

Special Story of Ferrers Locke, Detective & his Boy Assistant

inside!

The POPULAR

Week Ending April 23rd, 1925

New Series, No. 437

EVERY
TUESDAY

2d



THE BOY 'TEC'S FEARFUL PERIL!

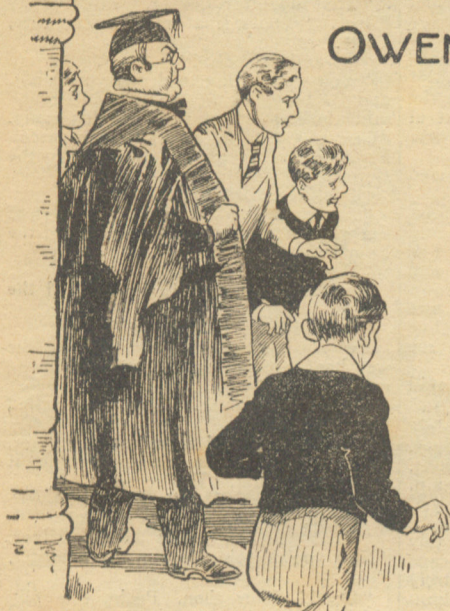
THE COLLAPSE OF THE REBELLION! Mr. Dalton, late Rookwood

master, takes a hand in quelling the Fourth Form rebellion and, in surprising fashion, brings the rebels to heel!

The REBELS' RETURN!

OWEN CONQUEST

A ROUSING LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.



THE FIRST CHAPTER. An Alarm in the Night!

JIMMY SILVER awoke suddenly. Jimmy was not, as a rule, a light sleeper. But since the outbreak of the rebellion at Rookwood the captain of the Fourth had been accustomed to sleep with one eye open, as it were.

He sat up in his blankets.

Bright moonlight streamed down upon the little island in the river and upon the flowing glimmering waters. It gleamed into the open doorway of the old Army hut on the island, in which the rebels of Rookwood were camped for the night.

Across the open doorway a dark shadow flitted for a moment and vanished. It was only for a moment, but it did not escape Jimmy Silver's eye.

He threw his blankets aside and rose to his feet. There was a grunt from the next sleeper, Arthur Edward Lovell of the Fourth.

"Groooh—"
"Wake up, Lovell!" whispered Jimmy.

"Mmmmm! 'Tain't rising-bell!"
"Fathead!"

Evidently Arthur Edward Lovell, half-awake, fancied that he was in bed in the dormitory at Rookwood School, where certainly he would have been at that moment but for the unprecedented state of affairs that reigned in the old school.

Jimmy reached out to take hold of his shoulder and shake him into wakefulness. It was unfortunately Lovell's nose that his groping hand lighted

upon; but, as it answered the purpose, he grasped it and shook it.

Lovell was effectually awakened.

"Mmmmmmmppp!"

"Lovell, old man—"

"Led do by dose!" hissed Lovell ferociously.

Jimmy released Lovell's nose, Arthur Edward sat up and rubbed it, and glared at the captain of the Fourth.

"You howling ass!"

"Lovell—"

"You burbling chump!"

"Look here!"

"You frabjous cuckoo!"

"What's the row, Jimmy? Raby sat up and asked the question. "Anything wrong?"

"You footling fathead!" went on Lovell, still rubbing his nose.

His cloquence seemed inexhaustible.

"Anything up?" yawned Newcombe.

"I don't know," answered Jimmy.

"Somebody's shifting about. I saw somebody pass the doorway. Can't be too careful. I'm going out to see that all's right."

"Oh, rot!" yawned Mornington. "Peele's on sentry-go, and he would warn us if the jolly old enemy came along."

"Well, I'm going to see. You coming, Lovell?"

Arthur Edward gave a snort, but he threw aside his blankets and rose. The floor of the old Army hut was thickly sprinkled with sleepers rolled in blankets. The two juniors picked their way out, and stood in the moonlight outside the hut.

"Nothing up!" grunted Lovell.

"You've been dreaming, Jimmy."

"Fathead!"

"Think the Head would turn out at night to come along here?" demanded Lovell. "Besides, the Head's beaten. He can't do anything, and he knows it. I'm not looking for a night attack. Rot!"

Jimmy Silver did not heed him. His quick glance was scanning the little island, with its patches of trees and thickets, through which ran the entanglements of barbed wire with which the rebels had fortified their camp. It had been Morny's brilliant idea to annex that barbed wire at a sale of surplus Army stores in Latham; and since the Rook-

wood rebels had wired their camp they had bidden defiance to the enemy.

Jimmy's quick eye caught sight of a moving shadow in the thickets, and he hurried towards it. Lovell followed him, grumbling.

He ceased to grumble as a sound of whispering voices was audible under the trees.

"That you, Gower?"

It was the voice of Cyril Peele, who was on sentry duty, it being the custom of the rebels to take turns at watching during the night.

"Yes."

"You got out quietly?"

"Yes."

"Nobody woke up?"

"No."

Lovell squeezed Jimmy Silver's arm, and grinned in the shadow of the trees. Evidently it was Cuthbert Gower who had left the hut, and in doing so had awakened Jimmy Silver.

"I thought I heard something," went on Peele's whispering voice.

"Only that fool Lovell mumbling I think."

