

YOU'LL ENJOY CHRISTMAS
WITH THE FISTICAL FOUR
OF ROOKWOOD.

NO LUCK for LOVELL!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.

To be landed with a crusty old
uncle at Christmas is not a bright
outlook for the Merry Chums of
Rookwood. But their effort to
alter the prospects, however, meets
with disastrous results!



THE FIRST CHAPTER. The Wet Blanket!

"**W**HOD have thought it?"
Thus Arthur Edward
Lovell, in dismal tones.
"Nobody!" said Jimmy
Silver in answer to the question.
Jimmy and Raby and Newcome
looked, as they felt, sympathetic.

It was, as the Rookwood fellows expressed it, hard cheese.
Lovell's worst enemy, if he had had one, would have admitted that it was exceedingly hard cheese.

Nobody would have thought it. Nobody could have foreseen it. Certainly Arthur Edward Lovell hadn't. But nobody could have.

It was just one of those hapless things that happen, and cannot be helped.

It was all the more unfortunate that it should happen at Christmas-time, when Lovell was home for the holidays, and had brought his three chums home with him.

That, so to speak, put the lid on.
"Was I to blame?" demanded Arthur Edward, appealing to his chums.

Three heads were shaken at once.
For once, Lovell was not to blame.
Generally, when Arthur Edward found himself in a scrape, the fellow at the bottom of all the trouble was Arthur Edward himself.

On this occasion, however, it could not be denied that Lovell of the Fourth was more sinned against than sinning.

"Who'd have thought it?" repeated Lovell. "We got into the giddy train to come home for the Christmas holidays—the most disagreeable old blighter in the wide world gets in along with us—he rags us and nags us, and we give him tit for tat—and then—it turns out that he's my Uncle Peter, who I hadn't seen for years—coming here for Christmas along with us. Oh dear!"

"Horrid!" said Jimmy.
"Where is he now?" asked Raby.
"Goodness knows—gone out, I hope!" said Lovell. "It isn't like home with him in it. He's worried you fellows a lot through the hols."

"Oh, no!" said Jimmy. "A bit snappy, that's all."

"A trifle tart," murmured Raby.
"But there must be some good in him

somewhere, Lovell. Your mater's fond of him."

"Well, he's her brother," said Lovell. "He may have been a good brother; but I can't say much for him as an uncle. I've got a lot of uncles, you know, and I've been pretty well broken in to stand 'em; but Uncle Peter really is the giddy limit. I thought he was going to clear right out of the house when he found that the chap who had cheeked him in the train was his blessed nephew. Wish he had!"

"Yes, rather."
"But he didn't," mumbled Lovell.
"He stuck on. He never sees me without glowering at me. It worries the mater. The pater doesn't like it, either. I've tried to be jolly civil. You fellows have been jolly decent. But he's a thumping wet blanket, isn't he?"

"Oh, let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "We're having a good time here, Lovell. And every chap has one or two rusty and crusty relations who make life a worry. If we're jolly nice to him he may come round before the hols are over. And he may pat you on the head and give you his blessing when you start for Rookwood again."

Lovell grinned.
"Not jolly likely!" he said.
"Keep smiling, old chap!"

As a matter of fact, Jimmy Silver & Co. were in a cheery mood, in spite of Uncle Peter in the role of wet blanket at the Christmas gathering at Lovell Lodge.

Arthur Edward Lovell and his Christmas guests were tramping home for lunch, with their skates dangling over their arms. They had been down to the frozen stream at Froode for skating, and had enjoyed their morning, three of them, at least, having forgotten the existence of Mr. Peter Wilmington.

But a thoughtful shadow might have been discerned on the brow of Arthur Edward Lovell.

Lovell, evidently, had been thinking that frosty morning, as well as skating.

"When Uncle Peter was a boy he was a good chap, according to the mater," said Lovell. "She gave me a long jaw about it last night. He went out to India as a young man for his people's sake. You see, they were rather short

of money, and there were a lot of sisters and only one brother, and he stayed single all his life to look after them. That's pretty decent, you know, especially as it's made him such a rusty, crusty old card."

"I knew he'd got some good in him, or your mater wouldn't think so much of him," said Jimmy Silver. "Let's all be as nice to him as we can."

"He put in twenty years in India and came home rich," went on Lovell. "According to what the mater tells me he was a sort of earthly providence all the time. Well, that's jolly decent. The mater's very fond of him, or, of course, she wouldn't be bothered with such a hunks at Christmas-time. And the pater has a lot of respect for him, though I don't see how he can possibly like him. Well, the mater would be no end bucked if Uncle Peter came round and forgave me and took a liking to me. I'm going to please the mater, if I can."

"That's right!"
"The question is—how?" said Lovell.

"That question wants a bit of answering," remarked Raby. "Uncle Peter may have a good heart, but he's got a dashed bad temper. And, as for his manners—"

Raby left his remark unfinished.

"Well, I've got it," said Lovell. "I've thought of a way. No good being civil to him; he only snaps at a fellow. No good asking after his health; he only snorts. But according to what the mater says, he has—or had—a good heart. I'm thinking of appealing to his gratitude."

"His which?" ejaculated Newcome.
"Gratitude," said Lovell.

