

JIMMY SILVER IS EXPELLED FROM ROOKWOOD!

The BOYS' FRIEND 1d

OUR MOTTO IS: "PLAY THE GAME!"

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ONE PENNY.

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Jimmy Silver "Holds the Fort" Against All-comers!

EXPELLED FROM ROOKWOOD!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Under the Shadow.

"Thief!" Jimmy Silver started violently. The hideous word was howled in at the keyhole of the end study. A rapid patter of footsteps in the passage followed. Whoever had yelled that taunt at Jimmy Silver had beaten a prompt retreat. But Jimmy did not rise.

He was seated in the study arm-chair, his elbows on his knees, his chin in his hands, in an attitude of utter dejection.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, his chums, were in the study. They were silent. Their faces were pale and troubled.

For some time there had not been a word uttered in the study.

The taunt howled in at the door broke a grim, oppressive silence.

Only Lovell made a movement towards the door, but he paused.

Jimmy Silver looked up at his chums at last. His face was deadly white.

"You believe it?" he asked, in a strange, dry, husky voice.

Lovell groaned.

"Oh, Jimmy!"

There was a tap at the door, and it opened. Rawson of the Fourth looked in hesitatingly.

Jimmy Silver smiled bitterly. He had always been friendly with the scholarship junior, and had stood by Rawson against the snobs of Rookwood—Mornington, Townsend, Topham, and the rest. Had Rawson come to taunt him now?

"Jimmy!" said Rawson.

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver, with a curling lip. "I didn't expect it from you, Rawson; but go it!"

Lovell clenched his hands.

"Better not!" he muttered.

"You don't seem to catch on," said Rawson quietly. "I haven't come here to go for you, Jimmy. I just caught Gower in the passage; he had been yelling into your study. I heard what he said."

"What all Rookwood will be saying soon!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

"I banged his head against the wall," said Rawson. "Gower's nursing his head now. Surely you don't think I believe it, Jimmy?"

The captain of the Fourth looked at him curiously.

"You don't?" he asked.

"No."

"You haven't heard the evidence, then?"

"Hang the evidence!" said Rawson stoutly. "I don't believe a word of it!"

"My pals do!" said Jimmy bitterly.

"I—I don't!" muttered Lovell. "I—I can't! But—but—"

"But—" stammered Raby.

"How did the note get there?" muttered Newcome. "Oh, Jimmy!"

"I saw Mr. Bootles come away from here, with Bulkeley and Neville and Beaumont," said Rawson. "I think he's gone to the Head. The fellows are saying—" He hesitated.

"Look here, Jimmy, it's all rot, and you've got pals to stand by you. I don't know just what's happened. Tell me. Morny & Co. are chattering over it; they seem to have got it all from Beaumont of the Sixth. I've heard it from them. They say Beaumont missed a banknote from his study—"

"That's it," said Jimmy.

"It was missed about the time you went to his study to fetch his footer for him—"

"So he says."

"And it was found on you," said Rawson.

"Yes."

"Well, I don't believe it, for one—"

"That part's true," said Jimmy Silver. "The banknote was found on me, right enough."

Rawson started.

"Found on you! Oh, Jimmy!"

Jimmy smiled—a bitter smile. "Now you agree with the rest!" he remarked.

Tom Rawson drew a deep breath. The information was staggering; but his loyal faith in Jimmy Silver did not waver. More than any other fellow at Rookwood, probably, the scholarship boy had learned to know Jimmy Silver's sterling qualities. The fellow who had stood by him generously and helped him in his uphill fight at Rookwood, was not the kind of fellow to steal.

"I don't agree with anybody, Jimmy, who thinks you took Beaumont's banknote," he said quietly. "I'd believe it if you told me yourself, not otherwise."

"But—but—" said Lovell.

"The five-pound note was found in my jacket," said Jimmy. "It had slipped through the lining from the pocket—there's a hole in the lining."

"How did it come in your pocket?"

"I don't know."

"You didn't put it there, of course?"

"No."

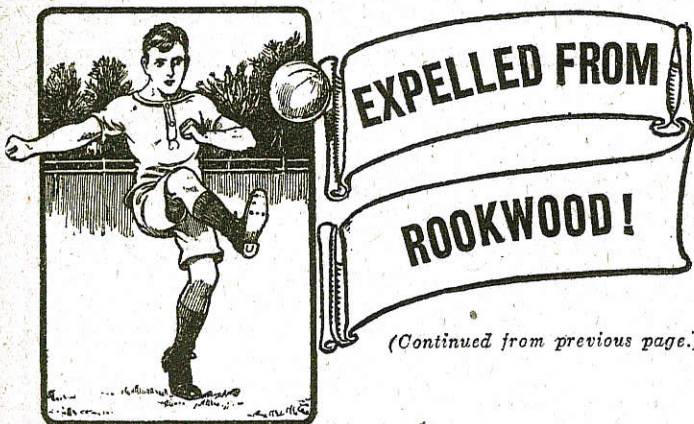
Lovell and Raby and Newcome exchanged haggard looks. Their faith in their study-leader was founded as upon a rock. But Jimmy's statement was staggering. How had Beaumont's banknote come into his pocket, if he had not put it there?

"Don't give in, Jimmy," said Rawson. "I believe you, anyway! So do these chaps!"

"Do they?" muttered Jimmy.

"Yes," said Lovell. "I—I do! But—but how did the banknote come"

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there, Jimmy? Tell me that. It was found there."

"Somebody put it there, as I didn't!"

"But who?"

"Beaumont, I suppose. It was his."

"Beaumont—a prefect of the Sixth! Oh, Jimmy!"

"Hold on!" said Rawson. "Look here, Beaumont is a prefect; but we all know the kind of fellow he is. He's a rotter all through, and he has always been down on Jimmy for not standing his bullying. If Beaumont searched Jimmy, he might have slipped the note into his jacket, and pretended to find it there."

"He didn't search Jimmy. He refused to."

"Who did, then?"

"Bulkeley."

"Oh, Bulkeley!" said Rawson, discouraged again. "Bulkeley's all right."

"The note was in my pocket before I was searched," said Jimmy Silver. "That's clear enough. Somebody put it there. It was Beaumont's note, and he dislikes me—he always has. I suppose he managed it somehow."

"But he couldn't!" muttered Lovell. "Even if he's rotter enough, how could he get at your jacket, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver did not answer. He could not answer.

"You have the jacket on all day," said Raby. "He couldn't get at it while you're wearing it."

"I know he couldn't."