Arthur Edward Lovell ceased to grin. He made a stride forward, but Jimmy Silver grasped his shoulder and stopped him. Something was evidently going on that it was necessary for the captain of the Fourth to investigate. Peele and Gower, the black sheep of the Fourth, had joined in the Fourth Form rebellion, not having much choice in the matter, but they were very lukewarm in their support of Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Well, it's all right," Peele's voice went on. "I've slid the skiff out under the wire, and we can get it down to the water easily enough. Come on, Gower!"

"I—I say, Peele—"

Gower seemed to hesitate.

"Well, what?"

"They'll be frightfully ratty if they find you've cleared off while you're on sentry-go."

"They won't find out. I'm on watch till midnight, when I have to call Lovell. He won't wake if I don't call him. You know what a sleepy fathead he is!"

Arthur Edward Lovell breathed hard.

"We shall be back soon after that," went on Peele. "We can put in an hour at the Bird-in-Hand, Gower. They're expecting me there—Stiggins and his friends. Dash it all, we haven't been on a little razzle since this rebel-

lion rot started. I'm fed-up with it, for one!"

"Same here," said Gower. "What do we care whether the Head sacked Mr. Dalton, or whether he ever comes back to Rookwood?"

"Nothin' at all. Anyhow, we're goin'."

"I—I say, though—"

"What is it now?" demanded Peele impatiently.

"Well, suppose there was a night attack—suppose the Sixth Form prefects came to catch us by surprise?"

"They won't."

"If—if they did, they'd bag the whole shoot, you know, taking the camp by surprise," said Gower uneasily.

"All the better if they did," said Peele coolly. "The sooner we're back at Rookwood the better, I think. I'm fed-up with campin' on this dashed island! I don't care a rap if the Sixth Form prefects come along and mop up the whole show. Shut up and come along, Gower."

"I'm comin'!"

Peele and Gower moved away quietly in the shadow of the trees to the wire fence. And as they did so there was a rush of two shadowy forms, and Peele and Gower went headlong to the ground, yelling, in the grasp of Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Court Martial!

"OH!" "Ow! Wow!"

In utter amazement and terror, Peele and Gower sprawled in the grass and howled. The sudden rush had taken them completely by surprise.

"Who—who—what—" stuttered Gower.

"Little me!" grinned Arthur Edward. "That fool Lovell, old chap! I've got you, you rotter!"

"Ow! Leggo!"

"Gerroff!" yelled Peele.

Jimmy Silver grasped Peele by the collar and dragged him to his feet. Jimmy's face was set with anger.

More than once, since the rebels had retreated from Rookwood School and taken up their position on the island in the river, Jimmy had had trouble with the blackguard of the Fourth. The dismissal of Mr. Dalton, which had caused the Fourth to go on "strike," was a trifling matter in Peele's estimation, and he was not at all keen on the rebellion. It was chiefly the happy prospect of escaping classes that had induced him to join up. And Peele's desire to fill his unaccustomed leisure with nap and banker and cigarettes had been sternly repressed by Jimmy Silver. But Jimmy certainly had never suspected him of such faithlessness as this.

"Come!" snapped Jimmy.

And he led Peele back to the camp with an iron grip on his collar.

"Let go, you cad!" hissed Cyril Peele.

"Bring that other rotter along, Lovell."

"You bet!"

The two delinquents were marched back to the camp. Gower went in fear and trembling, Peele with savage defiance in his angry face. The whole camp was awake now, and the Fourth-Formers crowded out into the moonlight; only Tubby Muffin's deep snore still resounded in the old Army hut.

"What on earth's the row?" asked Valentine Mornington. "What are you handlin' our jolly old sentry for, Jimmy?"

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"And Gower, too!" said Oswald.

"What's up?"

"I—I never wanted to go!" gasped Gower. "I—I—I—"

"Shut up!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver proceeded to explain, Peele listening in sullen silence. There was an angry murmur from the juniors.

"The awful rotter!" said Erroll.

"Suppose the prefects had come along while no watch was kept—"

"Then the game would have been up," said Raby. "You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, Peele!"

"Go and eat coke!" snarled Peele.

"This is a case for court martial," said Lovell. "A sentry who deserts his post ought to be shot. We can't shoot Peele, I suppose—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But we've got to make an example of him."

"Peele will be court-martialled in the morning. Peg him out for the rest of the night," said Jimmy Silver.

"Good!"

"Let me go, you rotters!" roared Peele, struggling furiously.

But Peele's struggles were unavailing. He was hustled into the hut and stretched in his blankets. Then he was pegged out, face down, his wrists and ankles tied to pegs driven into the floor. That military form of punishment met with general approval, and Arthur Edward Lovell was very careful to see that Peele was safely pegged.

"Your turn for duty, Lovell," said Jimmy Silver.

And Arthur Edward, having safely disposed of Peele, went on sentry duty.

The juniors returned to their blankets. Most of them were soon asleep again. But there was not much sleep for Cyril Peele. He wriggled and wrestled savagely with the cords, but there was no escape for him, and he remained securely pegged while the other fellows slumbered.

The night seemed a long one to Cyril Peele. Slowly the long hours wore away, and the moonlight grew dim. Dawn glimmered in the east at last, and never had Peele been so glad to see the light of day.

Arthur Edward Lovell appeared in the doorway of the hut at last.

"Wake up!" he roared. "Rising-bell, you slackers!"

And the rebels of Rookwood turned out of their blankets. Cyril Peele turned his head towards Jimmy Silver, and gave the captain of the Fourth a bitter look.

"Are you going to let me loose?" he asked between his teeth.

Jimmy gave him a contemptuous glance.

"Not yet!"