"My only hat! How?" asked Jimmy in wonder.

Lovell smiled, the smile of superior wisdom.

"I've thought it all out," he said. "Uncle Peter was attacked in India once by footpads—he calls them dacoits. He carries a lot of money about him—I've seen a wad of bank-notes in his purse when he's opened it. He's never got over those dacoits, and he's always ready to be pounced upon by footpads—nerves, you know. You fellows may have noticed that when he goes for a walk he always takes a big knobby stick

with him. It's no good telling him that there are no daocits in Somersetshire—he knows better."

The Rookwooders grinned.
"Well," went on Lovell, "Mr. Wilmington would never be surprised at being attacked by footpads. And since the War, of course, there have been a lot of footpads about and so there would be nothing really surprising in a gang of them setting on Uncle Peter one night."

"Eh?"
"What?"
"That's the idea," said Lovell. "Three ruffians set on Uncle Peter and get him down and begin robbing him. I rush in—"

"You rush in?" repeated Jimmy Silver dazedly.
"I rush in," assented Lovell. "Knocking the scoundrels right and left. I rescue him."

"Oh, my only summer bonnet!"
"Raising him from the ground, I help him back to the house," continued Lovell, evidently greatly taken with his wonderful idea. "He thanks me in broken tones—realises that his nephew is the goods, after all, as it were, and tells the pater and the mater how mistaken he has been in me. In fact, the giddy clouds will roll by, and everything in the garden will be lovely. That is, if old Peter has any gratitude in his composition at all."

Jimmy Silver & Co. stopped and stared at Lovell.

In the end study at Rookwood they had often heard weird schemes propounded by their chum—often and often. Generally they had sat on those schemes. But of all the weird schemes that Lovell ever had propounded, this struck his comrades as the weirdest.

"Not wandering in your mind, are you, old chap?" asked George Raby, with an air of solicitude.

"Look here, Raby—"
"The question is, has the poor chap any mind to wander in?" murmured Newcome.

"Look here, Newcome—"
"Patience!" said Jimmy Silver. "If this is a sudden fit of insanity it's no good arguing with Lovell. We shall have to help him home and send for a doctor."

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"
roared Lovell.

"If it's a joke—"
went on the captain of the Rookwood Fourth.

"It isn't a joke, you frabjous ass!" hooted Lovell. "I've thought it out, and I've got it. It's a tremendous wheeze."

"But if you're not potty, and it isn't a joke, what the thump do you mean?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Do you think that a gang of footpads are going to pile on to old Peter just when you want them to, and let you knock them right and left just as you like? More likely to knock you on your silly head."

"Shall I put it into words of one syllable?" asked Lovell, with deep sarcasm. "You might possibly understand it then. You fellows are going to be the footpads."

"Eh?"
"Us!"
"Oh, scissors!"

"That's the stunt!" said Lovell.

"Something like a stunt—what?"
"Oh dear!" said Jimmy Silver. "Yes, something like a stunt—but more like the wanderings of a giddy lunatic!"

"You silly ass! It's a regular catch! I suppose you fellows can blacken your faces."

"Blacken our faces!"
"Yes. Footpads do that so that they won't be recognised. You can hide in

a hedge and wait for old Peter to trot by and rush on him."

"Rush on your Uncle Peter!"
"Yes, and mop him over."
"Mum-mum-mop him over!" stuttered Raby.

"That's it! If he gets a bump or two it won't matter. It will make it all the more realistic."

"Oh crumbs!"
"And what about his big stick?" demanded Newcome. "You've been talking about the big stick he carries around for footpads."

"You may get a lick or two," said Lovell, with a nod. "But if you handle him short and sharp, he won't have time to get in more than one whack or so."

"You—you—you frabjous fathead!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "Do you think that we want even one whack from Uncle Peter's big stick?"

"I hope you're not a funk, Jimmy."
"You—you—you—"

"Look here! You jolly well rush him, Lovell, and take the whacks from his big stick and we'll rescue him!" said Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly owl, what would be the good of that?" demanded Lovell. "I've got to get into his good graces, not you! I'm his giddy nephew. You won't see him again after this vac. I may have him landed on me every vacation now that he's settled down in England."

"Oh, my hat!"
"It's a tremendous stunt—tremendous!" said Lovell impressively.

Arthur Edward Lovell was evidently not to be reasoned with. So his comrades gave up the hopeless attempt to reason with him, and they went in to lunch.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Out and Dried!

LUNCH at Lovell Lodge that day was not the brightest of functions.

Uncle Peter was cross. The dictatorial old gentleman, too much accustomed to having his own way and regarding himself as monarch of all he surveyed, did not seem to consider it necessary to conceal the fact that he was cross while a guest in his brother-in-law's house.

The Rookwood juniors were very quiet and sedate at lunch. Lovell was very uncomfortable.

It was really rotten that his friends from school should have to stand the cross temper and Hunnish manners of a relation of his. Lovell felt it keenly.

Teddy Lovell had gone away to stay with some Third Form friends over the remainder of the vacation. On the day he had departed Uncle Peter had been almost amiable. No doubt he would have been quite amiable had Arthur Edward departed also.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome were very circumspect. They felt for Lovell, and understood his discomfort.

