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TWO LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALES
AND MANY OTHER FEATURES IN THIS ISSUE!

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New Series.
No. 118.

Greyfriars

The POPULAR

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Stories, Jokes & Pictures
of Greyfriars, Rookwood & St. Jims

Rookwood St. Jims



THE SUCCESSFUL EDITOR! (BILLY BUNTER, Editor of our grand supplement, looks forward to the time when he will be treated like this!)



UNDER A CLOUD!



A Splendid, Long, Complete School Story, introducing JIMMY SILVER & Co. at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Shady Acquaintance!

COME on, Jimmy!"

The chums of the Fourth, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, were sauntering along Coombe Lane towards the school.

Jimmy Silver had suddenly stopped. The chums of the Fourth were passing the stile in the lane, and upon the stile was seated a disreputable-looking individual, a stranger to Lovell and Raby and Newcome.

They had glanced at him in passing with somewhat contemptuous glances. He was a man of about thirty, and might have been a good specimen of manhood if he had chosen. But evidently he had not chosen. His reddened face, his loose lips, and heavy eyelids, and his general hangdog look, told their own story of late hours and drink. He looked a blot upon the fresh countryside, as he sat on the stile, fouling the atmosphere with the scent of a strong black cheroot.

He grinned as the juniors passed him, and beckoned to Jimmy Silver.

And Jimmy halted.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stopped and looked back at him. Jimmy's sunny face had suddenly clouded over. He glanced at his chums hesitatingly, and glanced back at the man on the stile.

Lovell hurried back.

"Come on, Jimmy!" he repeated.

"Here we are again, Jimmy!" said the man on the stile cheerily. "Don't hurry away; I want to speak to you."

"Come on, Jimmy!"

"You go on, Lovell," said Jimmy Silver, in a low voice. "I'd better speak to—to this chap."

Lovell's brow set grimly.

"I'm not going on," he said. "You're not going to speak to a bounder like that. What the dickens does he mean by calling you Jimmy?"

The man on the stile chuckled. The remark seemed to amuse him.

"Come on, Jimmy!" called out Raby.

"Wait for me up the lane," muttered Jimmy Silver. "I—I must speak to this chap. I'll explain afterwards."

"Here's Townsend coming up the lane," growled Lovell. "Do you want to be seen talking to a rotter of that sort, Jimmy?"

"I must!"

"Oh, rats!"

Lovell shrugged his shoulders angrily, and tramped on with a dark brow. Jimmy Silver stepped nearer to the man on the stile.

"What are you doing here, so near to the school?" he muttered. "Do you want to get me into trouble at Rookwood?"

The wastrel blew out a thick cloud of smoke.

"That's your own look-out!" he said coolly. "I'm as keen to get away from here as you can be for me to go. You know what I want."

"Money?"

"Exactly!"

"I've given you all I could."

"You'll have to give me more if you want me to go."

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands hard. His eyes were fixed upon the bloated, dissipated face, with bitter contempt and anger. Up the lane, from the direction of Coombe, came Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth. He started as he saw Jimmy Silver in conversation with the man on the stile. Jimmy did not notice him, and Townsend, as he came nearer, heard Jimmy's next words.

"Get out of this! Haven't you any sense of shame? You've let my friends see you now—"

"They'll see more of me unless you help me to clear!"

"I can't!"

"You must find a way, my boy. I can do it on five pounds. If you don't let me have a fiver, you can expect me at Rookwood."

"I tell you I can't do it!" said Jimmy Silver. "I had to borrow money to help you before, and you gambled it away. I should be in an awful fix now if my chums hadn't paid up for me!"

"Let 'em pay up for you again!"

"You rascal!"

"By gad!" ejaculated Townsend.

Jimmy Silver spun round. The dandy of the Fourth backed away from the look in his eyes.

"You spying cad!" Jimmy broke out angrily.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Townsend. "I couldn't help seeing you, could I? You shouldn't meet your boozy friends so near the school, you know. Is that the chap you used to go to see at the Ship, that all the fellows have been talking about? Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver made a stride towards Townsend, but he stopped.

"Get out!" he muttered. "If you don't want to go into the ditch, you'd better clear off!"

Townsend grinned, and strolled on towards Rookwood. He had an item of news for the fellows in the Fourth, and he was anxious to impart it.

Jimmy Silver turned back to the man on the stile, his eyes gleaming under his knitted brows.

"You see what you've done for me!" he said savagely. "This will be the talk of the Lower School!"

"Your own fault, Jimmy. Help me to clear, and I'll clear!"

"I don't believe you!" said Jimmy, between his teeth. "I helped you before, and you spent the money in

gambling and drink. I sha'n't again. Come to Rookwood if you dare!"

"I'll come right enough, and show you up, Jimmy. I'm a man of my word!"

"Come, then; and you'll go away again with handcuffs on!" said Jimmy. "Set your foot inside the gates of Rookwood, and I'll ask the Head to telephone for the police. They will be glad to see you."

