printed in America."

"I won't!" yelled Dickinson minor furiously.

"You will—if you want a whole bone left in your body. You're going to be bumped till you do. Up with him!"

Bump!

"Yaroooop!"

"Are you going to give that promise?"

"Yow! No, no! Yow, ow!"

Bump!

"Oh crumbs! Hold on! Yes—I mean, yes!" howled the unhappy brigand.

"Good egg!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Now, thank us nicely for having looked after you!"

"You rotter—I—I mean, thank you!" stuttered Dickinson minor.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four quitted the box-room with the satisfied feeling that follows good work well done. Dickinson minor was left to gaze mournfully upon the dust and ashes, and to reflect.

In the dorm that night the Fistical Four nodded cheerily to Dickinson minor to show that there was no ill-feeling. Dickinson minor was looking very subdued. But he did not roll his eyes, and he did not say "Bah!" Jimmy Silver was of opinion that the cure was well on its way. Perhaps Dickinson minor realised that it was all for his own good. But, like Rachel of old, he mourned for that which was lost, and would not be comforted.

THE END.

(Another long complete story of the chums of Rookwood School next week, entitled, "The Conversion of Dickinson Minor!" by Owen Conquest. Order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR in advance.)

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