"Look here, you rotter—"

Jimmy walked past him without taking further heed, leaving the black sheep of the Fourth gritting his teeth. The camp-fire was stirred up, and Tubby Muffin started preparations for breakfast, while most of the juniors took a dip in the river. Tubby did not bother about a dip in the river. Tubby was firmly resolved not to bath any more till the rebellion was over. And he hoped that it would last a long time.

After breakfast the court martial sat on Cyril Peele and Cuthbert Gower. The prisoners were brought before the whole Form, Peele scowling defiance. Jimmy Silver promulgated the sentence.

"Gower, six whacks with a cricket-stump."

"I—I say—" stammered Gower.

"Gunner, take that stump! Bend over, Gower!"

Cuthbert Gower bent over dismally.

Gunner of the Fourth, a very hefty fellow, gripped the cricket-stump.

Whack!

There was a fearful yell from Gower.

"That hurt?" inquired Gunner.

"Ow! Yow! Yes!"

"Nothing to what you're going to get," assured Gunner. "Try that!"

Whack!

"Whoooooop!"

"Now try that!"

Whack!

"Ow! Help! Keep him off!" yelled Gower. "Oh dear! I say—"

Yarooop!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Ow, ow! Wow! Yow! Ow!"

"That does for Gower," said Jimmy Silver. "Yours is a more serious case, Peele."

"Go and eat coke!"

"You were going to desert your duty, and go blagging at the Bird-in-Hand," said the captain of the Fourth sternly.

"Gower's a worm, and you're a rascal, Peele. You'll get a dozen with the stump!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"And then you'll run the gauntlet of the whole camp," said the captain of the Fourth.

"Hear, hear!"

Gunner of the Fourth brandished the stump.

"Bend him over!" he said.

Peele struggled desperately, but he was bent over a log, and then Gunner got to work with the stump. Peele's sulky defiance vanished, and he yelled and howled.

"You're soft old man," said Gunner. "You ought to be able to stand it better than that. You're soft."

"Yow-ow-ow. Help! Stoppit!"

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

"That will do," said Jimmy Silver: "Now you're going to run the gauntlet, Peele."

"Good! Now then, Peele, the jolly old gauntlet!" said Lovell; and Cyril Peele was started on the run.

He had to run between two lines of fellows, all of them keen to get in a whack—especially Gunner. By the time Peele had finished running the gauntlet he was feeling a good deal as if he had been under a carpet-beater.

Peele spent the morning lying on his blankets and groaning, and perhaps repenting him that he had thought of deserting the post of duty to go "blagging." But certainly he did not look very repentant.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Head's Lucky Day!

"MR. DALTON!"

Dr. Chisholm started.

"Mr. Dalton?" he repeated.

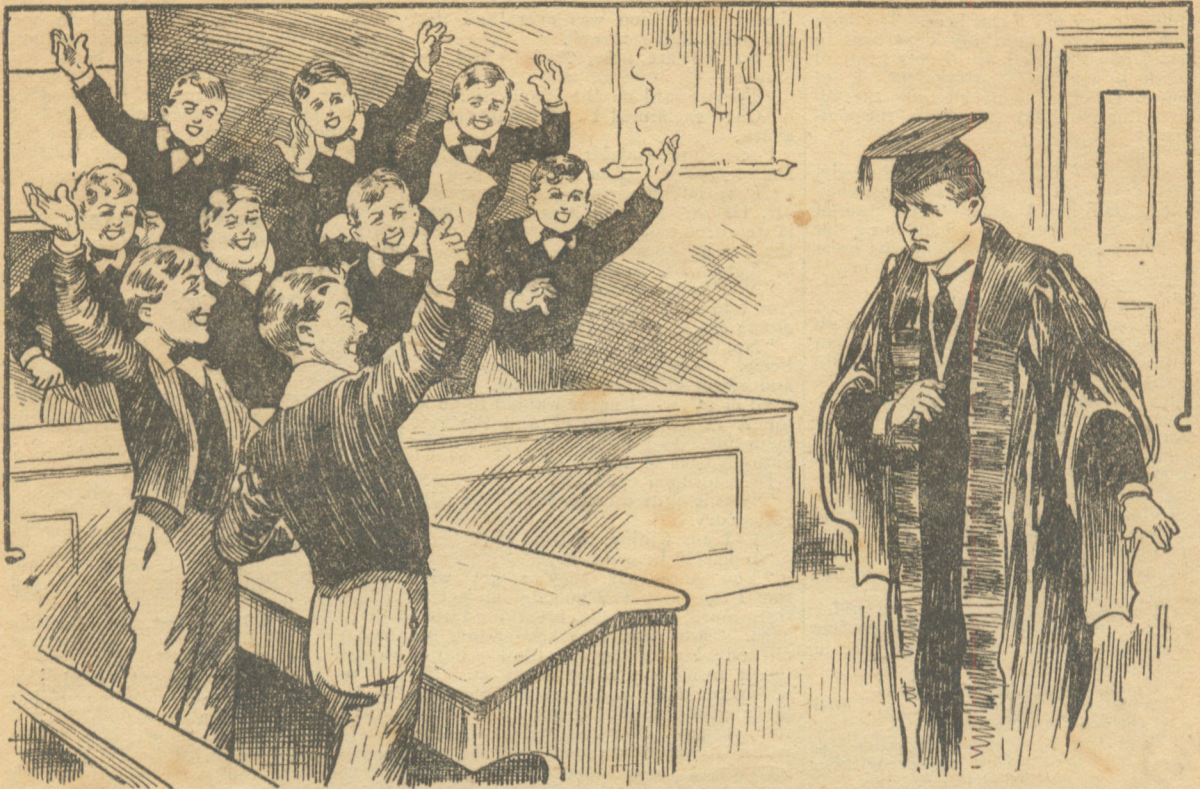
"Yessir!" said Tupper.