"Then it must have been put in in the dorm," said Rawson.

Lovell shook his head hopelessly. "Beaumont don't know his way about our dorm well enough to find Jimmy's jacket in the dark and put a banknote into it," he said. "Somebody would have woke up. He wouldn't have risked it—he couldn't."

"I know it sounds steep," said Jimmy Silver miserably. "I don't say that's the explanation. I only say I never saw the note in my life till Bulkeley pulled it out of my jacket half an hour ago."

The door opened, and Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in. His face was very grave.

"You're wanted, Silver!" he said. Jimmy rose.

"Follow me to the Head's study!" said Bulkeley, and he strode away.

His usually kind voice was as hard as iron. It was easy to see what Bulkeley believed. Jimmy Silver, without a word, followed him from the study.

Lovell made a restless gesture.

"It can't be true!" he muttered. "Jimmy must have been mad if he did it!"

"He didn't do it!" said Rawson.

"But how did the note get there? You know as well as we do that Beaumont couldn't have come to our dorm last night and found Jimmy's jacket in the dark—"

"It doesn't seem possible," admitted Rawson.

"Then how—"

"I don't know. But I know Jimmy Silver's innocent, and I'm standing by him," said Rawson quietly, "and I think you, as his pals, will stand by him, too!"

"We shall stand by him," said Raby. "But—but—"

Topham of the Fourth looked in, grinning.

"I hear there's goin' to be a sackin'," he remarked. "Quite a ceremony, by gad, for gettin' rid of a thief—Yaroooh!"

As if moved by the same spring, Lovell and Raby and Newcome jumped at Topham. The nut of the Fourth went reeling into the passage under a shower of fierce blows, and he fled yelling along the passage.

There was no doubt that the Co. would stand by Jimmy Silver. But it was with heavy hearts.

The 2nd Chapter. Expelled from Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver followed the captain of Rookwood with a firm step.

The discovery of the stolen note, and the condemnation that followed, had almost stunned Jimmy Silver; but he was recovering himself now.

He was innocent, though the toils were about him. He knew that he was innocent, and that therefore he was the victim of a cunning plot, which he could not yet fathom.

He had been found guilty, and he was to be expelled from the school; he knew that. But the consciousness of innocence upheld him even in that extremity.

He did not look like a culprit as he followed Bulkeley to the Head's study.

In the lower passage, Mornington & Co. were gathered, apparently in high feather. The news was all over the school now, and Jimmy Silver's guilt was being discussed by all Rookwood.

His old enemies were rejoicing in it.

Mornington burst into a sneering laugh as he came by, and Townsend and Peele and Gower and Smythe of the Shell smiled with lofty scorn.

"Here comes the thief!" said Townsend.

"Mind your pockets!" chortled Smythe.

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands hard.

"Enough of that," exclaimed Bulkeley angrily. "Hold your tongues!"

"Well, the rotter's a thief, isn't he?" sneered Mornington.

"Hold you tongue, I tell you!"

Bulkeley strode on with Jimmy Silver, and they entered the Head's study.

"That's the finish of Jimmy Silver here," remarked Mornington. "I fancy we shall see the last of him this evenin'."

"No doubt about that," said Townsend. "We don't want a thief at Rookwood. The Head can't do anything but sack him."

"Good riddance," remarked Adolphus Smythe. "The young cad was always too cheeky. I'm not surprised at his turnin' out like this, really."

"You never know a fellow till you find him out," said Howard of the Shell sapiently.

"Yaas, by gad!"

"I suppose he's guilty," said Peele.

"Of course he is," said Mornington, with a stare. "Wasn't Beaumont's banknote found hidden in his jacket?"

"Queer about Beaumont havin' a banknote."

"I don't see that."

"Well, we know Beaumont's hard up," remarked Peele, with a curious look at Mornington. "We know he's been borrowin' money of you—a kid in the Fourth, Morny. All Rookwood don't know it; but we do!"

"And the less you say about it the better," said Mornington tartly.

Peele laughed.

"Oh, I'm not sayin' anythin'," he said. "But it's queer. If Beaumont had a fiver, it's queer he should be borrowin' quids in the Fourth."

"Well, he had the fiver, or it couldn't have been found on Jimmy Silver, could it?"

"Might have borrowed that, too," grinned Peele. "You were sayin' the other day, Morny, that you knew a way of gettin' rid of Jimmy Silver—"

"Oh, dry up!" snapped Mornington.

Smythe of the Shell turned his eye-glass curiously on the dandy of Rookwood.

"What's that?" he asked.

"Nothin'," said Mornington hastily. "Only Peele's rot!"

"You haven't had a hand—"

"Of course I haven't! Don't be an ass!"

Mornington walked away with

Peele; and the nuts of Rookwood regarded one another with curious glances.

"By gad!" said Smythe. "It can't be a plant surely! That would be a bit too rotten, even for Morny." "No bizney of ours, anyway," said Townsend, shrugging his shoulders.

"No, by gad! It's time that cheeky young cad was sacked, anyway," agreed Smythe. "Some of his betters may have a chance in the footer when he's gone."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Howard.

But Peele's words had left the nuts of Rookwood with an uneasy feeling. Well they knew that Mornington of the Fourth would not have stopped at much to rid himself of Jimmy Silver. But if the miserable affair was a "plant," with Mornington of the Fourth at the bottom of it, they were not disposed to air their suspicions. It was no business of theirs to help Jimmy Silver out of his scrape, so far as they could see. Let him take his chance!

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver had entered the Head's study at the heels of the Rookwood captain. Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, and Beaumont, the prefect, were there with Dr. Chisholm.

The Head's face was grim and set. One glance at that hard, severe face was enough to tell Jimmy Silver that he had no mercy to expect.

"Silver!" said the Head, as the junior entered. "Come here!"

Jimmy advanced with a firm step.

"You have been guilty of theft. You have disgraced yourself and the school you belong to. You are expelled from Rookwood!"

"I—"

"You need not speak. Mr. Bootles will take you to the station, and you will take the next train home. I shall send with you a letter of explanation to your father. That is all. Take him away, Bulkeley."

Jimmy Silver's eyes flashed.

"You won't listen to me, sir?" he exclaimed.

Dr. Chisholm regarded him coldly.

"You can have nothing to say," he replied. "I presume you have no intention of denying your guilt in the face of the clearest proof?"

"I do deny it!"

"You will serve no purpose, Silver, by adding falsehood to theft."

"I shall tell you the truth, sir!"

"You had better go. Follow Bulkeley."

"Come, Silver," said the Rookwood captain gently enough.

