

RUCTIONS ON THE HIGHWAY!

Lovell and his motor-scooter have been the cause of more than one unpleasant adventure since the Rookwood Ramblers took the holiday road, and in their latest adventure these two are deeply involved again!



A STERN CHASE!

ANOTHER GREAT ADVENTURE OF
JIMMY SILVER & CO., OF ROOKWOOD.
ON HOLIDAY.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Stolen Scooter!

SPLASH!
Jimmy Silver looked up from his breakfast.
The Fistical Four of the Rookwood Fourth were in camp on a slope of the Sussex Downs.

Fields and meadows stretched away on all sides, with a pleasant-looking, red-roofed farmhouse in the distance. Close at hand, a stream ran under an old stone bridge, the banks thickly clothed with willows and elders.

Three push-bikes, and Lovell's celebrated motor-scooter stood against a big tree. The Rookwood rambblers were very careful not to leave their machines out of sight for a moment, since the occasion when a rascally tramp had nearly succeeded in bagging one of them.

Over breakfast, the chums of Rookwood were discussing that incident, as it happened, when the loud splash from the stream interrupted them. Jimmy Silver was of opinion that he had seen the tramp that day—the frowsy, unwashed gentleman whose name was Parkins, and who called himself Honest John. Being under the impression that he had seen the man, Jimmy suspected that Mr. Parkins was dogging the party, in his character of a snatcher-up of unconsidered trifles.

Edward Arthur Lovell pooh-poohed the idea. Mr. Parkins, in Lovell's opinion, had been too severely handled to want to have anything more to do with the Rookwood party.

The heavy splash interrupted the discussion. Something—or somebody—had fallen into the stream, beyond the thick willows that hid the water from the sight of the campers.

"Help!"

It was a loud yell from the stream.

"Hallo! That's somebody in!" exclaimed Raby.

Jimmy Silver sprang to his feet.

He dropped his teacup in his hurry. Fortunately, it was a tin cup. Unfortunately, the tea in it was hot, and Lovell's leg was in the way when it fell. There was a roar from Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Yoooop!"

"Help!" came in a yell from the stream. "I'm drowning!—Oh, help! Help! Help!"

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"Come on!" panted Jimmy.

He rushed away towards the stream, brushing hurriedly through the willows and osiers. Raby and Newcome rushed after him. Arthur Edward Lovell stayed only a moment to rub the place where the hot tea had fallen, and rushed after the others.

The Fistical Four burst through the thickets, and came out on the water's edge, breathlessly.

They scanned the shining waters that rippled along in the summer sunshine, singing through the rushes and reeds. There was no sign of a swimmer in the stream.

"He's gone under," said Lovell.

"It's queer, though," said Jimmy Silver, knitting his brows. "We weren't a minute getting to the water, and—"

"Might be caught in the rushes, or something."

"Or it might be some chap pulling our leg!" growled Jimmy Silver, "or—"

Chug-chug-chug!

Jimmy Silver jumped.

The chugging of a small engine came through the clear air, from the direction of the leafy lane close at hand.

It was not the powerful voice of a motor-bicycle. It was the well-known voice of the motor-scooter. Well the juniors knew that chug-chug!

"The scooter!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Sounds like ours, doesn't it?" said Lovell. "Some other chap on the road with one of them."

"It is ours!" roared Jimmy. "We've been gammoned, you ass! Come on, hop it!"

Jimmy Silver tore madly back towards the camp.

Raby and Newcome dashed after him at top speed. They understood the suspicion that had flashed into Jimmy Silver's mind—that the splash and the cry for help had been a trick to draw them away from their camp while the trickster pilfered their belongings. Arthur Edward Lovell stood and stared after them. Lovell's brain never worked very quickly.

"I say," he shouted, "what—"

The other three did not heed. Panting, they rushed back to the camp, tearing frantically through the bushes and thickets.

"Gone!" gasped Jimmy Silver, halting breathless.

Three push-bikes lay sprawling on the ground. But of the motor-scooter there was no sign.

It had vanished.

Chug, chug, chug! came faintly from the distance, through the balmy air of the sunny morning.

Jimmy Silver ran desperately into the lane. Far away, in a cloud of dust, he spotted the motor-scooter, going strong. A frowsy-looking gentleman, in a battered bowler hat, was mounted upon it. Jimmy Silver had only a back view of him, and only for a moment or two; but he knew that it was Mr. Parkins.