The man on the stile started a little, and looked searchingly at the schoolboy's set face.

"You don't mean that, Jimmy. You wouldn't have a goal-bird for a relation. You wouldn't give me away."

"I would, and will, if you come to Rookwood!"

Jimmy Silver turned away, without another word. But his look showed that he meant all he said, and meant it in deadly earnest.

"Jimmy!"

The junior did not answer. He strode up the lane, and the man on the stile looked after him with savage chagrin on his face.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The Secret!

JIMMY SILVER rejoined his chums, and they walked on towards Rookwood in silence.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were looking grim.

Townsend had gone on, and they knew that before long all the Classical Fourth, and probably the Moderns as well, would have heard of Jimmy Silver's meeting with the blackguard in the lane.

Lovell broke the silence at last.

"Look here, Jimmy, this won't do!" he blurted out.

Jimmy did not reply.

"There's been talk enough about you already!" said Lovell savagely. "It's growing into a regular scandal. You've visited the Ship, that low den that no decent fellow would go into. Tommy Dodd saw you meet a blackguard there—the same chap you've just spoken to, I suppose. You told us it was all over, and you were never going there again. We took your word for it that you hadn't been playing the giddy ox, like Smythe and his set."

"My word's good enough, I suppose?" said Jimmy Silver.

"We've taken your word, Jimmy," said Newcome. "But—but you are putting rather a strain on a fellow's faith, I must say."

"I know that," said Jimmy Silver miserably. "I wouldn't be surprised if you fellows thought I was a bigger blackguard than Smythe. I've told you I couldn't explain; it wasn't my secret. But—but now that rascal has shown him-

self here, and threatened me, I—I'm going to explain."

"Time you did!" grunted Lovell.
"But only on condition that you keep it dark."

"More blessed secrets!"
"That's the condition," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "You can take it or leave it!"

"Oh, we'll keep it dark!" said Raby.
"What's it all about, anyway?"

"I can't get rid of that fellow, because—because—"

"Because what?"
"Because he's my uncle."

The three juniors jumped. They stopped, and stared blankly and incredulously at Jimmy Silver.

"Your uncle!" exclaimed Lovell, stupefied.

"Uncle!" murmured Raby.
"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Newcome.

Jimmy Silver's cheeks were crimson.
"Now you know!" he said.

"He—he's really your uncle, Jimmy?" stammered Lovell.

"My father's brother," said Jimmy.
"The pater won't have anything to do with him. So he's come to me for money."

"That's what you were borrowing money for?"

"Yes."

"Why, it's blackmail!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly. "Look here, Jimmy, lots of people have shady relations, but they don't let the cads bother them in this way! Let's go back and give him a thundering good hiding, and warn him to clear off! That's the way to deal with rotters like that!"

"Jolly good idea!" said Raby heartily.
Jimmy shook his head.

"That isn't all," he said. "I'm going to tell you the whole story. My pater got him a berth in the City, and—there was money missing, and he had to clear off. The police are looking for him. But he's innocent."

"How do you know?"

"Well, he says so."

"I wouldn't take his word," said Lovell. "If the police want him, the sooner they get him the better."

"He's my uncle," said Jimmy. "He was kind to me when I was a kid. It's drink that's brought him to this, and gambling. He wasn't really a bad sort once, only weak as water; and he always got into trouble. So long as drinking and racing are allowed to go on there will always be weak wretches like that who can't resist temptation. And they go from bad to worse."

"That's all very well. But it's up to a man to be decent!" growled Lovell. "Anyway, he can't be allowed to worry you, Jimmy. What does he want?"

"Money!"

"Well, you can't give him any more."

"He's threatened to come to Rookwood if I don't. He thought I wouldn't have the nerve to send my own uncle to prison."

"To come to Rookwood!" exclaimed Lovell, aghast. "That blackguard!"

"And I've told him that if he comes I shall give him away, and he will be arrested," said Jimmy quietly. "He knows I mean it, and I think it will make him keep off. But unless he molests me I can't do anything against him. He's my own flesh and blood, rotter as he is!"

"Poor old Jimmy!" said Lovell softly.
The Classical chums walked on to the school in silence.

The Co. understood now the trouble that had come upon their leader. They knew why Jimmy Silver, generally the sunniest-tempered fellow at Rookwood, THE POPULAR.—No. 118.

had been moody and downcast for many days.

Their own faith in him had been put to a severe strain; but all was clear now. But Jimmy Silver's shady acquaintance was the talk of the Fourth Form, and many fellows had dropped into the way of giving Jimmy curious looks, and some of them even avoided him.

Jimmy Silver was under a cloud, and his chums did not see how that cloud was to be lifted.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Townsend in Trouble.

ADOLPHUS SMYTHE of the Shell was seated in his study a couple of evenings later when Townsend of the Fourth came in.

