

BOYS! HERE'S THIS WEEK'S BEST BARGAIN!

The POPULAR

EVERY TUESDAY

Week
Ending
Dec. 1st,
1928.
New Series,
No. 514.



CLICK! CAUGHT IN THE ACT!
See the Fine School Tale inside

TROUBLE FOR SOMEBODY!

The story of one schoolboy's treachery towards another, and how Fate steps in at the eleventh hour and gives the plottor the surprise and lesson of his life!



The OAKSHOTT FEUD!

A STIRRING LONG COMPLETE
STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO.
OF ROOKWOOD.

BY
**OWEN
CONQUEST.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Caught Napping!

"STOP him!"
"Collar the cad!"
There was a sudden rush of footsteps under the leafless trees in Coombe Lane.

Jimmy Silver stopped, panting. He had been running rather hard. Jimmy had reasons for haste. In the village High Street he had happened on Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth Form. There was snow in the High Street, and Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth, as usual, had been walking as if they were monarchs of all they surveyed and did not think much of it.

So the temptation had assailed Jimmy Silver to gather up two snowballs and knock off the hats of Hansom and Talboys, which was done neatly, efficiently, and successfully with two rapid shots. Whereat Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth waxed exceedingly wroth. Hence the speed with which Jimmy Silver was negotiating Coombe Lane.

At a distance behind him, breathing vengeance, were Hansom and Talboys, also running hard. They were yearning for reprisals on the cheeky Fourth-Former who had knocked off two Fifth Form hats. But Jimmy Silver had a good start, and he was putting on his best speed. He had little doubt of keeping clear of the vengeful Fifth-Formers, till that sudden shout and rush of footsteps stopped him in the lane.

It was not often that Jimmy Silver was caught napping. But caught napping he undoubtedly was now.

He was thinking of the danger behind, and not dreaming of danger in front. And almost before he knew what was happening five or six fellows had rushed him down and collared him, and he was sprawling in snow and mud in the wintry lane.

Half a dozen fellows in Oakshott caps sprawled over him. Valence Chilcot, captain of the Oakshott Fourth, chuckled breathlessly.

"Bagged the cad!"

"Got him!" said Vernon Poole-Poole. "Got him nicely! Our win."
Jimmy Silver struggled.

"Let go, you rotters!" he panted. "Not quite!" grinned Merton. "By gad! How the brute wriggles! Sit on his head, somebody."

"Hold him, you chaps!" said Chilcot. "Bang his head if he wriggles!"

"You bet!"
"Bump!"
"Oh!" roared Jimmy Silver, as his hapless head came into violent contact with the hard earth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Take it quietly, old bean," advised Poole-Poole. "We've got you, you know. You're for it!"

Jimmy Silver panted for breath. He was in the hands of the Philistines. He had quite forgotten Hansom and Talboys of the Rookwood Fifth now. He had much more serious reprisals to expect from these Oakshott fellows.

Valence Chilcot looked down on him with a malicious grin, as Jimmy lay gasping in the grasp of the Oakshott crowd.

"Your turn now, Silver," he said. "I rather hoped we might fall in with you this afternoon—that's why we came this way. My luck's in, and yours is out."

"You came over to look for another licking?" asked Jimmy Silver undauntedly. "Your nose still looks as if it had been butting into a motor-car. Do you want it punched again?"

Chilcot knitted his brows. "You're for it now," he said. "I've had a high old time, as I dare say you know. I've had a floggin' from my headmaster, for fightin' a Rookwood chap over a football match and gettin' black eyes, and for tellin' him a yarn about a tramp pitchin' into me. I've had a jaw from my pater on the same subject, and I'm in his black books. I owe it all to you, you Rookwood cad. I told you I'd make you sorry for it, didn't I?"

He swished a cane in the air—a light Malacca cane.

"I've had a floggin'," as I said. I'm

goin' to see that you have one—laid on a little harder. Catch on?"

"You rotter——" began Jimmy. "Turn him over," said Chilcot. "Oh, yaas!" chuckled Poole-Poole. Jimmy Silver resisted desperately.

But even the great fighting-man of the Rookwood Fourth had little chance in the hands of half a dozen fellows.

In spite of his resistance he was rolled over in the slush and snow, and pinned face downwards on the earth.

