

Sverna *Leopold*

VOTED THE BEST - OUR WILD WEST YARNS!

The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY

Week Ending
April 14th, 1928
New Series No. 491.

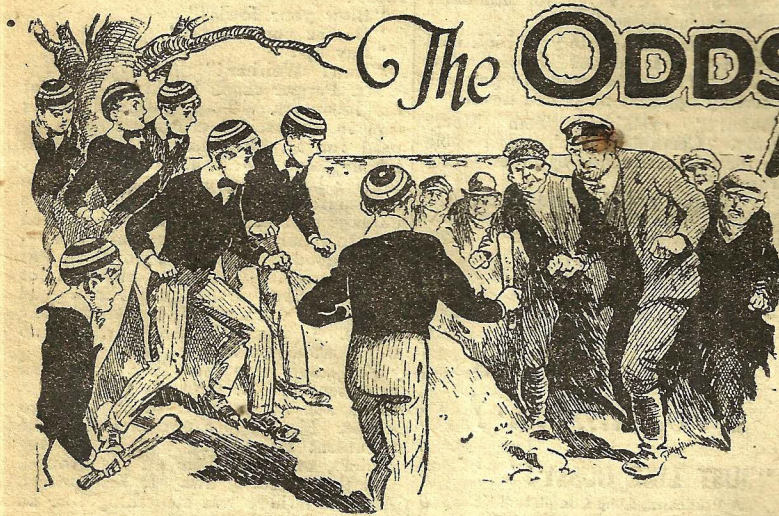
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SURROUNDED!

BUT GAME TO THE LAST!

"LET 'EM ALL COME!" That is the defiant cry of the Rookwood Rebels, barricaded in their island stronghold. And they strive to keep their colours flying in spite of the attempts that are made to bring them to heel!



The ODDS AGAINST THEM!

by Owen Conquest

A Rousing Long Complete Story
of Jimmy Silver & Co., of
Rookwood.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Surprise for Mr. Dalton!

"DICKY!"

"It's Dicky Dalton!"
At Rookwood School classes were in progress; all Forms, excepting the Classical Fourth, were in their Form-rooms. But there was one Form-room that was empty; one Form master who was idle that sunny spring morning. Jimmy Silver & Co., the rebels of Rookwood, were out of bounds.

The Rookwood rebellion was "going strong."

For several days the Classical Fourth Form had been camped on the island, nearly a mile from the school, and, so far, at least, the Head had not succeeded in rounding up the rebels.

Jimmy Silver & Co. remained cheerfully in camp, waiting for the Head's next move. It seemed a long time coming.

Probably Dr. Chisholm was perplexed. It was an unprecedented state of affairs. The juniors were content to wait. Camping-out was, as Arthur Edward Lovell declared, better than grinding Latin in the Form-room. How the affair was going to end, even Jimmy Silver did not profess to know; all Jimmy knew was that the Classical Fourth were not going to give in.

On that point all the rebels were agreed. It seemed improbable, on the other hand, that the Head would give in. So what would be the outcome of the rebellion was an interesting problem.

Arthur Edward Lovell, sitting on a branch of a tree overhanging the water, was the first to spot a boat pulling up the river from the direction of Coombe. An athletic young man was pulling, and Lovell recognised him at once.

It was Mr. Richard Dalton, formerly master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, lately dismissed by the Head.

"It's Dicky!" sang out Lovell. "Old Dicky's heard about it, and he's coming to pay us a visit."

"I don't think!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "It's Dicky Dalton right enough, though."

"Might be coming to join us!" said Lovell, from the branch above.

"Fathead!"

"Well, why not?" demanded Lovell.

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"We're backing up against the Head because he sacked Dicky. We're on strike till Dicky comes back to Rookwood. He didn't want to go, did he? Well, then, why shouldn't he come and take a hand?"

The juniors under the tree chuckled. It was true that the rebel Form were backing up Dicky Dalton, in their own original manner. But certainly it was not likely that the dismissed Form master would think of taking a hand in a schoolboy rebellion.

"You're an ass, Lovell, old man!" remarked Raby.

"Well, he's coming here," said Lovell. "What's he coming here for if he's not backing us up? You'll see that I'm right."

"Bow-wow!" said Newcome.

"Look here, Newcome—"

"You look out, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'll be off that branch in a jiffy, and taking a bath with your clobber on!"

"Rats!" retorted Lovell.

The juniors watched the boat as it came up against the current. Mr. Dalton was not looking towards the island; he seemed to be unaware of the group of juniors standing under the trees on the island shore. As the news spread that Dicky Dalton was coming, more and more of the Fourth-Formers came along from the camp in the centre of the little island, and joined Jimmy Silver & Co. by the water's edge. All of them watched the advancing boat with keen interest.

"He's coming here!" repeated Lovell. "He isn't!" said Mornington.

