

THE FISTICAL FOUR ARE ON HOLIDAY—MEET THEM BELOW!



A STRANGER COMES ABOARD!

A new passenger comes aboard the Silver Cloud, a man who, from the very first, causes considerable attention from his fellow-voyagers, the Chums of Rookwood. In a moment the air becomes charged with mystery and suspicion!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Run Ashore!

"**A**NYTHING wrong, captain?" Captain Muffin smiled blandly.

"But we've stopped!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Ay, ay; we've stopped," agreed Captain Muffin.

"What are we stopping for?"

"For an hour or two," answered Captain Muffin, as if he quite missed the point of Lovell's question.

And he turned away to speak to Mr. Punter, the mate, before Lovell could explain further what he had meant.

Jimmy Silver grinned. The Silver Cloud yacht certainly had stopped. The throb of her engines was stilled.

Traffic up and down the Bristol Channel passed the Silver Cloud in either direction. The yachtsmen had a good view of Wales on the one hand, and Somersetshire on the other. And Jimmy's opinion was that they would have to entertain themselves with those views for some time to come. Fortunately, it was a bright August day, and the views were really fine. The hills of Wales and the cliffs of Somerset were worth looking at.

"Something wrong in the engine-room," remarked Raby.

"That's it!" assented Newcome.

"I believe Captain Muffin picked those engines up on a scrap-heap at the same time that he bought this old tub second-hand from a washer-woman who was gettin' a new one," remarked Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blow the old engines!" grunted Lovell. "We were going to have a look at Cardiff to-day."

"We sha'n't see Cardiff to-day," said Jimmy Silver. "Never mind, it will keep till to-morrow."

"Br-r-r-r-r!" grunted Lovell.

During that summer cruise of the Silver Cloud there had been some little trouble with the engines occasionally. Captain Muffin's "paying guests" had noticed it. Indeed, they had heard the engineer express his candid opinion of the machinery. Still, as Jimmy Silver cheerfully remarked, what did it matter, so long as the yacht did not blow up? They were spending the summer vacation at sea, and they were in no hurry to get anywhere in particular.

They were enjoying themselves, and that was the chief thing. Perhaps things would have been a little more agreeable had not Ponsonby and Gadsby and Monson, of Highcliffe School, been included in the list of Captain Muffin's

paying guests. And the chums of the Fourth could have spared the company of Smythe & Co., of the Rookwood Shell, without missing it. Still, as Adolphus Smythe had put it, in a dashed boarding-house you couldn't choose your own dashed company, but you could keep cheeky blighters at arm's length. So Smythe & Co. kept the Fourth-Formers at arm's length, and the Fourth-Formers kept Smythe & Co. at arm's length. On board the Silver Cloud, as a matter of fact, there was little more than arm's length to keep anybody at.

The Silver Cloud was roomy, for a yacht. But undoubtedly her passengers were rather closely packed. There were twelve of them, counting Tubby Muffin as only one, though, from his width, he might justly have been counted as two. Ponsonby & Co. grumbled a good deal, so did Smythe & Co., but Jimmy Silver and his chums kept smiling. Captain Muffin regarded the whole party, satisfied or dissatisfied, with cheery, fat good-humour. He was running the Silver Cloud as a business proposition, at four guineas a week per head, and the more heads he could count the more guineas he could count. Probably his only regret was that he could not pack them in like sardines in a tin. There was still one more passenger to come, who was to be picked up at Cardiff, and even the easy-going Jimmy Silver hoped that the skipper would "chuck it" at that.

Jimmy Silver leaned on the rail and looked shoreward. Clear in the sunny air the great hills of Wales loomed against the blue sky in the distance. At the nearest point of the shore Jimmy could see a shelving beach running back to great cliffs, and the roofs of a clustering village. It was a beautiful and rather solitary spot on the Glamorgan shore.

"What about a run ashore?" said Jimmy. "We're going to be hung up here for some time, and the skipper will let us have a boat."

"Good egg!" agreed Lovell.

"Jolly good idea," said Mornington.

"We can get away from Smythe's face and Pon's swank for a bit."

Adolphus Smythe and Ponsonby of Highcliffe were on deck, quite near enough to hear Morny's remark, for which Valentine Mornington did not care in the very least.

Smythe frowned and Ponsonby scowled.

"I'll ask the skipper," said Jimmy.

And he went to look for Captain Muffin.

The captain had said that the stoppage would be for an hour or two. But he

told Jimmy Silver not to be away longer than three hours, which looked as if the stop might be a little longer. Very cheerfully the Fistical Four packed a bundle for a picnic ashore, and took their places in the boat which was lowered for them.

Cecil Ponsonby was talking in low tones to his friends, Gadsby and Monson. Now he came quickly to the side.

"Silver!" he called out.

"Hallo!" answered Jimmy cheerily.

Jimmy had a cheery word for anybody, even a fellow whom he liked as little as he liked Cecil Ponsonby of Highcliffe.

"It's your boat, of course," said Ponsonby with unusual civility, "but will you give us a run to the shore in it?"

"Certainly!" said Jimmy.

Lovell grunted. Arthur Edward disliked Ponsonby intensely, and he had already "scrapped" with the dandy of Highcliffe on board the Silver Cloud.

"Look here, Jimmy, we don't want those Highcliffe cads!" he muttered.

