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FEATURING JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD IN ROLLICKING SCHOOL ADVENTURE!



MORE TROUBLE FOR LOVELL!

By
Owen Conquest.

Who wants Lovell for a study
companion? Apparently no-
body at Rookwood does!

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Lovell On His Own!

MR. RICHARD DALTON, master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, paused

He was passing along the Form-room passage, and from under the door of the Fourth Form room a gleam of light caught his eyes.

As it was after eight o'clock in the evening nobody at Rookwood had any business in the Form-rooms, yet in that particular Form-room, Mr. Dalton's own, the light was burning.

Hence Richard Dalton's pause.

It was true that the Fourth were allowed to use the Form-room for such functions as Form meetings, debates of the junior debating society, and so forth. But at that hour of the evening all Fourth-Form fellows should have been at prep in their studies. Any fellow who was then in the Form-room must have been, ipso facto neglecting his prep.

Prep was not a thing that could be neglected in a Form of which Richard Dalton was master.

Mr. Dalton stopped at the door, turned the handle, and pushed it open and glanced in.

A solitary figure sat at a desk amid a host of deserted desks.

He was not engaged—as possibly Mr. Dalton had vaguely suspected—in “larking” with the Form master's desk, or splitting the Form master's cane.

He was at work.

With a frowning brow, Arthur Edward Lovell of the Classical Fourth sat at his lonely desk, with three or four books round him, and a pen in his hand.

He looked neither merry nor bright.

There was no doubt that it was lonely in the deserted Form-room, and a little chilly, and that prep on one's lonesome own was more troublesome than prep in companionship with other fellows.

Division of labour was practised in Rookwood studies in these matters: one fellow would roil through the Latin dictionary while another rooted in the grammar and another made ingenious

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guesses at what Virgil might possibly have meant, if he had meant anything at all.

Prep in solitude was more difficult and less agreeable. Lovell had the companionship of his own lofty dignity—or, as his former chums would have said, his “sulks.” That companionship did not seem to be enlivening him very much at the moment.

He glanced up as Richard Dalton stood in the doorway, and rose to his feet with a flush in his cheeks.

Mr. Dalton eyed him curiously.

“Why are you here, Lovell?” he asked.

“I'm doing my prep, sir.”

“In the Form-room?”

“I think fellows are allowed to do their prep in the Form-room, sir.”

“There is no special objection that I am aware of, Lovell, if a boy chooses to work here; but it is very unusual.”

Lovell did not answer that. He could not say that it was usual, for it wasn't. It was very unusual indeed.

“Why are you not in your study, Lovell?”

“I haven't a study at present, sir.”

“You share the end study in the Fourth with Silver and Raby and Newcome.”

“I have left it, sir.”

“I hope that that does not mean that you are on ill terms with your friends, Lovell.”

“They're not my friends now, sir.”

“I hope you have not quarrelled, Lovell.”

“Not exactly, sir; we just bar each other, that's all.”

“Come come,” said Mr. Dalton good-naturedly. “As a matter of fact, I have observed that you do not seem to be on your usual good terms with Silver and the others, Lovell. But I am sorry to see a dispute carried so far as this.”

No answer from Lovell.

Like the obstinate old prophet, he considered that he did well to be angry and the sun had gone down on his wrath, and risen thereon, many times since the split in the Co. Mr. Dalton's opinion was not likely to make any difference to Lovell in his present obdurate mood.

“You have lately been elected junior captain of Rookwood, Lovell,” went on Mr. Dalton.

“Yes, sir.”

“That shows, I presume, that you have some popularity in your Form,” said the master of the Fourth. “A majority of votes must have been cast in your favour.”

“Certainly, sir,” said Lovell, his colour deepening.

He did not care to explain to Mr. Dalton by what a curious concatenation of unforeseen circumstances the election had turned in his favour.

As he had undoubtedly been elected by a majority of votes, Mr. Dalton naturally supposed that he represented the Lower School and especially the Fourth Form. In point of fact, Arthur Edward Lovell represented only himself—owing to that curious concatenation of circumstances.

“Then, if you really have serious reasons for quitting your study, why have you not taken up your quarters in another Fourth Form study, Lovell?”