All the juniors were glad when lunch was over and they were able to get away from the grim countenance of Mr. Wilmington.

Lovell seemed in rather low spirits. The tremendous stunt he had elaborated should, in his opinion, have set matters right—carried out loyally by his comrades. But the three juniors had made it clear that they were not going to carry out that tremendous stunt. It was rather too tremendous for their liking.

Lovell regarded it as the last word in diplomatic strategy. His comrades regarded it as the maddest wheeze that

had ever been thought of outside the walls of Colney Hatch.

This was a difference of opinion that was not easily reconciled.

According to Lovell, everything was certain to go well if his comrades carried out his instructions to the very letter. According to his comrades, nothing was likely to go really well if Arthur Edward Lovell had a hand in the planning of it. This was another serious difference of opinion.

Had Lovell insisted in his usual high-handed way—which bore a distinct resemblance to the manner of his Uncle Peter—his chums would probably have remained firm.

But Lovell, though he somewhat resembled his Uncle Peter, had had his manners formed at Rookwood School; not among khidmutgars and punkah wallahs on the banks of the Hugli. He was aware of what was due to guests under his roof, and he respected the strong disinclination of his chums to enter into his wonderful scheme. Lovell at home was a little different from Lovell in the end study at Rookwood School.

But a total surrender on the part of Arthur Edward naturally had its effect on his chums. In the fable of Æsop, when the north wind competed with the sun to deprive the traveller of his cloak, the fierce gusts of the wind made the traveller draw his cloak tighter about him, while the smiling radiance of the sun induced him to throw it aside. So it was with Lovell and the Co. Surrender effected what lofty insistence could not have done. Jimmy Silver & Co. began to wonder whether, after all, there might not be something in Lovell's wheeze, and whether they might not, after all, help him out with it.

"You see, it's the pottiest idea, a silly ass ever thought of—even Lovell!" Raby remarked—out of hearing of Arthur Edward, of course. "But old Lovell seems keen on it."

"After all, if it leads to more trouble with his jolly old uncle, he has a right to have as much trouble with his uncle as he wants!" Newcome suggested.

Jimmy Silver grinned.
"It beats even Lovell's record as a fatheaded stunt," he said. "But, of course, there's a possibility that it might work."

"Lovell may be right," said Raby. "Miracles have happened before. Why not again?"

"If the old chap's keen on it, let's pile in and do as he wants," said Newcome. "After all, there would be a certain amount of satisfaction in bumping over that ferocious old Anglo-Indian."

"Something in that!" agreed Jimmy.

"We'll bring him down wallop in the snow," said Newcome, evidently looking forward to that. "A terrific wallop! That will make up for having to stand his scowling and growling. If Lovell wants us to handle his jolly old uncle, why not?"

"Then Lovell can butt in with his rescue stunt," said Raby. "If it works, all right! If it doesn't—well, it's Lovell's bizney."

"That's so!"
Jimmy looked inquiringly at his chums.

"Is it a go?" he asked.
And Raby and Newcome answered together:

"It's a go!"
The three chums sought Arthur Edward. That youth met them with a curious mixture between a reproachful frown and a hospitable smile. As a fellow who was, as he considered, left
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FOOTBALL MEMORIES!



The old veteran player recalls some very famous sportsmen who have represented their country both in football and cricket.

We were sitting, as usual, in our big armchairs before the bright fire in Tiny's cosy study, and our talk had ranged away from Soccer and flowed into other games as well.

"By jove!" said I. "But a man must be a grand athlete to represent his country at two games, say, football and cricket! Did you ever know anyone who did, Tiny?"

I had struck the right chord! Old Tiny sat up alertly.

"Know anyone? Lad, I knew plenty! Well, hardly plenty, because, as you say, a man has to be a wonder to be picked as an international at any game, so when he's picked for his country at two games—well! Sit ye back, and I'll tell ye of some double internationals I knew!

"Poor R. E. Foster was one of the greatest I knew. 'Tip' died when he was only thirty-six, just before the War! Lad, we lost a grand athlete!

"Oxford, Worcestershire, and England at cricket; Oxford, Corinthians, and England at soccer!

"Tip" was one of the most dashing batsmen who ever walked to the crease. There was no fiddling about for him—he just went for the bowling and knocked the stuffin' out of it—but he did it so gracefully, lad, it made you weep with joy!

"He got the second highest score ever made in the University match—171 in 1,900, followed that up a fortnight later by two centuries at Lord's against the Players, 102 not, and 136. And two years later he made the highest score ever made in Test matches, 287 against Australia, at Sydney!

"But he was just as good at soccer. Beautifully built and fast, he was a dashing forward, who could shoot like lightning, and dribble—well, like a Corinthian! Tip played for England five times, and was a success every match. A great athlete!

"Another fine batsman and footballer was William Gunn, of Notts. The crowd used to chaff Billy about his height—he stood 6 feet 6 inches, lad—but he was just as clever and graceful with the leather as he was with the willow! Of course, he was a bit better known at cricket than at soccer—what a batsman he was, to be sure!—and whereas he only played twice for England at football, he earned eleven caps against Australia at cricket.

"Still another great double international was C. B. Fry. You don't need me to tell you of how he skippered England and kept the Ashes in 1912! Well, he played soccer for England, too, at full-back."

