

JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD, AT THE BOATRACE!

(See the Grand School Tale in this Issue.)

The

EVERY TUESDAY.

Week Ending
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POPULAR

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THE ROOKWOODERS WATCH THE RIVAL CREWS PASS HAMMERSMITH BRIDGE!

(A Thrilling Episode from the Grand Rookwood Tale—Inside.)

For centuries the sandbank had kept the sea at bay; but now the waves had conquered and swept with a curl of their white lips over the frozen fen in every direction.

"By Heaven, they have seen it!" cried Leoffric of Leicester, standing erect. "Look, they ride forth already, and our labour is in vain!"

"Nay, nay," said Robin, with a strange laugh. "See you not what has happened? Those horses are riderless; the poor brutes have more sense than their masters, and our triumph is complete."

It was true. The horses, scenting the danger, tore out of the Priory garden and stampeded in a terrified mob northward, and as the men-at-arms in the ruins, hearing the frantic neighs and the clatter of hoofs, ran to the archway, it was to find the sea pouring round the little island in a roaring flood, rising higher and higher, spreading wider and wider, and cutting them off from all chance of escape.

Deep in the dungeon beneath the sheriff's house, Guy of Bollingwood sat with his head in his hands.

As the key grated in the lock and the door was flung wide, the young baron rose proudly in his chains and looked into the eyes—of Robin Hood!

"Dear heart alive, this is a joyful day!" cried Robin. "And as long as the good God spares us we will keep it as a feast! Bring the hammers, lads, and off with his fetters!"

The glare of torches filled the dungeon as Leoffric and Little John, their faces all agnir, went down on their knees and plied hammer and chisel.

"No questions, lad!" cried Robin. "Time enough as we go for that. By the Seven Champions of Christendom, but you may thank your lucky stars that the good townfolk of Nottingham have some love for the outlaw yet, else had we never overpowered the sheriff's guard, without their aid."

Leoffric twisted the last fetter from the young baron's ankle and flung it jangling to the far end of the dungeon.

"And now," said Robin, as out of the adjoining dungeon came Guy's troopers, who had been captured with him, "let us to Bollingwood to raise the siege. I doubt not those hogs have filled themselves to overflowing with poor Tom Taverner's ale by this time, and will have as little courage as a fallow doe."

It fell out exactly as Robin had surmised, and seizing a score of the men-at-arms whom John had left to guard the castle, with two of their officers, as hostages, they chased the rest over the frozen fields, now and again feathering a shaft in the back of one of them to quicken the others in their cowardly flight.

"Well, good Robin," said Guy, passing his arm round the waist of his sweet wife, the Lady Isobel, "thou hast saved me from death and I will take no denial; thou and our good friends here must find warm quarters behind our strong walls until the King has got into Wales or Windsor, or wherever he chooses to go when the floods let him free."

"Long live Guy Baron of Bollingwood!" cried the outlaws.

"Long live the brave lads of the Greenwood tree!" cried the men-at-arms.

(You must not miss next Tuesday's grand long romance of Robin Hood and his Merry Men of Sherwood, entitled: "Robin Hood Raises A Siege!")

THE ROOKWOODERS AT THE BOATRACE!

An exciting story of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s visit to the great Oxford and Cambridge Boatrace, and of an amazing adventure which takes place by the riverside.

Five At The Boat-Race!



Another Long Complete
tale of Jimmy Silver &
Co., of Rookwood.
BY
Owen Conquest.

THE FIRST CHAPTER Boatrace Day!

"ASS!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell politely.

Arthur Edward's remark was called forth by a dark blue badge that was pinned on Jimmy Silver's jacket.

"Fathhead!" was Jimmy Silver's equally polite rejoinder.

His observation was founded upon Lovell's light blue badge.

There was only one topic at Rookwood just then—the Boatrace. They were great on rowing at Rookwood, and naturally they took a deep interest in the classic event. Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, favoured Oxford, for the no doubt excellent reason that he had a cousin in the Oxford crew. Lovell, who knew all about rowing, and a little more, favoured the Light Blues—having an avuncular connection with Cambridge.

"What do you think, Raby?" asked Lovell.

"I think it would be ripping to see the race!" answered Raby.