“I—I went in with Peele and his friends for a time, sir, but I didn't pull with them.”

“Peele is not, perhaps, a boy you could be very friendly with,” said Mr. Dalton.

“But there are many other studies.”

“Yes, sir; but—”

Lovell paused.

Really he could not explain to Mr. Dalton how it was that no other study in the Classical Fourth was open to him.

He could not tell the Form master that nobody in the Form was anxious to take in a hot-headed fellow who quarrelled, at a moment's notice, with his best friends. Indeed, Lovell himself did not quite realise that that was how the matter stood. Nevertheless, he had to admit that he was not persona grata in any study in the Classical Fourth. He was not a fellow to ask favours, or to hint for them; but all the Form knew that he was in want of a study, and nobody had offered to take him in.

It was a humiliating position for the captain of the Lower School—very unpleasant and humiliating indeed. Wild horses would not have dragged Lovell

back to the end study, of which he had shaken the dust scornfully from his feet. But in taking that lofty action he had been far from realising that no other study would be open to him. It was a case of pride going before destruction, and a lofty spirit before a fall.

Mr. Dalton waited for him to continue; but he did not. He stood silent and discomforted, inwardly anathematising his kind Form master for having looked into the Form-room at all. Being "left" like this was bad enough, without Mr. Dalton being a witness to it.

"Well, Lovell," said Mr. Dalton at last, as the junior did not speak, "I recommend you to make it up with your friends and return to your study."

"Thank you, sir!" said Lovell, with a sarcastic inflection in his voice that brought a glint to Mr. Dalton's eyes. His tone, though not his words, implied a hint to Mr. Dalton to mind his own business.

"If you cannot do that, Lovell, I advise you to find quarters in some other study."

"I find that I can work quite well in the Form-room, sir."

"Possibly; but preparation is done in the studies, Lovell, and this kind of sulky solitude is good for no one. You may finish your work here this evening; but I repeat that I advise you to seek admission to some Fourth Form study, if you do not return to your own."

With that Mr. Dalton walked out of the Form-room, and Lovell sat down at his desk again with a clouded brow. Sulky! Mr. Dalton had used that word—as if he supposed, just like Jimmy Silver & Co., that Lovell's lofty dignity was merely a variety of sulkiness! Lovell had thought better of Richard Dalton than this; he had not supposed that "Dicky" was such a silly ass! Such a cheeky ass, in fact!

"Cheek!" growled Lovell.

And he resumed his interrupted task.

**THE SECOND CHAPTER.
Too Compassionate!**

JIMMY SILVER looked up as the door of the end study opened without a knock.

Jimmy was at prep, with Raby and Newcome.

Lovell was no longer a member of that celebrated study; and though his former chums had missed him at first, they were used now to his absence.

Perhaps Jimmy's thoughts wandered to the absent junior every now and then; "Uncle James" of Rookwood was a kind-hearted fellow, and his friendship for Lovell had been very sincere and deep—and was so still, in point of fact. Jimmy was not without hope that the breach would be healed, somehow, some time; though Lovell's manner towards his old chums gave little hope of it. It was not agreeable to Jimmy to think of Arthur Edward reduced to the solitude of the Form-room for doing his work—sitting there in chilly dignity, nursing his resentment against his old friends, and an object of smiles and sneers to the other fellows.

As the door of the study flew open without a knock, Jimmy looked up quickly. Only members of the study were entitled to walk in without knocking; even Sixth Form prefects knocked, excepting such outsiders as Carthew of the Sixth. So it came into Jimmy's mind that it was Lovell, returning to the fold, as it were.

But it was not Lovell: it was Peter Cuthbert Gunner who walked in, as if the study, and indeed the whole Fourth Form passage, belonged to him. Three

glares turned on him from the table where the juniors were at work.

"You cheeky ass!" said Jimmy Silver, disappointed and annoyed.

"What the thump do you want?"

"I don't want any cheek, to begin with," said Gunner.

"Don't they knock at doors in the slum where you were brought up, Gunner?" inquired Raby.

"I tell you—"

"Buzz off, whatever you want!" snapped Newcome. "We're doing our prep, and you ought to be doing yours."

"I've no time for prep this evening," explained Gunner.