Jimmy Silver did not move. In the presence of the Head, and with grim condemnation in every face round him, many fellows would have submitted hopelessly to fate. But Jimmy Silver was made of sterner stuff. All his courage was needed now, and it did not fail him.

"I demand to be heard, sir," he said calmly.

The Head made an impatient gesture.

"If you intend to utter a series of absurd falsehoods, Silver—"

"I do not."

"Then what can you have to say? You know that I desire to do strict justice. If you have anything to say, I will hear it. But be brief."

"It's worth a few minutes, sir," said Jimmy bitterly, "when a chap's in danger of being disgraced for life!"

"That is true, Silver," said the Head, more gently. "If there were a possible shadow of doubt, I should not spare my time or my trouble. I did not think that you would venture to deny what is clear as the sun at noonday. But if you choose to give me your version of the matter I will hear you patiently."

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, what have you to say?"

"Bulkeley found Beaumont's banknote in my pocket. I don't know how it got there!"

"Come, come!"

"I never saw it till Bulkeley pulled it out, sir," said Jimmy steadily. "I never touched it. I never knew it was missing till Beaumont said so."

"Silver!"

"It was in my pocket; I can't deny that. But I did not know it was there."

"Do you expect me, boy, to place the slightest reliance on such an absurd statement?" exclaimed the Head sharply.

"It's true, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"I tell you, sir, it is true. Somebody put that banknote into my pocket to make me out a thief!"

"Utter nonsense!" said the Head.

"Whom do you accuse?"

"I don't know whom to accuse. It's possible, I suppose, that somebody took the banknote from Beau-

mont's study, and planted it on me. I don't know."

"Who? Who? Answer that question."

"I can't! I don't even know anybody did so. It's quite as likely that Beaumont did it himself."

Beaumont of the Sixth started.

"Silver!" The Head's voice was hard and grinding. "You have the impudence, the effrontery, to bring such a wicked accusation against a prefect of the Sixth Form?"

"I only say it's very likely, sir. All I know for certain is that I don't know how the note came to be in my jacket. Beaumont has always been down on me."

"Nonsense!"

"I suppose I need not deny such nonsense, sir," said Beaumont.

"You need not, Beaumont. The wretched boy's wicked slander only adds to the contempt with which I regard him. He does not seem to be aware that what he suggests was impossible, as well as unimaginable. Silver, if you have nothing more to say—"

"I am innocent, sir!"

"That will do!" said the Head curtly. "You may go! Remain in your study till Mr. Bootles is ready to take you to the station. You are expelled from Rookwood! Go!"

Jimmy's eyes blazed.

"I am expelled from Rookwood, and I've done nothing!" he exclaimed.

"Silence! Take him away, Bulkeley," said the Head, frowning.

"I—I tell you—"

Bulkeley's hand fell heavily on the junior's shoulder.

"Come!" he said.

Jimmy shook himself loose, and faced the Head, his eyes blazing, his whole form trembling with anger and excitement.

"Well, I won't go!" he shouted.

"I won't be expelled, when I've done nothing! I won't!"

"Take him away, Bulkeley!" thundered the Head.

The captain of Rookwood grasped Jimmy Silver again by the shoulder, and drew him forcibly from the study.

The 3rd Chapter. Jimmy Silver's Resolve.

Sacked!

Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form, was sacked from the school!

The news spread over Rookwood, and was discussed far and wide, in every tone of amazement and consternation.

Jimmy Silver sacked—for theft!

It was incredible.

But it was true!

Tommy Dodd & Co., on the Modern side, heard it with amazement and dismay. They were Jimmy Silver's old rivals, but they were cast down by the news. They could scarcely believe it at first.

But the whole story was soon told—the finding of Beaumont's banknote hidden in the lining of Jimmy's jacket, and the sentence of the Head—expulsion from the school!

"How on earth did he come to do it?" said Tommy Dodd, in wonder. "He must have been mad!"

And Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook agreed that that was the only possible explanation.

Jimmy Silver a thief—Jimmy Silver condemned for theft! Unless Jimmy had taken leave of his senses, there was no explanation of it.

That Jimmy was innocent could scarcely be believed. The evidence was too strong for that. And it could not be believed that the Head of Rookwood had condemned him on insufficient proof.

But what he had done was totally at variance with his character as the Rookwood fellows knew him, and they charitably opined that he must have been out of his senses when he did the wretched thing.

It came as a surprise to the fellows who had heard the evidence that Jimmy Silver was maintaining his innocence.

To most minds, in the face of the proofs, Jimmy's denial seemed, as it seemed to the Head, mere effrontery.

But the fellows who knew him best did not think so.

Rawson of the Fourth did not waver for a moment. Even the Head's sentence made no difference.

And Rawson's loyal faith braced Lovell & Co. Their own horrid doubts were driven manfully from their minds. They determined to believe Jimmy Silver, in spite of everything. And they were not alone.

Jimmy Silver returned to the end study after the interview with the Head, and Oswald and Flynn and Van Ryn of the Fourth joined him there.

They came to tell him that they believed in him still.

Tommy Dodd came over from the Modern side, and found the end study

quite crowded with Jimmy's sympathisers.

There was a general clenching of fists at the sight of the Modern junior. The impression was that the Modern had come to "crow" over the expelled Classical. But that was an injustice to Tommy.

"I say, Silver, old man," began Tommy Dodd, "is it true that you're denying having had Beaumont's banknote?"

"Yes," said Jimmy quietly.

"Well, if you give your word on the subject, I take your word," said Tommy Dodd manfully. "It looks like a clear case, but I take your word, Jimmy."

"Thanks!" said Jimmy Silver, much moved by that testimony from his old rival. "You're a good sort, Tommy."

"But how did the banknote get there, Jimmy?"

"I don't know."

"I—I say, that sounds awfully steep," said Tommy Dodd uneasily. "I believe you, all the same. But—but you can't expect the Head to."

"He doesn't, anyway," said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"And—and you're sacked?"

"Yes."

"It's rotten!" said Tommy Dodd, in great distress. "When are you going?"

Jimmy Silver's face set hard.

"I'm not going!" he said.

Tommy Dodd stared, as well he might.

"Not going!" he echoed.

"No."

"But—but you're sacked!"

"I'm sacked for nothing, and I'm not going. I'm not going to be turned out of Rookwood as a thief."

"But—but you can't stay, if the Head says you're to go!"

"I shall stay!"

"But they'll shift you out if you don't go!" said Tommy Dodd, blinking at him in blank astonishment.