"Look!"
The boat swerved to pass the island. Evidently Mr. Richard Dalton was not intending to call at the rebel camp—even if he knew that the Rookwooders were there, which was doubtful.

"He's going on!" said Tubby Muffin. "I'll hail him, then!" exclaimed Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell sat astride of the branch, holding on with his legs, and put both hands to his mouth to make a trumpet, and shouted:

"Boat, ahoy!"

Mr. Dalton glanced round.

"Dicky Dalton, ahoy!" reared Lovell. "Ha, ha, ha!"

The young man in the boat stared towards the island. The astonishment in his face was very evident.

"This way!" shouted Raby.

The boat swerved again, and Mr. Dalton pulled towards the spot where the juniors stood. Jimmy Silver & Co. "capped" him with great respect. To their minds, he was still their Form master, and they owed him respect, the Head's dismissal of "Dicky" notwithstanding.

"Comin' ashore, sir?" called out Mornington.

"Oh, do!" said Putty of the Fourth. "We'll stand you lunch in our camp, Mr. Dalton!"

"Yes, rather!"

The boat bumped on the rushes, and stopped. Mr. Dalton stood up. He was still looking astonished.

"Good-morning, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What does this mean, Silver?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"What does what mean, sir?" asked the captain of the Fourth.

"How comes it that you are here? You should be in your Form-room at Rookwood at this hour!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"Then you haven't heard, sir!" exclaimed Lovell.

Mr. Dalton looked up at him. Lovell was swaying rather perilously on the branch over the river. But it was useless to warn Arthur Edward Lovell to be careful. Arthur Edward always knew best.

MR.

OWEN CONQUEST

is writing a grand new serial,
featuring Jimmy Silver and
Co., of Rookwood, in The
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On Sale Every Wednesday.

"Heard of what, Lovell?"

"We're on strike, sir!"

"What!"

"We've cleared out of Rookwood, and we're not going back till the Head comes to terms. It's a sort of barring-out," explained Lovell.

"Nonsense!"

"Not at all, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We mean business. The prefects have tried already to shift us, and they were jolly glad to get away."

"What-ho!" chuckled Lovell.

Mr. Dalton stared at the juniors, his brows knitted. He seemed very puzzled and very distressed.

"But what is all this about, Silver?" he asked. "I hoped that matters would go smoothly after I left Rookwood. I suppose you have a new Form master—"

"There's a rotter, but we don't own him!" said Mornington.

"Mornington!"

"Well, he is a rotter, sir," said Morny cheerfully. "In fact, a rank rotter!"

"You have had trouble with your new Form master, Silver?" asked Mr. Dalton.

"Lots!" said Jimmy. "But that isn't all. We're on strike till the Head fetches you back to Rookwood, sir! We're not going to have any other Form master!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Absurd!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "You are acting very wrongly and very rebelliously."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Lovell from above.

"Shut up, Lovell!" said Jimmy Silver. "You're not to check your Form master, you ass!"

"Sorry!" said Lovell.

"Nonsense! I am no longer your Form master!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "You owe respect and obedience to your headmaster."

"That's all right when he toes the line," said Couroy; "not till he toes the line, though."

"No fear!" said several voices emphatically.

"Come ashore, Mr. Dalton, and stand in with us!" said Lovell encouragingly. "We'll make you leader."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You foolish boy!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "If I have any influence left over you, I beg you to return to Rookwood at once and apologise to your headmaster."

"Can't be did, sir!"

"My boys—"

"I thought you were coming to join us when I spotted you on the river," said Lovell.

"Nonsense! I did not know you were here. I am staying with a friend at Latham, and came out for a pull on the river," said Mr. Dalton. "I had no idea that anything of this kind was taking place. Silver, according to what you say, you seem to have been inspired by some regard for me in taking this action—"

"Just that, sir!"

"Then I beg you to stop it at once and return to Rookwood."

"Impossible, sir! We're not giving in till the Head agrees to fetch you back."

"Absurd! Besides, the Head never would agree. Do you think your headmaster will allow himself to be dictated to by Lower boys?" exclaimed Mr. Dalton.

"I hope so, sir," said Jimmy cheerfully. "Anyhow, we can't give in now if we want to—and we don't want to. The Head's threatened to sack half a dozen of us, and he will jolly well keep his word if we give him the chance.

We're all standing together till he comes to terms."

"If you properly express your regret to—"

"But we haven't any regret, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, sir," said Lovell, "we think we've done right. In fact, we know we've done right."

"Hear, hear!"

"The Head will have to chuck it in the long run," said Lovell confidently. "He can't have this going on for ever. It will get into the papers. The governors will come down on him. You join up with us, sir, and we'll see you through."

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Dalton sat down and picked up his oars.

"Won't you come ashore and lunch, sir?" asked Mornington.

"I cannot countenance your lawless proceedings in any way," said Mr. Dalton sternly. He pushed off from the island.

"Good-bye, sir! We're backing you up all the same!"