There was a brief hesitation on the part of the Head of Rookwood. Then he said:

"You may show Mr. Dalton in."

Dr. Chisholm knitted his brows in troubled thought as the page retired. Classes were over for the day at Rookwood; in the quadrangle many voices could be heard, and the sound of shouting on the football-ground. Rookwood School was going on much as usual during the absence of the Classical Fourth Form.

For a long time the retreat from Rookwood of the rebel juniors had been the one topic of discussion. What the Head would do; what the Board of Governors might do, had been questions of burning interest. But the school was getting used to it now. Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern Fourth, envied the



BACK AGAIN AT ROOKWOOD! As soon as Mr. Dalton entered the Form-room the whole Form stood up and gave him a rousing cheer. "Good old Dicky!" "Hurrah!" It was a full five minutes before the young Form master could restore order, so pleased were the juniors to see their master back again with them. (See Chapter 6.)

Classical Fourth their freedom; more than once, on the Modern side, it had been discussed whether the Modern Fourth should join the rebels, but nothing had come of it. The fags of the Third and Second would gladly have joined up under Jimmy Silver's banner; but certainly they had not ventured to make the attempt.

There was no Fourth Form master now at Rookwood. The Head felt that he could scarcely engage a new master for a Form that was entrenched on an island in the river a mile from the school. Assuredly such a new master would have expressed great surprise on arriving at Rookwood.

The Head was feeling keenly the extraordinary position in which he was placed.

Several attempts had been made to round up the rebels, but all had failed. Yet the situation could not last.

The rebels' demand that the Head should reinstate Mr. Dalton, their old Form master, was one that Dr. Chisholm could not comply with. He could not take orders from a junior Form. That was impossible.

Yet the Head had come to the conclusion that in dismissing Mr. Dalton he had made a mistake.

The whole staff thought so. They did not venture to tell the Head so, but Mr. Greely and Mr. Bohun and Mr. Wiggins and the rest scarcely hid their opinion.

Opposition, as a rule, made Dr. Chisholm more resolved. There was a strain of uncommon obstinacy in him.

But, as a matter of fact, he had liked and respected Mr. Dalton, and he could not help feeling that the loyalty of the Fourth to their dismissed master was a tribute to his character, exasperating as was the shape that loyalty had taken.

And the position was growing critical; for the strange state of affairs had now

reached the august ears of the governors of the school, and the astonished ears of many of the boys' parents! On the Head's desk lay a stack of letters, which he had waded wearily through. There were a dozen from the parents of Fourth Form boys, there were three or four from members of the Governing Body, there was even one from an enterprising London evening paper, proposing to send a reporter to interview the rebels on the island.

It was all gail and wormwood to the Head, and whichever way he looked he saw only trouble before him.

True, he could explain fully to the governors. But he knew that the view of these great men would be that such things ought not to happen at Rookwood. A headmaster who could not, or did not, maintain discipline should resign—that was what the governors would think, and the Head knew it. And he had no desire to resign the headmastership of Rookwood—and had no intention of doing so.

He could not make terms with the rebels—that would be too severe a derogation of his dignity. And he could not overcome their resistance and march them back to the school—that was out of his power. A barring-out in the school might have been overcome; but the rebels were impregnable on the island in the river. The Head had hoped that they would tire of the rebellion. But they showed no sign whatever of tiring. It was, in fact, the Head who was tiring.

He was astonished when Tupper brought in Mr. Dalton's name to him. The dismissed master was calling upon him, and he wondered why. He could not be coming to ask to be reinstated—that would not be like Mr. Dalton at all. He had taken his dismissal with quiet dignity, and he had gone. Dr. Chisholm had expected never to see him again. He was conscious now that he

was glad to see the young master once more. Nothing would have induced the old gentleman to admit that he had acted hastily and inconsiderately in dismissing Mr. Dalton. But he was, in his heart of hearts, quite conscious of the fact.

The athletic figure of the young master appeared in the doorway. Dr. Chisholm rose and gave him a distant bow.

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Mr. Dalton," he said dryly.

Mr. Richard Dalton coloured a little. "I have taken the liberty of calling upon you, Dr. Chisholm," he said. "If, however—"

"Pray be seated, Mr. Dalton."

"Thank you, sir."

Richard Dalton sat down.

"I should not have called, sir," said Mr. Dalton, "but for the fact that I am shortly leaving England."

The Head started a little. Rather to his own surprise, he realised that he was sorry to hear this.

"Leaving England, Mr. Dalton?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir. I have been offered the position of games master in a school in Canada, which I have decided to accept," said Mr. Dalton. "I find no opening in England, and I shall not be sorry to see a little more of the world. But for this circumstance I should not have called, as my visit might have been misunderstood."

"I hardly think that I should have misunderstood you, Mr. Dalton," said the Head courteously. "We found ourselves unable to agree on all points, but I have always entertained a very deep respect for your character."

"Thank you very much, sir! I can now speak freely, at all events. I have been staying with a friend in Letcham, and, as you know, I think, I have become aware of the peculiar state of

affairs in my old Form here. The boys seem to have taken my departure to heart, and though I am deeply grateful to them for their attachment, I, of course, condemn most strongly the insubordination that has been the outcome."