"That villain!" he gasped.

The motor-scooter vanished round a curve of the lane. For a minute or so the chugging of it echoed faintly from the distance. Then the sound died away.

The motor-scooter was gone; and Honest John was gone with it.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Nothing Doing!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL came back to the camp, frowning. His look was rather accusing, as he fixed his eyes on his comrades.

"Look here—" he said.

"The scooter's been stolen!" snapped Raby.

"I can see that! It's bad enough, but human life comes first," said Lovell severely. "Blow the scooter, if you come to that. We've got to save that man from drowning!"

"There never was a man drowning!" howled Jimmy. "It was a trick to get us away from the camp. While we were rooting along the stream that villain was sneaking through the bushes to the camp to get hold of the scooter—see?"

Arthur Edward Lovell shook his head.

"I don't think so for a moment," he answered.

"You silly owl—"

"Look here—"

"It was Parkins!" yelled Jimmy. "I've just seen him. Getting off with the scooter. Don't be an ass, Lovell!"

"Well, my opinion is—"

"Bow-wow! Let's get going, you chaps. We may catch that villain yet!" exclaimed Jimmy. "He may run short of petrol, perhaps. How was the scooter fixed for petrol, Lovell?"

"Full up!" answered Lovell. "I'm always careful, you know."

"You would be—at the wrong time!" said Jimmy crossly. "Come on, you

fellows! Quick! You look after the camp, Lovell. No time to pack anything now."

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome dragged round their bicycles. Pursuit of a motor-scooter on push-bikes seemed a rather doubtful proposition, but the chums of Rookwood were determined to make an attempt, at least, to recover their property.

"Look here, I'm not staying behind!" exclaimed Lovell warmly.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not heed. They ran their bikes from the camp into the lane, and mounted them. Arthur Edward Lovell ran after them excitedly.

"Look here, you chumps—" "You can go and rescue that drowning nobody in the stream!" yelled back Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "You silly ass!"

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome pedalled away in hot haste. They left Arthur Edward Lovell standing in the lane, staring after them in great wrath and indignation.

Arthur Edward did not go back to the stream to the rescue of the mythical drowning man. Even Arthur Edward had realised by this time that it was a trick, and that there was nobody in the water. He went back frowning to the camp to finish his breakfast.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. were putting on their best speed.

For two or three miles they rode on rapidly, and they passed a good many cars, carts, bikes, and motor-bikes. But they did not spot a scooter.

Jimmy Silver slowed down at last. He realised that now that Mr. Parkins was safe out of sight with the stolen scooter, searching for him on the wide countryside was a good deal like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay.

"Nothing doing, you chaps," said Jimmy. "He's dodged us, and he may be a dozen miles away by this time."

"Or lying low in the woods," said Raby. "Waiting for us to clear off, very likely."

"Well, we can't search all the dashed county, foot by foot!" said Newcome. "Let's get back to Ockley Common. We can report the theft at the police station in Ockley."

Jimmy Silver nodded. "That's about all we can do," he said. "My hat! I'd like to be within punching distance of that scoundrel!"

"Wouldn't I—just!" grunted Raby. And the three baffled cyclists started on their return, a kindly agricultural native giving them directions as to a short cut through the woods, which saved a mile on the way back to Ockley Common.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Meeting with St. Jim's!

"MIND you don't forget—" "Wats!" "Look here, Gussy—" "Wubbish! I am not likely to forget things like you fellows, I trust."

The speaker was an elegant youth—no other than Arthur Augustus D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Seven fellows were in camp under the beeches and oaks, in a little wood a mile from the village of Ockley. Three of them belonged to the Shell at St. Jim's—Tom Merry, Manners, and Lowther. Four of them belonged to the St. Jim's Fourth—Blake, Herries, Digby, and D'Arcy. The seven were on tramp, enjoying a walking tour.

Their baggage was of the lightest. All they had they carried on the back of Solomon, the donkey.

But Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, at least, contrived to keep up an elegance of appearance that was worthy of the swell of St. Jim's.

The campers had turned out early that morning, and already Arthur Augustus had spent an hour or more in removing signs of travel from his garments. The swell of St. Jim's was quite able to rough it. Indeed, he prided himself upon being able to rough it with anybody. But a speck of dust on his trousers distressed him considerably, and a soiled shirt worried him deeply.