"Best of luck, Dicky!"

The boat glided out into the river again.

"Tell us where to send you a message when the Head gives in!" bawled Lovell.

Mr. Dalton did not reply to that. He pulled away from the island without a backward glance.

"Dicky's a good sort, but he's a bit of an ass," said Lovell. "I think that he—"

"Look out!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"I'm all right, Jimmy, you ass! Think I don't know how to sit on a branch of—"

"It's cracking!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Crack!

There was a yell from Arthur Edward Lovell as he shot downward into the water.

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Edward Lovell came up, spluttering. He crawled through shallow water and thick mud to the shore. A roar of laughter greeted him.

"Ow!" gasped Lovell. "Ooooooh! This mud is filthy! Groogh! Gug-gug-gug!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Lovell. "There's nothing to cackle at, is there?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Apparently the juniors thought that there was something to cackle at. At all events, they cackled.

Arthur Edward Lovell crawled away to clean himself, leaving them cackling.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Mr. Carker's Plan of Campaign!

"MR. CARKER!"

"Sir!"

"Something must be done, Mr. Carker!"

Dr. Chisholm spoke in an exceedingly dry manner. Mr. Carker's rather fishy, greenish eyes glistened, but he made no reply.

"This has gone on too long, Mr. Carker," said the Head.

"I agree, sir!"

"You were appointed master of the Fourth Form here, Mr. Carker."

"Quite so, sir."

"Your Form has been in revolt ever since your arrival. This is not what I expected."

The Head's manner was severe. His manner often was autocratic in dealing with his staff. The staff did not like it;

and Mr. Carker, the latest addition to the staff, did not like it any more than the older hands.

But he did not think of arguing with the Head. Mr. Richard Dalton had argued with the Head, and had been dismissed. Mr. Carker did not want to be dismissed.

So he did not point out to the Head, as he might easily have done, that the Form had been in revolt before his arrival at Rookwood, and that the cause—the dismissal of Mr. Dalton—had no connection with him at all.

Mr. Carker, like the rest of the staff, had the impression that the Head had asked for trouble, and had got it! But it would never have done to tell the old gentleman so.

If the Head chose to lay the blame on Mr. Carker, it was up to Mr. Carker to let him do so—to give him his head, as it were. Mr. Carker's only solace was the prospect of "taking it out" of his Form—as soon as he had an opportunity.

The Head paused, like Brutus, for a reply; but Mr. Carker did not speak. So the Head went on:

"The present state of affairs is disgraceful. Mr. Dalton, your predecessor here, was dismissed for insubordination. But, in justice to him, I am bound to say that his Form gave no such trouble as this in his time at Rookwood. If you are not able to handle a junior Form, Mr. Carker, there is no reason why you should not say so candidly."

Mr. Carker breathed hard.

"I trust that I am fully capable of handling the Form, sir," he answered, goaded, as it were, into resistance. "But the Form was not in a normal state when I took control. I understand that—"

Dr. Chisholm raised a thin, white hand.

"We need not go into that, Mr. Carker! The question is—can you deal with the Fourth Form, or can you not?"

"I shall certainly try, sir," said Mr. Carker, with a gasp. "I have been thinking the matter out—indeed, I have made some tentative arrangements, and, with your approval, I shall proceed—"

"Very good! The boys must be brought back to their duty at once," said the Head. "That is essential."

"They will yield to nothing but force, sir," said Mr. Carker. "They have already refused to obey your personal order to return to the school." Mr. Carker could not resist giving the Head that little thrust.

Dr. Chisholm frowned.

"If you have a plan, Mr. Carker, you—"

"I have, sir. The Sixth Form prefects have tried to remove Silver and his associates from the island and failed. It will be necessary to use greater force—"

"No doubt. But in what way?"

Mr. Carker coughed.

"My idea is to engage a number of men from the neighbourhood, sir, and pay them a moderate fee for their services. A dozen grown men will be able to deal with the rebels."

The Head frowned again.

"I do not like the idea, Mr. Carker! Rough measures may be necessary, but they should not be too rough. I cannot run the risk of any of the boys being injured."

"I shall give instructions to that effect, of course."

"If you think your plan will be efficacious, Mr. Carker, you may proceed with it. I am now due in the Sixth Form-room."

"Very good, sir!"

Mr. Carker left the Head's study with a frowning and grim brow. He was beginning to understand that his post at Rookwood depended on bringing the Fourth Form to heel; which was hardly fair on him. And even the measures he used were likely to be severely criticised by the Head as too rough and too ruffianly—though what other measures would serve his turn, the Head did not suggest. Mr. Carker gritted his teeth. At least, he would "take it out" of the rebel juniors, as soon as they were in his power—his hard, spiteful eyes glittered at that thought.



Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, whose action in "sacking" Mr. Dalton causes a rebellion.