With two or three fellows holding his arms, and another trampling on either leg, Jimmy Silver was helpless.

"Keep clear, you fellows!" said Chilcot, swishing the Malacca cane. "You bet!" grinned Poole-Poole.

Lash!
The cane came down across Jimmy Silver's back with a lash that rang out on the frosty air like a pistol-shot.

There was a yell from Jimmy Silver. "Ow! You rotten funk! Ow!"

Whack, whack!
Jimmy Silver squirmed and struggled. Jimmy had wondered whether the trouble with Oakshott was at an end, or whether he would hear anything more of Valence Chilcot and his threats of vengeance. Certainly he had not expected anything like this. Chilcot, the dandy of Oakshott School, was a good deal of a blackguard, as he knew; but he had not supposed that even Chilcot would play the hooligan in this fashion.

He struggled desperately, and the Oakshott crowd had plenty to do to hold him down. But they held him, and Chilcot, with a bitter vindictiveness, laid on the blows with the Malacca cane.

Whack, whack, whack!
Six times the cane had risen and fallen, and Chilcot was very far from finished. But then there came a sudden interruption.

Round a bend of the lane came Hansom and Talboys of the Rookwood Fifth, in hot pursuit of Jimmy Silver. They were running hard, and they came on the scene so suddenly that they were

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almost upon the Oakshott fellows before they saw them.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Hansom.

"My hat!" exclaimed Talboys.

"What—"

"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

The Rookwood Fifth-Formers did not need asking. The sight of a Rookwood junior held down by half a dozen fellows, whilst another flogged him, was more than enough for them. After a second's pause, in sheer astonishment, they got busy on the Oakshott crowd.

Right and left they knocked the nuts of Oakshott; and in less than two minutes Poole-Poole and Merton and the rest were fleeing as if for their lives, with the exception of Valence Chilcot. Chilcot would gladly have fled with the others, but Hansom of the Fifth had grasped him by the collar.

"No, you don't!" said Hansom grimly.

And Chilcot squirmed in the powerful grasp of the Fifth-Former, while Jimmy Silver, smothered with snow and mud, and gasping for breath, scrambled to his feet.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Faying the Piper!

JIMMY SILVER

VER panted.

His back was

aching from

the lashes of

Chilcot's cane; and

for once "Uncle

James" of Rook-

wood was seriously

wrathful. A scrap or

a ragging he would

have taken with his

usual cheery good-

temper, but this

was quite beyond

the limit. Valence

Chilcot shivered as

Jimmy's eyes

turned on him.

"Thank you for

helping me, Hansom,"

said Jimmy breathlessly.

"I—I

say, I'm sorry I snowballed you; only

a lark, you know."

"You mustn't lark with the Fifth,"

said Hansom. "But never mind that

now. Who's this chap? And what

does it all mean, anyhow?"

"It's Chilcot, of Oakshott," said

Jimmy.

"Oh, I remember him! He played

football with your fag team a few weeks

ago, and I was referee," said Hansom.

"He fouled you, and the match wasn't

finished. I remember."

"We had a scrap afterwards, and he

refused gloves, and got damaged," said

Jimmy Silver. "He told his headmaster

a lie about a tramp attacking him to

account for his black eyes, and he's

been found out and flogged. That's

why he was flogging me with his cane.

Now you can hand him over to me."

Hansom grinned.

"We'll see fair play!" he said.

Chilcot's collar was released.

The dandy of Oakshott cast a hunted

look up and down the lane. His com-

rades were well out of sight now; there

was no help for him. And there was

no escape; the two Rookwood Fifth

Formers saw to that. Jimmy Silver

pushed back his muddy cuffs.

"Are you ready, Chilcot?" he asked.

"I'm not scrappin' with you," said

Chilcot sullenly.

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"Your mistake, you are," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't lay into a fellow with a stick, and then say you're not scrapping. Put up your hands, you cad!"

"I won't!"

Smack!

Jimmy Silver's open hand came across Chilcot's face.

"Now, will you put up your hands, or take a licking with your own cane?" he said. "That's your choice."

Chilcot's choice was soon made. He clenched his fists and rushed furiously at the captain of the Rookwood Fourth.

Jimmy Silver met him more than half-way.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!