"Ass! I mean—"

"What about asking the Head to let us off?" asked Newcome. "Even the Head ought to see that lessons are out of place on a day like this."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"There are lots of things that the Head doesn't see, old scout. That's one of them."

"I'd like to see Cambridge win," said Lovell.

"Oh, you wouldn't see that!" answered Jimmy Silver airily. "You see, my cousin in the Oxford crew—"

"That's the chief reason!" retorted Lovell. "If your giddy cousin rows like you do, Jimmy—"

"Why, you cheeky ass—"

"Order!" said Raby soothingly. "Hullo, here's Erroll, looking down in the mouth! What's your choice, Erroll?"

Kit Erroll gave the Fistical Four an inquiring look. His handsome face was rather clouded that morning.

"Choice!" he repeated.

"Yes, ass! Light or dark?"

"Blessed if he hasn't forgotten!" said Jimmy Silver, in wonder. "What tremendous thoughts are bubbling up in your brain-box, Erroll? Too busy to remember Boatrace Day?"

"I—I was thinking of something else," said Erroll. "I'm a bit worried, you chaps."

"Oh, I know!" grinned Lovell. "The Head's giddy visitor—Mr. Durie—"

"Slippery Smith!" said Erroll quietly. "There's no doubt about it, you fellows—he's the man! And I've heard from Inspector Sharpe, at Rookham, that he's not coming over till Monday about it. He's making inquiries, and in the meantime—"

"Well, let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver. "I dare say he knows best."

"I can't help feeling worried about it," said Erroll. "But I suppose I can do nothing. But I've a message for you, Jimmy!"

"Trot it out."

"Mr. Dalton told me to look for you. The Head wants to speak to you before lessons."

"Blow!" said Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth made his way to the Head's study—not with happy anticipations. Interviews with the Head were not always grateful or comforting.

But, rather to Jimmy Silver's surprise, he found Dr. Chisholm genial.

"Ah, I sent for you, Silver," he said. "I have received a telephone message from your father. Mr. Silver has requested leave for you to witness the race."

Jimmy's eyes danced.

"I have decided to accede to the request, Silver. I shall grant you an exeat for the day—for five."

"Oh, thank you, sir!" said Jimmy gratefully. "For—for five?"

"The fifth member of the party," continued the Head, "will be Erroll, of the Fourth Form."

Jimmy Silver fairly gasped.

Erroll was under sentence of threatened expulsion from the school!

"It is Mr. Durie whom Erroll has to thank, Silver."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy, completely bewildered. "I—I hardly understand, sir! I—I couldn't have thought—"

"I hope, Silver, that this generous kindness on the part of Mr. Durie will convince you that Erroll's statements regarding him are wild and absurd?"

"Yes, sir," stammered Jimmy. "It does look—"

"Very good!" said the Head. "You are free to leave the school as soon as you wish, Silver, with your friends. You will return in time for call-over this evening. That is all. You may go now."

Jimmy Silver gasped out his thanks, and almost danced out of the Head's study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Luck for Five!

"HURRAH!"
"What?"
"It's ripping!"
"But what—which?"

Jimmy Silver's face was beaming as he rejoined his chums in the Rookwood quadrangle.

He caught Arthur Edward Lovell round the neck and waltzed him round in a state of ecstasy.

"Leggo!" roared Lovell. "What the thump!"

"Are you potty, Jimmy?" yelled Raby.

"Hurrah!" trilled Jimmy Silver. "We're going to see the giddy Boat-race!"

"What?"
"Leave for five!" shouted Jimmy, releasing the breathless Lovell at last. "What price that?"

Lovell staggered against a beech trunk and gasped for breath.

"Ow! You silly ass!"

"Little us and Erroll!" chortled Jimmy Silver. "The pater's played up like a merry old trump, and he's got us leave from the Head. Little me, because I've a cousin in the Oxford crew, and you bouncers because you're my pals, and Erroll—"

"Why me?" asked Erroll in astonishment. "It's about the last thing I should have expected, in the circumstances."

"Beats me hollow!" said Newcome. Jimmy Silver explained.

Erroll's brow darkened a little as he listened. Lovell and Raby and Newcome exchanged curious glances.

"Blessed if it doesn't look as if the bargee isn't such a blighter, after all!" remarked Lovell. "This is jolly decent of him, anyhow, to put in a word for Erroll!"