Mr. Carker walked down from Rookwood to Coombe, and stepped into the local train for Latcham. From Latcham Station he walked down towards the bridge, which overlooked the wharves where the barges were moored. A handsome young man came up the steps from the boathouse near the bridge and met Mr. Carker face to face.

"Mr. Dalton!" ejaculated the new master of the Fourth.

It was Richard Dalton, returning from his long row up the river. He stopped.

"You, Carker!" he said. "I never expected to see you here!"

"Neither did I expect to see you," said Mr. Carker, with a sneer. "Why are you hanging about this district? If you think you are likely to get back into your place at Rookwood, you are making a mistake!"

Mr. Dalton gave him a sharp look. "What have you to do with Rookwood?" he asked.

"Didn't you know that there was a new master of your Form there?" grinned Mr. Carker.

"You are not—"

"I am!"

"You are master of the Rookwood Fourth?"

"Yes."

"Then I need not be surprised that the trouble has increased, instead of diminishing, since I left!" exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "I cannot believe that the Head would have taken you into the school had he been well acquainted with your character."

Mr. Carker shrugged his shoulders. "He cannot know that you were once dismissed from a school for cruelty—"

"I fancy, in his present temper, that would be rather a recommendation in his eyes," said Mr. Carker. "He is not feeling tender towards the boys who are defying his authority, and making him look ridiculous to the whole school!"

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Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"And who are you to throw stones?" added Mr. Carker, with a sneer. "At least I have never been a professional boxer—and that, I believe, was your calling before you became a master at Rookwood. Perhaps the Head did not know he was engaging a 'pug.'"

"The Head knows all about me that is to be known," said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"And he sacked you?"

"That is no business of yours!"

Mr. Dalton was passing on when the Fourth Form master touched his sleeve and detained him.

"Your Form have revolted, and are demanding your return to the school," he said. "Of course, you know that—no doubt you had a hand in it—"

"I knew nothing of it till this morning."

"That is as it may be!" sneered Mr. Carker. "At all events, it will not succeed. I am taking measures here to put down the rebellion. Before dark the boys will be back at Rookwood—some of them, probably, in a state which will make them wish that they had never rebelled!"

"You are taking measures—here?" repeated Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Carker pointed from the bridge to a barge moored at the wharf. A thick-set man, with a stubby nose, smoking a pipe from his mouth, and waved it to Mr. Carker in sign of recognition.

"An hour or so from now that barge will be at the island," said Mr. Carker, with a grin. "It will have eight or nine barges on board—rough fellows, I can assure you. How long do you think your young friends will stand against a gang like that?"

Richard Dalton started violently.

"You will not use such measures as—"

"Indeed!" sneered Carker.

"Some of the boys may be injured by—"

"That is their look out!"

"Carker! Surely you will not try—"

Mr. Carker laughed.

"There may be some hard knocks," he said. "That should not be such a shock to you—who have lived by giving and taking hard knocks in the ring. Good-afternoon!"

He went down the steps from the bridge to the river. Mr. Dalton stood by the parapet, staring after him.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

An Advance in Force!

"ONLY a barge!" said Lovell.

"Keep an eye open, all the same!" said Jimmy Silver sagely. "The jolly old enemy might come in a barge. They're not likely to swim."

"Oh, I fancy the Head's fed-up!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "He started the prefects on us, and we walloped them. I dare say he's thinking out the terms of surrender now."

"Not likely!" said Mornington.

The juniors on the island watched the barge idly. A boy with a horse on the tow-path, was towing the great, heavy vessel. Down by Latcham barges were numerous on the river; but it was seldom that they came as far up the river as the island past Rookwood. Down by Latcham it was a wide stream, with muddy wharves and warehouses on its banks; higher up by Rookwood it dwindled in size, and ran clear and pellucid under green trees. The juniors watched the barge, and wondered a little to see seven or eight men on board,

all of them staring towards the island and grinning.

"They've heard of us, and come out to see the giddy sight!" suggested Lovell.

"Looks like it!" said Conroy.

Jimmy Silver looked at the approaching barge intently. He did not yet suspect that it was the "enemy" that had arrived; but he was on his guard.

The horse plodded on along the tow-path, and the barge passed between the island and the bank of the river. Then a stubby-faced man called out to the boy with the horse, and he halted the animal. The barge came to a standstill.

Eight men were in sight on the barge now, lining the side towards the island, and staring at the juniors. Arthur Edward Lovell cheerfully waved a hand to them.

"What have they stopped for?" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"To get a good look at us," said Lovell.

Jimmy shook his head. He was beginning to suspect mischief now. An angular, hard-faced man came out of the barge's cabin, and there was a yell from all the Rookwooders as they sighted him.

"Carker!"

It was Mr Carker. He stood on the barge, and surveyed the crowd of juniors with an unpleasant smile.

"Shy something at him!" said Flynn.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"If he's only come to talk, let him rip!"

"Can't have come for anything else," said Lovell. "He wouldn't like to tackle us on his own, I fancy."