"I am sure of that."

"The boys have acted thoughtlessly, from a sense of loyalty to a master they liked," said Mr. Dalton. "This state of affairs is, of course, a bad thing for Rookwood, and must be giving you great trouble. I offer my assistance in bringing it to a close."

"In what way, Mr. Dalton?"

"Silver and his friends have gone on strike, as they call it, in the hope of inducing you to reinstate me here," said Richard Dalton. "That is impossible. They do not understand that a headmaster could not possibly accept dictation from them. But if they learn, from me, that reinstatement is now out of the question—that I am shortly leaving for Canada—the object of their rebellion disappears. They will have no further motive to continue it."

"Dear me!" said the Head, his clouded brow clearing a little. "That is certainly very true, Mr. Dalton."

"I am sure, sir, that you would prefer the boys to return to their duty, rather than take measures of great severity in dealing with them."

"Undoubtedly," said the Head.

"With your sanction, then, sir, I will visit the boys on the island, and explain to them how matters stand," said Mr. Dalton. "I hope that it may cause them to return to the school immediately."

Dr. Chisholm glanced at the stack of letters on his desk. The proposed solution of the difficulty came as an immense relief to him. It was like a gleam of light in darkness.

"There is one more point, sir," said Mr. Dalton respectfully. "I learned from the boys that some of them, including Silver, were to be expelled as ringleaders in this revolt. If such is to be their fate, they may feel that they have nothing to lose by continuing this rebellion, and persuading the others to continue it. If you, sir, could offer forgiveness in return for immediate submission—"

Mr. Dalton paused.

There was a long silence.

"Mr. Dalton," said the Head at last, "you have come to my assistance in this difficult matter in the most kind and generous way. I shall certainly not make difficulties in the way of your self-imposed task. I recognise, also, that the motive of these rebellious boys, was a loyal one, though mistaken. You may assure them that, if they return to Rookwood this day, all shall be forgotten and forgiven."

"Then I have little doubt of success, sir," said Mr. Dalton, rising. "At least, I shall do my best."

Tap!

The door of the Head's study opened; and, to the amazement of the Head, Peele of the Fourth looked in.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm. "Is—is—is that you, Peele?"

"Yes, sir," said Peele.

Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet. His eyes gleamed over his spectacles. He was glad of Mr. Dalton's assistance in a matter that had now passed out of his control. Nevertheless, he would have been glad to dispense with assistance from a dismissed master. He did not precisely enjoy the process of having coals of fire heaped on his head. At the sight of a Fourth Form boy he jumped rather hastily to the conclusion

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that the rebellion was over, and that the rebels had returned.

"So you are here, Peele! And the others—"

"They're still on the island, sir."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm, taken aback.

Peele glanced at Mr. Dalton, and Mr. Dalton looked at him very keenly.

"Pray let me detain you a moment, Mr. Dalton" said the Head. "Perhaps it would be better for you to hear what the boy has to say."

"Very well, sir!"

"You have returned to school Peele. Am I to understand from this that the others are following later?"

"No, sir. They're not givin' in," said Peele. "I dodged them this afternoon, and swam off from the island. I—I'm tired of it, sir. I never wanted to go in for it at all but Silver and the rest made me. I—I think they ought to be brought back to school, sir."

Dr. Chisholm eyed him.

"That is quite correct, Peele," he said, rather dryly.

"I—I am willing to help, sir."

"Indeed! In what way?"

"You know, sir, they've got wire round the camp and nobody can get at them now," said Peele, breathing rather hard. "Well, sir, they keep watch for anybody landin' on the island; but a fellow inside the camp could cut the wire after dark, and leave a place open for anybody to get through. I only want a pair of wire-cutters. I—I'm willin' to do it, sir, and then the prefects could come along and bag the whole lot after dark."

"Bless my soul!"

"Of course, sir, I—I'm only offerin' to do this from a sense of duty," said Peele meekly.

Mr. Dalton's lips curled, but he did not speak. Dr. Chisholm's eyes were fixed on Cyril Peele.

"A sense of duty, Peele?" said the Head. "I fear, Peele, that your motives are very different from that. Doubtless by the means you suggest this revolt could be effectually dealt with. But, how dare you, sir, suppose that I could make use of such means! How dare you propose to me to take part in what amounts to an act of treachery! I repeat, you wretched boy, how dare you!"

The Head's voice rose in his wrath, till it seemed to the hapless Peele to reverberate like thunder. The cad of the Fourth stood with his knees knocking together. To his mean and cunning mind, it had seemed, without doubt, that the headmaster, puzzled and perplexed to know how to deal with the rebellion, would fairly jump at this chance. He realised his mistake now.

"Since you have returned here, Peele," resumed the Head, "you will not be allowed to leave the school again. I hope and trust that this unhappy rebellion will soon be ended; in any case, you will take no further part in it. Not a word, sir! Silence!"

The Head turned to Mr. Dalton.

"Mr. Dalton, I have accepted your offer of aid, and I hope you will be successful. Successful or not, I am deeply obliged to you, and, whether the boys return, or remain on the island, I hope to see you again before you leave for Canada."

"Certainly, sir, if you wish," said Mr. Dalton.

And he took his leave. After he was gone, the Head gave his attention to the miserable Peele.

"Follow me!" he snapped.