"Slippery Smith or not, he's done a decent thing this time," said Raby.

"Anyhow, Erroll gets off!" said Newcome.

Erroll compressed his lips.

"I don't care about accepting a favour from Slippery Smith," he said quietly. "I'd rather not."

"Why, you ass," bawled Lovell, "are you thinking of missing a chance to see the Boat-race?"

"Shurrup!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Here he comes!"

The Fistical Four stood silent as Lucian Durie approached the cheery group. There was a pleasant smile on the young man's face. Whether Mr. Durie was "Slippery Smith" or not, he knew how to make himself agreeable. He nodded kindly to the juniors.

"I hear that you youngsters are going on an excursion to-day," he said. "I hope you'll have a good time."

"Thank you!" said Jimmy a little awkwardly.

He could not help thinking at that moment how recently he and his chums had "handled" Mr. Lucian Durie, and he marvelled at Durie's geniality.

"I've been looking out trains for you," said Mr. Durie, with a smile. "You'll do well to catch the nine-thirty at Rookham. That will give you good time."

"You're very kind!" gasped Lovell.

"Not at all!" said Lucian Durie smoothly. "I regret very much having lost my temper yesterday, although you must admit that I was very greatly provoked. I gave you fellows a bad impression of me. I am sorry."

"Oh!" stuttered Jimmy.

"Your friend Erroll has done me injustice," said Lucian Durie. "I hope to convince him of it. That's all."

Erroll looked at him steadily.

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"I do not take back a single word," he said in a clear voice. "You are Slippery Smith, and I know it. You made a murderous attack upon me, and only these fellows coming along saved my life."

"H'm!" murmured Lovell uneasily.

"I've admitted that I lost my temper," said Durie calmly. "That is all there is about it. You will know me better some day, I hope. Best of times on your excursion to-day, my boys."

And with a genial nod, Lucian Durie walked away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. In spite of themselves, in spite of what they knew—that they were certain of—they were staggered. Was it possible—was it barely possible—that there was some ghastly mistake? That they had misjudged—misunderstood? It did not seem possible, and yet—

"Anyhow, we're going," said Lovell, at last. "And Erroll's coming. Come in and get ready. Jolly decent of him to look out the trains for us. I hate time-tables. Come on!"

"But," began Erroll, "I don't want to—"

"Come on!" roared Lovell.

Kit Erroll was marched into the School House, willy-nilly, to get ready for the excursion. Whatever Mr. Durie was, whatever his motives might have been, the Fistical Four did not mean to let their chum stand on his dignity and lose such a chance.

The Fourth were going into their Form-room now, and Mornington called to Erroll in the doorway.

"Come on, Erroll!"

"No giddy construe for Erroll this morning!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Wish us luck, Morny. We're going to the Boat-race!"

"By gad! Lucky bargees!" said Mornington. "Room for one more? How did you get leave?"

Mornington knitted his brows thoughtfully when he heard of Mr. Lucian Durie's intervention.

"Jolly queer!" he commented. "He's heapin' giddy coals of fire on Erroll's napper. Perhaps he thinks you'll telephone to Inspector Sharpe and tell him it's all a mistake, Erroll?"

"He's mistaken if he thinks so," said Erroll dryly.

"Well, best of luck," said Mornington, and he followed the rest of the Fourth into the Form-room.

Mr. Lucian Durie's kindness was, indeed, rather hard to comprehend, in the peculiar circumstances. But the Fistical Four, at least, did not waste much time thinking about it.

They had enough to think of in their happy exemption from school for the day, and the prospect of witnessing the classic rowing event of the year. In great glee they made their hurried preparations for the journey.

Kit Erroll was glad to go, there was no doubt about that; but he did not look so gleeful as the Fistical Four. There was still a cloud on his brow.

But he really had no choice about going. Jimmy Silver & Co. declined to entertain objections, and undoubtedly they would have walked Erroll off by friendly force if he had declined to accompany them.

While the rest of the Fourth Form were grinding in the Form-room with Mr. Dalton, four merry juniors and one serious fellow walked cheerily out of the gates of Rookwood and walked down to Coombe. There they took the local train to catch the 9.30 at Rookham.

Mr. Lucian Durie looked after them as they started, with a smile on his face—a strange, threatening smile.