Mr. Carker called across to the juniors.

"Boys!"

"Man!" answered Lovell, and there was a laugh from the Rookwood crowd on the island.

"I am here to take you back to Rookwood."

"Go hon!"

"You will all be taken on this barge, and towed down to the school," said Mr. Carker.

"I don't think!" said Lovell.

"If you venture to resist—" went on Mr. Carker.

"No 'if' about it, old bean," said Valentine Mornington. "You put a foot on our island, and you'll see!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Take your face away, Carker!" shouted Putty of the Fourth. "Bury it,



Jimmy Silver, the dauntless leader of the Fourth Form Rebels.

old man! You oughtn't to take a face like that about in the day-time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Some of the bargees chuckled, and Mr. Carker scowled savagely.

"If you venture to resist, force will be used, and some of you may be hurt!" he shouted.

"Who's goin' to hurt us?" inquired Mornington. "Not you, old man. You can give us shocks with your features; but that's your limit."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Carker made a gesture towards the grinning bargees.

"These men have been engaged to take you back to Rookwood," he said. "If you resist, you will take the consequences — and I warn you that they will be painful."

"Oh gad!"

"Phew!"

"That gang," said Mornington, with a whistle. "Old infants, we shall have to pull up our socks now; this is rather a different proposition from the giddy prefects that we beat."

Jimmy Silver's face was very grave.

The Rookwood prefects had been defeated and driven off in an attack; but a gang of hefty bargees was, as Morny said, quite another proposition. The odds, certainly, were on the side of the schoolboys; they were more than three to one. But the odds were not likely to count very much in a struggle with a gang of rough and tough bargees. Each of the bargees looked quite capable of dealing with half the Fourth Form of Rookwood "on his own."

Silence fell on the juniors. Tubby Muffin made a strategic retreat into the thickets. His example was followed by Peele and Gower and Latreay; and one or two other fellows seemed to wander away. But Jimmy Silver did not stir; and his comrades stood firm around him.

"I advise you," shouted Mr. Carker, "to yield peaceably and return to Rookwood. These men will not deal gently with you if you dare to raise a hand against them."

"That's so, gov'nor," grinned the stubby man. "You leave them to us, gov'nor! We'll make pictures of 'em!"

"Take the barge across to the island now, Mr. Pugson."

"Wotto!" said the stubby gentleman.

"I warn you to keep off!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "We shall not allow you to land on this island!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mr. Pugson. "He won't allow us! That there grasshopper won't allow us! Not that there whippersnapper! Ha, ha!"

"Resist, and you must take the consequences!" exclaimed Mr. Carker. "For the last time, I repeat—Yarooooooop!"

Mr. Carker did not mean to say

that; he said it as an apple, old and overripe, squashed on his prominent nose. It was hurled by Putty's unerring hand, and it landed fairly.

"Goal!" shouted Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Groogh! Hoooh — hoooh!" spluttered Mr. Carker, grabbing at the squashed apple. "Oh dear! You young scoundrels — Ow! Men, get on the island at once — ooooh! — and take them — thrash them — thrash them severely! Ow!"

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Something Like a Scrap!

"BACK up, Rookwood!"

"Give 'em beans!"

"Oh! Ow!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat! Leggo, you beast!"

"Ow! My nose!"

Splash!

Mr. Pugson, in the grasp of a dozen juniors, was hurled back headlong into the water. But seven other hefty barge-



MR. DALTON TO THE RESCUE! Like a flash of lightning, Mr. Dalton shot out his fist and caught Mr. Pugson full upon the point of his chin. The astonished bargee found himself flying through the air, and he came down with a crash on the sprawling Mr. Carker. (See Chapter 5.)

"You leave 'em to us, gov'nor!" said Pugson.

The tow-rope was cast off, and the barge swerved across the narrow channel to the island. Jimmy Silver set his teeth.

"We've got to keep them off!" he said. "Get hold of something, all of you, and stand to it!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Blow wind, come wrack, at least we'll die with harness on our back!" quoted Mornington cheerily.

"Fire!" grinned Lovell.

And clods of earth flew, crashing on the bargees as they toiled the heavy vessel across to the island. Loud exclamations, and expressions of great potency, came from the bargees, as the missiles smote them right and left. By the time the barge bumped on the island, Mr. Pugson and his men were in extremely bad tempers, and no longer grinning, but evidently in a mood to handle the Rookwooders roughly enough.

"Go for 'em, mates!" shouted Mr. Pugson.

And he jumped ashore, taking the lead; which Mr. Carker resigned to him, apparently not caring for it himself.

"Back up, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

And the juniors rushed at the enemy.

men came scrambling ashore, and they fairly drove a way through the Rookwood crowd. Pugson, wet and muddy, scrambled out of the water.

"Go for 'em!" he roared.

It was a terrific combat.