Cyril Peele followed him. In a few

more minutes he was locked in the punishment-room; the Head feeling, quite justly, that he could not be trusted to remain within bounds. Peele, with feelings that could not be expressed in words, sat on the edge of the bed in the punishment-room, and stared at the little patch of blue spring sky outside the window.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The End of the Rebellion!

"S EEN Peele?"

"No!"

"Well, he's gone!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

The river flowed red in the sunset, and the Rookwood rebels, round the camp-fire on the island, were sitting down to supper—an appetising supper turned out by the masterly hand of Tubby Muffin.

Lovell came up, after making a round of the island.

"Gone!" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"I had an idea that he meant to bolt," said Lovell. "I was going to keep an eye on him. I've looked for him all over the island, and he's gone. The boat's still there so he must have swum for it."

"Playing billiards at the Bird-in-Hand, I suppose," said Newcome. "Unless he's deserted."

"Well, if he's deserted, good riddance to him," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We shan't miss him!"

"I'll jolly well punch him if he comes back!" growled Lovell.

There was the sound of an oar on the river. A boat was pulling towards the island.

"Hallo, is that the deserter comin' back, or the jolly old enemy?" drawled Mornington.

Oswald shouted through the thickets: "It's Dicky!"

"My hat!"

All the rebels jumped up, forgetful of supper. There was a rush to the wire fence. On the sunlit river a boat glided up to the island, with Mr. Richard Dalton pulling at the oars. It bumped on the shore, and the young master jumped out.

"He's coming to join us, after all," said Lovell.

"Fathead!"

"Hallo, Dicky!" sang out Putty of the Fourth. "Welcome home, old man!"

"Shut up, Putty!"

Mr. Richard Dalton looked about him, and then came by the path under the trees. He arrived at the stretched wires, behind which the Rookwood rebels were crowded. Jimmy Silver & Co. capped him very respectfully.

Mr. Dalton's face was serious and a little stern. Doubtless he was pleased by the loyal attachment of his old Form, which had led to the Rookwood rebellion. But certainly he was not pleased by the rebellion, and did not approve of Jimmy Silver & Co.'s drastic measures in the very least.

"Good-afternoon, sir!" said Jimmy demurely. "Jolly glad to see you again, sir!"

"Thank you, Silver! I have come to say good-bye," said Mr. Dalton.

"Say au revoir, but not good-bye!" sang Putty of the Fourth softly; and some of the juniors laughed.

"That's all right, sir," said Lovell. "You hang on at Latcham, sir, till the Head comes to his senses. We're going to win!"

"Yes, rather!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We want you back, sir," said Mornington. "We're not goin' to give in till the Head sends for you to

take the Fourth again. Then we'll walk back to school as meek as woolly lambs."

"Next week," said Mr. Dalton quietly, "I am leaving for Canada."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Oh!"

"Great Scott!"

"You—you don't mean that, sir?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in great dismay.

"I do mean it, Silver." Mr. Dalton smiled slightly. "I am not a rich man, my boy, and cannot afford to spend many weeks in idleness. I have received an offer of a post in Canada, and shall accept it. I shall be required to start almost at once, and am, in fact, leaving Latham for London to-morrow morning. I should have been sorry to go without saying good-bye to you all."

"Oh, Mr. Dalton!"

"Rotten!"

The Rookwood rebels were all grave enough now. It was for the reinstatement of Mr. Dalton that they had gone on "strike." And now he was going to Canada! The rebels felt as if the bottom had been knocked out of the whole thing.

The Rookwood rebellion, which had been going so strong, and in which the rebels had counted confidently upon success, had suddenly lost its purpose and its meaning. If Mr. Dalton was not available for reinstatement at Rookwood there was nothing to "strike" for. Mr. Dalton's unexpected communication gave Jimmy Silver & Co. ample food for thought.

"My boys," went on Richard Dalton, after a pause, "you know very well that I strongly disapprove of your rebellion against your headmaster's authority. Your motive is very flattering to me personally, but you have acted hastily and wrongly."

"We don't see it, sir," said Lovell stubbornly.

"We need not discuss the point," said Mr. Dalton. "In a week's time I shall be on the sea, and I should like to see this unhappy trouble at an end before I go. I am empowered by your headmaster to offer you all full pardon if you return to Rookwood at once. He is prepared to make every allowance for you, and, in fact, to forget and forgive. You have no reason now for refusing this offer."

"Oh, rotten!" said Raby.

"You do not wish, Silver, to rebel simply for rebellion's sake, I hope?"

"Oh, no! Certainly not," said Jimmy. "We—we wanted you back, sir."

"That is now impossible," said Mr. Dalton kindly. "I urge you to take advantage of the headmaster's offer, and to return to the school. You have now no reason for continuing this revolt."

"I—I suppose we haven't," said Lovell, rather blankly. "I—I say, this is a bit rotten, Mr. Dalton. If you'd hang on we'd jolly well make the Head take you back."

"You are a foolish boy, Lovell, to suppose that I would consent to return to Rookwood on such terms, even if the Head should be agreeable."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

Mornington gave a rueful laugh.

"The game's up," he said. "I suppose we're not going to camp on this island for ever, like jolly old Robinson Crusoe. If Mr. Dalton's going to Canada we can't get him back to Rookwood, and the sooner we chuck up the better. I shall be glad to get some clean collars, anyhow."

"Only, we're not going to be flogged, or sacked, or anything of that sort," said Higgs suspiciously. "We can hold

out here as long as we jolly well like, and the Head can put that in his pipe and smoke it!"