"No harm in giving them a lift ashore," answered Jimmy. "They don't want our company. Besides, it's not our boat, old man."

"You're an ass, Jimmy!"

"Thanks! Jump in, you chaps!"

Ponsonby & Co. dropped into the boat. The Fistical Four took the oars, and Mornington steered. Pon and Gadsby and Monson sat packed rather close as passengers.

From the yacht Smythe and Howard and Tracy eyed them rather morosely as they departed. Smythe & Co. were chummy with the Highcliffians, and they looked on this as a desertion. But there was no room for more in the boat, even if the lofty Adolphus would have condescended to ask a favour.

"Give way!" said Jimmy cheerily, and the boat glided away towards the shelving beach.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

An Unexpected Meeting!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL was the first to jump ashore as the boat's nose ground into the sand. Naturally, he

jumped a little too soon, and landed up to his knees in water, and gave a gasp and scrambled farther on in a great hurry. Then he glared back at his comrades.

"You silly asses!" he ejaculated.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Is that how you bring a boat

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ashore?" demanded Lovell. "Look at my shoes! Look at my bags!"

"Blow your shoes, and bother your bags!" answered Raby. "Take hold of the painter, and make yourself useful!"

The juniors scrambled out, and the boat was dragged high up on the shelving sand. Ponsonby & Co. sat down on a rock that jutted from the sand, and Pon produced a cigarette-case. The three Highcliffe fellows lighted cigarettes, a proceeding that drew a snort from Lovell.

Jimmy Silver looked round him. The village which he had seen from the yacht was hidden by the cliffs from view now, and the shore seemed absolutely solitary.

"The boat will be all right here," said Jimmy. "We'll have a ramble, and picnic on the cliffs, and get back in good time."

"Let's get off!" grunted Lovell. "My feet are wet."

Jimmy glanced at the three Highcliffes, and hesitated.

The Rookwooders were not on good terms with the Highcliffe fellows, and on board the Silver Cloud a sort of armed truce reigned. But Jimmy was nothing if not good-natured.

"You fellows coming?" he asked.

"Thanks, no!" said Ponsonby.

"Going to sit there and smoke?" snorted Lovell.

"Thanks, yes!"

"Just as you like, of course," said Jimmy.

"You see, you're awfully kind," said Ponsonby, "is his delightful innocence. We didn't exactly come ashore for a beanfeast. Thanks, all the same."

Jimmy coloured, and turned away without another word. He realised that he might have expected something caddish from Ponsonby of Highcliffe. Arthur Edward Lovell gave an angry growl.

"I told you you were an ass to give those cads a lift ashore, Jimmy," he said aggressively.

"Yes. Come on!"

"I've a jolly good mind to punch Ponsonby's head before we start."

"Do!" said Mornington. "He's askin' for it!"

"Oh, come on!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently. "We didn't come ashore for a scrap, I suppose. Leave them to their silly smoking, and let's get a move on."

And the Rookwooders started, Pon & Co. watching them with supercilious smiles as they went.

The Rookwood juniors tramped cheerily along the shore, and turned in at the path up the cliffs. They vanished at last among the cliffs from the view of Ponsonby & Co.

Then Pon rose to his feet with a laugh.

"Time to get a move on," he remarked.

Gadsby and Monson chuckled. The three young fellows walked to the boat and began to push it down the sands towards the lapping water.

"What I like about Silver," yawned Ponsonby, "is his delightful innocence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He really thought that we were askin' a favour of him, you know, and never dreamed of suspectin' ulterior motives," said Ponsonby, laughing. "Perhaps he will wake up when he finds the jolly old boat missin'. I wonder how he will get back to the Silver Cloud?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Gadsby and Monson.

The boat slid into the sea, and the Highcliffe fellow jumped into it and pushed off with the oars. Ponsonby sat at the lines, leaving it to his followers to row.

"We'll get along the coast about a mile," he remarked. "When time's up we'll toddle back to the yacht. I hope Captain Muffin won't be worried at hearin' that those fellows went wanderin' and lost their way, and didn't turn up in time to come back with us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't suppose they'll know exactly where they left the boat, the boat bein' no longer there?" grinned Ponsonby.

"They can hunt up an' down the coast for it. I believe there'll be a moon to-night, if they don't find it by dark. Quite an interestin' experience for them, what?"

And the three young rascals chuckled as they pulled away.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver & Co. were climbing the cliffs, quite unconscious of the trick played by the Highcliffes. Even Lovell, though he had objected to Ponsonby's presence, had only objected on general principles, as it were, and had no suspicion that Pon intended treachery.

The five juniors came out on the top of the cliffs after a long climb, and sat down to rest in the grass there. Far away on the waters of the Bristol Channel they could see the Silver Cloud riding, a tiny craft in the distance. Here and there a white or brown sail danced on the sunny waters, and, farther

out, the smoke of great steamers loomed black on the blue sky.

"Jolly here," remarked Mornington. "Topping!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "I think we've earned the picnic. I'm hungry, for one."

The five juniors were all hungry; and they proceeded to do justice to the good things provided by the steward of the Silver Cloud.

Ponsonby & Co. were quite forgotten as they stretched themselves in the grass on the cliffs, warm and dry in the blaze of the August sun, and rested lazily and comfortably, after a good feed.

"Blessed if I feel inclined to move!" yawned Lovell. "After all, there's no hurry to get back. Those jolly old engines will keep Captain Muffin busy for some time."