The old-timer drew at his pipe.

"I suppose Charles Fry was the greatest all-rounder of all times! Cricket, soccer, rugby, athletics (he was long-jump

in the lurch by his pals, he was reproachful; as a host, he was bound to be hospitable and smiling. It was a mixture of feelings that produced quite a curious expression on Arthur Edward's speaking countenance.

But his mind was speedily set at rest.

"We're playing up, old man," said Jimmy Silver. "Mind, we think it's a fattedhead wheeze. But we'll play up if you like."

"It's a potty stunt," said Newcome. "But rely on us."

"It's simply idiotic," said Raby. "But we'll all be silly idiots if you really want us to be, Lovell. Can't say fairer than that."

Lovell grinned cheerily

"The wheeze is all right," he said. "It will work like a charm if you fellows play up. Have a little sense, you know."

"Oh!"

"I'll make all the arrangements. You fellows will only have to carry them out. Don't try to think for yourselves, you know."

"Oh!"

"Then it will be quite all right," said Lovell.

"H'm!"

"Old Peter is going down to the village after tea," went on Lovell. "We've got a chance of working the oracle today—a splendid chance! He's calling on the vicar about a blanket fund. He's standing blankets for the poor—he finds England jolly cold after India, and I suppose it makes him sympathetic. Well, there's only one way he can walk back from the vicarage, and it will be dark, of course. Three fellows with blackened faces rush out on him and collar him—money or your life, and all that—"

"Ye-e-es!"

"As it happens, I happen to have walked out to meet him on the way home," said Lovell. "See? I've got it all out and dried I catch sight of him at the physiological moment—"

"The psychological moment!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Any old moment," said Lovell cheerily. "I mean just when he's downed by the giddy footpads. I rush

in and rescue him, knocking you right and left—"

"Not too much of your giddy knocking right and left," said Raby. "We're not blinking skittles."

"You mustn't mind a thump or two, to give the thing a touch of realism," said Lovell.

"Then we'll jolly well give you a thump or two back!" said Raby warmly. "Real footpads would!"

"Look here, Raby! If you are going to play the goat—"

"Order!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's all right, Lovell. We're on. We'll jolly well get his stick off him at the first rush—that's rather important—"

"Jolly important!" said Newcome, with emphasis.

"Then we'll roll him over and give him hands-up and money-or-your-life!" said Jimmy. "You rush in, and we clear. And—and—we'll hope for the best. It may turn out all right."

"It may!" murmured Raby.

"It will, if you fellows don't make a muck of it," said Lovell confidently.

champion of the world too, son!); everything came alike to him.

"Harry Makepeace—Everton at footer, Lancashire at cricket—was a great fighter at both. Solid Old Harry, I used to call him, and it was just as easy to pass him at football as it was to get a ball past his bat at cricket! Many's the time he saved his side in the old days!

"Let's see, he got four caps for football, and four, too, for cricket! And he scored 117 at Melbourne, against Australia, in 1921.

"Two curious double internationals, son, are Andy Ducat, of Surrey, Aston Villa, and Fulham, and Wally Hardinge, of Kent and Sheffield United! "

"How do you mean, 'curious,' sir?" I asked.

"This way, lad. Funnily enough, they were both born in February, 1886, and both got their first soccer caps the same day, against Scotland, in 1910, and both got their first cricket caps the same day against Australia, in 1921. Coincidences, what!"

Old Tiny chuckled.

"However, I think both of 'em will agree they did a bit better at soccer than at cricket! But they're grand chaps, and at forty-three, they're as fit as fiddles to-day!

"Then, we mustn't forget Patsy Hendren! He was a fine little footballer just after the War for Brentford, and he got his cap all right, but, of course, cricket has bigger claims on him—and rightly! What a batsman he has been for Middlesex and England! The cricket field always seems a cheerier place to me, when I see Pat scooting after the ball to the edge of the field, or getting up to some little lark out there in the middle!

"Now there's one thing I want to impress on ye with all these men, laddie, and that is—they kept fit! Some chaps train for one game and some for another, but all these 'doubles,' Foster, Gunn, Fry, Makepeace, Ducat, Hardinge, and Patsy—they keep fit all the year round. That's the great thing in life.

"I'll just tell ye another story of a great footballer-cricketer, although he wasn't a 'double.' G. O. Smith is the man I mean—the greatest centre-forward England ever had! A tall, slight chap, always in good humour, never a cross word, and never unfit, he could sway and dribble and feint his way through any defence that ever breathed! And his shooting and his headwork—well, they were wonderful! I know!

"Well, he played for Oxford. But this is how he earned his cricket 'blue.' Just before the great match at Lord's, Oxford were playing Sussex. G. O. had to go in to bat the next day, so—off to bed early he went. Next day, turned out fit as a fiddle, with a good night's rest behind him—and scored a great century!

"And that got him his 'blue'—at the eleventh hour! And, lad, off he went to Lord's—and scored another century—against Cambridge! And it practically won the game.

"Yes, son, a man who can wear the blue blazer trimmed with red and yellow, and at the same time earn a few of those little velvet caps there in the glass case—well, you can take it from me, son, he's fit, and he's a man!"

"You've simply got to have a little sense and do exactly as I tell you!"