"They've got to get hold of me first," said Jimmy Silver coolly.

"I'm not going to take this lying down. I am going to stay at Rookwood."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'd better not tell you chaps any more, though. I don't want to drag you into trouble," said Jimmy Silver.

"I'm glad you believe in me, Tommy. And you can tell the chaps on your side that it's all a rotten lie, and I never had anything to do with Beaumont's rotten banknote."

"I will," said Tommy Dodd. "And—and I wish you luck, Silver! If there's anything I can do, old scout—"

"There isn't, thanks, excepting to believe that I'm not a rotten thief!"

"You can rely on that," said Tommy.

And he took his leave, leaving Jimmy Silver alone with the Classical juniors. They were staring at Jimmy, not knowing in the least what to make of his startling announcement.

"How the dickens are you going to stay, if the Head won't let you, Silver?" asked Van Ryn.

"I'm going to stay. But I don't want you fellows dragged into it. Thank you for standing by me. But you'd better clear off. I've got to get ready before Bootles comes to take me to the station."

"Then you are not going?" asked Oswald.

"No; I'm not going!"

"I'm going to stand by you, Jimmy, whatever you do," said Oswald. "You stood by me once when I was in a bad scrape."

Jimmy shook his head.

"You can't help me, old chap, and I'm not going to get you sacked, too. You'd better all clear off."

"But can't we help ye intirely?" asked Flynn.

"No; there's nothing you can do."

"Sure, I can punch the head of any spalpeen who calls ye a thief," said Flynn. "I'll go an' see Morny now. I'll stop his grinning, anyway."

Flynn and Oswald and Van Ryn left the study. But the Co. remained. Jimmy Silver looked at them.

"Better go," he said.

"I'm not going," said Lovell stubbornly. "What are you thinking of doing, Jimmy?"

"I'm going to lock myself in this study, and refuse to clear," said Jimmy quietly. "I'm not going to leave Rookwood unless I'm dragged out. And they won't drag me out without some trouble."

Lovell whistled.

"A barring off?" he said.

"Something of the sort."

"We'll stay and help you, Jimmy," said Raby.

"No; better not. You can help me get ready, if you like," said Jimmy Silver. "But I'm doing this alone. You would be sacked for resisting the Head's order, and you've got your people to think of."

"But—"

began Newcome.

"I'm settled on that," said Jimmy quietly. "I'm going to resist, because I'm sacked unjustly, but you fellows can't share in it. The truth may come out about that banknote—lies generally are found out in the long run. Anyway, I'm going to stick it out as long as I can."

"Good for you!" said Rawson. "And I dare say we can help you more outside the study than inside it. We've got to find the rotter who planted that note on you."

Jimmy brightened a little. "You might," he said. "If you could do that—"

"We'll try," said Lovell, not very hopefully.

"There's one thing," said Jimmy. "I believe Mornington had a hand in it. Keep an eye on him."

"Mornington?"

"Yes. You know how thick he's been with Beaumont, and it's jolly odd for a Fourth-Former to be thick with a Sixth-Form prefect. They're both down on me—they've always been. And they're both rotters through and through. Mornington knows something about it, I'm certain of that."

"I shouldn't wonder," said Lovell, between his teeth. "He's cad enough. Beaumont couldn't have planted that note on you, but Mornington could, as he's in our dormitory."

"Mornington's our game," said Rawson, with a nod. "And we shan't be idle, Jimmy. The truth has a way of getting out; lies can't be kept up for ever."

"But—but about sticking here, Jimmy?" said Raby hesitatingly.

"That's settled."

"They'll force the door."

"Not so jolly easily, I think."

"But—but you'll be starved out, anyway."

"Not if I get a supply of grub in," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "That's where you fellows can help. You can get in some grub from the tuck-shop for me, if you don't mind lending me your money."

"Good egg!"

The four juniors left the study at once on that errand.

Jimmy Silver's plan seemed wild and reckless to them; but they were prepared to back him up to the full extent of their power.

What would happen when the Head of Rookwood learned that the expelled junior refused to leave the school they could hardly imagine.

But one thing was certain—that Jimmy was in deadly earnest, and that only force would move him from the school.

Jimmy, left alone, began to make his preparations.

His heart was beating faster than usual, and he was labouring under suppressed excitement. But his head was cool.

He had mapped out the course he intended to take, and nothing would have induced him to swerve from it.

If he had been guilty, he would have been glad to flee from Rookwood, and hide his shame from the eyes of all who knew him. But he was innocent, and that made all the difference.

To go home, to tell his father that he had been expelled as a thief, unresistingly—he refused to think of that for a moment.

The news would be a terrible shock to his father, in any case. But surely he would not be displeased to know that his son was making a fight for his honour.

Lovell & Co. returned laden with parcels. There was little time to lose. Then Lovell cut off to the dormitory with Raby, and they came back with a couple of blankets and a pillow. There were tears in the eyes of Jimmy Silver's faithful chums as they helped him make his final preparations.

Oswald looked into the study hurriedly.

"Bootles is coming, Jimmy," he breathed.

Jimmy drew a deep breath. "Right! Clear off, you chaps; I've got to lock the door!"

"Oh, Jimmy!" groaned Lovell. "With miserable, dejected faces Jimmy Silver's chums left the study. Jimmy closed the door after them, and the key turned in the lock."

The 4th Chapter.

Jimmy Declines to Go.

Mr. Bootles' kind face was deeply distressed as he made his way to the end study.

The disgrace of Jimmy Silver had come as a heavy blow to the master of the Fourth, and he felt it keenly.

He had always liked the cheery, frank junior, as most Rookwooders—masters and boys—did.

That Jimmy should have turned out so badly, as he regarded it, was a blow to Mr. Bootles. Had there been room for a doubt on the subject

the Form-master would have doubted. But there seemed no room for doubt. He tapped at the study door and turned the handle. To his surprise the door did not open.

He knocked again, more loudly.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" came Jimmy's voice from within.

"Open the door, please! It is time to go to the station. You have packed your box, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Dear me! You should have done so. However, it is too late now; your box shall be sent after you. Open the door!"

"I can't, sir."

"What? What? Why can't you open the door, Silver?"

"I am not going to leave Rookwood, sir."

Mr. Bootles jumped.

"What—what?" he ejaculated.

Jimmy Silver's voice came steadily and clearly through the locked door.

"I am innocent, sir! I refuse to be expelled for something I have not done! I am staying here."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles.

Some of the Fourth were gathering in the passage, and they listened in amazement. Mornington's face was very dark.