"Better tell Mr. Dalton so, in the morning," said Newcome sarcastically.

"I shan't do that, Newcome," said Gunner, who was deaf and blind to sarcasm, as to many other things. "I mentioned it to him once, and he got quite waxy."

"Go hon!"

"But I haven't come here to talk about prep. I want to speak to Lovell. He's not here, I see."

"He doesn't dig in this study now," said Jimmy Silver shortly.

"No; I've heard so; and Peele and his friends have kicked him out of their study," assented Gunner. "Nobody else has taken him in, I understand."

"You do?" exclaimed Newcome.

"Yes. Isn't it so?"

"Yes, it's so. But what beats me is that you understand it. I never supposed you could understand anything."

"Ha, ha ha!"

"I didn't come here for cheek!" roared Gunner. "I want to see Lovell; I'm going to take him into my study, on conditions, if he's a sensible chap. He looks no end of a fool being left without a study, and I'm going to take pity on him. See?"

Jimmy Silver frowned with vexation. It was Arthur Edward Lovell's own fault that fellows talked of him in this strain; but it was very unpleasant for his old friends to hear.

"Better put it like that to Lovell!" growled Raby.

"Look out for your silly features at the same time."

"Lovell will be pleased, I suppose," said Gunner. "Look what a fool he looks!"

"Oh, cheese it!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"Not that it matters his looking a fool, as he is a fool," went on Gunner. "Now he's skipper he's leaving me out of the football the same as you did in your time, Silver. He's as big a fool as you are, and that's saying a lot."

"Thanks!"

"I speak as I find," said Gunner. "No bunkum about me. But though Lovell, like you, is such a crass ass that

he can't see that I'm the best junior footballer at Rookwood—properly speaking, the only footballer—he may have more sense in other matters. We row against the Moderns next week, and if Lovell puts me in the Classical boat it means another victory for our House. See?"

"I don't quite see," said Jimmy Silver. "We're going rowing, not fishing—and I can't see that you'll benefit the boat by catching crabs."

"I shall make it a condition that you're left out, Silver—you can't row for toffee. I shouldn't care to be in the same crew with a dud like you."

"I don't think you'll have much chance," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"But you'd better go and give all this stuff to Lovell, not to me. He's captain now."

"Well, where is he? If he does the sensible thing I'm going to take him into my study. Dickinson minor objected, but he agreed after I hit him in the eye. Where's Lovell?"

"Echo answers where? He's doing his prep somewhere, I suppose," said Raby. "For goodness' sake go and look for him and give us a rest."

Peter Cuthbert Gunner snorted and strode out of the study. Jimmy Silver & Co. resumed their interrupted prep. Gunner looked into Study No. 4, where Mornington and Erroll were at work.

"Lovell here? No! Seen that ass anywhere?"

"Yes," answered Morny.

"Where did you see him?"

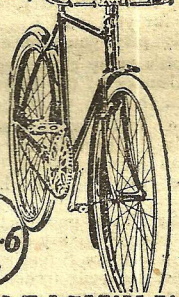
"On Little Side."

"Eh! He can't be on the football ground at this time of night!" exclaimed Gunner, staring.

"Hardly," agreed Mornington. "It was yesterday I saw him there."

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"You silly ass!" roared Gunner.
 "I think he's doing his prep in the Form-room Gunner," said Erroll, with a smile.

"Oh!"
 Gunner tramped away and went downstairs. He arrived at the Fourth Form room and looked in. There was Lovell, sitting in solitary state, with his books. It was just as well for Gunner that Mr. Dalton was no longer there; the Fourth-Form master would have been very far from appreciating the fact that Gunner was too busy for prep. that evening.

"Oh, here you are!" said Gunner.
 "I've been looking for you Lovell."

"Well, you've found me," said Lovell, with rather more civility than he generally wasted on the egregious Peter Cuthbert. It was owing to an extraordinary trick played by Gunner that two candidates had been kept away from the Lower School election, resulting in Lovell's success. Certainly Gunner had not intended that to come about; nevertheless, it had come about. Moreover, Lovell was quite fed-up with the silence and solitude of the deserted Form-room, and even the bull-voice of Peter Cuthbert Gunner was welcome to break the dismal silence.

