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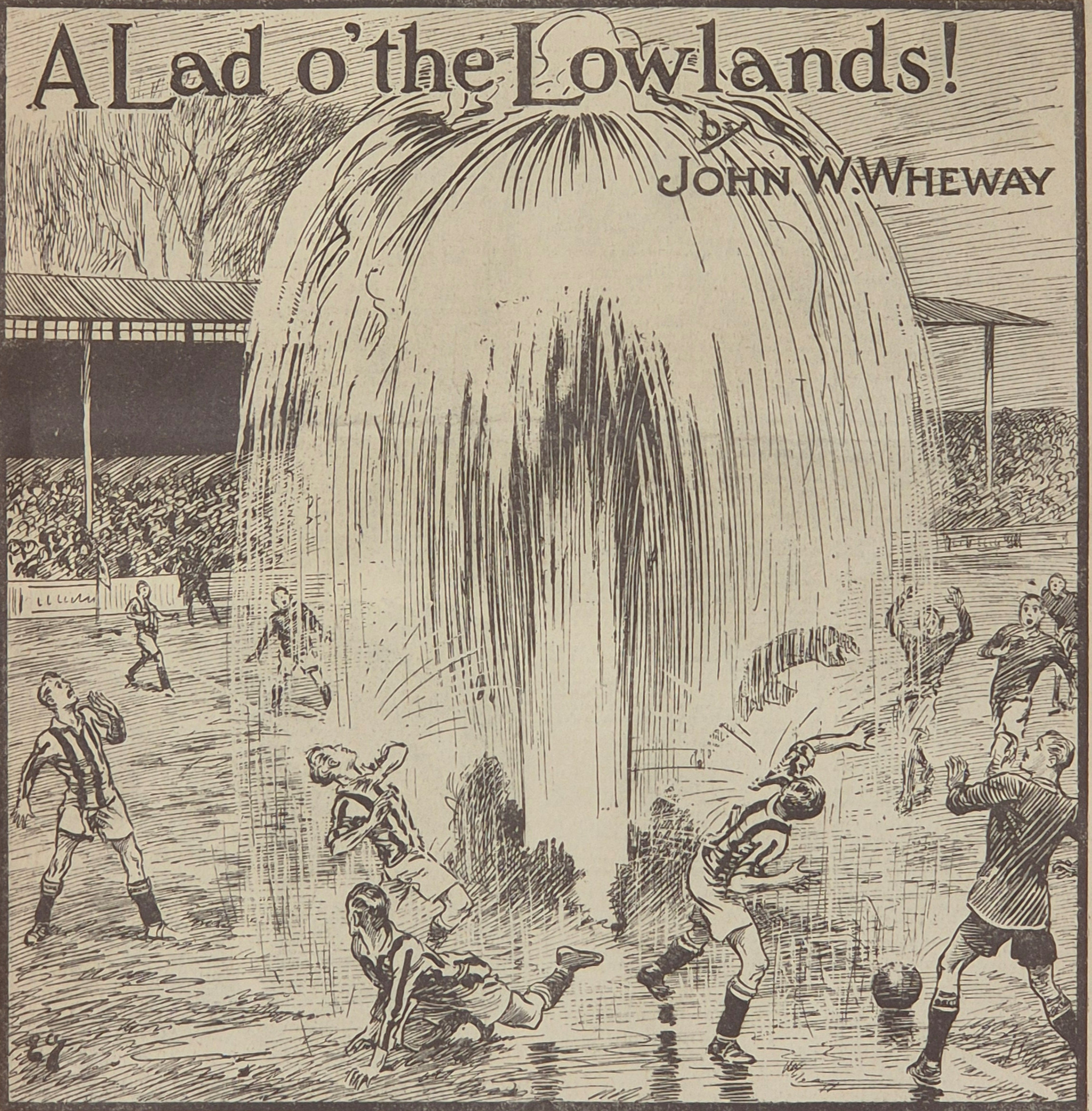
No. 1,282. Vol. XXVI.—New Series.]

NEW PROGRAMME FOR THE NEW YEAR!