"Well, we'd better not be late," Jimmy Silver remarked thoughtfully. "The skipper has to get on to Cardiff to pick up a passenger, you know. The chap must be waiting for him there."

"We're getting near the giddy limit with the passenger-list," said Mornington. "The Silver Cloud will be loaded down to the Pimmsoll-line soon. But I'm rather curious to see that new passenger, from what the skipper told us about him."

"Lee?" said Raby. "I say, it was rather fatheaded of Captain Muffin to tell us about it, and we'd better not let Lee know about it. I dare say the chap is all right; and he couldn't help his uncle being a rotter and going to prison. He will feel rather rotten if he knows we know—what?"

"That's so," assented Jimmy Silver.

"The fact is, it's rather thick," said Mornington. "I've been thinkin' about it since the skipper mentioned it, and I remember the case in the newspapers last year. Griffin Lee was a regular rotter, and he got away with a haul of diamonds from a merchant in Hatton Garden, and though he went to prison, they never got the plunder back. Sort of gentleman cracksmen, you know. There's a reward of a thousand pounds still offered for anybody finding out where the fellow hid the diamonds. They were worth a ton of money. Can't help wonderin' whether his nephew knew anything about it. Of course, he may not have. But, really, Captain Muffin ought not to have taken him on his giddy list of payin' guests on the yacht."

"Bosh!" said Lovell. "The fellow's done nothing, and I suppose he didn't bring up his uncle, did he?"

"No; but—"

"Oh, rot!" said Lovell. "I dare say the young fellow wants to see the Silver Cloud again, as he used to cruise on it with his uncle before Griffin Lee was found out to be a cracksmen, and collared by the police. I think we ought to be civil to him."

"Oh, I'll be civil to him!" yawned Mornington. "All the same, he seems to have had a lot to do with his precious uncle, and a fellow can't help wonderin'—"

"Rot!" said Lovell.



ON BOARD! Captain Muffin stepped forward as Lee climbed on to the deck. There was surprise in his look. "Mr. Lee, well, this beats it!" he exclaimed. "I was thinking you'd be at Cardiff. How the dickens did you get along here?" (See Chapter 4.)

"Look here, you ass—"

"Rot, old man!" said Lovell.

"Hallo, there's somebody coming along," said Newcome, as there was a sound of footsteps on the cliffs.

In the hot afternoon the cliffs were quite solitary, and hitherto the Rookwooders had had the place all to themselves. They glanced at the stranger who came tramping along from inland.

He was a young man, rather athletic, with a rather good-looking face, and a very keen pair of eyes that glanced quickly and sharply at the picnickers. He was dressed in tweeds, with a well-filled rucksack on his back.

Jimmy Silver was struck by the keen, penetrating glance he gave the party in passing. He passed on, tramping up the cliffs to the highest point, and there he stopped, and took a pair of binoculars from a leather case at his side, and swept the sea with them.

The juniors, looking at him idly, saw him focus the glasses on some object out at sea, and gaze long and intently.

"He's interested in our giddy yacht," said Lovell. "That's the Silver Cloud he's staring at."

"Looks like it!" said Raby.

"Can't be interested in it for its beauty!" yawned Mornington. "I'm sure nobody would take it for a prize specimen of the Royal Yacht Squadron. Hallo, he's coming over here!"

The young man closed the glasses and came down the slope to where the picnickers sat in the grass.

"Excuse me," he said. "Do you young fellows happen to have a boat about here?"

"Yes, down on the beach," answered Jimmy.

"Perhaps you're going for a row?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "We're going for a row pretty soon."

"Would you give me a lift to the yacht yonder?" asked the young man. "I've got to get out to her, and there doesn't seem to be any fisherman's boat in sight. It's rather a long pull, I know."

Lovell sat up.

"You're going to the Silver Cloud?" he exclaimed.