"By gad, the cad's stickin' it out!" he remarked to Townsend.

"But he'll have to go all the same. We don't want a thief here."

Mr. Bootles hurried to the spot and grasped Flynn by the shoulder, and dragged him away from the unfortunate dandy of the Fourth.

"Flynn! How dare you!"

"He called Jimmy Silver a thafe, sorr!"

"Bless my soul!" It was news to Mr. Bootles that anybody at Rookwood believed that Jimmy Silver was innocent. "Flynn, control yourself, sir. Mornington, you will kindly refrain from making unpleasant references to Silver in the presence of his friends. It is, at the least, very bad taste."

"Yow-ow-ow!" groaned Mornington.

"Let there be no more of this!" said Mr. Bootles sternly. "Silver has been punished for his action, and if his friends still have some faith in him, it is not for you to attempt to shake it, Mornington. It is mean and cowardly to triumph over a person who is unfortunate, even when his misfortune is his own fault."

Mornington only groaned. He was not feeling equal to any more triumphing just then, at all events.

Mr. Bootles returned to the door of the end study, and rapped sharply.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly open the door at once!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"Will you open this door, Silver?"

go quietly, you will be removed from the school by force!"

"I shall resist, sir!"

"Bless my soul! Very well, Silver, as you are determined, apparently, to cause as much unpleasantness as possible, I shall call Dr. Chisholm."

Mr. Bootles rustled away, very much disturbed. There was a buzz in the passage. As the Form-master went, a cheer rang out—a cheer for Jimmy Silver—a cheer for the junior who was under sentence of expulsion—and it rang very strangely in the Form-master's ears.

The 5th Chapter.

No Surrender!

Dr. Chisholm looked disturbed and irritated as Mr. Bootles entered his study. The whole affair was very disturbing to the Head, who had the honour of the old school very much at heart. The discovery of a thief in Rookwood was a bitter blow to him. He was only anxious to get the matter finished with as quickly as possible, and forgotten as soon as might be.

"Silver, sir—" began Mr. Bootles, hardly knowing how to acquaint the Head with the latest extraordinary development.

"I understood that you had already taken him to the station, Mr. Bootles!" said the Head, with asperity.

"He refuses to go with me, sir!"

"What?"

study, and struck sharply on the door.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir," came from within.

"Open this door immediately!"

"Am I to remain at Rookwood, sir?"

"What? Certainly not. You are to proceed to Coombe with Mr. Bootles at once, to take the train for your home."

"My home is at Rookwood till the end of the term, sir."

"You are expelled from Rookwood, Silver!" thundered the Head.

"Unjustly, sir!"

"What? What?"

"I can't go home and tell my people I'm expelled, sir! I am not a thief, and if I gave in it would look as if I were one!"

"How dare you bandy words with me, Silver! I command you to open this door this instant!"

No reply.

"You hear me, Silver?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you open this door?"

"No, sir!"

"If you do not obey me immediately, Silver, I shall have the door forced."

"I shall resist, sir."

"Enough!" thundered the Head.

"I am sorry to see, Silver, that you are lost to all sense of shame as well as to all sense of honesty! The door will be forced, and you will be removed!"

And the Head, greatly perturbed and extremely angry, strode away.

There was a low, steady sound continuously from the end study, and the juniors in the passage knew what it was. Jimmy Silver was screwing up the door!

As soon as the Head was gone Lovell ran up the passage and tapped.

"Jimmy!"

"Hallo!"

"You're sticking it out?"

"Yes, rather!"

"There'll be an awful row, Jimmy!"

"I know that, old chap."

"I—I wish you'd let me in, Jimmy. I'll stand by you."

"No fear! You clear off, old chap. I'm all right. I've screwed up the door with a dozen big screws already. I've got no end of nails and screws in my tool-chest!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth came along the passage, with a grave face.

"Clear off, you fags," he called out.

And the passage cleared. The captain of Rookwood knocked at the door.

"You'd better chuck this, Silver!"

he said.

"Sorry, Bulkeley, I can't."

"What's the good of making a fuss, Silver? It's only disgracing the school. You know you've got to go," said Bulkeley.

"I'm not going, if I can help it."

"You young ass, do you think you can stay here after what you've done!" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily.

"I've done nothing."

"If you're going to keep up that yarn—"

"I'm going to keep up the truth, Bulkeley. And it won't finish here, either. My father won't take this quietly," flashed out Jimmy Silver.

"There's still some law left in England, and my father will see that the truth is brought out."

"Your father will know that you are guilty, Silver!"

"He won't believe anything of the kind. You wouldn't either, Bulkeley, if you weren't an ass!"

"What?"

"You ought to know me better. You know Beaumont's a liar and a cad! He planted his rotten banknote on me somehow!"

"Rot!" said Bulkeley.

"It's the truth!"

"Look here, Silver, the Head's sent for Sergeant Kettle to force the door. You will be taken away by force. Won't you go quietly?"

"Never!"