The Rookwooders, armed with cricket-stumps and cudgels, resisted desperately, and there was not a member of the barge party that did not receive severe punishment. The juniors did not stand on ceremony; they hit often, and they hit hard.

The bargees had entered on the business with grinning good-humour; but they were angry and savage now, which was perhaps not to be wondered at in the circumstances. They were all powerful fellows, and they hit out recklessly and powerfully. One punch from a big bargee was generally enough for a Fourth-Former of Rookwood—the hapless rebels, fighting hard, were fairly strewn on the grass.

Some of them lay dazed where they had fallen, other scrambled up to fight again, some retreated into the trees towards the old Army hut, round which the schoolboy camp was formed. Mr. Carker, from the barge, watched the combat anxiously.

He had no doubt about the result—the rebels were hopelessly overmatched; that did not worry him. But he was worried, all the same. In that fierce combat it was quite possible that severe injuries might be received—a bargee's punch was no joke. And cer-

tainly the Head of Rookwood would have been shocked and horrified to see a battered crew of wrecks shepherded back to Rookwood, with streaming noses and missing teeth, and perhaps worse damages.

That was a worry to Mr. Carker, for he had not ventured to explain precisely to the Head what methods he had intended to use. The Head had left it to him, with a very plain hint that if he did not succeed he would have to go; and Mr. Carker did not see what other means could be efficacious. But he was rather troubled.

The Fistical Four were the last to make a stand against the overpowering enemy. Jimmy Silver, Raby, Lovell, and Newcome stood together fighting hard.

But a rush of the bargemen sent them spinning, and they sprawled in the grass, panting.

Mr. Pugson mopped a heated brow and a nose that streamed crimson.

"I reckon that job's hover!" he said. "It was 'ot-otter than a bloke expected! I reckon this 'ere job was worth more than ten bob a man, I does! But we done it!"

"Bring them into the barge!" shouted Mr. Carker.

"Right-ho, guv'nor! Let a cove dror his breath fust!" snorted Mr. Pugson. "We've done 'em!"

But Mr. Pugson was mistaken; he was far from having "done" the rebels of Rookwood. Jimmy Silver scrambled up. He was hurt, there was no doubt about that, but he was not beaten yet. He called to his chums, and raced for the trees.

Some of the Rookwooders were still sprawling about the bank, too dizzy and breathless even to pick themselves up. But fifteen or sixteen fellows, panting, and sorely knocked about, gathered in the old hut with Jimmy Silver.

"We're not done yet!" gasped Mornington.

"No fear!"

"Oh, my hat! What a day!" groaned Lovell, feeling his nose to make sure it was still there. "I—I say, I never thought they'd use a dodge like this—setting blessed barges on us!"

"The Head wouldn't!" said Jimmy.

"But that cad Carker—"

"The awful rotter!" mumbled Conroy. "Look at my nose! But we're not done yet!"

"Come out of it!" roared the voice of Mr. Pugson, as he came tramping towards the hut.

There was no door to the old Army hut on the island. But the juniors were hastily jamming the doorway with anything they could lay their hands on. Several old benches and boxes made a slight barricade, and behind it the rebels of Rookwood crowded, to face the enemy again.

Mr. Carker was on the island now. Like his followers, he supposed that the struggle was over, and that it only remained to round up the juniors scattered about the little isle. He came striding towards the hut with the bargemen.

He stopped as he saw the barred doorway, with the flushed, war-like faces of the Rookwooders looking over the barrier.

"Come out at once!" he snapped.

"Come and fetch us out, Carker!" roared Lovell.

"You young rascal—"

"You old rascal!" retorted Lovell.

"This way, Carker!" shouted Mornington. "Don't hide behind the giddy barges! Come on, Carker!"

But Mr. Carker did not come on.

He scowled at the juniors, and snapped out an order to his followers.

"Get them out of the hut!"

"Easy enough!" grinned Mr. Pugson.

"Come on, mates!"

The bargemen made a rush.

But it was not so easy as Mr. Pugson anticipated. The barrier in the doorway stopped the rush of the bargemen, and, over it, the juniors lashed out with their weapons. They were hitting hard, and Mr. Pugson and his comrades backed off.

"Keep on, men!" shouted Mr. Carker.

"Pugson—Pugson! Do you hear me, Pugson? If you run away—if you do not get them, on the barge, I shall pay you nothing."

"Wot's that?" roared Mr. Pugson, who was rubbing a bump on his head where a cricket-stump had landed.

"I tell you—"

"You talking to me?" asked Mr. Pugson, shoving a knuckly fist fairly under Mr. Carker's nose.

It might have been a rattlesnake by the way Mr. Carker jumped back.

"I—I— You—I—" he began to stutter.

"You 'old your jor!" roared Mr. Pugson. "I don't notice you taking a 'nd very lively! You 'old your jor!"

And Mr. Carker decided to hold it; his rough-and-ready followers were not in a mood to be gagged by Mr. Carker.