"It's all wight," went on Arthur Augustus. "I shall be back in about an houah. You fellows get a camp-fire goin', and be weady to cook the gwub when I turn up."

"Don't forget—" repeated Blake. "Weally, Blake—"

"Well, you know what you are," said Blake. "If you come back without the things we'll scrag you!"

"Wats!" "Cut off, Gussy!" said Tom Merry, laughing. "We'll get some bathing while you're gone. There's a lovely pool only a little way off, near the footpath."

"Mind you don't get ddowned." "Fathead!"

And Arthur Augustus started at last. He walked elegantly away by the footpath, and disappeared among the trees.

"The old ass will be at least an hour gone," said Tom Merry. "Let's go and get a swim."

"Let's!" assented Lowther. And the juniors of St. Jim's strolled away from their camp to the enticing pool in the midst of the wood, and in a few minutes were enjoying themselves in the water.

It was nearly an hour later that they came back to their camp under the beeches near the footpath; but there was no sign yet of the return of Arthur Augustus.

Tom Merry & Co. were feeling cheery and refreshed after their swim. But they were also feeling extremely hungry.

Provisions had run out at supper the previous evening, and there was nothing for breakfast. Arthur Augustus had volunteered to fetch a supply from the neighbouring village. As that village was only a mile or so away, an hour seemed ample time.

But the minutes ticked away, and Arthur Augustus did not appear.

"He's found a collar-shop!" groaned Blake. "Ten to one he's nosing over collars and ties, and has forgotten all about brekker!"

"Bother him!" grunted Herries. "We'll bump him when he comes back!" said Digby.

The juniors nodded assent. There was solace in that prospect; but it did not alter the fact that they were very hungry.

Another half-hour glided by. "Hallo, here comes somebody!"

There was a sound of bicycles on the footpath through the wood. The juniors of St. Jim's looked along the path with a faint hope that it was Arthur Augustus returning.

Three cyclists came along the path. Arthur Augustus was not one of them, but the three fellows were quite well known by sight to Tom Merry & Co.

"Rookwood chaps!" said Blake. Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome glanced at the six fellows standing by the footpath. They slowed down. "Hallo, St. Jim's!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Hallo, Rookwood!" Jimmy Silver & Co. jumped down.

Cheery greetings were exchanged between the two parties of juniors, and then Jimmy asked:

"Seen anything of a frowsy-looking fellow on a motor-scooter?" "No," said Tom Merry. "Lost a scooter?"

"That's it."

"Rotten luck! How did it happen?" Jimmy Silver explained. The St. Jim's fellows were sympathetic; but they had seen nothing of Mr. Parkins or the motor-scooter. The cycle-thief had not come their way.

"We'd ask you to join us at brekker," said Tom Merry ruefully, "only there isn't any brekker. We're waiting for D'Arcy to get back with supplies, and he seems to have lost himself, or something."

"Then let us ask you to join us at brekker," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Our camp is only about a mile away. Lovell's there looking after it. We've got lots of stuff. We had our break fast hours ago. Trot along with us."

"Good egg!" said Manners.

"But what about Gussy?" said Blake. "You know Gussy. He may be hours yet, but he is bound to come hopping in the minute we've gone."

"Yes, rather; that's Gussy!"

"Leave a note for him," suggested Raby. "You can stick it on a tree."

"Give us the bearing of your camp, and I'll scribble a note," said Tom Merry.

And a note, scrawled on a leaf from Tom's pocket-book, was pinned on the trunk of the beech under which the St. Jim's juniors had camped. It ran:

"FATHEAD!"

"We've gone on to Ockley Common, with some Rookwood chaps. You'll find us there by the stone bridge.—Tom Merry.

"P.S.—Ass!"

"P.P.S.—Chump!"

And, leaving that note for Arthur Augustus D'Arcy to find on his return, Tom Merry & Co. walked away with the Rookwooders, the latter wheeling their bicycles; and the camp under the beeches was deserted.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

D'Arcy's Bargain!

"I WONDRAH—" Arthur Augustus D'Arcy paused to consider.