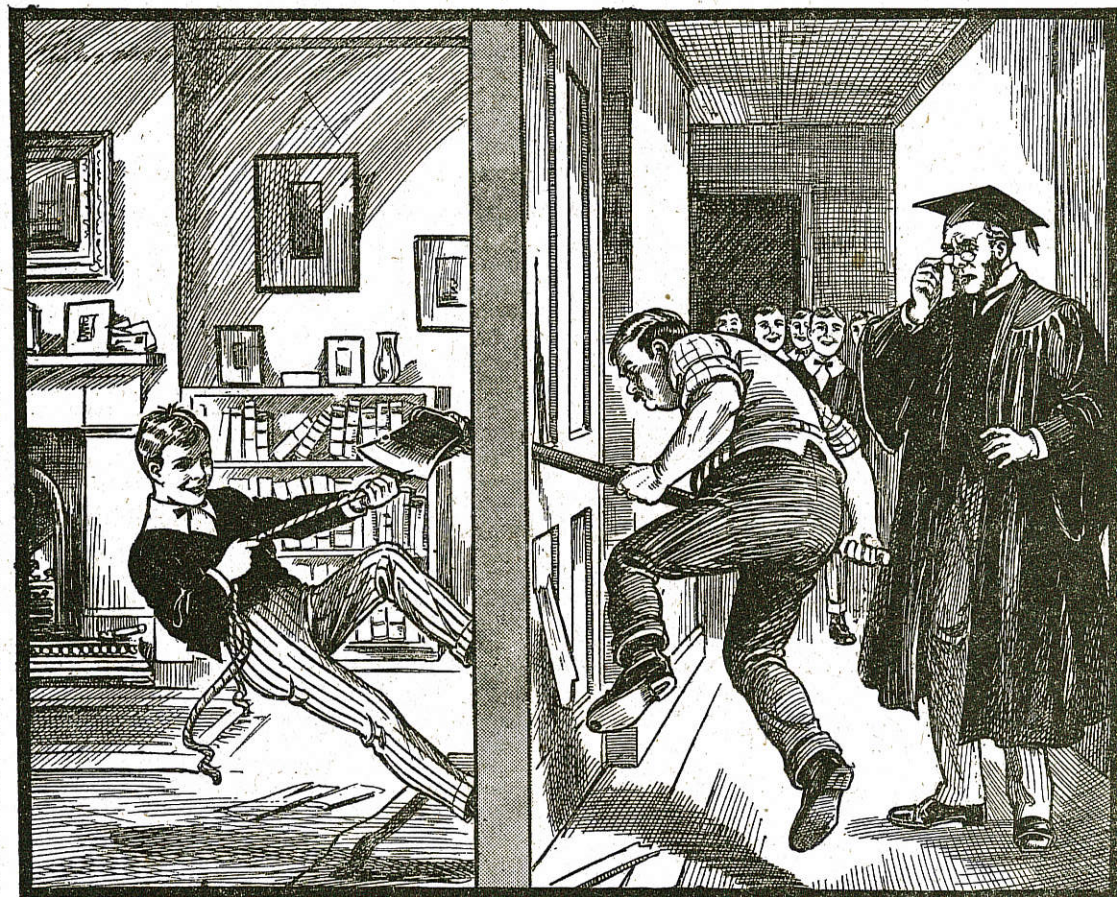
"It will be all the worse for you."

"I'll chance that."

Bulkeley shrugged his shoulders and retired.

The Rookwood captain was feeling uneasy in his mind, too. Was it possible that a guilty fellow could have had the hardihood and effrontery to make a resistance like this against a just sentence? Was it possible that there was some fearful mistake—that the hapless junior was, after all, the victim of a treacherous plot? It was hard to believe—and yet—

Bulkeley went to Beaumont's study. Beaumont was not looking happy. He had been successful; but the new development of the situation troubled him greatly. He had never expected this. Beaumont's desire was for Jimmy Silver to go—and go quickly. The more fuss there was made about the matter, the more chance there



"I've got a cord round your axe, old chap," said Jimmy Silver, "and I'm holding it. Pull as hard as you like!" "Master Silver," exclaimed the old sergeant, "let go that axe!"

Biff! Mornington gave a howl as Patrick O'Donovan Flynn's clenched fist was planted full in his face, and he went flying backwards.

Crash!

"Yooop!" gasped Mornington.

Flynn stood over him with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

"Now say that again, you hound, if you want some more, bedad!" he roared.

Mr. Bootles looked round angrily.

"Flynn! How dare you fight in my presence!"

"Sure, he called Jimmy Silver a thafe, sir!"

"What? What?"

Mornington sat up dazedly.

"So he is a thief!" he yelled.

"Faith, you want some more—eh?"

"Flynn!" shouted Mr. Bootles.

The Irish junior did not heed. He grasped Mornington by the collar, and proceeded to bang his head on the floor.

Bump, bump, bump!

"Go it!" yelled Lovell, in great delight.

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!" screamed Mornington.

Townsend and Topham made a move towards him, and Lovell shoved them back savagely.

"Do you want some?" he asked.

"I'm ready!"

Townsend and Topham did not want any. They backed away in a hurry. Mornington's wild yells rang through the passage.

"Will the Head let me remain at Rookwood, sir?"

"Certainly not! You know that is impossible!"

"Then it is impossible for me to open the door, sir!"

There was a pause. In these extraordinary circumstances Mr. Bootles did not know what to do. Certainly he could not pass through a locked door.

The juniors in the passage waited in breathless expectation; excepting Mornington, who had gone away to bathe his nose.

Mr. Bootles was at a loss.

"Silver," he said, at last, "what do you intend by this—this extraordinary conduct?"

"I intend to remain at Rookwood, sir."

"You are expelled—"

"Unjustly, sir."

"Silver!"

Another pause. Mr. Bootles coughed and blew his nose.

"Silver, unless you open the door at once, I shall have no alternative but to call in the Head."

"Very well, sir."

"This disrespectful conduct will not benefit you in any way, Silver," said Mr. Bootles, his temper rising a little.

"I don't mean to be disrespectful, sir. But I can't leave Rookwood in disgrace when I've done nothing to deserve it."

"That matter is settled, Silver. There is no purpose to be served by making a disgraceful disturbance. You must be aware that if you do not

"He will not come to the station!"

"Really, Mr. Bootles, I am surprised at you! Surely you can deal with a junior boy in your own Form. If he has the astounding audacity to refuse to go, take him by force! If you need assistance, call upon one of the prefects to assist you."

"He has locked himself in his study, sir, and refuses to admit me!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Head.

"It is a very distressing matter, sir," said Mr. Bootles. "He maintains that he is innocent—"

"Absurd!"

"It is very odd, too, that a number of boys in his Form appear to believe in his innocence, in spite of the evidence to the contrary."

The Head made an irritable gesture.

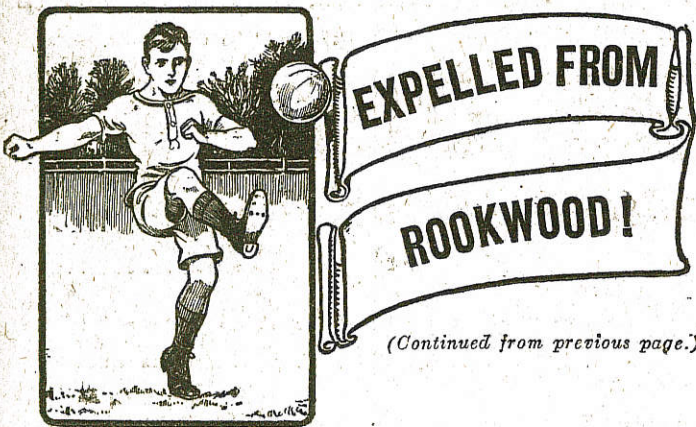
"Their foolishness makes no difference, Mr. Bootles. Silver must go—and at once. We will see whether he refuses to open his door at my command!" rumbled the Head, and he stalked majestically from the study.

Mr. Bootles followed him. He did not doubt that a command from the Head himself would bring the recalcitrant junior to reason.