After they were gone the young man sauntered back to the School House and

went to the Head's study. Dr. Chisholm was in the Sixth Form room then, digging Greek roots with the Sixth, and there was no one to hear Mr. Durie's talk on the telephone. It was a brief talk, after he had rung up a number in Rookham.

"The nine-thirty!" said Mr. Durie.

"Sure?" came a rather husky voice.

"Of course. You've lots of time, Dusty."

"Lots!"

That was all. But Mr. Lucian Durie smiled with satisfaction as he put up the receiver and strolled out of Dr. Chisholm's study. The five excursionists were expected—by the Head—to turn up at evening call-over at Rookwood. But if Mr. Lucian Durie's plans worked well, only four of the party were to answer their names when the roll was called in Big Hall!

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

At the Race!

"CAMBRIDGE!" said Lovell.

"Forget it!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I think—in fact I know that—"

"What you know about races, old fellow, would fill a thimble, if it were a twenny-weeny thimble—"

"Look here, you ass!"

"There's the train, you fellows," said Erroll mildly. "Hadden't you better settle the point after we've got our seats?"

"Just what I was thinking," remarked Raby.

"Come on, you duffers!" said Newcome. "There's lots of people going!"

The Rookwood party were changing at Rookham Junction. The London train was already in, and passengers were taking their places, when Lovell and Jimmy renewed the unending argument concerning the respective merits of Oxford and Cambridge. In point of fact, the argument was ill-timed. So it was postponed, while the juniors rushed for a carriage. A short, thick-set man with a bull-neck and a moustache like a ragged scrubbing-brush, hustled against them close to the train. He was looking along the carriages, but seemed in no hurry to take his seat.

When the five juniors crowded into a carriage, however, the bull-necked man followed them in.

"Full up here!" said Lovell, who had to stand.

The man scowled at him.

"Room for me," he answered.

"There's more room along the train," said Erroll.

The bull-necked man looked at Erroll, and his deep-set, narrow eyes glinted for a moment.

He did not answer, but shoved Lovell roughly back and forced his way into the carriage.

"Look here!" exclaimed Lovell angrily.

"Nuff said! This 'ere carriage will 'old one more."

Slam! The porters were closing the doors of the train. It was in the minds of the Fistical Four to collar the bull-necked gentleman and drop him on the platform, as a reward for his incivility; but it was too late now. The express moved out of the station.

There were more passengers than seats in the carriage; and Lovell stood at one end and the bull-necked man at the other. A passenger alighted a few stations farther on, and Lovell promptly dropped into the seat, anticipating a movement on the part of the bull-necked gentleman.

"Look 'ere, you give me that there seat!" said the man with a scowl.

"First come, first served," answered Lovell.

"I tell you—"

"You may take my seat, if you like," said Erroll, who was sitting near the disgruntled passenger. And he rose.

The bull-necked man gave him a quick, very curious look.

"I don't want your seat!" he said sourly, and a little awkwardly, a flush coming into his hard, rugged face.

"Just as you like," said Erroll, and he sat down again.

The man stood silent, letting the matter drop, as the train raced on. Jimmy Silver & Co. chatted away, nineteen to the dozen, if not twenty, as the landscape whirled by the rushing express. They were in the greatest of spirits.

There was another change half an hour later, and the Rookwood party trooped off merrily to the waiting train. They had scarcely taken their seats in it, when the bull-necked man put his head into the carriage.

"Hallo! Here's that merry merchant again!" murmured Lovell.

There was an empty seat in the carriage this time, and the bull-necked man sat down in it, favouring the Rookwooders with a black glance. Erroll was seated opposite the man, and his eyes turned upon him a good many times, with something of perplexity in them. The man avoided looking at him, however, staring out of the window during the completion of the journey.

At the London terminus Jimmy Silver & Co. mingled in a thronging crowd, and the bull-necked man vanished from sight and from their minds. Over light refreshments at the station there was a discussion, Lovell advancing his views, at great length, in favour of Cambridge; and by this time Arthur Edward seemed to have settled it, to his complete satisfaction, that the Light Blues were bound to win, for the reason that Jimmy Silver's cousin was rowing for Oxford!

"Suppose we settle where we're going to see the race!" suggested Erroll, in a pause of the argument due to expenditure of breath.