The swell of St. Jim's had arrived at Ockley village, and had carried out his shopping. Unfortunately, he had not found a hosier's or an outfitter's shop, and his failing supply of clean collars had not been replenished. But at the village store he had laid in an ample supply of provisions, and his rucksack was crammed with them. With that load on his elegant shoulders, Arthur Augustus had started to walk back to the beech wood.

Now he was at the parting of the ways.

He paused where three lanes branched off from one another, without the ghost of a signpost in view.

Arthur Augustus was perplexed. "It's no good goin' on without bein' suah of the wight way," he reflected sagely. "I wondrah which of these beastly woads is the wight one, and whethah any of them is the wight one. Weally, it is vevy puzzlin'!"

Arthur Augustus took off his rucksack while he was puzzling out his problem. It was crammed with supplies, and it was very heavy.

He laid the rucksack on the ground, and sat down on the grassy bank by the lane to rest and consider.

Behind him was a thick hedge, and near at hand there was a gap in the hedge. After a few minutes Arthur Augustus became conscious of the fact that someone was looking at him through the gap.

He glanced round.

An extremely shabby, not to say frowsy, gentleman, was looking out from the field, scanning the swell of St. Jim's.

As he caught D'Arcy's glance he touched his battered hat very respectfully, and came out into the lane.

"Morning, sir!" he said.

"Good-mornin'!" answered Arthur Augustus politely.

"You don't 'appen to know of a job goin' in these 'ere parts, sir?"

"I am vevy sowwy, but I do not," said Arthur Augustus. "If you are lookin' for work, I twust you will find it soon."

"Lookin' for it for weeks, sir," said the frowsy gentleman. "Fair 'untin' for it, sir. Wife and family at 'ome—seven children, sir—and a hold grand-father of seventy."

"Bai Jove! That is vevy hard cheese!" said Arthur Augustus.

"Name of Parkins, sir," said the frowsy gentleman. "Generally called Honest John, in my part, sir. Any kind of work. It's all the same to me, so long as it's honest work, sir."

"That is a vevy pwopah pwinciple, Mr. Parkins."

"But it's 'ard to find in these 'ere times, sir," said Parkins, with a sigh. "I've been looking round on my motor-scooter, sir, looking for work all over the county."

"Bai Jove! Have you?" said Arthur Augustus, still polite, but a little surprised.

Even to Gussy's unsuspecting mind, a motor-scooter seemed rather an expensive possession for an unemployed man with a wife, seven children, and an aged grandfather to support.

"You see, sir, I wasn't always so low down in the world," said Mr. Parkins. "I 'ad a good job once, and I bought that scooter. Couldn't afford a motor-bike, sir, but that scooter was a good one. I'd 'ave parted with it long ago, but it came in useful going long distances looking for work."

"I quite undahstand," assented Arthur Augustus.

"But it will have to go at last, sir," sighed Mr. Parkins. "It's a good scooter, sir. I've got it 'ere, in this field. The dealers is 'ard to do with, sir. I gave a lot for that scooter when I had the ready. Now I'd let it go for a five-pound note."

"That is wathah hard!"

"It's worth fifteen, sir, if a penny. But the dealers is 'ard. I've been offered four pounds in Ockley. But I was in 'opes of finding somebody who'd spring a fiver on it. Like to 'ave a look at it, sir?"

"Weally, I do not think I have the time—"

"I'll run it out for you to see, sir," said Mr. Parkins.

For reasons best known to himself, Mr. Parkins looked very sharply up and down the lane and across the fields. Then he disappeared through the gap in the hedge, and a minute or two later reappeared wheeling out the motor-scooter.

Arthur Augustus knew something about petrol-bikes, and he was interested in them. He had handled his brother Conway's motor-bicycle, and

was quite expert with it. So, when he looked at the motor-scooter he could see that it was a good machine. It showed many signs of wear and tear, and was evidently far from new. But it was in quite good condition, so far as its working powers went. Certainly it was worth nine or ten pounds, at least.

"P'raps you'd care to buy that there jigger, sir?" suggested Mr. Parkins. "It's a good machine. It's carried me many a 'undred miles, looking for work."

Arthur Augustus looked very thoughtful.

Mr. Parkins watched his face slyly.

"Only a fiver, sir, and it's yours!" he said.