Jimmy Silver, for once, was in a black and vengeful mood. The lashing of Chilcot's cane on his helpless back was an injury and an insult that had to be avenged.

and, with a last savage look at the captain of the Rookwood Fourth, tramped away down the lane.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Precious Pair!

MR. JOSEPH HOOK, glancing from a back window of the Bird-in-Hand inn, near Coombe, grinned.

His grin was caused by the sight of a youth who had just turned into the inn garden from the slushy little lane that ran beside the Bird-in-Hand.

"His nibs 'ave come a cropper!" murmured Mr. Hook.

Valence Chilcot certainly looked as if he had come a cropper. Usually he was a nut of the nuts; what he did not know about the tying of a necktie, or the crease in a fellow's trousers, was not worth knowing. But the elegant



TO JIMMY SILVER'S RESCUE! "Rescue!" yelled Jimmy Silver, as Hansom and Talboys dashed up. The Rookwood Fifth-Formers did not need asking. The sight of Jimmy held down by half a dozen fellows while another flogged him, was more than enough for them. The next moment they were wading into the Oakshott crowd, knocking them right and left. (See Chapter 10.)

His attack was like a whirlwind, and the Oakshott dandy was knocked right and left.

Chilcot put up a good fight, fighting savagely; and for five minutes or more the two juniors tramped in the snow, panting and punching. Then the dandy of Oakshott went down heavily.

"Time!" grinned Hansom.

Chilcot did not rise. He lay in the trampled slush, and looked up at Jimmy Silver with savage eyes.

"I'm done!" he muttered thickly.

"Oh, you're not done yet!" said Hansom banteringly. "You can take another punch or two. Get up and get going!"

"I'm done!" snarled Chilcot.

Jimmy Silver gave him a glance of contempt.

"If you're done you can crawl away," he said scornfully. "I've a jolly good mind to start you with my boot! Get out of sight!"

Valence Chilcot rose painfully to his feet. His nose was streaming crimson, and he dabbed at it with his handkerchief.

"You'll hear somethin' more of this Silver!" he said between his teeth.

Jimmy laughed contemptuously.

"You'd better keep clear of Rookwood," he said. "You won't get off so easily next time. Now clear before I kick you!"

Valence Chilcot picked up his hat,

and expensive dandy of Oakshott was in a sad state now. He was smothered with mud and snow—he was untidy from head to foot—his nose was red and damaged; and his expression was almost Hunnish. Only too plainly the dandy of Oakshott had come a cropper.

As Chilcot was on a friendly visit to Mr. Hook, Mr. Hook might have been expected to be sympathetic. But his derisive grin, from the window, did not express much sympathy.

Probably Chilcot's lofty ways did not conciliate Mr. Hook's regard, though the fat bookmaker found his acquaintance a profitable one. Possibly Mr. Hook was even glad to see that his uppish young friend had "come a cropper."

Chilcot, unaware of the grinning glance turned on him, ascended the steps to the crazy wooden veranda behind the Bird-in-Hand, and came along to the dirty french windows. By that time Mr. Hook's derisive grin had vanished, replaced by an expression of respectful concern. He opened the french windows and stood aside for the Oakshott fellow to enter.

"Arternoon, sir!" said Joey Hook.

"Had an accident, sir?"

"No—yes! I'm in a pretty rotten state," said Chilcot, scowling. "Can I get a clean-up here?"

"Suttin'ly, sir! Step into my room, sir!"

Mr. Hook opened a communicating door, and Chilcot passed into the adjoining room. Mr. Hook sat down to smoke a cigarette, grinning over it, as he waited for Chilcot to reappear.

It was a quarter of an hour before Valence Chilcot came back, and he looked a great deal improved. But his damaged nose stood out in startling contrast to his pale face.

"Sit down, sir!" said Mr. Hook. "Your friends comin' along, sir?" "I don't know where they are—half way to Oakshott by this time, I dare say," replied Chilcot sourly. "We fell in with some Rookwood chaps, and there was a row."

"Cheeky young rips, them Rookwood kids, sir," said Mr. Hook. "Specially young Silver—and Lovell, too. Why, sir, I've been punched myself by them young rips—actually punched, sir. Straight!"



Chilcot's lip curled. He was not worrying about Mr. Hook's grievances; and obviously did not care whether Mr. Hook had been punched or not by the cheeky Rookwooders.