"Oh!"

"Then it's all cut and dried," said Lovell, with great satisfaction.

And his comrades agreed that it was. Arthur Edward's face was very bright; he had no doubts. Jimmy Silver & Co. had a good many doubts; but they hoped for the best. At all events, it was settled now, and all cut and dried.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Not According to Plan!

"WHAT a game!" murmured Raby. "Oh dear!" "Keep smiling!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

Really, it was not easy to keep smiling, in the circumstances.

In the deep winter dusk the three Rookwood juniors lurked in a gap of a frozen hedge at a little distance from the gate of Lovell Lodge.

It was cold, and a freezing wind came down from the Mendip Hills. But the chums of Rookwood were warmly wrapped up against the wind; they did not mind that very much.

It was the task they were engaged upon that dismayed them. They had agreed to play up, under Lovell's masterly lead. Lovally they were keeping to their word. But they were dismayed, they were dubious, they were worried. The enterprise was so very extraordinary; the stunt was so exceedingly tremendous.

It might work. If it worked, it might have the results expected so confidently by Lovell. But—

There was a "but." In fact, there were an infinite number of "buts." The objections to the scheme were as innumerable as the stones on the Mendip Hills.

But the trio were "for it" now, and they meant to do their best. The rest had to be left to the fickle goddess Fortune.

So far, the task had been accomplished without hitch: The four juniors had gone out to look at a valley by moonlight. That excited no suspicion on the part of the old folks at home.

In a secluded spot behind trees and bushes, three of the juniors had carefully blackened their faces to disguise their identity, in the approved style of footpads.

Certainly, with their blackened faces, they were not recognisable. Their own parents would not have known them. Uncle Peter was absolutely certain not to recognise them. Moreover, Lovell had sorted out some old clothes in the way of overcoats and mufflers and boots, which altered their usual appearance almost as much as their blackened faces.

Lovell gave the finishing touch to the decoration of his chums, and then left them and went back towards the Lodge.

He was to remain in cover till the attack took place. Then he was to happen to be within hearing, and to rush in to the rescue. Like Cæsar of old, he was to come, to see, to conquer.

With blackened faces and old dark mufflers drawn round their necks and up to their ears, the three juniors lurked in the shadow of the hedge and waited and watched for Uncle Peter.

"How long?" mumbled Newcome at last.

"Oh dear!" groaned Raby. "That ass Lovell—"

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"Suppose we chuck it and go and look for Lovell and give him a jolly good hiding?" suggested Newcome. Arthur Newcome's temper seemed to be deteriorating.

Jimmy Silver grinned ruefully.

"Stick it out!" he said.

"Suppose the old Hun stays for supper with the vicar?" groaned Raby. "It would be like him. We know he's every kind of a beast."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Suppose—" went on Raby, in a deeply pessimistic mood.

"Hush!"

Raby's suppositions were interrupted by a heavy tread in the snow, coming up the lane.

Jimmy Silver peered through the gap.

"It's old Wilmington!" he whispered. "Good!"

Uncle Peter was coming up the lane, on his homeward way to Lovell Lodge. The juniors watched him, with sinking hearts.

Certainly Mr. Wilmington had no suspicion that three Rookwooders were hidden behind the hedge ready to pounce upon him. He couldn't possibly have had any suspicion of the kind. But he was a wary old bird. He had his stick in his hand, prodding the snow with it as he came along, and his sharp glinting eyes were well about him, scanning the shadows of trees and hedges as he came. Obviously the old gentleman had never forgotten the lesson of caution impressed upon him by his ancient adventure with dacoits in the Indian jungle.

It did not look as if it would be easy to take him by surprise. But the Rookwooders were for it now; it was neck or nothing.

"Ready?" whispered Jimmy Silver.

"Ye-e-es!" muttered Newcome.

"Oh dear!" murmured Raby.

"Follow your leader!" said Jimmy desperately. "We've got to go through with it now!"

"Oh, all right!"

Uncle Peter was almost abreast of the gap in the hedge. Jimmy Silver, taking his courage in both hands, so to speak, leaped desperately through the gap and rushed at him.

Raby and Newcome scrambled after him. Unfortunately Raby caught his foot in a trailing root of the hedge, and went headlong into the snow. Newcome, following him, sprawled headlong over him.

Jimmy Silver reached Uncle Peter alone.

Doubtless the rush of three sturdy juniors, all at once, would have bowled Uncle Peter over. Jimmy's rush didn't.

"What—stop—who—highway robbery, by gad!" spluttered Uncle Peter as the black-faced, muffled figure rushed on him.

Uncle Peter was cross-tempered, surly, and had the manners of a bear—a bear whose education has been neglected. But he had plenty of courage; he was not in the least dismayed. He swung up his big stick and made a terrific swipe at the black-faced assailant.

Had that swipe landed on Jimmy Silver's head he would have seen more stars than ever seen by an astronomer, and of larger size than dreamed of in the wildest astronomical visions.

Fortunately he dodged it. But the stick swiped again, and Jimmy Silver rushed in under it and closed with Uncle Peter. That was the only way to escape the swipe unless he took to his heels.

"Help! Robbery! Murder! Help!" roared Uncle Peter.