Arthur Augustus looked at the machine again. Certainly it would be an acquisition at the price. And it would be very useful. That heavy rucksack would go into the carrier. And as soon as he found the direction he would be back in camp in a few minutes on the scooter. And it was agreeable to think of the surprise of Tom Merry & Co. when he arrived on the scooter. They would jump to the conclusion that he had given about twenty pounds for it. And their astonishment would be great when they learned what a bargain he had made.

"Licence on it, sir, paid up to the end of the year," said Mr. Parkins. "I'll throw that in for nothing, sir."

"Right-ho!" said Arthur Augustus. "I can send home for my dwivah's licence. You are quite suah that you will be satisfied to part with that machine for five pounds?"

"Only too pleased, sir!"

"Then it is a go," said Arthur Augustus.

The swell of St. Jim's took out his little Russia-leather pocket-book, and five pound-notes passed into the possession of Mr. Parkins. That gentleman scarcely stayed to thank the purchaser. Perhaps he was in a hurry to get home to his wife, his seven children, and his aged grandparents, or perhaps he had other reasons for wishing to get to a safe distance from the scooter with D'Arcy's money in his pocket.

At all events he disappeared promptly, and Arthur Augustus, in a very satisfied frame of mind, was left in possession of the motor-scooter for which Jimmy Silver & Co. were searching.



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THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lovell Takes the Matter in Hand!

UTTER rot!" Thus Arthur Edward Lovell.

Left to mind the camp by the stone bridge on Ockley Common, Lovell was far from satisfied.

The motor-scooter had been stolen, and there seemed only a slight chance

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THIS WEEK'S LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES, AND SPECIAL CLAIMS FORM, APPEAR ON PAGE 6 OF THIS ISSUE! Register To-day on the Special Form provided below.



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(very plainly.)

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AUGUST 11th, 1928.

of getting it back. That slight chance practically vanished—in Lovell's opinion—when he was left behind. Without him, what chance had the Rookwood trio of running down the cycle-thief?

Lovell was fed-up. He resolved at last that he couldn't and wouldn't stand it. He gathered up the baggage of the Fistical Four, and found a place of concealment for

There was no sign of a stolen scooter about Mr. Parkins. He was on foot. Still, it was suspicious that he was there at all; it bore out Jimmy's belief that he had been following the Rookwood party.

"He hasn't got the scooter," murmured Lovell. "I don't quite believe he had it. Jimmy's an ass! Still, he may know something about it. He may

it in the thicket. Having glanced round, to make sure he had left nothing in sight save the ashes of the late camp-fire, Arthur Edward Lovell cleared off.

On foot, certainly, it seemed a somewhat hefty task to track down a cycle-thief who had stolen a motor-scooter, well supplied with petrol. Even Lovell did not hope to beat the thief in point of speed, especially as he had lost well over an hour "kicking his heels" at the camp.

But Lovell had thought the matter out. It was by no means sure that the thief would make a direct "break" for the far distance. Any policeman, seeing that frowsy tramp scudding along on a motor-scooter, would naturally become suspicious—that is, if it was Mr. Parkins who had stolen the jigger. If Honest John was the thief, he was scarcely likely to scud along the high-roads in the broad daylight with his prize. He was more likely to hide somewhere, Lovell thought, and wait for dusk.

Lovell came across several natives as he went on, and asked every one of them whether he had seen a motor-scooter.

Nobody had, apparently. All the replies were in the negative.

This was discouraging; but Lovell drew from it confirmation of his theory that the cycle-thief was keeping out of sight, instead of scooting boldly off on the scooter.

As he turned into a rusty, dusty lane between two meadows, Lovell gave a sudden jump.

A man was crossing one of the meadows, towards a stile in the lane, at a rapid pace. He was not running, but he was walking very quickly indeed. And Lovell knew him!

It was Honest John Parkins—the man who, a few days before, had sold him a can of water for petrol, and whom Jimmy Silver suspected of stealing the scooter.

Lovell dodged into the cover of a hedge at once.

Mr. Parkins was coming almost directly towards him, but had not seen him yet. Now he could not see him.

have stolen it and hidden it somewhere. I'm jolly well going to know!"

In cover, by the stile, Lovell watched the tramp through the openings of the hedge.

By earlier experience, Lovell knew that he was not a match for Mr. Parkins in single combat. He had tackled him once, under the mistaken impression that he was.