"What a jolly good idea!" grinned Raby. "For goodness' sake, dry up, you fellows! It will be settled soon, anyhow."

"What about Putney, for the start?" said Newcome.

"Or Mortlake, for the finish?" said Raby.

"Well, we can't see both start and finish," remarked Jimmy Silver sagely.

"Unless you ask that wonderful cousin of yours to give us a lift in the Oxford boat!" suggested Lovell, with deep sarcasm. "I've no doubt they wouldn't notice the extra weight—with your cousin pulling."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, old chap—cheese it!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're wearing out your chin. By Hammersmith Bridge is a jolly good place, though I've no doubt it's pretty well crowded already."

"I think—" resumed Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Get a move on!" said Jimmy Silver. "Along the towing-path—that's our place!"

And the Rookwooders got a move on. They were soon in the midst of a thronging crowd, most of them decorated with light or dark blue colours, and all evidently keen on the classic race. In the midst of the throng, a thick-set, bull-necked man shoved by the juniors, and they recognised their acquaintance of the Rookham train.

"Hallo, there he is again!" said Lovell, as the man disappeared in the throng. "Blessed if that merchant isn't haunting us!"



ROUGH JUSTICE FOR A RASCAL! "Give him a Rookwood ragging!" grinned Lovell, and the Fistical Four proceeded to rag the bull-necked ruffian—carefully, thoroughly, and scientifically. He was rolled to a deep, muddy puddle, and rolled in it until he had gathered up all the available mud. (See Chapter 5.)

"Is he following us?" said Erroll quietly.

Lovell stared.

"Following us? Why the thump should he follow us?"

"He came up from Rookham with us and—"

"So did lots of people, to see the Boat-race," said Raby. "That's what he's here for, I suppose. No reason for following us that I can see."

Erroll did not answer, but his brows were knitted. Jimmy Silver pressed his arm.

"You don't suspect—"

"I don't know!" muttered Erroll. "But—but the man is keeping close to us, and you can see the kind of ruffian he is from his looks. And it was Slippery Smith that found us the train from Rookham—"

Jimmy compressed his lips.

"We'll jolly well keep our eyes open," he said. "Keep together, you fellows—mind you don't get separated."

It was not easy to keep together now, for the juniors were in the midst of a thick, jostling, swaying crowd. The towpath was swarming with sightseers, and there was a buzz of discussion as to whether "they" had started. The juniors secured a fairly good place, and they held together, though there were a good many unceremonious elbows at work.

Arthur Edward Lovell cast a glare behind as he felt a shove, and almost jumped at the sight of the bull-necked man, with his sharp, rat-like eyes.

"You again!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Don't shove, please!"

Erroll looked round.

Without heeding Lovell, the bull-necked man shoved along, until he was standing close to Erroll.

So thick was the crowd now that it

was impossible to avoid contact—the sightseers were almost wedged together. There was a shout:

"Here they come!"

All eyes were on the river now. In the distance, in the sunshine on the river, there was a glimpse of two racing skiffs. Erroll's eyes turned with the rest—he forgot the lowering face behind him. It was fortunate that Jimmy Silver did not forget. It was almost by inspiration that "Uncle James" of Rookwood turned his eyes from the gleaming river below. The next moment there was a shout and a desperate struggle.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Narrow Escape!

"HELP!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"What—"

"Great pip!"

"Jimmy—"

Jimmy Silver was grasping a thick, muscular wrist—and in the hand there was something that glittered and flashed. With his left hand Jimmy struck fiercely at the bull-necked man's savage face.

"Erroll, lend a hand!"

"What—" panted Lovell dazedly.

"Clang!"

The knife dropped on the ground among a swarm of feet. The bull-necked man wrenched himself away.

"Collar him!" shrieked Raby.

Jimmy sprang at the man again, and a backward blow sent him reeling. Kit Erroll's grasp was almost on the ruffian, when he squirmed into the swaying crowd out of reach.

The crowd jostled, swayed, and wedged. Excited voice shouted on all sides.

It had all passed so rapidly that only a few close at hand were aware that there had almost been a tragedy.

"The villain!" panted Jimmy. "After him! Collar him! Stop that man! Stop him—stop him!"

"Order there!"