"The Head offers complete pardon if you all return to your duty at once," said Mr. Dalton quietly.

"That's all right, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We can trust the Head, and we can trust you. But—but this is rather a knock-out blow for us, sir."

"Yes, rather!" grunted Lovell. "We wanted to march you back to Rookwood with colours flying, sir."

Mr. Dalton smiled.

"Well, I will march back with you, if you will break camp and march at once," he said.

"I—I suppose we may as well."

"I will leave you to discuss the matter," said Richard Dalton. "I hope you will follow my counsel."

And the young master walked back to his boat.

There was deep discussion in the rebel camp. The Fistical Four, deeply disappointed as they were, were for taking Mr. Dalton's advice. They saw no object in continuing a revolt which had, in point of fact, lost its object. Mornington agreed reluctantly; Erroll and Rawson agreed emphatically. Tubby Muffin was of opinion that the rebellion should be kept up so long as the supply of grub lasted. After that, in Tubby's valuable opinion, it could not end too quickly. But nobody heeded Reginald Muffin.

"I don't see it," grumbled Higgs. "We're here, and they can't touch us. We're keeping out of classes, and we're making the Head look a fool. I'm for keeping it up."

"But we only went on strike to get Mr. Dalton back," said Jimmy Silver, "and now he can't come back."

"Oh, blow Mr. Dalton!" said Higgs. "It's a lark, anyhow."

"We didn't bar the Head for a lark, fathead!"

"Oh, rot!"

Higgs held to his opinion, evidently reluctant to face the prospect of grinding Latin again in the Form-room. But most of the other fellows realised that the game was up, and that there was "nothing doing" now that Mr. Dalton could not, in any case, return to the school. Higgs was left alone in his opinion, and Lovell offered to leave him alone on the island, if that would suit him. But that did not suit Alfred Higgs, and he began to pack up his belongings, along with the others.

The wire was cut, and Jimmy Silver went down to the landing-place. Mr. Dalton glanced at him.

"We're going back to Rookwood, sir," said Jimmy.

"I'm very glad to hear it, Silver," said Mr. Dalton, greatly relieved. "It is a great pleasure to me to see the end of this unhappy trouble before I leave."

"I—I wish you weren't going, sir."

"That cannot be helped now, Silver."

And for the next hour or so the rebels of Rookwood were very busy breaking camp and ferrying across to the river bank. The Rookwood rebellion was over at last, and it had ended in neither victory nor defeat for either side, which was, perhaps, as satisfactory an ending as could have been looked for.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

The Return of the Rebels!

SNOOKS, of the Second, came bolting into the School House at Rookwood with a face full of excitement. Snooks, of the Second, was bursting with news.

"They're coming back!" roared Snooks.

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Mr. Greeley, the master of the Fifth, portly and solemn, was chatting with Mr. Mooney, of the Shell. He turned a portentous frown upon the excited Snooks.

"Boy!" boomed Mr. Greeley.
"Oh!" gasped Snooks. "I—I didn't see you, sir. But they're coming back—Jimmy Silver, sir!"

There was a buzz at once from all of Snooks' hearers, and even Mr. Greeley forgot to look portentous.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Greeley.

"Comin' back, hay?" grinned Smythe of the Shell. "They're chuckin' it up at last, the cheeky fags! Now there's goin' to be weepin' and wailin' and gnashin' of teeth! The Head will put in some hefty exercise with the jolly old birch!"

"About time he did," said Hansom, of the Fifth. "It's lasted a long time. Bound to give in, in the long run, though."

"Oh, bound to!" said Tallboys, of the Fifth.

Mr. Greeley rolled to the big doorway to look out into the quad. The dusk was deepening over Rookwood, but there was still light, and a crowd of juniors could be seen marching up from the school gates. Bulkeley of the Sixth looked out at them, and his look was one of relief.

"I say," panted Snooks, "Dalton is with them! Is Mr. Dalton coming back to Rookwood, Bulkeley?"

"Not that I know of, young 'un."

"Well, he's with them!"

"By Jove, he is!" remarked Neville. "There's Dicky Dalton, Bulkeley—walking beside young Silver! I'd be glad if he was coming back!"

Fellows crowded round on all sides to stare at the returning rebels. Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern Fourth came scudding over from Mr. Manders' House. They greeted the Classics with yells and cat-calls. All Forms at Rookwood were keenly interested in the return of the prodigals; but all the fellows were surprised. Somehow, though it had been taken for granted that the revolt would be put down sooner or later, nobody had expected Jimmy Silver & Co. to give in and walk quietly home, to be dealt with by an incensed headmaster.

"You're for it, old dears!" grinned Smythe of the Shell. "You've come back to ask for it, what?"

"Put some exercise-books in your bags before you go in to the Head!" advised Tommy Dodd.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, here you are again, Silver!" said Bulkeley of the Sixth, as the Fourth Form arrived at the School House. "I'm glad to see you back. Good-evening, Mr. Dalton! I'm glad to see you here, sir."

"I have brought the truants home with me, Bulkeley," said Richard Dalton, with a smile. "The Head has consented to overlook their rebellion, in consideration of the boys returning to their duty. I have had the pleasure of acting as ambassador."

"Oh, I—I see! Then there's not going to be floggings all round," said Bulkeley.