"Speaking of young Silver," said Chilcot. "I owe Silver this nose, and a good deal more. I've been flogged by my headmaster, and ragged by my pater, and all through him. I've told him that he's going to be sorry for it all. I think you can help me."

"Me sir?" said Mr. Hook, in astonishment.

Chilcot set his teeth. "I want him put through it," he said in a low voice. "He's going to have all that I've had, and a little more. I had a chance to-day; but my luck was out, and I got the worst of it again. I'm not going to try handlin' him personally any more. I'm in the Head's black books now, and I can't run any more risks. But he's got to have it."

Mr. Hook eyed the pale, malicious face before him, puzzled.

"Well, what can I do, sir?" he asked. "I can't undertake to andle the young cub. You don't mean that."

"No," said Chilcot contemptuously. "I thought of that at first, but I don't suppose you could handle him—you're too fat and flabby, and I dare say he could knock you out."

"He seems to have knocked you out, sir!" said Mr. Hook, stung to red.

Chilcot scowled. "Never mind that. Look here, Hook, you spend half your time on the race-

course and I suppose you know plenty of the ruffians who go there—racing roughs, and that kind."

"Course I do," said Mr. Hook. "I've got plenty of money, you know that, as you've had a lot of it," said Chilcot. "I want Jimmy Silver thrashed—nothing serious, of course, out a thrashing that will make him wriggle, something like a Head's flogging, only twice as thick, see? Find a man to do it, and you can hand him five pounds, with another fiver for yourself."

Mr. Hook stared at the Oakshott dandy.

That Valence Chilcot was a young rascal, and a pretty thorough-going blackguard, he knew already. But even the cynical Joey Hook had never suspected Chilcot of blackguardism to this depth.

"Well, my eye!" ejaculated Mr. Hook.

Chilcot looked at him with a sneer.

"Don't give me any rot about scruples on the subject," he said. "You can cut all that out, Hook. Will you do it?"

"It won't be easy, sir."

"Easy enough. You're not to mention my name, of course, or to give your man a hint that he's employed by an Oakshott fellow. You're not to mention Oakshott, or me, at all. It's a private quarrel of your own, see?"

"Of course, But—"

"But what?"

snapped Chilcot impatiently. "I can find a man, of course," said Mr. Hook. "Billy Chivers would do it for a fiver; it's his trade to pinch watches at the races, and if he has to biff a man, why, sir, he biffs him 'ard. Chivers is the bloke, and I can tip him the wink easy enough. But 'ow's it going to be arranged, sir? He's never seen young Silver, and he can't 'ang round Rookwood School watching for a cove to biff. How can he?"

Chilcot laughed impatiently. "Of course not. I shall have to fix that part. I'll think that out and fix it up for Jimmy Silver to be in a certain place at a certain time. Chivers can be there, too, with a good, thick stick."

Mr. Hook wrinkled his fat brows thoughtfully.

"If you can fix that, sir—specially arter dark—"

"Leave that to me. If I let you know the exact place where Silver will be, at a certain time, can you fix it for your man to be on the spot and handle him?"

"Quite easy, sir," said Mr. Hook. "You fix that much, and I'll answer for the rest. You'll only 'ave to let me know."

"That's settled, then," said Chilcot. "You'll drop me a line—"

"I'll telephone," said Chilcot, with a sour smile. "I'm not ass enough to put things in writing, Hook. Get your man here, and keep him ready, and I'll ring you up when it's fixed. Mind, not a

word about me—your Chivers isn't even to know of my existence."

"That's understood, sir."

Mr. Hook shuffled the cards again. But Valence Chilcot was not to be tempted. He rose from his chair.

"It's settled, then," he said. "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, sir!" said Joey Hook, disappointed.

Chilcot left the Bird-in-Hand by way of the veranda at the back. Mr. Hook stood at the window and watched him go.

"Well, I knowed that young 'ound was no good!" soliloquised Mr. Hook. "If ever there was a rotten egg, that young gent is it, and no error. I don't like young Silver, he's a cheeky young cub, but I'd rather see Chivers give Master Chilcot a thrashing than 'im, that I would, straight! But that wouldn't be business."

And Mr. Hook shook his bullet head regretfully.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Chilcot's Challenge!

"ROT!"

Thus Arthur Edward Lovell. It was the way of Arthur Edward to express his opinions

with more vigour than grace.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at tea in the end study in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood a couple of days after the affair with the Oakshott fellows.