"Prep., what?" asked Gunner, sitting on the end of the desk.

Lovell nodded.
 "Rather rotten working on your lonely own, old scout."

Arthur Edward Lovell's civility vanished at once. The bare suggestion of being compassionated was more than enough.

"No bizney of yours, I suppose!" he snapped.

"Well, I don't like seeing a fellow down on his luck," said Gunner. "You seem to be given the go-by by the whole Form."

"Can't you mind your own business?" asked Lovell.

"Oh don't be ratty, old bean! It's rotten for you, and I'm sorry for you—I really pity you—there!"

Lovell's grasp closed on a ruler. Pity from Gunner of the Fourth was the last drop in the cup of bitterness.

"The fact is," went on Gunner cheerily, "I'm thinking of taking you into my study, Lovell."

"Are you?" said Lovell sulphurously.

"Yes; I'm a good-natured chap. If you're cheeky in my study, as you used to be in Jimmy Silver's, I'll jolly soon put you in your place—you can rely on that. I never stand cheek in my study. Dickinson minor is bathing his eye now. And why? He cheeked me!"

"You silly idiot!"

"Oh, cut that out!" said Gunner. "I dare say you're feeling ratty, turned down by the whole Form as you are—it's enough to make any fellow ratty, I know. But I've come here to be friendly—can't you catch on to that? I want to speak to you about the Classical junior eight next week."

"Speak about something you understand."

"I fancy I understand rowing," said Gunner. "I'm prepared to give you some tips on rowing, if you're not too swanky to take them. After all, it was a sort of accident, your being elected junior captain, and you've got no cause to put on side. Anyway, I never stand a fellow being sided with me. You mayn't understand that I'm the man you want for the boat race. But take my word for it—listen to the man who knows you know. Do the sensible thing, Lovell, and I'll play up on my

side—I'll take you into my study. Dickinson minor's agreeable, now I've punched him. I've told him to tell you personally that he's agreeable. If he jolly well doesn't, I'm sorry for his other eye. Now, is it a go?"

"Fathead!"

"Talk sense!" suggested Gunner. "My opinion is that you ought to be jolly glad of the chance. Even those rotten outsiders, Peele and Gower, won't have you in their study any longer, and nobody else will stand you. You're turned down by the whole Form, and laughed at all round—"

"What?" roared Lovell.

"Laughed at all round—a regular laughing-stock, you know," said Gunner. "I suppose you know it as well as I do. I'm taking pity on you, and I really think you might be grateful. And, I say—Yaroooooooh!"

Gunner did not really mean to say that—he said it quite involuntarily as Lovell jumped up and commenced operations with the ruler.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

"Ow! Wow! Oh! Whooop!" roared Gunner.

He rolled off the desk and jumped away. Lovell followed him up, still swiping with the ruler. For some reason unknown to Gunner's powerful intellect, Lovell was in a towering rage. He laid into Gunner with the ruler as if he fancied that he was beating a carpet.

Whack! Whack! Crack!

"Oh, crumbs! You rotter! Yarooogh! Keep off!" shrieked Gunner. "Oh, my hat! Whoooooop!"

There was no arguing with a long, heavy ruler swiping in a reckless and enraged hand. Gunner, as a rule, feared no foe, but he fled now—he fled for his life.

He rushed wildly for the door of the Form-room, and Lovell charged him, swiping away.

Whack!

"Yarooooooop!"

Gunner caught a final swipe as he dodged out of the Form-room.

"Come back, you cheeky rotter!" roared Lovell. "Come back and have some more, you cheeky fathead!"

But Gunner did not come back. He had had more than enough to go on with, and he did not want any more. Lovell, with a crimson, wrathful face, returned to his desk, and a gasping and yelling Gunner vanished along the corridor as if he were on the cinder path.

The question of Lovell's study, or whether he was to have a study at all, was still unsettled. But it was quite settled that he was not going to share Gunner's study. On that point there did not exist the faintest shadow of doubt.

THE THIRD CHAPTER. The Machinations of Muffin!

GRUNT!

It was a couple of days later, and Lovell, after class, had taken a letter from the rack. This he opened.

From that letter he drew a pound note—obviously a tip from some thoughtful relation who was aware that at school, as everywhere else, riches take unto themselves wings and fly away.