Adolphus was in an elegant attitude, reclining in the easiest of easy-chairs, with his feet on another chair, showing six inches or so of his purple silken socks. A gold-tipped cigarette was between his lips, scenting the study with its fragrance. His eyeglass dangled at the end of its cord.

He nodded lazily to Townsend.
"Shut the door, chappy," he drawled.

"I don't want Bulkeley to spot this fag if he comes this way."

Townsend shut the door.
"Squat down!" added Adolphus.

"Help yourself to the cigarettes!"

Townsend did not sit down, and he did not help himself to the cigarettes. He stood with one hand on the table, looking dismally at Adolphus.

Adolphus raised his eyebrows.

He was willing to stand his pal cigarettes galore. But Townsend had the look of a fellow who had come to borrow money.

Adolphus did not believe in lending money.

It was a full minute before Townsend spoke. He seemed to have to take his courage in both hands, so to speak.

"I—I've looked in—" he stammered at last.

"Take a cigarette. They're good!"

"No, thanks! I—I don't feel up to smoking now. I'm in trouble."

"Sorry!" said Adolphus politely.

"I—I've come to you as a pal—"

"Awful good of you to think of me!" yawned Adolphus. "If it's anythin' but money, rely on me. Money's rather tight; but anythin' else—"

"It's money," said Townsend.

"Hard cheese!"

"I—I've got to raise five quids, somehow," said Townsend miserably. "That scoundrel Hook is threatening me. You introduced me to him, Smythe."

"You asked me to!" said Smythe icily.

"I—I know I did. I'm not complainin'," said Townsend hastily. "But I've had bad luck! The rotten geegee came in about eleventh, and I had plumped on him!"

"Deep?"

"I owe Hook five quid."

"Well, you have a whacking allowance," said Smythe. "What's all the trouble about? You can settle."

"I had bad luck before that—rotten bad! I can't get anything more from home now, and I'm stony!"

"Ask Hook to wait."

"He's waited a fortnight."

"Oh!"

"And—now he's come down on me," mumbled Townsend. "It means being shown up if I don't pay him. Could you let me have five quid, Smythe?"

"Five thousand just as easily," said Smythe. "Ask Howard."

"I've asked him."

"Well, Tracy, then; or your own pal, Topham."

"I have," said Townsend. "They

can't do anythin'. You've got a lot of tin, Smythe."

"I'm not a loan bank!" said Smythe frigidly. "The fact is, I've not had good luck myself, and I shall want all I've got to see myself clear. I'm sorry!"

"Then you won't help me?"

"I can't."

"Hook says he's going to my father."

"He won't do that," said Smythe confidently. "It would bust up his connection here if he played it low down like that, and he doesn't want to lose us."

"Well, he says he will if I don't pay him, and—I think he means it. He says he simply must have the money."

"The pater would pay him, to keep it dark, but—but it would be simply awful for me!" Townsend groaned. "I wish I'd never gone into it! You got me into it, Smythe, and you might lend a fellow a hand!"

"So I would if I could, though you're a bad payer," said Smythe. "But I can't, and that settles it. I don't believe Hook will do anythin' of the sort. It wouldn't be business. Keep a stiff upper lip, and see it through."

Adolphus lighted another cigarette.

Townsend gave him a silent look, and quitted the study without another word. It was easy enough for Adolphus to advise him to keep a stiff upper lip; it was not so easy for the wretched fellow to keep it. Joey Hook's threats, whether in earnest or not, had terrified the slacker of the Fourth.

Adolphus shrugged his shoulders impatiently when his visitor had gone. It was really too bad, Adolphus thought, that a wretched lame duck should come and lay his troubles upon Adolphus's shoulders. Smythe felt a sense of injury. He consoled himself with several cigarettes.

Townsend went wretchedly down the passage.

Smythe of the Shell had been his last hope. Smythe could not, or would not, help him, so that resource had failed.

In the Fourth Form passage Newcome stopped him.

"Pay up!" he remarked.

Townsend started.

"What do you mean, Newcome?"

"I'm out for the subs," explained Newcome, who was secretary and treasurer of the junior football club. "You're jolly late with yours. I've just screwed out Jones minor's and Hooker's. Now I want yours."

"You'll have to wait a bit. Hang the football club!" said Townsend irritably.

"What do I care for footer? Confound it!"

Newcome stared at him.

"You're down as a member, and you voted at the election," he said. "Strictly speaking, you oughtn't to have voted, with your sub unpaid."

"Hang the election!"

"Well, I must say I like your manners!" said Newcome. "Is that the latest variety of nutty politeness?"

"Go and eat coke!"

"My hat! You're asking for a thick ear," said the secretary of the Rookwood Junior Football Club, "and you're going to get it, too!"

"Cheese it!" said Townsend, backing away in alarm. "Sorry! I'm feeling rather seedy, as a matter of fact."