"I've said I'll do the job, and I'll do it, blow me!" added Mr. Pugson. "I'll 'ave 'em out if I 'ave to smash 'em into pancakes! But don't you give a bloke any of your lip! I ain't taking it—see? You 'old your jor!"

He called to his comrades.

"'Ere, you back me up, mates! One rush will do it, and it don't matter 'ow much you 'urt them!"

"They're comin'!" said Mornington coolly. "This will finish it, Jimmy; but we'll go down fightin'!"

Jimmy Silver nodded, and set his teeth. With Mr. Pugson in the lead, and Mr. Carker looking on from a safe distance, the bargemen came on with a terrific rush. And they had almost reached the barricaded doorway when a sharp voice shouted:

"Stop!"

"Dicky!" yelled Lovell.

It was Mr. Dalton!

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mr. Dalton takes a Hand!

MR. DALTON hurried on the scene. His handsome face was flushed, and his eyes sparkling.

In the excitement of the attack and defence no one had had eyes for the boat that approached the island from the direction of Latham; no one had seen Mr. Dalton jump ashore. His sudden arrival was a surprise to both parties.

"Stop!"

There was authority in Mr. Dalton's voice, and Mr. Pugson and his comrades stopped and stared round. Mr. Dalton strode between them and the doorway of the hut.

"Who the thump are you?" snapped Pugson. "Wot are you butting in for, I'd like to know?"

"Stop this at once!" snapped Mr. Dalton.

Mr. Carker ran forward, his face red with rage.

"Mr. Dalton, get out of this at once! How dare you interfere?"

Mr. Dalton's eyes flashed at him.

"How dare you set these roughs on the schoolboys?" he thundered. "You are amenable to the law, sir!"

"Mind your own business! Men, throw him into the water if he will not go!" gasped Mr. Carker.

With a long stride, Mr. Dalton reached the master of the Fourth. His right fist shot out, and caught Mr. Carker on the point of the chin.

Crash!

The new master of the Fourth went spinning, and landed on his back in the grass.

"Well hit!" roared Lovell.

"Bravo, Dicky!"

Mr. Carker lay where he had fallen. He did not care to get up while Mr. Dalton was near him.

The young man turned to the bargemen.

"Get back to your barge!" he snapped.

"Wot's that?" snarled Pugson.

"Get back to your barge! You may be thankful if you are not charged with assault and battery for what you have done."

"We're follerin' that bloke's horders," said Mr. Pugson. "He's a school-master, he is, and can't keep his kids in horder. We're a-doin' of it for 'im. See? You clear!"

Mr. Carker sat up.

"Throw him into the water!" he spluttered. "Men, I—I—throw him into the water! Pound him to a jelly! I—I—"

"You getting out of the way, young man?" asked Mr. Pugson. "We're going for them kids, we are!"

"You are not!" said Mr. Dalton grimly. "It is my duty to interfere here, and I warn you, Carker, that the Head of Rookwood will learn of your brutal methods. Stand back there!"

"Rush him!"

"I warn you, before you proceed," said Mr. Dalton quietly, "that at one time I was a boxer in the Ring, and that I have not forgotten how to use my hands. You had better go!"

"Blinking prize-fighter, what?" sneered Mr. Pugson. "Well, I dessay I can give you as good as you 'and out; and if I can't, my mates can! Rush him, boys, and chuck him into the water!"

And with that the truculent Mr. Pugson led the way, and there was a fierce rush.

What followed was rather an eye-opener for the bargemen of Latham. Mr. Dalton did not give an inch, he stood like a rock, and his fists played like lightning. The astonished Pugson found himself fairly flying through the air, weighty as he was, and he came down with a crash on Mr. Carker, feeling as if a steam-hammer had smitten him. A second later Mr. Dalton's left sent another man crashing down. Then he was fighting hand-to-hand with the rest.

"Come on!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwood rebels were not likely to see their old Form master facing the enemy single-handed. They scrambled over the barricade and rushed to his help.

Another and another of the bargemen went down under Richard Dalton's terrific drives; but four hefty fellows were clinging to him and dragging him down. Wonderful fighting-man as Mr. Dalton was, it would have fared hard with him had not the Rookwooders rushed to the rescue. But the rush of Jimmy Silver & Co. settled the matter.

They dragged at the bargemen, dragging them off Dicky; and Mr. Dalton, who was nearly down, recovered himself. He did not waste a moment—he sailed in with right and left.

The tables were turned now.

Mr. Pugson staggered up, holding his stubby jaw with both hands. He did not utter a word, or even look at the Rookwooders; he limped away to the barge, holding his jaw as if he were holding it together. He rolled dismally into the barge, and after him went his comrades, driven now in headlong retreat by the victorious Rookwooders.

"Our win!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, as the last of the gang tumbled on board the barge.

"Show 'em off!"

"Hold on! There's Carker!"