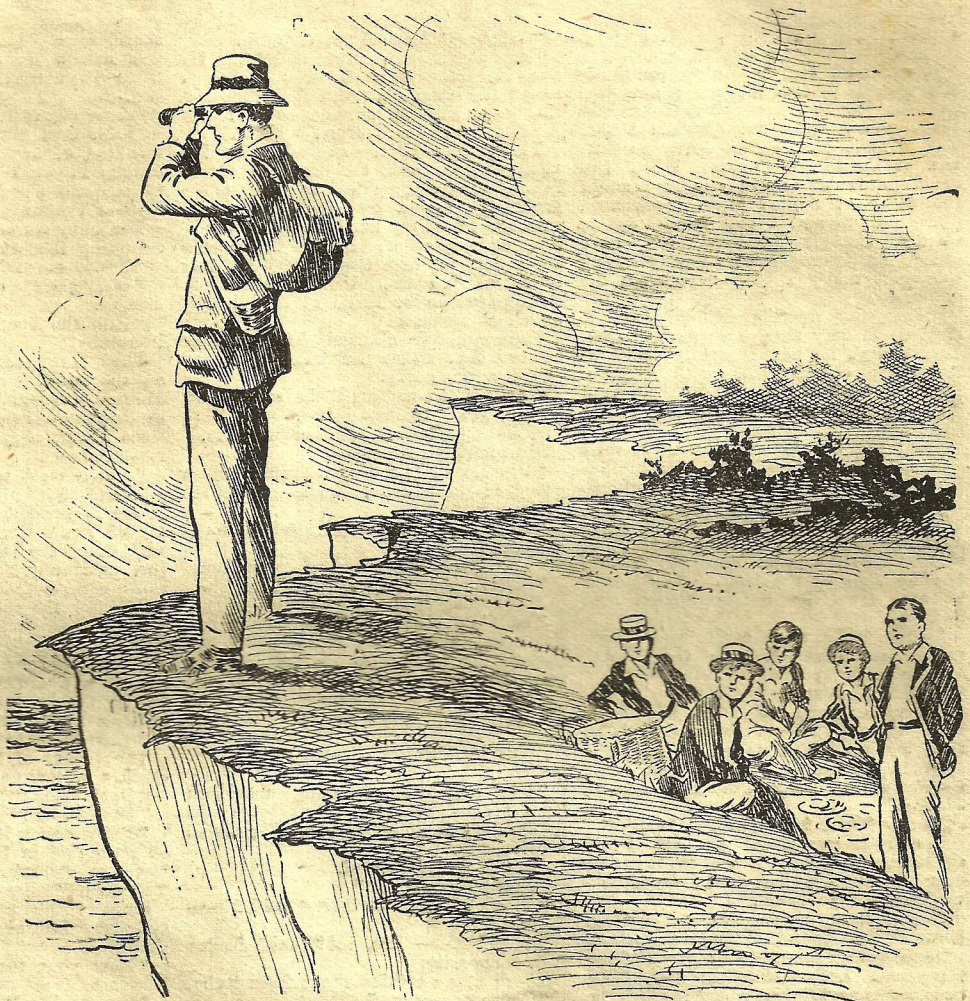
The young man gave a start.

"Yes, you know the yacht?" he asked.

"Well, rather, as we belong to her," said Lovell, with a grin.

The young man looked puzzled for a moment. Then he nodded.

"Oh, I catch on! You're some of Captain Muffin's paying guests, is that it?"



THE STRANGER! Passing the Rookwooders, the young man tramped on up the cliffs to the highest point, and there he stopped, and took a pair of binoculars from a leather case at his side and swept the sea with them. Jimmy Silver & Co. looking at him idly, saw him focus the glasses on some object out at sea and gaze long and intently. (See Chapter 2.)

"That's it!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Are you the new passenger, by any chance? Captain Muffin was going on to Cardiff to pick up a new passenger named Lee, only the engines have failed to play up."

"By gad, what a lucky meeting! Yes, I'm the new passenger," said the young man, with a smile. "Then I suppose you'll be pulling back to the Silver Cloud soon, and you won't mind giving me a lift in the boat?"

"Not at all."

"Pleased," said Mornington, with a curious look at Ulick Lee. "May as well get a move on now, you fellows."

"Let's!" assented Raby.

The Rookwooders detached themselves from the grass, and took their way down the path over the cliffs to the beach, in company with Ulick Lee—nephew of Griffin Lee, gentleman crackman, once the owner of the Silver Cloud, and now an occupant of one of his Majesty's prisons.

It would, perhaps, have been more tactful of Captain Muffin, as Raby had remarked, to tell his guests nothing of Lee and his antecedents, in the circumstances. But, doubtless, the fat captain supposed they knew all about the case of Griffin Lee, which had made rather a sensation at the time. And as Tubby Muffin knew all about the previous ownership of the Silver Cloud, it was not likely to have remained a secret.

The young man looked decent enough. Excepting for that peculiar keenness and watchfulness of his sharp eyes, there was nothing to strike the attention about him.

No charge had been made against him at the time his uncle had been sentenced; but it was known that he had lived in association with Griffin Lee, and no one but himself could have told whether he knew what his rascally uncle's character really was before the crash came.

Jimmy Silver felt that it was only fair play to give him the benefit of the doubt. But it was pretty certain that there were plenty of people who would regard him with suspicious eyes; and possibly that was the cause of his curious, watchful look. A man could not be a notorious convict's nephew

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Painful for Pon!

JIMMY SILVER & Co. could not help feeling a curious interest in this new companion, who was to be their fellow-voyager on the Silver Cloud.

without feeling a little conscious about it.

It was odd, too, as Jimmy could not help reflecting, that the young man had met the Rookwood party there on the Welsh cliffs. That day Captain Muffin was to have picked him up at Cardiff; and at Cardiff, of course, Ulick Lee could not have known anything about the delay of the yacht. Apparently, had the Silver Cloud gone on to Cardiff, Captain Muffin would have missed his passenger, who was tramping the coast many a long mile from the seaport.

His sighting the Silver Cloud from the cliffs could only have been pure chance. Yet, though he had evidently failed to keep his appointment with Captain Muffin at Cardiff, he was anxious to get on board the yacht. It was odd, to say the least of it.

However, it was not Jimmy Silver's business, and though it struck him as odd, he did not give much thought to it. And he soon had a more pressing matter to think about.

The juniors reached the shore, but there was no sign of Ponsonby & Co., and no sign of the boat. They stared up and down the beach, puzzled and annoyed.

"Those silly asses can't have given us up, and gone off with the boat!" exclaimed Newcome.

Lovell gave an angry snort. "They've gone off with the boat, right enough!" he exclaimed. "But they haven't given us up. This is a Highcliffe trick. I told you you were a silly ass to bring Ponsonby ashore, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows. The boat was gone, and the Highcliffians were gone. It was pretty clear that Pon & Co. had left the Rookwooders in the lurch.