Any fellow finding a pound note in a letter from home might have been expected to look considerably bucked.

But Lovell did not look bucked. He looked angry, dissatisfied, discontented. And Tubby Muffin, whose greedy eyes

were on the currency note, marvelled. Even a ten-shilling note would have exalted Tubby Muffin to the skies—so long as it lasted. In a pound note, judiciously expended at the tuckshop, there was twenty shillings' worth of happiness. Yet Lovell looked anything but happy.

Lovell was in a frame of mind not to be soled by a tip from home. In fact, a generous tip from his pater only accentuated the discomfort of his position. In happier days there would have been a royal spread in the end study on that pound note—tea in the study would have assumed the proportions of a banquet. Now Lovell barred the study, and he had no other study in which to extend hospitality to other friends. If he wanted to gather friends to a feed—which he could easily have done, though he was not exactly popular at the present time—he would have to ask them to some other fellow's study, or else to the tuckshop. That would draw still more general and marked attention to the painful fact that he was homeless.

Lovell shoved the pound note into his pocket and stalked away, not thinking of anything in the nature of a spread. Much more disagreeable thoughts than that occupied his mind.

The question of a study was really becoming pressing.

Mr. Dalton, finding him at prep in the Form-room a second time, and then a third time, had spoken quite plainly. He had told Lovell that this could not continue, and that he must either resume his quarters in his old study or find room in another. There was plenty of room along the Classical Fourth passage. The trouble was that nobody wanted a firebrand in his study; but Lovell did not care to tell Dicky Dalton that, as a study-mate, he had been turned down by the whole Form. That was a confession he was very reluctant to make; he preferred to let Mr. Dalton believe that his present attitude was due only to wilful obstinacy. And indeed it was, to a large extent. Mornington and Erroll would have given him a home in Study No. 4 if he had asked civilly; but, as Morny remarked to several grinning fellows, he did not "see" begging and praying a fellow to crowd him out of his own study when he really wasn't keen on being crowded. He would have stood Lovell; but Lovell did not care to be "stood"; he had to be sought after, which was not likely to come to pass.

But unless Lovell swallowed his lofty pride his situation was likely to become more and more difficult. Already he had decided upon prep in the box-room, so that Mr. Dalton would not again discover him lonely in the Form-room. The box-room was extremely uncomfortable for purposes of study, and sooner or later, he realised bitterly, he would be rooted out of that. And these shifts and contrivances were, as he knew, a matter of continual jesting in the Form. Lovell was keenly sensitive to ridicule, and he was getting it now in large doses.

Almost he repented him that he had turned his back so loftily and contemptuously on the end study. Probably he would not have done so had he foreseen the present uncomfortable state of affairs.

Lovell stalked in the quad, feeling lonely and despondent and angry. A fat figure rolled after him.

"I say, Lovell, old chap—"

"Oh, seat!" grunted Lovell.

He was in no mood for Tubby Muffin.

But Reginald did not "seat."

Although Lovell had not noticed him, Reginald Muffin had seen that pound note, and that pound note loomed large in Reginald's eyes.

A study spread, with Reginald as principal performer, was what Tubby Muffin considered the proper destination of that pound note.

And Reginald Muffin flattered himself that he had thought of a way of directing that pound note to its proper destination.

"Lovell, old fellow—"

"Hook it!"

"But I want to speak to you, old chap," said Muffin. "I've been going to ask you for a long time, but I know it's rather cheek to ask the junior captain of the school to share my study."

"Eh?"

"You're a big gun now, of course," said Tubby. "I know that. If you think it's a cheek to ask you—well, let it drop, and no harm done."

Lovell looked at him.

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath, and Tubby's answer was soft enough. Lovell looked considerably more amiable.

Tubby was putting it delicately. When it was put like this, even the sensitive and touchy Lovell could not suspect patronage.

The new junior captain was, in fact, getting from Tubby the humble respect which was his due, but which other fellows in the Fourth did not seem keen to render him.

"If you'd think it over," said Tubby, "I'd be glad! You needn't chum with me. I know I'm nobody! But I'd really like to have you in my study, Lovell, if you'd consent."

Lovell thawed still more.