"Well, you look rather seedy," said Newcome, scanning him. "Why don't you chuck up smoking, you ass?"

"I—I'm going to," mumbled Townsend. "I—I say, I suppose you've got most of the subscriptions in, haven't you?"

"Most of them," agreed Newcome.

"There's six quid in the box."

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Under a Cloud!

(Continued from page 8.)

Townsend's eyes sparkled for a moment.

"Better take care of it," he said. "Six pounds is a lot of money."

"Of course I'll take care of it!" said Newcome testily. "You don't think I'd be careless with the club money, do you? I don't carry it about in my trousers-pocket."

"Better keep it locked up."

"So I would if there was a lock on my desk," said Newcome. "What are you getting at, Towny? You don't think there's any burglars in the Fourth, do you?"

"You've got a chap in your study who's hard up for money."

"What!"

"Jimmy Silver was borrowing right and left last week."

Newcome's eyes blazed.

He did not make any verbal reply to Townsend's insinuation. He hit out without troubling to speak.

Crash!

Townsend caught Newcome's knuckles with his nose, and he went down on the floor like a sack of coke.

"Now, you cad, get up and say that again, and I'll give you some more," shouted Newcome.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Townsend sat on the floor and nursed his nose, and Newcome, with a snort of contempt, left him there.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Surprise for the End Study.

BULKELEY of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, stopped at the end study and knocked. Bulkeley, great man as he was, always knocked at a junior's door before entering, and on little points like that Classical juniors often contrasted him with Knowles, the Modern prefect, who never wasted politeness of that kind on fags. The Fistical Four were at home, and they rose at once as Bulkeley looked in.

It was evening, and they were at work on their prep. Something of his old cheerfulness had returned to Jimmy Silver. It was several days now since he had seen his scapegrace uncle, John Silver, and he had not heard from him. He was in hopes that the wretched waster was gone from the neighbourhood of Rookwood.

Once he was gone, the unpleasant talk in connection with Jimmy would doubtless die away of its own accord. Jimmy felt it keenly, though he gave no sign, and his chums felt it for him more keenly still.

Lovell & Co. were in great uneasiness lest a whisper of it should reach the ears of those in authority. Certainly, any prefect who had known of Jimmy's undesirable acquaintance with the man at the Ship Inn would have felt it his duty to look into the matter, and with a very stern eye.

As Bulkeley came into the study, the Classical Four exchanged a quick glance that was full of uneasiness.

The thought came into each mind at once that Bulkeley had heard something, and that he had come to question Jimmy Silver, as in duty bound.

The Rookwood captain's face was very serious, and did not wear its usual genial expression.

"Come in, Bulkeley!" said Lovell.

"I—I say, will you have some chest-nuts?"

"Thanks, no! I've looked in to speak to Silver," said Bulkeley.

"Here I am!" said Jimmy cheerily, though with a sinking heart.

Bulkeley fixed his eyes on the junior.

"It's come to my knowledge that there's been a lot of talk about you, Silver," he said abruptly.

"It's the penalty of fame," said Jimmy flippantly. "Naturally, I loom rather large in the eyes of the Fourth, you know."

Bulkeley frowned, and Lovell & Co. gave Jimmy warning looks. The captain of Rookwood was quite plainly not in a humorous mood.

"I dare say I'm rather unsuspecting," said Bulkeley. "Some prefects would have heard of this earlier, I dare say. I haven't heard till to-day, when a couple of juniors were chatting under my study window. Of course, I shouldn't, as a rule, take any notice of any chance talk not intended for me, but what I heard made me call Townsend and Topham into my study and question them."

"Yes?"

"You needn't blame them for speaking out. They had to when I ordered them," said Bulkeley. "They had the choice of that, or going before the Head. It's not a case of sneaking."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Well, it seems that you have some precious acquaintance who put up at the lowest den in the county, the Ship, on the moor," said Bulkeley. "You meet him near the school. I don't like to believe it of you, Silver. I've always had a good opinion of you."

"I hope I've deserved it," said Jimmy.

"I hope you have," assented Bulkeley.

"But that's what we've got to clear up now. Is there any truth in it? Townsend says that he saw you talking with the man three days ago at the stile in Coombe Lane."

"That's true enough!" said Jimmy, growing a little pale.

"You know the man, then?"

"Yes."

"Is he some betting blackguard?"

"I'm afraid so."

Bulkeley stared.

"You've got the cheek to admit that you're acquainted with such a man!" he exclaimed.

"Not of my own accord," said Jimmy steadily. "I don't like the man, and I'd never see him if I could help it. I've never done any betting, or anything of that kind. The man spoke to me against my will when Townsend saw us."

"It seems that he asked you for money."

"Yes."

"And threatened to come to Rookwood unless you gave him money."

"That's true, too."

"Oh, that's true, is it?" said Bulkeley gruffly. "And what did you say to him?"