"Fortunately, not!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched into the House. The news had spread that the Head had granted an amnesty; and it was soon known that as Mr. Dalton was going to Canada, the "casus belli" had disappeared, and then all Rookwood understood how it was that the rebellion had come to an end.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome strolled into the end study in the Fourth Form passage. They got the fire going, and Lovell cut down to

the tuckshop for supplies, in the old style. It had been exciting and adventurous and agreeable in its way, to camp on the island in the river, under the flag of rebellion. But the Fistical Four looked round their old study with great satisfaction. They sat down to supper in the study with cheery faces. After all, it was very pleasant to be back in their old quarters.

The Fourth Form passage, long deserted, wore its old familiar aspect that evening. The Rookwood rebellion was over—and, on reflection, most of the Classical Fourth were glad of it.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

All Serene!

"COME in, Mr. Dalton!"
Dr. Chisholm spoke very courteously. From his window, in the dusk, he had seen the Classical Fourth march in, and the relief the sight gave him was intense. He did not regret that he had offered a free pardon to the rebels. He was only too glad to see the end of the dispute, and to be able to reply to inquiring governors and inquiring and critical parents that the little trouble at the school—purely of a temporary nature—was quite, quite over, and that there was no occasion for either governor or parent to come down to Rookwood to look into it.

Naturally, he was feeling very kindly towards Mr. Richard Dalton. That young gentleman, instead of resenting his unjust dismissal, had very quietly and unostentatiously extricated the Head from an exceedingly difficult and troublesome position. The horrid prospect of an invasion to the school by sternly inquiring governors and alarmed parents faded from the Head's mental vision. It was a great relief.

"Come in, Mr. Dalton! You have succeeded, I see!"

"Yes, sir!" said Mr. Dalton. "I am glad to say that the boys decided to act sensibly. They are now in their old quarters."

"That is a great relief, Mr. Dalton. I confess that I was a little perplexed how to act in the peculiar circumstances."

"No doubt, sir."

"I owe it to you, Mr. Dalton."

"That is nothing, sir. I have been long enough at Rookwood to have the interests of the school at heart. I have spent many very happy days here," said Mr. Dalton. "And now, sir, good-bye!"

"You are going?"

"I leave for London to-morrow," said Mr. Dalton.

Dr. Chisholm coughed. He looked at the young man over his spectacles, and coughed again.

The Head had been doing some thinking during Mr. Dalton's absence round-up the rebels.

"I—I hope you will be very—very successful in your new life, in a new country, Mr. Dalton," said the Head at last.

"Thank you, sir!"

Mr. Dalton was standing, prepared to shake hands before departing. But the Head made no motion to shake hands. He was looking more and more thoughtful, and he coughed again.

"You are looking forward to a new life in Canada?"

"Yes, sir. It has its attractions."

"No doubt," said the Head—"no doubt! But if this offer, Mr. Dalton, had been made to you while you were on the staff at Rookwood, may I inquire whether you would have resigned your post here to accept it?"

Mr. Dalton smiled.

"I hardly think so, sir."

"Now, I am going to speak frankly, Mr. Dalton," said the Head. "So long as the boys demanded your reinstatement here as a condition of surrender I could not possibly take it into consideration. The position's altered now that they have surrendered."

By this time, apparently, the Head had satisfied himself that the rebels had surrendered. Jimmy Silver & Co. were far from looking at it in that light. But the old gentleman had his own ways of looking at things. Mr. Dalton made no remark.

"I am now free to act," continued the Head, "and I willingly admit, Mr. Dalton, that in parting with you I parted with the most-valued member of my staff."

"You are very kind, sir," said Mr. Dalton, looking very embarrassed.

"I will say, further, that after you were gone I desired very much to find some means of accommodation," said the Head. "You have now rendered me a great service, Mr. Dalton."

"Not at all, sir."

"A great service," repeated the Head obstinately. Even in trifling matters the old gentleman did not like to be contradicted. "I regard it as such. I regard it as bridging the differences that existed between us. If you desire, Mr. Dalton, to accept and take up this new post in a new country, I have nothing more to say. If, on the other hand, it should be your desire to resume your old position at Rookwood—"

"Dr. Chisholm!"

"In the latter case, Mr. Dalton, I can only say that I should welcome you back, and should make it a point to obliterate completely any recollection of any difference that may have occurred!" said the Head impressively.

Mr. Dalton stood silent.

"The boys of your Form are greatly attached to you, Mr. Dalton, and perhaps I may say that I have some regard for you," said the Head. "On these grounds, I think you may accept my offer without misgiving. If we part, we part friends; but if you elect to remain, I shall regard myself as greatly obliged to you."

This was a tremendous concession from the Head of Rookwood. For some minutes Mr. Dalton stood in deep thought. Then he looked frankly at the Head.

"You are very kind, sir. I shall not post a letter which I had intended to post this evening to Canada."

Dr. Chisholm smiled.

"Then you remain at Rookwood, Mr. Dalton?"

"I shall be glad to do so, sir."

And Jimmy Silver & Co. were glad, too, when they heard of it. On the following morning the Classical Fourth found Mr. Dalton was to take them in class, in the old Form-room, and they rejoiced greatly. The whole Form stood up and cheered for a full five minutes—even Peele joined in the cheering, and Tubby Muffin contributed an enthusiastic squeak. The Form-room and the School House rang with it, and for full five minutes Richard Dalton failed to restore silence. After that the Fourth Form settled down to work, and no one looking into the Fourth Form-room would have dreamed that Jimmy Silver & Co. had ever been the rebels of the school.

THE END.

(Look out for "Gunner Plays the Goat!" next week's screamingly funny story of Jimmy Silver & Co. It's Owen Conquest at his best, so order your copy now!)