"My idea is that we should go over to Oakshott and give Chilcot a jolly good ragging," said Lovell.

Jimmy shook his head.

"There's been trouble enough," he said. "Chilcot's bagged his share of trouble for rowing with us. I fancy he'll give us a miss now. We don't want a shindy, Chuck it, old man."

Lovell grunted. "Tap!"

"Come in!" called out Jimmy Silver. The door of the end study opened, and to the surprise of the Fistical Four it was not a Rookwood fellow who appeared there. It was Vernon Poole-Poole, of the Fourth Form at Oakshott.

"Excuse my buttin' in," said Poole-Poole. "I found my way up here. Pax, you know. I've got a message for Silver."

"You can come in. Poole-Poole came in."

Arthur Edward Lovell eyed the nut of Oakshott morosely.

"Message from Chilcot?" he demanded.

"Yaas."

"Well, what is it, Poole?" asked Jimmy Silver restively. "I don't want to hear anything more from Oakshott. What's the good of keeping up the trouble?"

"Just what I told him," said Poole-Poole cheerfully. "But the trouble is that he's had a floggin'; and he'll get another, safe as houses, if Dr. Cranston finds out that he's been fighting Rookwood chaps again. The Head is awf'ly down on him at present. But Chilcot's goin' to risk it—that is, of course, if you don't funk comin' up to the scratch, Silver."

"Fathead!" said Jimmy Silver politely.

"Oh, he's got to be jolly careful," went on Poole-Poole. "If it comes out, he's for it, at Oakshott. The Head is fairly fed with him and his goin's on. So he wants to meet you, but the meetin' is to be kept a dead secret—no witnesses, and all that."

Jimmy Silver frowned.

"He thinks he can lick you, given a fair chance," went on Poole-Poole. "He's determined on tryin', anyhow. If you don't chose to play up, don't, but I've got to deliver the message. Chilcot will come alone from Oakshott after lessons on Wednesday, and meet you in the wood near Coombe. He'll wait for you near the dead oak on the footpath. You know the place?"

"Yes."

"You're to turn up there. If he's first on the spot, he'll wait; if you're first, you'll wait. That clear?"

"Quite clear."

"Well, is it a go?" asked Poole-Poole. "Time for the meetin' four o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, no witnesses, and the whole thing kept a dead secret. I'm tellin' you before your friends; but they'll agree not to say a word about it, of course."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

He was fed-up with Oakshott and Chilcot & Co. and all their works. Yet it was difficult to refuse that challenge.

"Tell Chilcot I accept his challenge, and that I'll try to make him tired of carrying on a feud with Rookwood. That's all?"

"Yaas."

And Vernon Poole-Poole lounged out of the end study and took his departure.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Treachery!

JIMMY SILVER came off the football ground on Wednesday afternoon, after a House match with the Moderns, and proceeded to change. The match was over in time for the captain of the Fourth to keep his appointment in Coombe Wood.

Arthur Edward Lovell was thoughtful and rather morose. He did not like the idea of Jimmy going alone to the appointment; partly, perhaps, because he had a keen desire to see Valence Chilcot receive the licking that was the certain outcome of the fight.

"I don't like it, Jimmy!" he growled.

"Same here," agreed Raby. "It's all very well about the need of keeping the thing dark; but it's quite on the cards that Chilcot may bring three or four fellows with him, and make it a ragging instead of a fight. He's capable of it."

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"I know that," he said. "I'm not quite an ass. I don't trust Chilcot any more than you fellows do. If he's got any trick on, Poole-Poole doesn't know it; but there may be a trick on, all the same. But I'm not exactly going to run into a trap."

"You're keeping the appointment?"

"Yes; I'm bound to do that. I've agreed to keep it, and to go alone; and I shall play up, of course."

"And suppose Chilcot's got a crowd with him?" demanded Lovell.

Jimmy laughed.

"In that case, they won't see me. I shall see them first. I haven't been a Boy Scout for nothing. I shan't walk up to the dead oak by the footpath, and walk into an ambush, if they've got one laid."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

"It's agreed that if one isn't on the spot at four, the other waits for him," went on Jimmy Silver. "Well, Chilcot can't grumble at being kept waiting a bit. If he's so keen on a scrap he can wait half an hour for it, while I look round and make sure that he's there alone."