He roared for help, but, in point of fact, he did not need much help. Jimmy Silver was grasping him, but his arms

would not go round Uncle Peter's portly figure wrapped in a huge fur-lined overcoat. He held on to Uncle Peter a good deal like an Alpine climber holding on to the Matterhorn.

"Back up, you chaps!" gasped Jimmy.

It was unprofessional language for a footpad. But Jimmy was seriously in need of help—much more in need of it than Uncle Peter, who was roaring for it with a voice that showed that age had not withered his vocal powers.

Newcome and Raby scrambled up breathlessly.

They rushed into the fray.

Jimmy Silver had seized Uncle Peter, but he had caught a Tartar in that hefty old gentleman. Uncle Peter had seized Jimmy by the back of his collar with his left hand, and held him as in a vice. With his right hand he brandished the big stick. It swept round in a circle, and Raby and Newcome jumped back in hot haste, just in time to escape its sweep.

"Come on, you scoundrels!" roared Uncle Peter. "Help! Help! Come on! Robbery with violence, by Jove! Help!"

"Ow!" gasped Jimmy, almost suffocated, as Uncle Peter's grip held his head almost buried in the huge overcoat. "Wow! Help!"

There was a rush of footsteps. Down the snowy lane came Arthur Edward Lovell at top speed, rushing to the rescue.

It was Jimmy Silver who needed rescuing. But Arthur Edward, of course, was not there for that purpose. He attacked the footpads.

"Yaroooh!" roared Raby, as Lovell's fist took him under the ear.

"Whoop!" yelled Newcome, sprawling in the snow under Lovell's left.

It was realistic; there was no doubt about that.

It was too realistic for the Rookwood footpads. Newcome and Raby scrambled up, breathing vengeance, and fairly hurled themselves at Lovell.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell, as he went spinning in his turn and crashed down into the snow.

"Arthur! My nephew!" exclaimed Mr. Wilmington. "Great gad! Stick to the villains, my boy! I can help you!"

He plunged forward, dragging Jimmy Silver after him by the collar, the hapless Jimmy struggling in vain to escape from a grip that was as hard as that of an iron vice.

He flourished the stick in his right hand, and Newcome and Raby just dodged it. Lovell sat up in the snow.

He shook a furious fist at the footpads. It was time for them to run—high time! They had forgotten their role for the moment under the exciting influence of Lovell's overdone realism.

However, they remembered it now, and bolted through the gap in the hedge into the snowy field. They supposed that Jimmy Silver would follow, and Lovell supposed so. But Jimmy Silver, gladly as he would have followed, was not in a position to do so. The grip on his collar held him fast.

Mr. Wilmington brandished his stick after the fleeing footpads.

"Come back, you scoundrels!" he roared.

They vanished.

"Robbery with violence, by gad!" gasped Mr. Wilmington. "Thank you for coming to my help, nephew!"

"I—I heard you!" gasped Lovell.

"I've got one of the rascals!"

"Eh?"

Lovell staggered up.

"I've got one of the scoundrels! Help me to get him to the house, and your father will telephone for the police. He shall be given into custody

and charged," said Mr. Wilmington, with great satisfaction. "He will get three years for this! By gad, I'm almost glad that it happened, as I've got one of the scoundrels, and he can be made an example of!"

Lovell simply gasped. He did not share his uncle's satisfaction at having captured one of the scoundrels; and no words, in any language, could have done justice to the feelings of the unhappy scoundrel whom Uncle Peter had captured.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. Not a Success!

JIMMY SILVER could have kicked himself. Knowing his old pal Lovell as he did he was well aware, from experience, that any wheeze propounded and planned by Arthur Edward was practically bound to end in disaster.

But, in spite of experience, he had let himself in for this!

"Let us have a look at the scoundrel!" said Mr. Wilmington; and he held Jimmy at arm's length, as if he had been an infant, heedless of his wild wriggles, and turned his face to the moonlight. "The scoundrel is disguised—blackened his face, by gad! A young fellow for this kind of work, I fancy—hardly more than a boy. Young reprobate!"

Lovell tried to collect his senses.

"Shall—shall I hold him, uncle?" he gasped.

Jimmy Silver had a gleam of hope.

But Mr. Wilmington shook his head. "No, you could not hold him, Arthur. He is a very muscular young scoundrel; he would get away from you. I have him safe enough."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I wish we could have caught the other rascals," said Mr. Wilmington. "But the police will soon be on their track. You acted very bravely in coming to my help as you did, Arthur."

"Oh!" gasped Lovell.

"I think much more of you now, Arthur—very much more! I shall try to understand you better. It was plucky, by Jove! And very fortunate, too, as you are really responsible for the capture of this miscreant. We shall be better friends after this, my boy."

Lovell suppressed a groan.

It was the object of his tremendous stunt to become better friends with his formidable uncle. But he could not suppose that that desirable result would accrue when Uncle Peter recognised his prisoner.

While he was speaking Uncle Peter was marching at a great rate towards Lovell Lodge.

Jimmy Silver, wriggling hopelessly, was marched on in his iron grip. When he did not walk he was ruthlessly dragged; he had to go. Lovell followed in a dazed frame of mind.

A wild idea came into his head of charging his uncle from behind, and thus giving the prisoner a chance of escaping. But he realised that that desperate expedient would make matters worse rather than better.