"That if he bothered me here I would call in the police."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley, a little taken aback. "You don't want the man's acquaintance, then? You mean he's forcing himself on you?"

"Yes."

"It's jolly odd. How did you come to know him in the first place, if you've had no shady transactions with him?"

"He knew me when I was a kid."

"Oh! And then—"

"He was respectable then, and my father knew him. He's gone to the dogs since."

"Oh, I see; and he's claimed acquaintance with you on the strength of having known you when you were a kid?" said Bulkeley, his brow clearing.

"Yes."

"Well, that puts a different complexion on the matter," said Bulkeley. "But you ought never to have had a word to say to a bad character, Silver. I dare say he pitched you some yarn, though."

"He did!" said Jimmy bitterly—so bitterly that Bulkeley looked at him very curiously. "I believed him, too. Now I know he's an unscrupulous rascal, and I sha'n't ever see him again if I can help it. If he should come here, I shall go to the Head at once about it."

"Well, that's all right," said Bulkeley, mollified. "I've always thought you a straight kid, Silver, and I take your word. If the man troubles you again, let me know, and I'll deal with him. A good hiding is what he wants, and he'll get it if he hangs round Rookwood!"

And, with a kindly nod to the juniors, Bulkeley left them.

"It's all right, Jimmy!" said Lovell. "I'm glad you spoke out straight to Bulkeley. He was bound to take notice of it, you know."

Jimmy nodded.

"I suppose I wasn't bound to tell him the man was my uncle?" he said moodily. "I've told him the truth. I don't want the relationship to be the talk of Rookwood if I can help it."

"No need at all to mention that," said Lovell. "I dare say the bouncer has cleared off by this time, too, as he can see there's no money to be had from you. The rotter ought to enlist—he's young enough. They'd make a man of him in the Army."

"I've told him that," said Jimmy. "Pity he can't be made to go. Bulkeley is an innocent old duck. I'd bet a cricket-bat to a hatpin that Townsend was jawing under his study window on purpose for him to hear—he's sneak enough!"

"I shouldn't wonder. Still, there's no harm done."

The four chums returned to their preparation.

When it was over, Jimmy Silver went along to the next study to see Oswald, and Lovell went down to the Common-room. Newcome and Raby remained in the study—the former to do his accounts. They were thus engaged when Townsend of the Fourth looked in.

"Hallo, sneak!" greeted Raby.

"What's the matter?" asked Townsend.

"Do you generally hang about under a prefect's window to jaw about a chap?" asked Raby contemptuously.

Townsend flushed.

"It was quite by chance. I didn't know Bulkeley was there—"

"Oh, tell that to the Marines!"

"I didn't come here to jaw with you, Raby!" said Townsend sulkily. "I've come to pay my sub. There you are, Newcome, and I'll have a receipt."

Newcome gave him a receipt, and Townsend quitted the study. Newcome took up the five shillings, and went to his desk and opened it.

"Towny must have had a remittance," he remarked. "I've been trying to screw his sub out of him for days. All in but two now. Hallo! What the thumping thunder—"

Newcome gasped.

He had opened the little chocolate box in his desk, in which he kept the funds of the junior football club.

He was staring into it blankly.

"What's the row?" asked Raby, looking up from his imposition.

"The—the money!"

"What money?"

"The football club funds!"

"Well, what about them?" asked Raby, puzzled.
 "They're—they're gone!"
 Raby jumped up.
 "Gone!" he exclaimed incredulously.
 "Every cent!" gasped Newcome.
 "Great Scott!"

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. A Clue!

RABY ran to the desk. He, too, stared into the chocolate-box, which, when Newcome had last opened it, had contained the sum of six pounds, mostly in silver.

It was empty.
 Not a coin remained.
 Newcome picked up the box, and turned it over in his hands. He blinked in a dazed way about the desk. It was impossible that the money could have been spilled there; but he had a faint hope of seeing some of it. It seemed incredible that the money had been taken away. But not a coin was to be seen.

The two juniors stared at one another blankly.

"Well, this beats it!" said Raby at last.

"It—it's gone!" said Newcome dazedly.

"Somebody's taken it."

"I—I suppose so."

"Sure you haven't put it somewhere else?" asked Raby.

"Quite sure. I always keep it there in that chocolate-box in a drawer in the desk. Somebody's been to my desk and taken it away," said Newcome, in an agitated voice. "Some awful beast! Who'd do such a thing?"

"We've got to find out," said Raby. "If we don't get it back, this study will have to make it good. You ought to have kept it locked up."

"Well, the lock on the desk has been broken since last term," said Newcome. "You remember when I lost the key, and we had to bust it open. The drawer was locked."

"Oh, it's rotten! Who'd have thought it?" said Raby. "Some utter beast! But we'll nail him, all the same. I shouldn't have thought there was a chap at Rookwood who'd do a thing like that. Hallo! What's that?"

Raby was scanning the desk, and a gleam of metal had caught his eye.