Lovell chuckled.

"Good! I didn't think you had so much sense, old chap," he said.

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"Thanks!"

"All serene," said Raby, relieved. "I'd rather we came with you; but if you put in some scouting first it will be all right."

"Right as rain!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

And after a hurried early tea in the end study Jimmy Silver left the school alone, leaving his chums still at tea. He walked down the misty lane towards Coombe, and turned into the wood at the footpath.

But he did not follow the footpath very far.

It was already four o'clock, and dusky in the wood. Jimmy Silver turned from the path into the dusk of the trees and proceeded to make a very wide detour.

Faintly, from the distant village, came the chime of the quarter after four, as Jimmy approached the place of appointment, moving silently and cautiously through the underwoods.

Suddenly he stopped.

Through an opening of the trees he had a glimpse of the dead oak near the footpath, a well-known landmark in the vicinity.

The place was quite solitary; there was no sign of Valence Chilcot near the oak, though it was now twenty minutes after the hour fixed for the meeting.

But in the thickets, a short distance ahead of Jimmy Silver, was an object that drew his concentrated attention.

A man in a rough coat, with a cap pulled down over his brows, was half-crouching behind a clump of bush.

His back was towards Jimmy Silver, his face turned towards the dead oak. He was watching the footpath through the interstices in the bush.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

He had never seen the man before—he caught a glimpse of a brutal profile, and it was quite strange to him. But the roughly-dressed man was evidently in ambush, watching the spot where Jimmy was to wait alone for Valence Chilcot.

Jimmy stood quite still, watching the man. Every now and then the ambushed ruffian made a movement of impatience; once or twice he glanced at a watch; once he put his head through the bushes and glanced along the dusky footpath. It was only too plain that he was watching for someone—waiting and watching for one who was expected to arrive at that lonely spot by that solitary footpath.

Jimmy set his teeth hard.

He did not need telling for what and for whom this hulking ruffian was watching.

He had suspected a trap, but his suspicions had not gone beyond a "ragging" from a crowd of Chilcot's friends. Now he comprehended that the scheme was a darker one.

For whom could this hulking fellow possibly be watching in that lonely spot, at that hour, with a thick stick grasped in his hand? It was not a fight, hand-to-hand, that Chilcot intended, it was not a ragging from a crowd of Oakshott fellows, though that would have been treacherous enough. It was a savage beating from this hired ruffian that Jimmy Silver was to have received, if he had walked up to the place of appointment by the footpath unsuspectingly.

"The awful rotter!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

And in cautious silence he backed away from the spot and trod cautiously away through the wood.

The ruffian continued to watch, while Jimmy Silver, threading his way through the misty wood, retired farther

and farther from the spot. Jimmy grinned a little as he went, wondering how long the hooligan would keep on his useless ambush.

At a safe distance, Jimmy came back into the footpath, and walked along towards Coombe Lane.

The open lane was before him, and in a few minutes more Jimmy Silver would have been out of the wood, and on his way back to the school. Then suddenly, from the dusky woods behind him, came a loud and startling cry, and the Rookwood junior halted and turned round.

"What the thump——" he ejaculated. Loud and sharp, from the depths of the wood, came yell on yell, ringing wildly through the winter dusk.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Wrong Man!

VALENCE CHILCOT stirred uneasily, and muttered below his breath.

He was cold, he was angry, and he was impatient.

Chilcot had left Oakshott quite early that afternoon, and his friend Poole-Poole was under the impression that he had gone to keep the secret appointment with Jimmy Silver by the dead oak in Coombe Wood. In the cunning and dastardly scheme Chilcot had laid for the punishment of his enemy, the vacant Poole-Poole had been quite an innocent agent. Though Poole-Poole was not a particular fellow, certainly he would have drawn the line at entering into any such plot.

Chilcot had simply made use of him, telling him nothing. Chilcot left Oakshott School alone, as if to keep the appointment with the captain of the Rookwood Fourth, but nothing was farther from his intention than keeping the appointment.

Only too well Chilcot knew that, hand to hand, he was no match for Jimmy Silver, of Rookwood. Twice he had been defeated, and once would have been enough to impress that fact on his mind. But he was savagely, bitterly keen to see Jimmy Silver take the punishment that he could not inflict. He had not a pang of remorse for his wretched plotting, not a twinge of compassion for the unsuspecting fellow who was to receive a brutal beating from the hired ruffian. All he wanted was to be a witness of the scene in secrecy and safety.