"Look here, we've got to get on board!" said Lovell. "There's a fishing village along the coast—we saw it from the yacht. Let's walk along and hire a boat there to take us out. It can't be more than a mile or two."

"That's not a bad idea," assented Jimmy Silver.

"I'm not going to the village!" muttered Ulick Lee.

"Why not?" asked Mornington. Lee did not answer that question. He put his binoculars to his eyes, and swept the calm sea, shining in the setting sun, with an anxious survey.

"Come on!" said Jimmy Silver. The Rookwooders started tramping along the sands in the direction of the fishing village they had seen from the yacht. It was a toss-up, so to speak, whether Ponsonby had taken that direction or the other. They could only hope that he had taken it. If they failed to find him, there would be a fishing-boat to be hired at the village, as a last resource.

Jimmy Silver glanced back as he noticed that Ulick Lee was not accompanying the party.

"Aren't you coming?" he called out. "Oh, yes!" muttered Lee.

And he followed the Rookwooders. Mornington grinned.

"Our friend Lee doesn't seem keen on going to the village," he murmured to Jimmy Silver.

"No. I wonder why?" said Jimmy carelessly.

"Perhaps he doesn't want to be seen."

"What rot! Why shouldn't he?"

Morny laughed.

"Isn't it rather odd that he's turned up here in this queer way, and not stopped at Cardiff to be picked up, accordin' to arrangement?" he said.

"Yes; but—" Jimmy looked at Mornington. "What on earth are you driving at, Morny?"

"Nothin'. Only it looks—"

"Well?"

"Has that cheery young merchant been playin' some of his uncle's tricks in Cardiff, and had to clear?" grinned Mornington.

Jimmy Silver started.

"Morny, what rot!"

"Well, it's odd, at least," said Mornington.

"Yes, but— Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily.

There was a sudden shout from Raby. "There they are!"

"Oh, good!"

The Rookwooders broke into a run. They had taken the right direction, after all. In a little cove, where the rocks hid them from view along the

shore, were Ponsonby & Co. The boat was drawn up on the sand, and the three Highcliffians were using it as a card-table. They were playing nap and smoking cigarettes; enjoying themselves in their own dingy way, and evidently thinking of anything and anybody but Jimmy Silver & Co. The Rookwooders were quite close at hand before they sighted Ponsonby & Co.

Ponsonby stared round as he heard the tramping feet on the sand.

"Those cacs!" he exclaimed. "Oh, gad!" ejaculated Monson in dismay.

"Run the boat out—quick!" shouted Ponsonby.

The playing-cards scattered unheeded on the sand. Pon and Gadsby and Monson grasped the boat and shoved it in desperate haste towards the water. Once afloat, they could have defied the Rookwooders.

"Put it on!" panted Jimmy Silver. "Buck up!" roared Lovell.

The Rookwooders fairly flew over the sands. Pon & Co., shoving and dragging with desperate haste, floated off the boat just as Jimmy Silver and his comrades came sweeping down on them.

"Go for the cads!" gasped Raby. "Give 'em jip!"

"Oh! Ow!" yelled Ponsonby, as Arthur Edward Lovell's hefty fist caught him under the chin. Ponsonby let go the boat and went spinning, to collapse in the water.

Splash!

The dandy of Highcliffe sprawled in shallow water, gasping and spluttering.

"Duck them!" bawled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, chuck it!" howled Gadsby, as he struggled in the grasp of the Rookwooders. "I say, it was only a lark— Yaroooooh!"

Splash!

Gadsby followed his leader into the shallows.

"Now your turn, Monson!" grinned Newcome.

"In with him!" chuckled Mornington. Monson struggled frantically.

"I—I say, we never meant to leave you behind!" he howled. "We—we were coming back for you, honest Injun!"

(Continued on opposite page.)

THIS WEEK'S LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES.

Readers who were registered in the POPULAR Birthday Gift Club before August 17th, 1929, may claim one of the following gifts:

- Fountain Pen.
- Penknife.
- Table Tennis Set.
- Combined Compass and Magnifying Glass.
- Conjuring Outfit.
- Drawing Set.
- "Ever Ready" Electric Torch and Battery.
- Leather Pocket Wallet.

—if the date of their birth is the same as a date in the following list—

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Jan. 9th, 1915. | Feb. 7th, 1913. |
| Mar. 14th, 1918. | April 2nd, 1917. |
| April 29th, 1919. | May 22nd, 1914. |
| June 15th, 1915. | July 6th, 1917. |
| Aug. 13th, 1913. | Sept. 8th, 1921. |
| Oct. 6th, 1915. | Nov. 14th, 1912. |
| Dec. 13th, 1911. | Dec. 21st, 1910. |

If you were BORN on any of these dates, fill in the CLAIMS COUPON provided here and send it to:

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5, Carmelite Street,
London, E.C.4.

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No reader may claim a Gift unless he or she has already been registered as a member of our Birthday Gift Club.

A published date must be exactly the same in day, month, and year as that given on your registration coupon.

You CANNOT claim and register AT THE SAME TIME. Should your birth date happen to be published in this list, and you are NOT already registered, YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE FOR A GIFT.

ANOTHER LIST OF BIRTHDAY DATES WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE.