This time he determined to take no chances.

Very strategically, he remained in cover, while Mr. Parkins came puffing and panting up to the stile, and clambered over it into the lane.

Just as he was coming over, Lovell leaped on him like a tiger.

Mr. Parkins was taken utterly by surprise.

"Oh!" he gasped.

Crash!

The tramp came down heavily into the dusty lane, in a breathless heap, nearly all the breath knocked out of his body by the crash on the earth.

Lovell dragged him over, and planted a knee on his frowsy chest. Then he flourished a clenched fist over Mr. Parkins's dizzy, startled face.

"Now, you scoundrel!" panted Lovell.

"Ow! Ow! Oh! What the thump—ow!" gasped Mr. Parkins.

"Where's my motor-scooter?"

"Eh?"

"Did you steal my motor-scooter, you scoundrel?" demanded Lovell.

Mr. Parkins blinked up at him. He recognised Lovell now. He was at a disadvantage; the Rookwood junior's knee pinned him down, and Arthur Edward had the upper hand. But his question to the tramp implied a doubt, which Mr. Parkins observed at once.

"I didn't!" he gasped. "I ain't—I never was! Don't you 'andle a man what hasn't done nothing, sir!"

Lovell stared down at him suspiciously.

"What are you hanging about these parts for, anyhow?" demanded Lovell.

"Looking for work—"

"Oh, cut that out!" snapped Lovell. "Jimmy thought he saw you when the scooter went, anyhow. I'll jolly well give you in charge, and chance it!"

Mr. Parkins gasped. He could hear the sound of some agricultural machine at work in a neighbouring field, and realised that there was help at hand for the Rookwood junior if he chose to call for it.

"I—I say, sir, has your scooter been took?" he spluttered.

"I fancy you know it has!" snapped Lovell.

"I've seed a scooter jest like it, sir," said Mr. Parkins eagerly. "Own twin to it. I thought it was you, not knowing that your scooter had been took. Well-dressed young feller had it, and not a hundred yards from this 'ere spot."

"Too thin," said Lovell.

"Sir, I'll p'int out the scooter," panted Mr. Parkins—"I will, honest! You can see it from t'other side of that medder—why, there goes the blessed ingen, this blessed minute!"

Chug-chug-chug!

"My hat!" ejaculated Lovell. "That sounds jolly like it!"

"I saw it!" gasped Mr. Parkins. "Own twin to yours, I thought it was, sir. You get a move on, or that feller will be off with it. Feller with an eye-glass, he was. 'Igh-class-lookin' feller

to steal a bike, but you never can tell, sir."

Chug-chug-chug!

From the lane on the other side of the green meadow came the sound of the starting engine.

Lovell released the tramp.

It was possible that he was being deceived—that it was some other motor-scooter that was chugging beyond the meadow. But, at all events, it was plain that Mr. Parkins hadn't the scooter about him. On that point there was no shadow of doubt—no possible, probable shadow of doubt—no possible doubt whatever. Leaving the frowsy gentleman sprawling in the dust, still gasping, Lovell jumped up, leaped over the stile, and started across the field at a rapid run.

Mr. Parkins picked himself up.

"Well, my eye!" he ejaculated.

He gasped for breath.

"Wot a go!" murmured Mr. Parkins, with a beery chuckle. "Lucky I got rid of that there scooter when I did to that silly young hass. My eye! I'd like to give that bloke one in the eye for 'aving a man down like that 'ere! I would that! But I think, John, my boy, that it will be better for your 'ealth to get out!"

And Mr. Parkins proceeded to get out at top speed.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

"Stop, Thief!"

"WIGHT as wain!"
Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was highly satisfied.

He was testing his new purchase, the motor-scooter. The tank was well supplied with petrol. The machine ran smoothly. Arthur Augustus ran it up the lane, and ran it down the lane, chugging away gaily. Then he halted and jumped off.

"Wight as wain! This scootah will come in handy, and no mistake," murmured the swell of St. Jim's. "I weally think I am in luck, baggin' a wippin' scootah like this for five pounds! Bai Jove! I can run back to the village in ten minutes, and ask the way to the beastly wood where I left the chaps."

And Arthur Augustus proceeded to load his crammed rucksack into the carrier. Then he prepared to mount the jigger again and depart. He became dimly aware of the fact that a youth was racing across an adjoining meadow towards him; but that was no business of his, and Arthur Augustus took no special heed of the hurrying youth.