True, Tubby Muffin was not the fellow he would have chosen for a study-mate; he was almost the last fellow Lovell would have chosen. But this offer—or, rather, this humble request—came in the nick of time. Something had to be done about a study—really, it was getting to be a case of any port in a storm. Tubby's study was not the one Lovell would have selected, but it was a port. Installed in Study No. 2 he would, at least, cease to be a fellow without a home. But it was not Lovell's way to seem to be eager even for this inestimable boon and blessing.

"But there's four in your study now," he said. "It would be a bit of a crowd, Muffin."

Tubby started a little.

In his eagerness to capture the owner of a pound note—which, in the circumstances, he felt he could count upon for a study spread—he had forgotten his study-mates.

How Jones minor, Higgs, and Putty of the Fourth were likely to take it was rather a problem. Jones minor had lately been punched by the irate Lovell; Higgs had been gruffly refused a place in the Classical junior eight; Putty of the Fourth had had the gloves on with Lovell for jesting too freely about his studious state, and had been rather severely licked. It was extremely doubtful whether the three would extend a warm welcome to Lovell, simply because Tubby had a business eye on his pound note. Moreover, four was rather a crowd in Study No. 2, and five would be overcrowding it. Tubby Muffin realised at once that if his study-mates were consulted an emphatic negative would be the outcome. He immediately decided that they were not to be consulted. Fortunately, they had gone out of gates after class, and were not likely to be back yet.

"Well, what about it?" said Lovell,

eyeing him. "I don't see how we could cram five into a study, Muffin."

Tubby Muffin had few gifts, but a remarkable gift of prevarication was included among the few.

"That's all right, Lovell. Putty's changing out."

"Oh, is he?"

"Yes; he's going along to the end study."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

"So we shall only be four, just the same," said Tubby brightly.

"That's all right," said Lovell. "But what about Jones minor and Higgs? Have you asked them?"

Tubby Muffin had not even dreamed of asking them. The whole thing had only come into his fat mind ten minutes ago, when his greedy eyes had fallen on the pound note. But he answered cheerily:

"Of course! You don't think I'd have asked you before I spoke to them about it? They're jolly keen on it."

"Sure of that?" asked Lovell.

"Oh, quite! The fact is, Lovell, we've talked it over a lot, and they wanted me to be spokesman."

Arthur Edward Lovell looked quite genial.

Lovell had many faults, but nobody could have accused Lovell of being a suspicious fellow. He believed himself to be very keen; though nobody had ever been able to discover upon what he founded this belief. At all events, he accepted Reginald Muffin's statements now at face value. This chance was, indeed, too good to be missed, if he could help it; and the request was put very properly, too. It seemed that Study No. 2 were fully sensible of the honour that would be done them if Lovell condescended to take up his quarters there. Lovell nodded very pleasantly.

"Well, if that's how the matter stands, Muffin, I'll come."

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Muffin, delighted.

Lovell smiled. Muffin's delight was so evidently genuine that he could not help feeling pleased.

Naturally, he could not guess that Muffin's delight was at having captured not Lovell, but Lovell's pound note. He did not even know that Muffin knew that had a pound note.

"I say, that's jolly good of you," said Muffin. "I'm so glad! The—the other fellows will be awfully glad, too! I say, Lovell, it's tea-time. Come into tea in your—your new study, will you?"

"Certainly!"

"I haven't very much to offer you in the way of tea," said Muffin; "but you won't mind that, will you, Lovell?"

Lovell laughed.

"That's all right, Muffin; I'm in funds, and I'll stand the tea. We'll have something rather decent."

Reginald Muffin beamed.

"Tell Jones and Higgs," added Lovell. "Putty, too, if he likes. I was going to tea in Hall, but—I mean—I'll cut down to the tuckshop; you get the study ready for tea."

"What-ho!"

Tubby Muffin fairly flew to perform that welcome task. Arthur Edward Lovell walked down to the school shop with a cheery face.

For a long, long time Lovell had "tea'd" in Hall, not having a study of his own. Really, it was very pleasant to have a study again, a room that was his own, and where he could ask fellows. Still more pleasant was it to lose that horrid feeling of being an outsider whom nobody wanted.