He trod his way through the misty glades of Coombe Wood, and stopped at a distance from the dead oak. He knew that he was near enough to the scene to hear what passed—it was not likely that Jimmy Silver would be silent in the grasp of the ruffian.

Under a tree, leaning on the trunk, Valence Chilcot waited, looking at his watch at intervals. Four o'clock came—and went—and still there was no sound.

He still waited.

Had Joey Hook deceived him. Was it possible that, after all, Hook had pocketed the money, and failed to play his part? Or had the man Chivers failed to arrive, after all?

The dandy of Oakshott waited and listened, more savagely impatient with every passing moment.

He glanced at his watch again.

It was past half-past four; the misty dusk in the wood was deepening, and soon it would be dark.

Yet there had been no sound!

Chilcot gritted his teeth with bitter anger.

He moved from the spot at last where he had waited, shivering in the cold

wind. He came out into the open footpath and listened, staring through the thickening dusk towards the dead oak.

There was no sound, no movement. The footpath, lonely even in the daytime, was utterly deserted and solitary.

"Hang it! Hang him!" muttered Chilcot bitterly.

The whole thing was a failure, how, he did not know; but the fact was certain. He stood savagely in the footpath, staring towards the dead oak—black against the dimming sky. It was useless to wait longer. He struck a match to light a cigarette, with the intention of going.

There was a rustle in the wood. Chilcot started and glanced round.

From the trees a roughly-dressed man emerged. In the dusk Chilcot had a glimpse of a stubby, coarse face—the face of a racing rowdy. The man came quickly towards him with a stick under his arm.

Chilcot stepped back in vague alarm. He wondered whether this was the ruffian hired by Joey Hook—the hooligan who had been set to watch for Jimmy Silver.

The man eyed him and came closer. "You're late, hay?" he said, with a leering chuckle.

"What? What do you mean?" asked Chilcot, in a faltering voice. He backed farther away, the rough following him up.

"Better late than never, my boy!" grinned Bill Chivers. "I've been waiting for you a long time, I've, and I'll give you a little hextra for keepin' me kicking my 'ceels so long."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Nuff said!"

Chivers made a spring at the Oakshott junior, and his rough, stubby hand closed on Chilcot's collar.

Valence Chilcot panted in terrified alarm, and strove to drag himself away.

"Let go!" he panted. "You—you ruffian—let go! You're making a mistake—you fool! I'm not Silver!"

"I don't know who you are, only you're my mutton," grinned Bill Chivers, grasping him brutally and throwing him into the wet grass of the footpath like a sack of coal.

Chilcot panted with terror and dismay. He realised the ruffian's mistake now; he understood what was to come.

Bill Chivers had waited and watched

for a schoolboy, whom he did not know by sight, to arrive at the dead oak and wait there. It was not Jimmy Silver, but Valence Chilcot who had arrived. That made no difference to Mr. Chivers, who did not even know the name of the fellow he was hired to thrash. All he knew was what Joey Hook had told him; and Mr. Hook had mentioned no names.

"Let me go!" screamed Chilcot, almost beside himself with terror. "I tell you I'm not the fellow you want! I—"

Bill Chivers chuckled grimly. With one strong hand he twisted Valence Chilcot over on his face in the wet grass, heedless of his howling; with the other he swished the stick in the air.

Whack, whack, whack!

Chilcot's yells rang through the dusky wood. He had planned this beating for Jimmy Silver, in return for the flogging he had received from his own headmaster. But the Oakshott headmaster's flogging was nothing to this. Bill Chivers had a heavier hand than Dr. Cranston.

Whack, whack, whack!

Wild yells rang out from the hapless victim of his own treachery. The misty wood echoed with them. And it was those cries that came to the ears of Jimmy Silver.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Goals of Fire!

JIMMY SILVER came along the dusky footpath under the leafless trees at a rapid run.

What was happening in the depths of the shadowy wood he did not know—only that somebody was in severe trouble, and that he was ready to help.

Whack, whack, whack!