"Collar Carker!"

Mr. Carker fairly howled with terror as a crowd of the Rookwooders collared him.

"Frog's march!" shouted Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Release me!" shrieked Mr. Carker.

"Let go! Oh! Young rascals! Oh! Yawoo! Yoop! Whooop!"

"Check him in!"

Mr. Carker was hurled headlong into the barge. He sprawled over Mr. Pugson, who turned on him and smote him hard, and he rolled off again. The Rookwooders shoved the barge off from the island, and it floated away on the current. Further down the river the hapless Pugson caught on to the tow-ropes, and the barge went towing back to Latham, unregarded by the rebels of Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co. gathered round Mr. Dalton. He had saved them—only his intervention had saved them from defeat. Never had the dismissed Form master been so popular with his Form.

But his face was grave and stern.

"You have nothing to thank me for," he said, interrupting the juniors. "I was told of Mr. Carker's intention. I came along to see that no harm was done, and, seeing what I did, I was compelled to interfere. But I repeat what I said to you boys this morning—I urge you to return to Rookwood, and to your duty."

The battered, bruised juniors looked at one another. With the exception of Tobby Muffin and Peele, and a few other slackers, all of them had been damaged, some severely. And there was no doubt that, but for Mr. Dalton's intervention, damage would have been done that would have led to serious consequences. But the rebels of Rookwood had come through, and they were un-conquered. They had heard Mr. Dalton with respect, but he did not succeed in changing their determination.

"We're up against the Head, sir, till you come back to Rookwood," said Jimmy Silver at last. "We're not backing out."

"No fear."

Mr. Dalton compressed his lips.

"Then I have nothing more to say," he said. "I have no authority over you, and cannot give you orders."

He turned, and walked away to his boat.

"Mr. Dalton!" said Jimmy.

"Dicky!" called out Lovell.

Mr. Dalton did not bend. He stepped into his boat and pushed off. The falling dusk on the river swallowed him up in a few minutes.

"Dicky means well," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, he feels bound to talk to us like that. But we're sticking it."

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh! My nose!" murmured Lovell.

"I—I feel as if I've been through a giddy mangle. Wow!"

"Same here!" groaned Newcome.

Till quite a late hour that evening the Rookwood revels were busy attending to their damages, and groaning over them. Nearly every fellow was on the

casualty list; swollen noses were seen on all sides, and black eyes were almost as common as blackberries.

But, damaged as they were, their determination remained unchanged. The Rookwood rebellion was going strong—and it was going on! Jimmy Silver & Co. were quite resolved on that.

Dr. Chisholm was pacing his study with a moody, knitted brow, when a tap came at the door.

The Head paused in his walk and faced the door, his eyes glinting over his spectacles.

"Come in!" he rapped.

Mr. Carker entered.

He looked tired and worn, and there was a mark on his face where Mr. Dalton's knuckles had landed. His manner was almost cringing as he came in.

"Well, sir?" said the Head, in a deep voice.

"The—the boys have not been brought back from the island, sir. I—I should have succeeded, but—"

"But what?"

"Mr. Dalton interfered, taking the side of the rebels," said Mr. Carker. "I have no doubt that he has had a hand in the whole proceedings, from the beginning. It is his object, of course, to force you to reinstate him here—"

"I do not believe so for one moment."

"Oh!" gasped Mr. Carker.

"Mr. Dalton was dismissed from this school for a—a disagreement of opinion. Certainly he is incapable of instigating a rebellion in the school. Neither do I believe that you really think so, Mr. Carker."

"Oh, sir!" stuttered Mr. Carker.

"No, sir. I have received a message from Mr. Dalton. He thinks—and I agree with him—that it was his duty to

warn me of the methods you were using in dealing with my boys—methods, sir, that might have caused legal proceedings to be taken; methods that might have made the name of Rookwood a byword!" thundered the Head, in great wrath.

"You left the matter in my hands."

"I did not authorise you to gather a party of roughs, sir, from Latham. But enough! You are not suited, Mr. Carker, for a Form master's duties here, and evidently you cannot deal with the Fourth Form. I shall be glad, Mr. Carker, if you find it convenient to leave Rookwood to-morrow!"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"You have said enough, sir, and I have said enough!"

"Then I am dismissed?" snapped Mr. Carker.

"You are, sir!"

Mr. Carker's eyes glittered. Even the worms will turn, and there was nothing left for Mr. Carker to cringe for.

"Very well," he said. "I will go. I shall not be sorry to go. No member of your staff, sir, would be sorry to go. And if they ventured to tell you their opinion, as I am doing now, they would tell you, sir, that you are a high-handed and unreasonable old fool, sir!"

With that Parthian shot Mr. Carker retreated from the study and closed the door after him with a bang.

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head.

He sank into a chair, and for quite a long time he sat, and stared at the closed door. Perhaps he was wondering whether Mr. Carker was right.

THE END.

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