Lovell had not been on the best of terms with anybody in Study No. 2, but he felt very kindly towards them now.

He was willing to forget all about punching Jones minor's nose, and hammering Putty in the gym, and snapping a scornful refusal to Higgs' request for a place in the eight. He was, in fact, in a very forgiving frame of mind.

In this genial mood, he resolved that there should be quite a handsome spread for tea—quite a house-warming in his new quarters. Tubby Muffin's hopes were high, but they were exceeded. Tubby had calculated on ten shillings out of the pound; but, as a matter of fact, when Lovell had finished his shopping, he received only ninepence change from Sergeant Kettle. He was quite heavy with parcels when he arrived at Study No. 2, where Tubby already had a good fire going, and the kettle boiling, and the table laid for tea.

Tubby's eyes fairly danced at the sight of the good things that Lovell unpacked on the table.

"Where are the other chaps?" asked Lovell.

Tubby started. He had forgotten the other chaps again.

"Oh, Putty isn't coming!" he stammered.

"What about Jones and Higgs?" asked Lovell. "You told them?"

"Oh, yes, of course. They're jolly keen."

"They're coming in to tea, I suppose?"

"Of course. If they're late we needn't wait for them," said Tubby. "I—I believe that beast Carthew of the Sixth is fagging them. Just like that brute to keep a fellow late for tea. But we needn't wait."

Lovell nodded. He was hungry, and there was no need to wait; fellows did not stand on ceremony in junior studies.

Tubby Muffin, indeed, could not have waited—he was already beginning! Besides, he was anxious to get the feed over before his study-mates turned up. Goodness knows what would happen then!

In a very cheery mood, Arthur Edward Lovell sat down to tea with Tubby Muffin.

"We'll bring my books and things here after tea," he remarked.

"Yes, rather!" assented Muffin, with his mouth full. "I'll help you carry them, old chap."

There were footsteps in the passage, and Tubby glanced towards the half-open door rather apprehensively.

But it was only Jimmy Silver & Co. on their way to the end study.

"Hallo! Going strong, Tubby?" asked Jimmy, glancing in with a smile. "You seem to be doing yourself well!"

Then he caught sight of Lovell on the other side of the table.

Lovell gave him a sarcastic look.

"You'll be pleased to hear that I've got a study now," he said very sardonically.

"Have you?" said Jimmy. "Good! There's still room in the end study if you care to come back."

"Thank you for nothing—I don't."

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on. Lovell, in a state of great satisfaction, went on with his tea—and Reginald Muffin went on with his, in a state of still greater satisfaction. It was a long time since the fat Classical had enjoyed a spread like this. There was only one little trouble—the doubtful question of what would happen when Putty & Co. came in. But Reginald Muffin did not think very much about that; he had the spread to think of, which was much more pleasant—and a fellow couldn't think of everything!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER
Trouble!

THREE tired and rather dusty juniors wheeled their bikes in at the school gates, just before old Mack came out to lock up. Jones minor, Higgs, and Putty, of the Fourth, had returned from their spin.

They had not returned in the best of tempers. They had "tea'd" at an inn, and had been overcharged. Higgs had had a puncture, and the other two had had to wait while he repaired it. Jones minor was rather worried by a painful swelling on his nose, which he owed to Lovell's knuckles. They put up their bicycles and went into the House, Jones and Higgs looking quite cross and Putty less genial than usual.

The three came up the Classical Fourth passage together and stopped at their study.

Higgs threw the door open. There were two juniors in the room—Tubby Muffin and Arthur Edward Lovell.

Tubby, of course, belonged there, but the three were rather surprised to see Lovell.

They did not look pleased, either. Certainly Muffin had the right to invite any guest he pleased into the study. But with his study-mates, at least, the junior captain was not persona grata.

Higgs glanced over the table, on which were the remains of an extensive spread. The spread had been so extensive that even Reginald Muffin had been obliged to leave a few remains.

Reginald was looking very fat and shiny and sticky now, and seemed to breathe with a little difficulty.

Muffin started, guiltily as his study-mates came in. After the feast comes the reckoning; the feast was over now, and the reckoning was at hand.

"Hallo! Been having a spread here?" asked Higgs.

"Yes, a—little feed, you know," stammered Muffin.