"Keep your place! Stop shoving—"

Erroll caught the captain of the Fourth by the arm.

"Too late!" he said quietly. "He's gone! He knew he was safe in a crowd like this! The villain!"

"But—but what did he do?" stammered Raby.

"He had a knife—"

Jimmy Silver panted. He was white with horror of Erroll's fearfully narrow escape.

"I caught his wrist just in time," he panted. "He wedged close to Erroll, and there was a knife in his hand. In another second Erroll would have been stabbed—"

"Good heavens!"

"Jimmy!"

"Here they come!" came in a tremendous roar. "Here they come!"

Jimmy Silver cast a wild glance round. A policeman could be seen towering over the heads along the tow-path, but too far off for speech, and approaching him was impossible. The bull-necked man had vanished, wriggling in the crowd—the swarming throng that made his dastardly attempt safe from his very audacity and daring.

If that murderous blow had been struck, Erroll would have fallen among the crowd. Probably no one would have guessed that a knife-thrust had been delivered till afterwards. The crowd was wedged too thick for observation. But for Jimmy Silver's watchfulness and prompt intervention, Slippery Smith, at Rookwood, would have had nothing more to fear from the boy who had denounced him.

It had been almost a tragedy—a fearful tragedy—and Jimmy's heart felt almost sick within him. Erroll was quiet and calm. He understood the danger he had been in, and he knew to whom he owed it. He pressed Jimmy Silver's arm.

"There's nothing to be done now, Jimmy," he whispered. "Thank you, old fellow! You've saved my life! Thank you! But the brute's gone! Look at the race, old fellow."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

But in the wedged crowd it was impossible to do anything further, and he turned his attention to the racing skiffs again, only in time to see them flash by. There was a roll and a roar of shouting voices, and the crowd began to move.

"Cambridge was leading, I think!" gasped Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Think again!" grinned Raby. "I fancy Oxford was half a length ahead and—"

"Quarter!" said Newcome.

"Half a length behind, you mean!" said Lovell obstinately. "You'll find that they'll be about three lengths behind at Chiswick Eyot."

"Bow-wow!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Jolly hot here!" grunted Lovell. "I'm jolly sure Cambridge was leading!"

"Fathead!"

It was not easy to get out of the swarming crowd. It was a good hour before the Rookwood juniors were away from it, enjoying the cool breeze there after the heat of the crowd.

"My pater will be at the hotel at Mortlake," said Jimmy Silver. "I was thinking that we might get along and touch him a spread, but—"

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"Jolly good idea," said Lovell. "No 'but' about it."

"But," said Jimmy Silver quietly, "we want to deal with the ruffian who tried to stab Erroll."

"He's gone long ago," said Lovell, with a stare. "Not likely to show up again, I fancy. We should give him in charge."

"He won't show up where we've a chance of giving him in charge," assented Jimmy Silver. "But you can bet he's not losing sight of us. I fancy if we took a lonely walk he would drop in again."

"Then we won't!" said Lovell.

"We will, you mean," said Jimmy coolly. "We want to see that merchant—and handle him. He's not going to have it all his own way. I want to get my hands on him."

"Well, that's not a bad idea!" agreed Lovell. "If he follows us again we—"

"I fancy he will! It's pretty clear that he's a confederate of Slippery Smith, and that's why that villain got Erroll leave to come up and see the Boatrace—and found us our train at Rookham, too. He had fixed it up with the villain to follow us, and find an opportunity of ridding him of Erroll's evidence."

"I suppose that's pretty clear now," admitted Lovell. "We—we ought to have suspected something of the sort, come to think of it. I wonder what the Head would say to this?"

"Not much good telling the Head—we've got to deal with the villain ourselves. And if I get my paws on him" Jimmy's eyes glinted—"I'll make him sorry for himself!"

"What-ho!"

The juniors turned from the river into a quiet path, shaded by trees. They sauntered on for some distance, and at a point where the narrow path was lined by a thick hedge, Jimmy turned out of it, through a gap in the hedge. His chums followed him quickly. In a minute or less they were in cover, watching the path they had come by, through the interstices in the hedge. If Jimmy Silver's surmise was correct, and the ruffian was still shadowing them, they would know the truth soon. And in the eagerness of watching for him they forgot even the Boatrace, and its still unknown result; and Lovell even forgot to remark that he was pretty sure that it would turn out that Cambridge was the winner. There was a footfall on the path, and the juniors breathed quickly and hard.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Rough Justice!