He heard the lashing of the stick, amid the wild yelling of the dandy of Oakshott, as he arrived on the scene. In the dusk neither Chilcot nor Bill Chivers saw him, and on the thickly-strewn fallen leaves of the footpath his footsteps made no sound.

He came up with a breathless rush, and in the dimness he saw a writhing form in the grasp of the ruffian, and

the stick descending; and without waiting a second, Jimmy Silver rushed right at Bill Chivers.

Crash!

With all his strength and all his weight behind it, Jimmy Silver drove his fist into the ruffian's stubby face.

There was a hoarse yell from Chivers, and he rolled over on the path, dazed by that hefty drive.

Chilcot rolled free from him. The stick dropped from the hooligan's hand as he sprawled on his back, and Jimmy Silver caught it up.

"Now then, you scoundrel—"

"Oh, my eye!" gasped Chivers.

"Help!" panted Chilcot. Chivers scrambled up. Even in the dusk Jimmy recognised him as the man he had been watching the dead oak. And, quite aware that he had to deal with a dangerous ruffian, Jimmy did not stand on ceremony with him.

As Chivers scrambled to his feet, the Rookwood junior lashed out with the stick, and Chivers roared as he caught it with his head.

The ruffian sprang away, and dodged into the wood. There was a crashing in the bushes as he fled.

Jimmy Silver turned back to the fellow sprawling in the path. It was not till he bent over him that he recognised him.

Then he jumped. "Chilcot!" he ejaculated. Valence Chilcot panted. He was aching all over from the beating he had received, though Jimmy's arrival had saved him from worse; and he was almost weeping with rage and pain.

"Oh—oh! Ow—ow!"

"So it's you!" said Jimmy Silver, staring at him blankly in the dusk.

"You! My hat!"

Chilcot staggered up.

"Silver!" he muttered. "You! It—it was you helped me—you, Silver!"

"Little me!" said Jimmy. "Your man seems to have made a mistake, doesn't he? Did he take you for me in the dusk?"

"My—my man?" stammered Chilcot. "I—I don't understand—"

"Don't you?" said Jimmy grimly. "I think you do. You've got what you meant for me, you rotter!"

"I—I—I—"

"That's enough!" said Jimmy Silver. He tossed away the stick into the trees.

"You're a pretty sickening rotter, Chilcot—not much better than that rough, I think. Pah!"

And with that Jimmy Silver turned away.

Chilcot made a sudden movement after the Rookwood junior.

"Silver!"

Jimmy stopped and turned his head. "I—I'm sorry! It—it was awfully decent of you to help me. I'm sorry!" stammered Chilcot. "I don't know how you know, but it's true—I meant it for you, and I got it! And if you hadn't helped me—" He broke off. "I—I'm sorry, Silver, and I've only got what I deserved! That's all."

And without waiting for an answer Valence Chilcot hurried away.

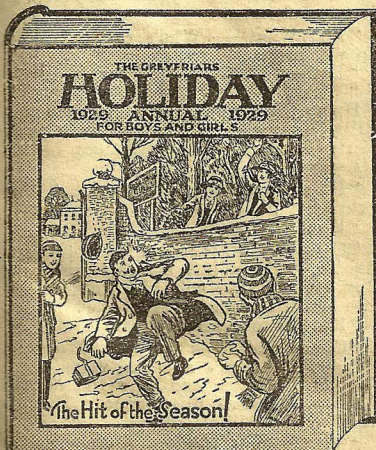
"Well, my hat!" murmured Jimmy. And in a thoughtful mood he walked back to Coombe Lane and took his way to Rookwood. And that was the end, for the time at least, of the Oakshott Feud.

THE END.

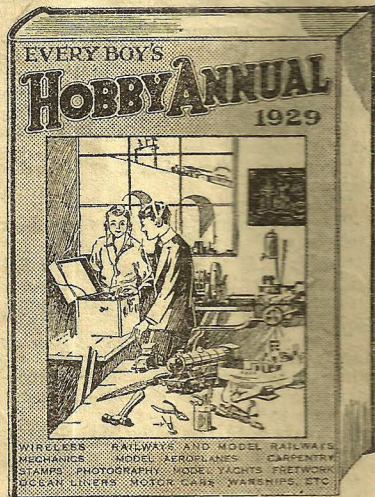
(You'll enjoy reading next Tuesday's long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled: "GUNNER'S HAMPER!")

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