It was the half of a small penknife blade.

Raby's eyes glittered as he caught it up.

"Look at that!" he muttered excitedly. "That isn't yours, I suppose?"

"No fear!"

"Well, nobody uses that desk except yourself," said Raby. "That blade belongs to the thief, then. You say that drawer was locked?"

"Well, I generally keep it locked," said Newcome. "Sometimes I forget. It opened just now to a touch. But I'm pretty certain I locked it yesterday. I keep the key of it under the inkpot in the desk; it's safe there."

"Fatheaded place to keep a key," said Raby.

"Well, the thief didn't find it, anyway, or he wouldn't have wanted to use a penknife to open the drawer."

"That's so. He jabbed the drawer open with his knife, and broke this blade," said Raby. "I dare say he finished the job with another blade, and forgot this bit, or didn't see it among all that precious rubbish you've got there. That lock on the drawer is no good; it wanted only a snap to make it open."

"Well, if a chap came here to bone the cash, any lock wouldn't have stopped

him," said Newcome. "If it had been a stronger lock he'd have used the poker."

"I shouldn't wonder. Anyway, we'll keep this, and nail the beast," said Raby. "We've got to find a chap with his penknife broken."

"Most likely he'd chuck it away when he found he'd lost this bit," said Newcome. "He'd remember breaking it in the desk."

"Well, then, we shall have to find a chap who's not got his penknife any longer."

"Good!"

"Let's tell Jimmy and Lovell."

Jimmy Silver and Lovell were soon called into the study. Oswald came along with Jimmy Silver. The three juniors heard the story of the rifled desk, and looked startled and dismayed.

Jimmy Silver examined the desk, and looked at the fragment of blade that Raby had discovered.

"We ought to be able to nail the rotter, with that as a clue," said Jimmy.

"Easy enough," said Oswald. "Suppose we get all the Fourth together in the Common-room, and put it to them? If we can find the miserable beast, and make him hand the money back, we can give him a jolly good ragging, and keep our heads shut about it. No good letting the Modern cads know there's a thief on the Classical side."

"That's jolly thoughtful of you, kid," said Lovell approvingly. "The Moderns would make no end of a song about it."

"Better keep it dark," agreed Jimmy Silver. "The chap must be a horrible worm, but we're not called on to give him away to the prefects. We can deal with him ourselves."

"Pretty sickening to have a thief in the school," said Raby. "I think he ought to be shown up and sacked, and blow what the Moderns say."

"Oh rats!" said Lovell warmly. "We're not going to have Tommy Dodd & Co. crowing over us. Lovely story it would make—a thief on the Classical side! I'd make the money good myself rather than that."

"Well, it's got to be got back or made good," said Newcome. "I'm responsible for it as secretary. The fellows will say I ought to have taken more care of it."

"So you ought!" growled Lovell.

"Oh rot! There was a lock on the drawer—"

"Flimsy rubbish!"

"Well, if there'd been a lock on the desk, too, the thief wouldn't have stopped short at that, I suppose?"

"No good jawing," said Jimmy Silver. "We've got to find the rotter before he's got rid of the cash. When was it boned? That's the question. I mean, when did you see it last?"

"Blest if I know!"

Newcome reflected.

"This morning," he answered. "I got Flynn's sub in this morning, and I make it a rule never to carry any of the club money in my pockets. It gets mixed with a fellow's own tin. I remember now—I put Flynn's bobs there just after morning lessons. I haven't been to the desk since."

"Most likely the rotter came here while we were at footer practice," said Lovell. "He would be sure of finding the study empty then, and most of the fellows out of doors. It was safe enough then."

"How much was there?" asked Jimmy.

"Six quids. I paid some away yesterday, but Flynn paid up this morning, and that made it up again. Just six quids, nearly all in silver."

"Well, if it was only taken this afternoon it can't have gone far," said Jimmy Silver. "We shall get it back

all right, and the sooner the quicker. Blest if I can figure out who took it, though."

"Some of the precious Giddy Goats!" grunted Lovell. "A fellow would have to be pretty hard driven before he'd steal, I suppose. It's some blackguard who's got himself into trouble over gee-ges, and couldn't pay up. We've got to find some chap who is known to be hard up and badly in want of money—"

Lovell paused abruptly.

A strange look came over his face, and it was reflected upon the faces of Raby and Newcome and Oswald.

Jimmy Silver started a little.

"Dash it all, Lovell, that would apply to me as much as anybody!" he exclaimed. "Every fellow in the Form knows that I was borrowing money last week, and most of the silly asses believe that it went on gee-ges."

"I—I was talking out of my hat, of course," stammered Lovell. "I—I didn't mean that, really. Of course, a chap might be hard up without collaring another fellow's tin. There's that broken blade—that will settle it."

"Let's get the Fourth together, and ask them," said Oswald uneasily.

"Right! Pass the word round for a meeting," said Lovell.