The Fourth-Formers in the passage made way respectfully for the Head as he came striding upon the scene. The frown on Dr. Chisholm's severe face was thunderous.

"Now look out for fireworks!" murmured Oswald.

Dr. Chisholm reached the end



(Continued from previous page.)

was of something happening to bring the truth to light.

"Has the young cad gone?" asked the prefect, as Bulkeley came in.

"No. He's locked himself in his study, and refuses to come out. Look here, Beaumont—the Rookwood captain looked hard at the pale and troubled prefect—"Silver says that banknote was planted on him—"

Beaumont sneered.

"Have you come to ask me whether that's true?" he said sarcastically.

"Do you think I should plant a banknote on a kid in the Fourth, and call him a thief?"

"I know you always disliked Silver. I've heard all about your being kicked out of his study when you went there to bully one of them," said Bulkeley abruptly. "The juniors made no end of a song about it."

Beaumont shrugged his shoulders. But a chill of fear crept into his heart as he saw the doubt that was creeping into Bulkeley's mind.

"Suppose I were rotten enough to do such a thing, do you think I could?" he sneered.

"Well, no, it doesn't seem possible."

"If it seemed possible, you'd rather believe Jimmy Silver than me," said Beaumont, with a bitter sneer.

"Yes, I would," said Bulkeley at once. "Silver was always as straight as a die. I can't understand how he came to do this thing—unless he's deceived everybody all along the line!"

"Well, he has."

"If he's guilty, it's jolly queer that he's got the nerve to kick up a shindy like this, and no mistake!"

"Oh, he's got plenty of nerve—a hardened young scoundrel!"

"If he's guilty, he's a hardened young scoundrel right enough," agreed Bulkeley. "But he never gave any sign before of being a hardened young scoundrel, or anything like it. I'm not generally a fool, and I always had a high opinion of the kid. I—I wonder if it's possible that some other kid sneaked that note, and shoved it on him? Do you know any kid in the Fourth who's got a bitter grudge against him?"

"I don't know much about the Fourth and their precious feuds!" said Beaumont. "I don't care twopence, either!"

"It's barely possible that it happened that way, though."

"You're making out that there's a kid in the Fourth who's ten times worse than Silver's supposed to be!"

"Well, ye-e-es; I suppose that's hardly fair, either. But it's a puzzling business. Silver's acting as if he's innocent, not as if he's guilty!"

"He wants to give that impression, of course, and he's taken you in to begin with!" said Beaumont scornfully.

"I—I suppose that's possible. It's a jolly queer bizney, anyway!"

Bulkeley quitted the prefect's study with knitted brows. In spite of himself, in spite of the clearest proof,

a doubt was in his mind, and would not be dismissed.

When he was gone, Beaumont paced the study with uneasy steps, his heart throbbing, and beads of perspiration on his brow. There was at least one fellow at Rookwood that day who was more downhearted than Jimmy Silver of the Fourth, and that was Beaumont the prefect.

The 6th Chapter.

Jimmy "Holds the Fort."

Crash!
Crash!

The heavy blows rang and echoed through the Fourth-Form passage.

At the end of the passage a crowd of juniors looked on with breathless interest.

Sergeant Kettle was wielding a heavy axe, and the blows crashed and crashed on the door of the end study.

Mr. Bootles stood looking on. The Head had retired to his study, like Achilles to his tent, with great dignity.

Crash, crash!

The door was of stout oak, but it yielded at last under the terrific blows rained upon it by the sergeant.

The head of the axe went through at last. It disappeared through the wood, and the sergeant dragged on it in vain.

"By gum, the beastly thing's jammed!" he muttered.

"Go it, sergeant!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Hang you!"

"I've got a cord round your axe, old chap, and I'm holding it! Pull as hard as you like!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles.

The sergeant, crimson with exertion, tugged at the handle of the axe; but it was held by the cord lopped over the head within the split door.

"I—I can't get it out!" gasped the sergeant.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Master Silver, let go that axe!"

"Bow-wow!"

"You young raskil—"

"Go and eat coke, old scout!"

The sergeant growled under his breath some expressive words he had learned in the Army.

"Pray proceed, sergeant," said Mr. Bootles mildly.

Sergeant Kettle snorted.

"I'll have to use the 'ammer!" he said.

He took up a heavy coke-hammer, and proceeded to hammer on the door. The lock was already smashed, but the stout screws held the door fast. Under the crashing blows, the already split panels flew in splinters. A huge gash appeared down the middle of the door, and the sergeant could see into the study. His eyes met Jimmy Silver's, and the besieged junior nodded to him.

"Oh, lor!" gasped the sergeant.

"Go it!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"You young rip!" panted the sergeant.

"Silver, let me make one more

appeal to you!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "This disgraceful scene should go no further!"

"I can't give in, sir!"

"In a few minutes more, Silver, the door will be forced!"

"Some hours' work yet, I think, sir, and I'm not going to let the sergeant do it if I can help it. I've got a poker in the fire!"

"What!"

"And I think the sergeant will get fed-up on it, sir, before he gets through!"

"Oh, my heye!" said the sergeant.

"Pray proceed, sergeant!" said Mr. Bootles, frowning.

"Which I'm jolly near wore out, sir!" growled Sergeant Kettle sulkily. "This 'ere ain't work for a school sergeant, that I knows on!"

"Ahem! Some recompense will be made for your trouble, sergeant," said Mr. Bootles.

"Pray proceed as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the last train will be gone, and it will be impossible to remove that wretched boy from the school to-night!"

"I rather think that train will go, sir," said Jimmy Silver; "and I rather think I sha'n't be in it!"

"Silence, Silver!"

"Certainly, sir!"

Crash, crash, crash!

The heavy hammer splintered the upper panels of the door. The opening in the jagged wood grew larger.

The sergeant panted over his job. He was still a hale old fellow, but the hard labour told on him.

As soon as the opening was large enough for his head and shoulders to pass through, the sergeant threw down the hammer.

He put his head through the opening, and his shoulders and arms followed. Lovell, at the end of the passage, gave his chums a hopeless look.

"Poor old Jimmy!" he said. "The game's up now!"

But the game was not up yet. Jimmy Silver had said that he would resist to the finish, and he meant it.

As the burly sergeant strove to drag himself through the opening in the smashed door, Jimmy Silver jerked the poker from the fire.

The end was glowing red.

Sergeant Kettle blinked at him as Jimmy advanced, poker in hand.

"Master Silver! Don't you dare—"

"Get out!" said Jimmy.