Something had to be done; he knew that. But what was to be done was a hidden mystery. Long before Lovell's dazed brain could even begin to solve that mystery the lights of Lovell Lodge gleamed through the winter darkness.

Mr. Wilmington hurled open the gate and marched his prisoner up the gravel drive to the house.

Lovell tottered after him.

He dared not think of what was going to happen now. It was only clear that his tremendous stunt was not going to be a success.

Mr. Wilmington rang a terrific peal

on the bell, and then banged on the knocker with his free hand. His other hand never relaxed for an instant its grip on the prisoner he had captured.

The door opened.

The parlourmaid who opened it stared, and gave a little shriek at the sight of the black-faced prisoner wriggling spasmodically in Mr. Wilmington's muscular grip.

Uncle Peter strode in, dragging his prisoner with him.

"Call Mr. Lovell!" he rapped out.

"Upon my word! What—what is this?" Mr. Lovell came out into the hall in amazement. "What—who—"

"Goodness gracious! What has happened?" exclaimed Mrs. Lovell.

"I have been attacked by footpads!" thundered Uncle Peter.

"Peter!"

"My dear fellow!"

"Arthur came to my help—most gallantly to my help," said Mr. Wilmington. "He showed great courage, and by his intervention enabled me to capture one of the gang—a desperate young rascal! Look at him!"

Mrs. Lovell gave her son a look instead of looking at the prisoner. Arthur Edward ought to have appeared extremely bucked. Praise from Uncle Peter was praise indeed. Instead of which he seemed to be sunk into the very depths of dejection.

"Look at this scoundrel!" continued Mr. Wilmington, holding Jimmy Silver at arm's length in the lighted hall. "A mere boy, from his build, but a desperate young villain. There were two others, but they got away. He is disguised with a blackened face—a regular footpad dodge. The dacoits use the same trick in India. But we will see what he is like before he is handed over to the police, Lovell."

Jimmy Silver gasped.

"I will telephone for the police," said Mr. Lovell, staring blankly at the wretched prisoner.

"Let us see what the young scoundrel is like first, so that we may identify him on another occasion," said Mr. Wilmington. "It appears to be soot that is rubbed on his face. A sponge and a little hot water—"

"Certainly! Certainly!"

Jimmy Silver shuddered.

He was not recognised yet; but evidently he was going to be recognised. Not that it made much difference, for he would have had to reveal his identity before the police were called in. Matters could not possibly be allowed to proceed as far as that!

He had a faint hope of getting loose from the iron grip of Uncle Peter, of bolting upstairs, and escaping by a

window. But Mr. Wilmington took no chances with his prisoner. He did not relax his grasp for a moment; and he was still gripping Jimmy's collar, when a maidservant brought a basin of hot water with a sponge floating in it.

Mr. Wilmington grabbed the sponge and rubbed it unceremoniously over the prisoner's face.

"Grooogh!" gasped Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell leaned on the wall, feeling quite giddy. What was going to happen now?

With a heavy hand, Uncle Peter rubbed the sponge over Jimmy's face, and the soot came off, blackening the water, and leaving Jimmy's unhappy countenance whiter.

"Now look at him," said Mr. Wilmington, to his brother-in-law. "You may know the young scoundrel by sight, Lovell; he may be a native of these parts. Do you know him?"

"Bless my heart and soul!" said Mr. Lovell faintly.

He knew him!

Mr. Wilmington threw the sponge into the basin, and fixed a deadly glare on Jimmy's washed, flushed face. Then he jumped.

"Silver!" he exclaimed.

"Jimmy!" said Mrs. Lovell blankly.

Uncle Peter stared at the Rookwood junior as if he could scarcely believe his eyes, as indeed he scarcely could.

"Silver! James Silver! A friend of your son's, Mabel! By gad! A Rookwood boy taking to highway robbery—a guest in this house attempting to rob another guest by violence! Upon my word! Why, the hardened young rascal is actually grinning! Grinning, by gad! You young miscreant, have you no sense of shame?"

Mr. Lovell gasped.

"I—I hardly think the—attack can have been seriously intended, Wilmington," he said. "It is some schoolboy hoax. I should imagine."

"What?"

"You say there were two others—now that I recognise Silver, I can hazard a guess at their identity—"

"What! Three Rookwood boys engaged in highway robbery!" thundered Uncle Peter. "Three guests in this house conspiring to rob another guest! Good heavens!"

"It was a lark!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "Can't you understand that it was only a lark?"

"I don't believe it!" hooted Mr. Wilmington. "Your own friend, Lovell, came to my rescue; he could not have suspected—"

Arthur Edward Lovell staggered forward. The time had come to own up. Lovell realised that.

"I—I—I—" he stuttered.

"Well?" snorted his uncle.

"I—I—I was in it!" gasped Lovell.

"What?"

"It—it—it was a stunt," groaned Lovell. "I—I thought it might make us better friends, Uncle Peter—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" roared Uncle Peter. "I see now that it was a disgraceful—a ruffianly practical joke, and that you were a party to it, Arthur. It confirms the opinion I have hitherto held of you—a silly, impertinent, worthless young rascal!"