The juniors left the study hastily.

Jimmy Silver's brow was sombre as he went with his chums.

He had observed that sudden look on the juniors' faces. That his chums would suspect him was out of the question; they would hardly have believed that Jimmy Silver was a thief if they had seen him taking the money with his own hands.

But the other fellows?

The theft had been committed in Silver's study. He, at least, had had every opportunity. It was known that he had been borrowing money; it was known that his chums had paid for him a heavy debt to Leggett of the Fourth. It was generally suspected that he was engaged in betting transactions, owing to his acquaintance with the blackguard he had been seen with.

And even his chums knew that he was threatened with disgrace by his scapegrace uncle unless he handed over money to him.

From the bottom of his heart Jimmy Silver blessed the carelessness of the thief in leaving the broken blade in the desk.

With that clue the rascal could be discovered; without it, suspicion would almost certainly have fallen upon Jimmy Silver.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Discovery.

A CROWD of the Classical Fourth gathered in the Common-room.

The juniors were surprised and curious.

Word had been passed round for a meeting, and it was understood that the object of the meeting was extremely important.

The meeting was confined to the Classical Fourth. The Moderns, whose quarters were distant from those of the Classics, had nothing to do with it, and the Shell were left out.

Jimmy Silver & Co. kept watch and ward on the door as the Fourth-Formers came in one by one and in twos and threes.

"Pretty nearly all in, I think," said Raby, as Oswald came in last.

Jimmy Silver ran his eye over the crowd.

"All but Flynn," he said. "Where's Flynn?"

"Couldn't see him," said Oswald.

"Look here, what the dickens is

all this about?" exclaimed Townsend irritably. "What are we all called in here for? I'm not going to stay!"

"Look here—" began Topham. "Cheese it! Somebody go and look for Flynn," said Lovell. "Oh, here he comes! Flynn, you ass—" "Sure, I've been looking for you, Jimmy Silver!" said Flynn. "I've found something that belongs to you—"

"Don't you know there's a meeting?" roared Lovell.

"Sure, how should I know, when I've been lookin' for Jimmy Silver? I've found something of his in my study, and—"

"Blow what you've found in your silly study!" Lovell slammed the door. "Now we're all here!"

"And now what the thunder are we here for?" demanded Jones minor. "That ass Oswald rushed me off before I'd finished my prep!"

"Blow your prep!" "I can't blow Bootles in the morning!" hooted Jones minor. "If it's a meeting, why don't you get to business?"

"So we will, when silly asses have stopped jawing!" said Lovell. "For goodness' sake shut up a minute!"

"Is it something up against the Moderns?" asked Harris

"Hang the Moderns!" "Then what the merry deuce is it?" exclaimed Topham.

"Shut up, and I'll tell you!" Lovell mounted upon a chair.

"There's something happened," he announced—"something that we've got to keep dark among ourselves, or the rotten Moderns will never let us hear the end of it. There's a thief here!"

"What?"

"A thief?"

"Rats!"

"Draw it mild, Lovell!"

"Do you think I'm joking, you thumping asses?" roared Lovell. "Tain't a joking matter having a thief on the Classical side! I shouldn't be surprised if there were lots on the Modern side, but—"

"But what's happened?" howled Topham.

"Some disgusting beast has been to our study and taken the club money out of Newcome's desk!"

"Phew!"

"Six pounds!" added Lovell impressively.

"Oh, scissors!"

"We've got to find the villain and scrag him!" said Lovell. "But we're not going to have any masters or prefects on the job. We're not going to let the Modern cads get wind of it. We're going to scrag the filthy burglar, and make an example of him, and keep mum!"

"Rot!" exclaimed Townsend shrilly. "He ought to be shown up, I say!"

"Shut up, Towny!"

"Order, for goodness' sake!" urged Oswald. "We shall have a prefect here if there's so much row. Get on with the washing!"

"That cad—" gasped Lovell.

"Shush! Get on!"

"Well, we've got a clue," said Lovell, swallowing his wrath. "The beak who burgled Newcome's desk broke his penknife in forcing the drawer. We want every chap here who has a penknife to show it!"

"Ripping idea!" said Hooker.

"Here's mine!"

Quite a large collection of pen-knives and pocket-knives came into view at once. Nearly every fellow had one.

"Where's your, Jimmy Silver?" asked Townsend, with a sneer.

The dandy of the Fourth was displaying a handsome silver-handled penknife, which certainly had both blades intact.

Jimmy Silver was running his hands through his pockets.

"I haven't mine with me," he said. "I left it in the study this morning, and I haven't seen it since."

"Howly Moses!" ejaculated Flynn. The Irish junior was staring open-mouthed at Jimmy Silver.

His jaw had dropped, and the look on his face was one of dazed astonishment and dismay.

Jimmy looked at him in surprise.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Oh, Jimmy!" gasped Flynn. "Oh, tare an' ounds! Didn't I tell you I'd found something of yours in my study? Here it is."