He wheeled the machine round in the direction of Ockley, and turned on the "juice." He ran lightly with the jigger, and mounted into the roomy saddle just as Lovell came flying out of the meadow with a flying leap over a stile.

Lovell landed in the lane, staggering a few yards behind the gliding scooter. He recovered himself and bawled after the rider:

"Stop thief!"

Arthur Augustus heard that shout, but, naturally, he did not heed it. It did not even dawn upon his mind that such an approbrious epithet could be applied to his noble and aristocratic self.

So he kept on cheerily, and the voice of Lovell died away behind him.

He reached the village of Ockley, and there he was able to get the right direction for the beech wood. And when he scooted out of the village again it was by a different road. In cheery spirits, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy scooted away at a spanking speed for Tom Merry's camp.

Meanwhile, Arthur Edward Lovell of

the Rookwood Fourth was in a frame of mind that could only be described as homicidal.

He chased the elusive motor-scooter along the lane till it vanished, and then he stopped, breathless, panting, crimson, and boiling with rage.

"It's all up!" groaned Lovell, wiping the streams of perspiration from his face. "We'll never see it again! That fellow will get clear away with it all right. Oh, dear!"

And in that dismal mood Arthur Edward Lovell proceeded to tramp back to the camp on Ockley Common, realising that there was nothing more to be done.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Whose Scooter?

JIMMY SILVER grunted.

"Just like Lovell!"

"Oh, just!" said Raby and Newcome together.

Jimmy, and Raby, and Newcome, with Tom Merry & Co., arrived at the camp on Ockley Common. Naturally, they had expected to find Lovell there, as he had been left in charge of the camp. But there was no sign of Lovell—or of the camp, save the dead fire.

"Is this the place?" asked Tom Merry.

"Oh, this is the place right enough," answered Jimmy Silver. "But Lovell's gone off. Goodness knows why. I suppose he's put our baggage out of sight somewhere, and we shall have to hunt for it."

"Never mind, so long as there's some grub when we find it!" said Tom, with a laugh.

Three Rookwooders and six St. Jim's fellows proceeded to root about the vicinity for the baggage. Perhaps it was a case of many hands making light work, or perhaps Lovell had not concealed the baggage so completely as he had supposed. At all events, the juniors were not so long in finding it, and breakfast at last was handed out to six hungry fellows.

Tom Merry & Co. enjoyed that breakfast. Jimmy, and Raby, and Newcome hospitably attended to their numerous guests, and took another snack with them. The hunt for the stolen scooter had made them hungry.

"I wonder where Lovell is?" Raby remarked when the breakfast was finished.

"And I wonder where D'Arcy is?" remarked Blake.

Chug-chug! Chug!

"Hallo, that sounds like our jolly old scooter!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, jumping up. "Lovell can't have found it."

"No fear," said Newcome.

"Gussy!" shouted Blake.

An elegant youth, with an eyeglass gleaming in his eye, came sailing merrily up the path to the stone bridge on a chugging motor-scooter. St. Jim's fellows and Rookwood fellows stared at him blankly. Jimmy Silver & Co. recognised the scooter—all the party recognised Arthur Augustus D'Arcy.

And then they became aware of a dusty, breathless, crimson fellow, who was racing after the scooter with perspiration pouring down his face.

"Lovell!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"D'Arcy!" shouted Tom Merry.

"What the thump—"

"Stop thief!" Lovell's voice, husky with yelling, reached the astounded juniors at the camp. "Stop him! Stop thief!"

"What the merry thump—"

Arthur Augustus turned the scooter from the path, sounded his horn, and

rode into the camp and jumped down. He raised his hat politely to the Rookwooders.

"Heah I am, you fellows!" he said. "Glad to meet you Wookwood chaps! I've got the gwub in the cawwiah, Blake. I found your cheeky note, and came on! I—"

"Where did you get that scooter?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Bought it, deah boy."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Lovell—"

Arthur Edward Lovell came panting up. Lovell was simply astounded to see the cycle thief turn into the camp and halt there. But the scooter was safe now, and Lovell came panting in, streaming with perspiration and covered with dust, but triumphant.