Snort, from Higgs.

"Just like you to have it while we're out of gates, Muffin, you fat cad. You sponge on the study when you're out of funds, which is nearly always, and when you've got a spread you leave other fellows out. Just like you!"

"Oh, just," said Jones minor contemptuously.

Lovell glanced round. "That's all right!" he said. "I stood the spread."

"You did?" ejaculated Jones minor.

"You—you see—" mumbled Muffin. "I don't see why Lovell stood a spread in this study," said Jones minor surlily.

"You fellows are welcome to what's left," said Lovell genially. "I'm afraid Muffin has made a bit of a clearance, though."

"Precious little left!" sneered Jones minor. "And I don't know that I care about teaing with a chap who punches a chap's nose, either."

Lovell stared at him.

He had quite forgiven Jones minor for that punch on Jones' nose. Muffin's words had led him to suppose that Jones had forgiven it also. Apparently he hadn't; and, indeed, an incident of that kind was more easily forgotten by the puncher than by the punchee, so to speak.

Putty politely placed the door wide open.

"Well, if you've done here, Lovell, will—" said Putty.

"What the thump do you mean, Teddy Grace?" demanded Lovell angrily.

"I mean what I say," answered Putty, in surprise. "If you've done here, I suppose you're not bestowing your valuable company on three fellows you've rowed with, without being asked? And I've got some lines to do before roll-call."

"Who the thump's been shifting my box from under the window?" demanded Jones minor.

"I did!" snapped Lovell.

"You did! And what the merry dickens for?"

"My desk will have to go there!"

"Your—your—your desk?"

"Yes, ass! I shall want the light. Anywhere will do for your old box!"

Jones minor blinked at him.

"Are you potty?" he bawled. "Do you think you're going to keep your desk in this study, because you haven't a study of your own?"

"Of all the cheek!" hooted Higgs.

"Dash it all, Lovell, don't be a goat!" exclaimed Putty sharply. "Do you really think the whole passage belongs to you, and you can do as you like in any fellow's study? You can't keep your desk in here!"

"I—I say—" gasped Muffin.

Lovell stared blankly at Higgs and Jones minor, who were equally furious, and at Putty, who was red with wrath. Even Lovell could see that there was something wrong somewhere now. Putty calmed himself; he could see now that there was a misapprehension somewhere.

"Muffin told me—"

Lovell broke on and fixed an infuriated look upon Reginald Muffin. Slowly it was dawning on his mind that he had been taken in.

"You—you see—" stammered Muffin.

"Look here!" roared Lovell furiously. "Didn't you fellows talk it over, and agree to ask me to share this room, and ask Muffin to be the spokesman?"

"Did we?" howled Higgs. "I should jolly well say not, with a capital 'N.'"

"Think we'd have you at any price?" bawled Jones minor.

"Look at my nose!"

Lovell stood rooted to the floor, his face crimson with rage and chagrin. His look was almost homicidal as he glared at Reginald Muffin.

"You—you fat rotter!" he gasped.

"You told me—"

"I—I meant—I—I didn't mean—I—" stammered Muffin.

"I—I really meant I—I wanted you, I

Lovell. I—I assure you I never knew you had a pound note—"

"What!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hadh't you better go, Lovell?" grinned Higgs.

It was clear to Arthur Edward Lovell that he had better go. But he had something to do before he went. He leaped on Reginald Muffin like a tiger.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

"Yaroooogh! Help! Draggimoff!" shrieked Muffin, in anguish.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Crash!

Tubby Muffin rolled on the floor rearing. Arthur Edward Lovell strode from the study, slamming the door with a slam that rang through the House. He left Putty & Co. shrieking with laughter, and Tubby Muffin with anguish. And when the story spread along the Classical Fourth passage there were yells of laughter in every other study. Even Tubby Muffin, when he had recovered from the thumping, chuckled.

There was only one fellow in the Classical Fourth who did not chuckle. That was Arthur Edward Lovell—who was still in search of a study.

THE END.

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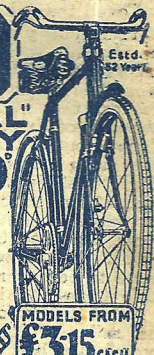
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