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Name

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I declare myself to have registered in your Birthday Gift Club before Saturday,

Aug. 17th, 1929, and as the date given in the

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This Coupon is only available until Aug. 29th.

POPULAR August 24th.

"Your injun isn't very honest, old bean!" chuckled Mornington. "Stop tellin' lies, old man, and take a bath."

"I—I tell you— Ow! Ooooch!"

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwooders roared with laughter as Ponsonby & Co. crawled out of the water, gasping, panting spluttering, and drenched and dripping.

"You—you rotten ruffians!" panted Ponsonby.

"Do you want to go in again?" demanded Edward Lovell belligerently.

Ponsonby backed away in a hurry.

Ulick Lee had already jumped into the boat and picked up an oar. The Rookwooders followed him in.

"Push off!" exclaimed Lee. "We're wasting time."

"Don't you be in such a hurry," said Mornington coolly.

"You're not in command of this party, Mr. Lee. Your jolly old uncle isn't owner of the Silver Cloud, you know."

Lee gave him a quick, fierce look.

"Chuck it, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We'll leave those cads ashore, same as they were going to do with us," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Hear, hear!"

"I—I say, you can't leave us here," panted Gadsby. "I—I say, be decent fellows, you know, and take us back to the yacht."

"We're soaking wet!" moaned Monson. "Give us a lift back, you chaps, and let's get changed. We shall catch a cold."

"Catch a cold and be blown!" retorted Lovell.

Ulick Lee was shoving the boat off shore with an oar. Mornington, with another oar jammed in the sand, kept it from moving out. Whatever might be Lee's motive for haste, Valentine Mornington did not intend to let the crackman's nephew take command.

Gadsby and Monson trampled down to the boat with imploring looks. The lofty Pon looked on savagely, without speaking.

"Clear off, you Highcliffe cads!" exclaimed Lovell, flourishing a boathook.

Gadsby and Monson jumped back.

"I—I say—" spluttered Gadsby.

"Do take us back!" implored Monson. "We're wet to the skin. I say, do be decent chaps, you know."

"Go and eat coke!"

"Oh, give them a lift back!" said Jimmy Silver good-naturedly. "Captain Muffin will have a lot of trouble if they're left ashore. They'll have to be fetched."

Lovell grunted.

"I've told you you're an ass, Jimmy! I tell you so again!"

"Good! And now dry up, old chap—you're wearing out your chin. Jump in, you Highcliffe rotters!"

Ponsonby & Co. crowded into the boat. With the additional passenger the boat was rather overcrowded now, and low in the water. Fortunately, the sea was as calm as a pond. Ulick Lee handled one of the oars, and showed that he was a good oarsman, a circumstance that rather raised him in the estimation of the Rookwooders. The boat pulled out from the shore with Ponsonby & Co. crouching in a drenched group in the stern. The great Pon's enterprise that afternoon had not proved much of a success, after all.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.
The New Guest!

CAPTAIN MONTAGUE MUFFIN stared at the newcomer who landed on the deck of the Silver Cloud with Jimmy Silver & Co. The fat skipper was evidently astonished to see him there.

"Well, this beats it, Mr. Lee!" he exclaimed. "I was thinking you'd be hung up in Cardiff, wondering where the Silver Cloud was. How the dickens did you get along here?"

Lee shook hands with the captain.

The peculiar anxious watchfulness of manner which Jimmy Silver & Co. had noticed about him on shore seemed to be gone; he was easy, polite, cheerful. It was as if the young man had left some trouble behind him in taking his feet off the shores of Wales.

Ulick Lee answered the captain's surprised question with a smile.

"The fact is, I missed the date," he said. "I went to stay with some friends along the coast, and, like an ass, timed my return to Cardiff for to-morrow instead of to-day. I was putting in a day's walk back to Cardiff, when I sighted the yacht from the cliffs, and then it came into my mind that I'd made a mistake about the date."

Captain Muffin smiled genially and unsuspectingly.

(Continued on the next page.)



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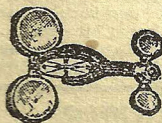
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"Then if we'd got into Cardiff on time we shouldn't have found you," he said. "Of course, I should have waited a bit."

"Lucky, I fell in with some of your guests," said Lee, with a nod at Jimmy Silver & Co. "They very kindly allowed me to take a passage in their boat to the yacht; so all's well that ends well."

"Lucky you knew the Silver Cloud well by sight—what?" said the skipper. "But of course you wouldn't forget the vessel that once belonged to your uncle, and that you've sailed in many a time."

"Not many a time," smiled Ulick Lee. "I had one or two cruises in her, that is all. But I remember the old bus well, of course. I'm jolly glad to be treading her planks again, Captain Muffin. By the way, if you were only going into Cardiff to keep your appointment with me, you don't want to take the trouble now."

"Ay, ay!" assented Captain Muffin. "We've lost a good deal of time, and we'll save a little on that, Lee."

Jimmy Silver glanced at Mornington. Ulick Lee's explanation had been made in full hearing of the Rookwooders; it even came into Jimmy's mind that he wanted them to hear it. Jimmy detected a slightly sarcastic smile on Morny's face.

As Lee went below with the skipper, Jimmy joined Valentine Mornington, and spoke in a low voice.

"Well, Morny?"

"Jolly clever," said Mornington.