"I'm coming in, hang you!" bel-
lowed the sergeant.

"I give you two seconds," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I don't want to hurt you, sergeant, but you are not coming into my study!"

"It's 'Ead's orders, Master Silver!"

"I can't help that. I'm holding the fort, same as you did when you were shut up in 'eadsmith," said Jimmy. "Only following your own example, sergeant. You can't grumble at that!"

The sergeant grinned for a moment.

"Look 'ere, Master Silver, I've got to come in! Don't you touch me with that there poker!"

"Are you going?"

"No, I ain't!" roared the sergeant angrily.

"Then here goes!"

The glowing end of the poker came forward, straight at the sergeant's plump nose.

Human flesh and blood could not stand that. Sergeant Kettle jerked back his head, and gave a wild howl as the back of it knocked on the door. He wriggled out of the opening in a terrific hurry.

"Sergeant—sergeant!" Mr. Bootles was very annoyed. "Why do you not enter the room, sergeant? Pray enter the room at once!"

Sergeant Kettle rubbed the back of

his head, and gave Mr. Bootles a glare like a Hun.

"Which I ain't ramming my nose on to no red-hot poker—not if I knows it!" he roared. "P'raps you'd like to ram your own nose on to a red-hot poker, sir? You're welcome!"

"Bless my soul!" Silver, put down that poker at once!"

"Sorry, sir. Can't be done!"

"You—you wretched boy! I will enter myself!" shouted Mr. Bootles.

"I presume, Silver, that you will not touch your Form-master with that poker?"

"If I'm expelled from Rookwood, sir, you're not my Form-master any longer," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't come in, sir!"

"I shall come in immediately!"

Mr. Bootles put head and shoulders through the gap in the door, his eyes gleaming with anger over his spectacles.

Jimmy made a pass with the poker, and the glowing tip glowed within an inch of the Form-master's nose.

Mr. Bootles felt the glow of heat on his nose. He did not wait to feel the poker itself. He squirmed back in breathless haste.

"Good heavens!" he gasped.

"Silver! You utter young ruffian!"

"Sorry, sir!"

"Sergeant, on second thoughts, perhaps you had better proceed to demolish the door entirely!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

The sergeant grunted.

"You don't like red-hot poker at close quarters, sir—wot?" he remarked, with heavy sarcasm.

"Ahem! Pray proceed, sergeant, and do not pass remarks," said Mr. Bootles hastily.

Sergeant Kettle took up the big hammer again, and the crashing of his blows resounded along the passage.

But at the third or fourth crash there was a sudden fearful yell from the sergeant. The hammer dropped to the floor with a crash, and the sergeant hopped and skipped wildly, roaring.

"Yow-ow-ow! Wow-wow-wow!"

"Bless my soul—"

"Yaroooh! I'm burnt! Yoop!"

Oh, oh! Ah, yah!"

"Sergeant! What is the matter?"

"Grooh! Yoop! I'm burnt!"

howled the sergeant.

"Pooh! Only a tap on the wrist!"

said Jimmy Silver. "Suppose I'd tapped you on the nose, sergeant? I'd have done it, only I don't want to spoil your beauty!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

The sergeant rubbed his wrists wildly. It was not a bad burn, but it was an earnest of what was to come. Now that there was a big gap in the door, Jimmy Silver could reach him with the poker with perfect ease, and it was clear that he meant to defend his stronghold against further attack.

Mr. Bootles seemed at his wits' end. At the end of the passage the juniors were chuckling. Even fellows who had thought the worst of Jimmy Silver were coming round in their opinion now. The fellow who was putting up so extraordinary a fight against expulsion couldn't be guilty—at least, that was how it seemed to the Fourth Form. And excepting Mornington & Co. there was not a junior in the Fourth who did not wish Jimmy Silver luck.

The sergeant licked his scorched wrist, and sucked it, and growled, and made military remarks, fortunately under his breath.

"Pray proceed," said Mr. Bootles at last. "I am sorry you have been hurt, sergeant—extremely sorry; but it is, after all, necessary to overcome that obstinate boy. Pray force the door as quickly as possible."

"I've been burnt, ain't I?" roared the old soldier.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Bootles soothingly. "But pray go on. Really, if there is much more delay, the train will be lost."

The sergeant sulkily picked up his hammer again. Jimmy Silver had put the poker back into the fire.

Crash, crash!

As the blows resounded on the creaking door again, Jimmy jerked the poker from the grate, and rushed to the defence.

The glowing end of the poker came through the gap, shoved right at the sergeant as he hammered. The junior meant business.

But it did not touch Mr. Kettle. The old sergeant jumped back before it could reach him. The crashing ceased.

"Sergeant!" urged Mr. Bootles.

"Look at that there red-hot poker!" bellowed the sergeant furiously. "I ain't going to be burnt half hover—not if I knows it!"

He hurled the hammer to the floor with a final terrific crash. "I'm done! I can't get at that there door while that there young demon have got that there red-hot poker! I'm huff!"

"Sergeant!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

But the sergeant strode away down the passage, growling and grunting. He was fed up, which was not surprising under the circumstances. Breaking into a study to collar a rebellious junior was not really a part of his duties; and it was only too clear that every crash on the door would be followed by a thrust of the red-hot poker. It was not good enough.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in dismay.

The Fourth Form master ambled away to the Head's study again. He could think of nothing but to bring the Head upon the scene once more.

There was a sound of knocking in the study. Jimmy Silver was nailing the table to the door, to block up the openings Sergeant Kettle had made with his axe.

The knocking was still proceeding merrily when the Head came striding up the passage with a black brow.

He glared through the split door at the junior in the study.

"Silver!" he rasped.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy, quite respectfully.

"You young rascal, will you cease this disgraceful scene?" shouted the Head. "Will you give yourself up at once?"

"No, sir."

The Head appeared to choke for a moment. Never had Jimmy Silver seen him so furious. But the junior did not falter. He had everything to lose and nothing to gain by surrender. And he did not even think of surrender. Surrender was not a word in Jimmy Silver's vocabulary.

"Silver, if you persist in this, I shall send for your father!" gasped the Head at last. "This—this utter ruffianism—"

"I am sorry, sir! But I am not a thief, and I cannot be expelled from Rookwood for what I have not done."

"Enough! Since you persist in this ruffianly resistance, I shall request your father to come here and remove you! Enough!"

The Head strode away.

Jimmy Silver let the poker fall into the fender. It was not needed now. The siege of the end study was over, and Jimmy Silver had won.

THE END.

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