"I've run him down!" he gasped. "Collar him! Hallo, you St. Jim's chaps! Fancy meeting you here! Lend us a hand to collar that scoundrel—"

"Wha-a-at?" stuttered Tom Merry.

"He's got our scooter! He's got it! He stole it this morning! Why, what—what—what—"

Hitherto Lovell had had only a back view of Arthur Augustus D'Arcy on the scooter. Now he had a front view, and he recognised the swell of St. Jim's.

"You!" he stuttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell felt as if his head were turning round.

"That's our scooter!" he gasped.

"Weally, I fail to see how it can be your scootah, when I bought it for five pounds this mornin'," answered D'Arcy calmly.

"You—you—you bought it" stuttered tered Lovell.

"Yaas, wathah!"

"Oh, crumbs!" Lovell understood at last. "D-d-d-did you buy it from a frowsy, dirty, unshaven blighter in a battered bowler hat?"

"Yaas."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Tom Merry.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Trust Gussy!" gasped Blake. "Oh, my hat! Gussy, old man, you've done it now! You're going to be had up as a receiver of stolen goods!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Arthur Augustus stared blankly at the hilarious juniors. It was but slowly that the truth penetrated into his aristocratic brain.

"Bai Jove, have you fellows had a scootah stolen?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"And—and is that the scootah?"

"Ha, ha! That's it."

"Bai Jove! I've been done out of five pounds!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The question arises," grinned Jimmy Silver, "whose scooter is it now?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. spent that day in company with the St. Jim's fellows, and they parted the following morning. The scooter went with the Rookwooders. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy declined to receive any indemnity, but the Rookwooders insisted upon reimbursing him for half the amount, and so it was settled. And both parties, when they took to the road again, kept open a wary eye for Honest John Parkins, yearning to meet him once more and visit the punishment of his sins upon his frowsy head.

THE END.

(You'll enjoy reading next week's long, Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, entitled: "LOVELL SCENTS A MYSTERY?")

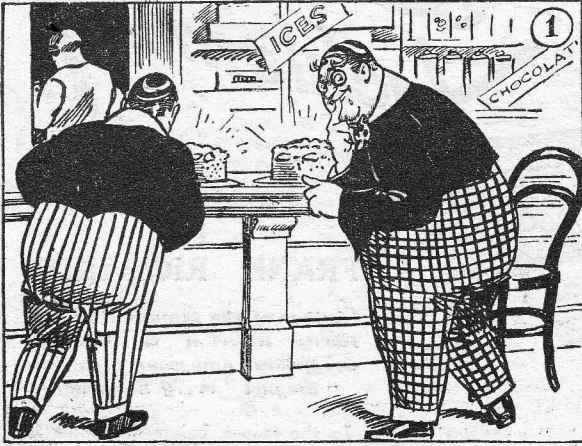


The BUNTER BROTHERS

— Merry Mirthmakers. —



THE BUNTERS "TAKE THE CAKE"!



Billy and Sammy Bunter were in the tuckshop one day. They were in their usual state of impecuniosity—and they were hungry, too. Two big cakes that rested on the counter looked very tantalising, so when Mrs. Mimble's back was turned, those two wily youths decided to purloin them.



But when the Bunters grabbed up those cakes, and made a bee-line out of the tuckshop, Mrs. Mimble saw their dark deed. "Stop, you bad boys!" she cried. "How dare you! Come back!" But the Bunters did not come back!



Across the quad those cake-purloiners raced, carrying their loot. And, in the rear came the voice of the angry tuckshop-keeper. But Billy was so taken up with the pursuit that he failed to notice a hoe which was lying directly in his path.



Then—biff! Whack! Billy stepped on that hoe, and the next moment the handle whizzed up in his face, knocking the cake clean over his head. And, unable to stop himself, Sammy collided with his brother. "Wow! Yarooop!" howled Sammy, as his cake was jerked over his shoulder.



Of course, that did it! The two brothers subsided dizzily to the ground, and Mrs. Mimble nimbly caught those flying cakes. Smart work! And then Mr. Quelch came on the scene. When he heard what had happened, he swished his cane ominously.



"Your chastisement will be severe!" he thundered to the Bunter Brothers. And when he led them off to his study, they agreed with him on that point. Their punishment was severe! Swish! Swish! Swish! "Wow! Wow! Wow!!"

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