"You don't believe the chap?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"He hasn't explained why he was in such a hurry to get off shore, or why he objected to being seen in a fishing village," he answered. "Still, I can't say that I actually don't believe him. That's goin' too far. But I don't think I quite trust Griffin Lee's nephew, all the same. You see how he's keepin' us from goin' on to Cardiff, where somethin' may have happened that made him clear off all of a sudden, without stopping to keep his appointment."

"But—" Jimmy wrinkled his brows in uneasy thought. "Dash it all, Morny, do you think he's a shady card like his uncle, and that he's done something in Cardiff?"

"I think it's jolly likely," answered Mornington coolly. "All the same, I believe in givin' a chap the benefit of the doubt. I don't see that it's any bizney of ours."

Jimmy Silver nodded assent. At supper that evening, Ulick Lee was the recipient of a good many glances from the other "guests" of the Silver Cloud.

The yacht was under way again now. The trouble in the engine-room, whatever it was, had been overcome, and the Silver Cloud was going strong until the next time, as Morny put it. The yacht glided down the estuary of the Severn under a brilliant moon.

Lee's manner was quite composed and genial. He seemed to find himself perfectly at ease on the yacht that had once belonged to his uncle. Jimmy Silver could not help wondering at it.

All the passengers of the Silver Cloud, and the seamen, too, for that matter, knew Lee's story—there was no secret

about it. There could be no secret about it, in fact, for Lee bore a strong resemblance to his Uncle Griffin Lee, whose photograph had appeared in all the illustrated papers at the time of his trial and sentence.

The fact that a large packet of diamonds, stolen by Griffin Lee, had never been recovered, and that a reward of a thousand pounds was outstanding for their discovery, kept the "Griffin Lee case" somewhat alive in the public memory.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Turned Out!

MASTER LOVELL!"

There was a slight hesitation in Captain Muffin's manner.

Lovell glanced at him. It was the following morning, and the Silver Cloud was gliding under a blue sky and brilliant sunshine in the Irish Sea, with the coast of Pembroke in view to the starboard. Lovell was looking away towards the blue, Welsh mountains when the fat skipper addressed him.

Montague Muffin gave a fat little cough.

"Heave ahead!" said Lovell.

"About your room," said the skipper.

"My room?" repeated Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell was in possession of the only state-room on board the yacht that had a single bunk in it. With passengers packed so closely, that was an advantage much to be prized.

Lovell was restive at once.

Certainly he had no intention whatever of giving up his state-room, to Ponsohnv or anybody else.

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THIS COUPON IS ONLY AVAILABLE UNTIL AUGUST 31st, 1929.

POPULAR.

August 24th, 1929.

"Your room," said the captain. "I suppose you wouldn't mind turning out and bunking with one of your friends."

"I should," said Lovell dryly. "The fact is, Mr. Lee wants the room," said Captain Muffin, taking the plunge, as it were. "That chap?" exclaimed Lovell in surprise.

"Yes. Of course, it was a case of first come first served on board my yacht," said Captain Muffin. "Lee had some business in Cardiff that prevented him from joining up at the beginning of the cruise. But, as matters stand, he's sharing a room with my nephew Reginald, and, of course, it's more suitable for him to have a room to himself. You would naturally have no objection to bunking with one of your school-fellows."

"Shouldn't I just!" said Lovell warmly. "I have enough of Tubby's snoring in the dormitory at Rookwood, I can tell you."

Captain Muffin set his plump lips. "I am sorry, Master Lovell—"

"Nothing to be sorry about!" interrupted Lovell acidly. "Lee can't have my room, and that's that!"

"I have told Mr. Lee he can have the room," said Captain Muffin. "I reserve the right to make or to alter arrangements on board my craft. I will order the steward to help you move your things."

And with that he walked away. Lovell stared after him, and then glanced round, as a chuckle fell on his ears. Ponsonby & Co. were lounging close at hand, and evidently they had heard the conversation and were enjoying it. Smythe and Howard and Tracy were grinning across the deck.

Lovell's face was crimson. Trembling with anger, Lovell went tramping down the companion. He came back in a few minutes with a very red face, his looks indicating that his interview with the steward had not been a success.

"Look here, what's the thumping row?" asked Mornington.

Lovell explained in tones choking with wrath. Valentine Mornington whistled.

"What the thump is the man so keen on gettin' your room for?" he asked.

"It's the best room on this rotten old tub!" snapped Lovell.

"Oh, rot! He wouldn't cause all this fuss for that!"

"It's too thick!" said Jimmy Silver. "The fellow's a cad—a sheer cad! We can't keep him out of it, but—"

"But what?" asked Raby.

"But we can make him jolly sorry he's bagged it," said Jimmy Silver. "We can make him so jolly sorry that he will be willing to give it up again. It's going to be a campaign, my infants. We're going to make that rank out- outsider tired of life till he gives up Lovell's room. What?"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. heartily. And the deeply injured Arthur Edward found comfort in the hearty support of his comrades. Comfort, however, was what Ulick Lee was not likely to find so long as he was an occupant of Arthur Edward's state-room. It was, as Jimmy said, a campaign—and when the Fistical Four of Rookwood went on the warpath something was bound to happen.

And something was not long in happening on board the Silver Cloud.

THE END.

(Mr. Lee, the newcomer to the Silver Cloud, has made for himself enemies in Jimmy Silver & Co., and he lives to regret it. See "THE CRACKSMAN'S NEPHEW!" next week.)