"THERE he is!"

Jimmy Silver scarcely breathed the words.

Along the lonely, shaded foot-path came a thick-set figure—a man with a bull neck, whose rat-like eyes were watchfully about him.

Evidently Slippery Smith's confederate was still on the track of the Rookwood juniors. He had failed once, but he was still shadowing his quarry to make another attempt.

The five juniors remained quite silent, watching through the hedge, waiting for the ruffian to come abreast of the gap.

The rascal came on rather quickly, looking ahead of him as he came. It was evident that he did not suspect for a moment that his intended victim had stopped, and that the five juniors had taken cover to wait for him.

He came opposite the gap in the hedge, and Jimmy Silver made a sign to his chums. Like an arrow from a bow Jimmy leaped out into the path, and before the man had even time to swing round on him, Jimmy's clenched fist struck. There was a gasping howl from the ruffian as he reeled. He made an effort to recover, but the rest of the Rookwooders were on him now. The ruffian went to the ground with a crash, with the chums of Rookwood sprawling breathlessly over him.

If he had a weapon he had no time to produce it. His wrists were grasped and held, and Erroll was kneeling on his chest, and Jimmy Silver's boot was planted on his bull neck.

A savage string of oaths broke from the ruffian.

"Fairly caught!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "You shouldn't have tried the same game twice, my man."

An oath answered him.

"Now you're going through it," continued Jimmy. "We can't very well carry you to a police-station, but we're going to make you sorry for yourself. Catch on?"

"A Rookwood ragging!" grinned Lovell.

"That's it!"

The bull-necked ruffian cursed furiously, and he had a flow of language that rather startled the Rookwood juniors. But they did not heed his oaths. They proceeded to rag him²² carefully, thoroughly, and scientifically. His own dirty neck-cloth was used to tie his hands, and his own belt was buckled round his legs. Then he was rolled to a deep, muddy puddle, and rolled and rolled in it, until he had gathered up all the available mud. By this time the Rookwood juniors were chuckling²³ gleefully; and the ruffian was too breathless to swear again.

"Now he can hop it!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

One of Dusty's legs were turned up and buckled into place with his belt. He had one leg left to hop on, but he refused to hop. Instead of that, he lay and yelled out oaths and threats.

"Start him!" said Jimmy Silver.

Five pairs of hands dragged up the ruffian, and he stood unsteadily on one leg, gasping for breath through the mud that smothered him.

"Now, all kick together," said the captain of the Fourth, "and kick so long as he's in reach."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, ye cripples!" yelled Lovell.

Five pairs of boots commenced operations on Dusty. With a furious yell the ruffian leapt forward on one leg. Five pairs of active boots dribbled him along, and he hopped desperately to escape.

"Hop it!" shrieked Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Hopping desperately, Dusty got up quite a good speed, and the Rookwooders, laughing too much to pursue him further, stopped. Dusty, still going strong, hopped out of sight.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Lovell wiped his eyes.

"I fancy that merry merchant will remember his meeting with Rookwood chaps. I wonder how he'll get home?"

"That's his biznai!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "I think we've done with him now, anyhow. Now, let's hustle along and get to Mortlake in time to catch the pater. I want to congratulate my cousin on a win for Oxford."

"For Cambridge, you mean!" said Lovell.
 "Bow-wow!"
 "Rats!"
 And they started.

Dusk was deepening on Rookwood School when five juniors came in at the gates and headed for the School House, just in time to slip into Hall and answer "Adsum" to their names when the Head called the roll. Jimmy Silver & Co. were a little tired—but very cheerful. They had had a glorious day out, and Jimmy's "pater" had stood a really marvellous spread, and they had news of the Boatrace for the less lucky Rookwooders who hadn't seen it; and so they were quite satisfied with themselves and with things generally. They answered cheerily to their names, and came out of Hall in great spirits; and in the corridor they caught sight of Mr. Lucian Durie. Erroll had stayed behind in Hall to speak to Mornington, and was not in sight when Lucian Durie came up to the Fistical Four.

"Back again, what?" asked Mr. Durie.
 "Yes," said Jimmy, "here we are again!"