"Peter!" pleaded Mrs. Lovell.

"A worthless young rascal!" roared Uncle Peter.

"Wilmington!" exclaimed Mr. Lovell sharply. "It was a foolish practical joke—foolish and thoughtless—quite unjustifiable, but— Let my son explain. Why did you play this extraordinary trick, Arthur? Such disrespect to your uncle—"

(Continued overleaf.)

THE POPULAR.—No. 570.

Read

"The Thriller—"

It's a Wow!

"I—I meant it for the best," groaned Lovell. "The mater wanted Uncle Peter to like me better, and—and I thought he would if I rescued him from footpads. That's all, father."

Mr. Lovell stared blankly at his son. Then, as the full egregiousness of Arthur Edward's wonderful stunt dawned upon him, he burst into a roar of laughter. He could not help it; he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. Even Mrs. Lovell could not help smiling.

But Uncle Peter did not smile.

He snorted.

"A laughing matter, by gad! A laughing matter—what—what? Great gad! I am attacked and insulted, and made a fool of—and it is a laughing matter! Good gad! Oh, good—very good indeed! Huh!"

"Peter—"

"Wilmington—"

"Very good—oh, very good!" snorted Uncle Peter. "I leave this house tomorrow. I will not stay here to be insulted! Huh!"

"Uncle—" gasped the dismayed Lovell.

"Mr. Wilmington—" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

Uncle Peter turned on them. He grasped Jimmy again with one hand, Lovell with the other. He brought their two heads together with a resounding concussion.

Crack!

"Ow!"

"Wow!"

Uncle Peter tramped up the stairs and disappeared.

That was the happy state of affairs when Raby and Newcome—with washed faces and many misgivings—came sneaking in later at a back door. Uncle Peter had not been placated, that was clear; he had not learned to love his nephew Arthur, that was clearer! All the fat was in the fire, that was clearest of all. By the wildest stretch of imagination, Arthur Edward Lovell's wonderful stunt could not be called a success. THE END.

(With Uncle Peter still at the Lodge, what chances are there of a bright Christmas vacation for the chums of Rookwood? In spite of all this, however, Jimmy Silver & Co. are determined that THEIR holiday, at all events, is not going to be spoiled. See next week's topping story: "BY LUCK AND PLUCK!")

THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME!

(Continued from page 11.)

Minutes that seemed like hours crawled by, and then the old man spoke in faint, gasping tones.

"There is a flask in my coat. Get it."

"Yes, sir," breathed Dick.

He groped in the pockets and found the flask.

"Open it."

Dick unscrewed the stopper.

"Give it me."

Sir Henry Compton sipped from the flask; and then, at a gesture from the old man, Dick drew it away.

He waited, still supporting the heavy head on his knee. The baronet was recovering now.

"Help me to the bench," he said at last.

Dick helped him up silently. The master of Compton Hall was a heavy weight, but the waif was strong and sturdy. Sir Henry was seated on the bench at last.

He sat there, leaning back, breathing hard and deep.

Dick hesitated.

"Shall I go for help, sir?"

"No."

"But you need—"

"I know best what I need."

Dick was silent. The old man was recovering; his masterful will was as strong as ever. Sir Henry Compton was almost himself again now.

Dick backed out of the summer-house. But the deep voice of the old baronet followed him.

"Stop!"

Dick turned back.

"Who are you?" asked Sir Henry Compton, peering at him in the gloom from under his gray, wrinkled brows. "You have helped me when I needed it. But who are you, and how did you come here?"

"I am a tramp."

"You are young for tramping the roads," said Sir Henry. "Have you no home?"

"No."

"Your name?"

"Dick."

"What else?" snapped the old man impatiently.

"Nothing else," said the waif quietly. "I've been called Ragged Dick. That's all."

"Have you no parents?"

"No."

"Or relations?"

"No."

"How do you live?"

"Tramping, picking up jobs—all sorts of things."

"Begging and stealing among them I have no doubt."

"No," said Dick quietly.

"And you are homeless, ragged, tattered, doubtless hungry!" The old man seemed to be speaking to himself. "Yet you live—and my grandson, with all that wealth could provide for him, has died. He is dead—and this starving vagrant lives!" He broke into a bitter laugh. "Dead—and the Compton lands must pass to an idle, dissolute waster, a shame and disgrace to his name—and this homeless wretch lives to haunt the roads and starve and steal!"

There was a long silence after the muttered words, and Ragged Dick stood uneasily, longing to go, yet held by the authority of the old man's command. Sir Henry rose at last from the bench. The torch flickered out. A match was struck, and Sir Henry lighted a cigarette.

"May I go now, sir?" muttered Dick. "No!" The voice was hard and grim. "You have assisted me, and—I do not choose to be under an obligation. It shall be for your benefit that you trespass on my land."

"But—"

"Silence! Come with me!"

There was command in the old autocrat's voice that was not gainsaid. He strode away, a tall, grim figure in the gloom, and the little waif obediently followed him, little knowing what difference in his life that chance meeting was destined to make.

THE END.

(In what way will Sir Harry Compton reward the waif of the road for that good turn he did him in the summer-house? That question will be answered in next week's rousing long story of the Greyfriars Chums.

—a story which contains a host of surprises and sensational incidents!

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