RIVALRS on the THAMES!

(Continued from page 12.)

"My dear chap, I'm with you all the way," said the Scottish junior. "We're going to recapture those paddles, for the honour of the House. Incidentally, we're going to wreck the camp, just to show those bounders that New House is cockhouse at St. Jim's."

"Just that," said Figgins.

"Easy enough," declared Fatty Wynn. "They'll be fast asleep, and not looking for anything of the kind. Before they know what's happening to them we'll have their tent over, wallop them, bag the paddles, and scoot. Easy enough!"

Figgins looked at his watch by the light of a little electric torch. "Half-past ten!" he said. "They've turned in long ago."

"Fast asleep long before this," said Fatty Wynn.

"I suppose we shall be able to spot their camp in the dark?" remarked Kerr.

"Easily! I made a special note of it. I know just how they're fixed. Besides, it's not very dark. There's the stars."

"True, O king!"

Figgins rose from the grassy knoll upon which he was seated.

"Let's get off," he said. "It's late enough."

"Let's!" assented Kerr.

The three heroes of the St. Jim's New House stepped into the canoe, and pushed off from the shadowy bank. It was dark on the rolling river, save for the gleam of the stars. The canoe had gone on a mile or more past the St. Jim's camp, and the three juniors dropped down with the current, paddling gently.

Kerr and Wynn paddled, while George Figgins watched the bank anxiously.

"We're close on them now," he murmured presently. "I know that bunch of willows. Quiet, now!"

Kerr and Fatty Wynn paddled with redoubled caution.

The canoe glided into the bank. Dimly, rocking to the water under the willows, they made out the form of a moored boat.

They could make it out only dimly, but they had no doubt that it was the Old Bus, for Figgins had reached the right spot. Of what had happened since Tom Merry & Co. had camped there the New House trio had, of course, no knowledge.

"This is the place," whispered Figgins. "That's the boat. The camp's on the bank quite close."

"Good!" murmured Kerr.

The canoe, almost without a sound, glided round the stern of the swinging boat, and bumped softly on rushes and reeds. Then the three juniors crept cautiously ashore.

The sound of a snore grew louder as they advanced, and they heard several other snores, forming a kind of chorus. As Figgins & Co. occupied a different House at St. Jim's, they did not know whether Tom Merry & Co. snored or not. But certainly they would never have suspected the School House fellows of kicking up a shindy like this when they slept. But the snores, at all events, guided them, and it was upon this spot that Tom Merry & Co. had camped.

"There's the tent!" breathed Figgins.

There was the tent right enough, dim in the starlight. It was not, as a

matter of fact, Tom Merry & Co's tent, but Figgins & Co. had no reason for suspecting that little circumstance. Of Albert and his merry men they knew nothing at all.

"Go it!" breathed Figgins.

The New House trio suppressed their chuckles, and set to work to draw the tent-pegs.

"It's going!" murmured Fatty Wynn. "Going—going!" chuckled Kerr. "Gone!" gasped Figgins. Crash!

Walloping canvas came down on half a dozen sleepers, walloping and flapping, and from half a dozen sleepers, suddenly awake, there arose a babel of voices.

"What the thunder—"

"Ow the thump—"

"That blinking tent—"

Figgins & Co. stood petrified. They had been about to rush on Tom Merry & Co. and tangle them further in the flapping canvas and generally make a wreck of them and their camp. But at the sound of those raucous and excited voices, Figgins stopped still, amazed and dismayed. For not by the wildest stretch of imagination could they suppose those raucous voices to belong to Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's. George Figgins fairly stuttered.

"We—we—we've got the wrong camp!"

"Oh, crumbs!" gasped Kerr. "We've woke up the wrong passengers, and no mistake! Listen to the giddy language!"

"Better hook it!" breathed Fatty Wynn.

"Come on!" gasped Figgins.

The three juniors ran for the bank. But as they started, Albert wriggled from under the flapping canvas with a bloodthirsty eye. He caught sight of the three flitting figures.

"It's some of them kids ag'in!" he roared. "Arter them!"

Albert dashed in pursuit. His comrades, struggling out from the wrecked tent, rushed after them. Figgins & Co. bounded into their canoe.

"Arter 'em!" shrieked 'Enry. "Smash 'em!"

"Wring their blinking necks!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Figgins.

"What a gang! Shove off, for goodness' sake."

The canoe rocked away over starlit water as Albert & Co. reached the river. Albert rushed in knee-deep and made a clutch at the canoe and caught hold. A smart rap from a paddle made Albert withdraw his clutch with a yell.

"We're off!" gasped Kerr.

Albert, splashing in water and mud, roared with pain and wrath. He stumbled over a root, and sat down in a foot of water. And the remarks that proceeded from Albert after that mishap were simply sulphurous.

Figgins & Co., panting, glided out into the middle of the river, leaving the pimply party raging on the bank. And they realised that they were very fortunate in getting clear.

But justice had been done. The honour of St. Jim's saved, but not by Tom Merry & Co.

Unaware of the downfall of Albert & Co., the St. Jim's juniors on board the Old Bus lay under the glittering stars, sleeping the sleep of the just.

THE END.

(There will be another long complete story dealing with the rollicking holiday adventures of Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's next week, entitled: "GUSSY'S UNLUCKY DAY!")

THE POPULAR.—No. 552.