Flynn held out a penknife.

"That's mine," said Jimmy Silver, taking it. "I don't see how it came in your study. I left it in mine this morning, after sharpening a pencil with it!"

"I supposed you'd dropped it there when you came in to see Oswald," said Flynn. "But—but—but—"

"Well?"

"Look at the blade, Jimmy Silver."

Jimmy, in utter wonder, opened the penknife.

There was a shout from the fellows looking on.

Jimmy stared blankly at the knife. One of the blades was broken short!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Condemned by the Form!

JIMMY SILVER stood with the penknife in his hand, rooted to the floor.

There was a buzz round him. All eyes were fixed upon Jimmy.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were dumb. Oswald looked thunderstruck. An unpleasant cackle was heard from Townsend.

The clue of the penknife had been regarded by the chums of the end study as an unfailing means of tracing the thief.

As soon as they found a fellow whose penknife was broken, they concluded that they would have found the thief.

They had found him! And it was Jimmy Silver!

"Well, that settles it!" It was Townsend who spoke. "Did you know it all along, Lovell?"

Lovell started violently.

"Know it all along?" he repeated.

"Know what, you crawling cad? Do you think that it's Jimmy Silver?"

"You've proved it," said Topham.

"I?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Fit the pieces together, and see!" jeered Townsend.

"I'll jolly soon do that, and then I'll hammer you for your beastly insinuations!" shouted Lovell furiously. "Give me that bit here, Raby!"

Raby, in frozen silence, handed Lovell the fragment of blade that had been taken from Newcome's desk in the end study.

Lovell, with all eyes upon him, took the fragment, and took Jimmy Silver's knife from his nerveless hand. He fitted together the fragment and the broken blade—hoping and believing that the two would not fit—that the fracture would prove that the fragment was not part of Jimmy's knife.

Then a strange pallor stole over his face.

The fragment fitted exactly.

It was evident to all eyes, even to Lovell's own, that the fragment was the missing portion of the blade of Jimmy Silver's knife.

Lovell stood dumb.

"Doesn't it fit?" came Townsend's sneering voice.

"It does," said Jones minor, in almost a seared voice. "That's a bit of Jimmy Silver's knife. He can't deny it!"

"I don't deny it!" said Jimmy huskily. "It's mine, I know that. My knife must have been used at Newcome's desk."

"Jolly well proved!" said Topham.

"Now you can get ahead with the ragging, Lovell, now that you've found the thief."

"Why don't you tell some more lies, Silver?" jeered Topham. "You said you left the knife in your study—"

"So I did," said Jimmy.

"And Flynn found it in his!" sneered Topham.

"Sure, it was on the flure, and I knocked me foot against it," said Flynn. "I'd been looking for Jimmy Silver to give it to him—I knew it was his own initials on the handle, I've seen him with it—"

"We all know it's his," said Townsend. "Unless perhaps he'll accuse Flynn of boning his knife and burgling the desk with it."

"Phwat!" gasped Flynn.

"I don't accuse Flynn of doing anything of the kind," said Jimmy Silver, trying to steady his voice. "Flynn's as square as I am, I—"

"A jolly good deal squarer!" said Smith minor. "The matter's settled!"

"Quite settled!" said Topham.

"Lovell's got nothing to say," said Townsend. "He was so jolly sure of his clue to the thief. Now he's found the thief he's not satisfied!"

"I-I can't believe—" stuttered Lovell.

"You can't believe!" shouted Topham. "You'd have believed it fast enough of any other fellow here. Jimmy Silver's the thief, and it's proved. And you're the chap who's proved it."

"Bravo, Lovell!" said Townsend mockingly. "Sherlock Holmes beaten hollow by gad!"

"Now you can get on with the ragging!" went on Topham. "Only, first of all, Jimmy Silver's got to hand the money back. Where's the tin, Silver?"

Jimmy started.

"I don't know where the money is," he said. "I can't hand it back when I've not taken it. I don't know anything about it!"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Rats!"

"Tell the truth, you rotter!"

"Hand over the tin!"

There was a threatening movement towards Jimmy Silver. Instinctively Lovell & Co. lined up to defend their chum. Jimmy looked at them with haggard eyes. They avoided his glance. "There's going to be no ragging!" said Lovell savagely. "As for the money, it will be paid back, every cent. Our study will make it good!"

"He's backing up the thief!" howled Topham.

Jimmy Silver looked at the furious juniors, and looked at his three old chums; then, with an unsteady step, he went to the door. There was a buzz of derision and contempt as he went. The door opened, and closed again.

"Thief!" yelled Topham.

Lovell clenched his fists, and unclenched them again. Topham dragged the door open, and shouted the word again after Jimmy Silver:

"Thief!"

It rang in Jimmy Silver's ears as he went—alone!

THE END.

(See my "Chat" for our next story.—Ed.)
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