"Isn't Erroll with you?" Durie was breathing quickly. "Hasn't he come back?"

"Sorry!" said Jimmy.
 "He hasn't?"
 "Ha, ha! He has!"

"Good news for you, Smithy. What?" roared Arthur Edward Lovell.

Erroll came out with Morny. Lucian Durie gave him one look, and his face whitened, and he turned and strode away without another word, and Jimmy Silver & Co. went to their study quite happy and bright after their day at the Boatrace.

THE END.
 (Look out for "Lagged At Last!" next week's thrilling and dramatic long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood.)

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Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his chums. Address your letters to: The Editor, THE POPULAR, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

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LOOK at this programme of school stories and old-time romance, and you will see what a wonderful treat there is in store for you next Tuesday when you buy your copy of the jolly old POPULAR. First come the three complete school tales:

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A BALDHEADED BIRD.

A reader tells me that he has a bird, though he does not specify its class, with its head quite denuded of feathers, and my reader wants to know of some remedy for this.

The baldness may be due to two causes—either to some skin affection, or to the fact that the bird's perch is too near the roof of the cage, and it is enabled to rub its head against it.

Of course, the remedy in this latter case is very obvious—simply to shift the perch lower down.

If, however, the baldness is due to a skin disease, then a little sulphur ointment rubbed into the bald place will have the effect of remedying the trouble.

A GOOD ROACH-PASTE.

"Will" wants me to tell him how to make a good roach-paste. An excellent paste-bait for roach is made by boiling wheat and malt in milk until it is quite soft. This is a favourite bait for roach and bream with many anglers.

A BOY WITH HEAVY EYEBROWS.

J. H., in a very long and interesting letter, tells me that his eyebrows are becoming too heavy, and he wants me to tell him of some remedy to remove them.

I would advise my reader very earnestly not to tinker with the hair upon his face; the chances are that he will only make matters worse. Even if his eyebrows do become a bit bushy, they are not such a drawback or defect to a man's appearance as to need removal.

To my mind, they give a man a sharp, intelligent look, and they, therefore, should be appreciated, and not scorned.

A ROUND-SHOULDERED BOY.

R. R. is a boy who wants me to tell him a remedy for round shoulders. This reader is also anxious to know if too much sleep is bad for him.

His first question is a comparatively easy one to answer. Round shoulders can be cured by a judicious use of a pair of light dumb-bells. Let R. R. get a pair of dumb-bells weighing two pounds each. These should cost him quite a small sum at any ironmonger's. With these let my reader exercise just after getting up and just before going to bed.

He will find that the exercise which the muscles of the chest and arms receive from the use of the dumb-bells will so brace them up that his inclination to stoop will cease.

With regard to his inquiry about sleep, I might say that a fair amount of sleep will do a growing lad no harm, because during the hours of repose the body silently expands and acquires size. A lad from fifteen to eighteen needs from seven to eight hours' sleep.

HE WANTS TO BE A SCHOOLMASTER.

A reader of the POPULAR writes to say that he is keenly desirous of becoming a schoolmaster, but is afraid that he cannot pay the ordinary fees to pass through college for the purpose of obtaining his degree.

In these circumstances, I would advise my reader to endeavour to get appointed as pupil-teacher at some local Council School. In this way, whilst learning his profession, he will at the same time receive a small salary, which will enable him to keep himself during the period of instruction which he must undergo.

"BEST SELLERS!"

POPULAR readers ought to be put wise to the fact that there is an extra special series of school and circus stories, dealing with those popular characters, Harry Wharton & Co., just starting in our grand Companion Paper, the "Magnet" Library. Publishers of novels often refer to such-and-such a book as a "best seller." Well, we can apply the term to this week's "Magnet" story, "A Star of the Circus," for I dare to wager my best Sunday topper that this yarn—the first of the series—will go down like ginger-beer on a hot summer's day! While we are about it, a mention must be made, too, of the splendid four-page footer supplement appearing in the "Magnet" every week. It's the real goods—readers can't say enough in praise of it; whilst the football and detective serial, "The Case of the Langdale Wanderers," completes as pretty a programme of good things as can be bought for the weekly outlay of twopenny. Just you get a copy of this week's "Magnet," and see for yourselves, my lads.

Your Editor.

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