[Week Ending January 2nd, 1926.]

A Lad o' the Lowlands!

by
JOHN W. WHEWAY



AN AMAZING INTERRUPTION TO THE QUEEN'S MATCH WITH THE HIBERNIANS!

(A remarkable incident from the powerful 15,000-word story of Scottish League football in this issue.)

AN A1 STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL ON HOLIDAY!



The 1st Chapter.

The Wet Blanket.

"WHO'D have thought it?" Thus Arthur Edward Lovell, in dismal tones.

"Nobody!" said Jimmy Silver.

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, whom I hadn't seen for years—coming here for Christmas along with us. Oh dear!"

"Horrid!" said Jimmy.

"Awful!" agreed Newcome.

"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.

Ambushing Uncle Peter!

By Owen Conquest.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

The Fistical Four's plot against Uncle Peter is not quite a success!

were in a cheery mood, in spite of Uncle Peter in the role of wet blanket at the Christmas gathering at Lovell Lodge.

The December darkness was falling, and the four juniors were gathered round the fire in the dining-room, chatting in the firelight, taking their ease in comfortable armchairs after a tramp on the snowy slopes of the Mendip Hills.

Only Lovell was rather worried.

He could have stood his Uncle Peter on his own, as it were; fearsome as that old gentleman was.

But he had a feeling that Uncle Peter had a harassing effect on his guests, which naturally worried him a little.

In truth, Uncle Peter was not a polished gentleman; he had never studied graceful manners on Chesterfieldian lines.

He did not like boys, and made no secret of the fact.

Disliking boys, it would have been rather judicious of him to spend his Christmas in some home where boys did not exist. Doubtless he had been unaware that Arthur Edward was bringing home friends from Rookwood School for the vacation. He could not have been pleased to find four Fourth-Form fellows in the house, as well as Teddy Lovell of the Third. And the unfortunate meeting in the train, and the trouble that had happened there, had deeply incensed him.

He was angry, and did not conceal the fact. He regarded Arthur Edward as a cheeky young rascal, and made that opinion well known. Mrs. Lovell, with the remembrance of many past kindnesses from the testy old gentleman, bore with him patiently. Mr. Lovell bore with him chiefly for his wife's sake. Arthur Edward bore with him because he could not help himself. But really he was hard to bear with.

"Keep smiling, old fellow!" repeated Jimmy Silver, as he glanced at Lovell's frowning face in the ruddy glow of the firelight. "Don't think that Mr. Wilmington is worrying us. He isn't."

"Not a bit!" said Raby loyally.

"He's entertaining, in his way," said Newcome. "The way he roars out, for instance, something like a lion or a tiger, when he's annoyed—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You see, he had twenty years in India," said Lovell. "I dare say it touched his liver. It does, you know. And he wants to treat everybody as if everybody was a dashed coolie. I've heard him say that he used to kick his punkah wallas. I dare say a punkah walla isn't much class; but it's rotten bad form to kick a chap who can't kick back."

"That's so!" agreed Jimmy.

"Huh!"

The Rookwood juniors jumped. They knew that expressive grunt.

Arthur Edward Lovell stared round the dusky room in horror. His comrades followed his glance, almost equally horrified.

They had come into the dining-room by the French windows from the garden half an hour since, and they had seen no one in the room, and supposed that it was quite untenanted.

That irritated grunt told that they were mistaken.

It proceeded from an ottoman in a recess of the long room; a spot, as Lovell now remembered, where Uncle Peter sometimes took a little rest.

Evidently Uncle Peter had been taking a nap on that ottoman when the juniors came in and sat down round the fire, without perceiving him in the falling dusk.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Newcome.

The juniors stared across the room.

Through the dusk, they were aware of a form rising from a recumbent attitude on the ottoman, to a sitting posture, and of two glinting eyes that glared at them over gold-rimmed glasses.

It was Uncle Peter.

Mr. Wilmington had doubtless been asleep when the juniors entered. The sound of voices had awakened him at last. In horrified silence, Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered how much he had heard of their conversation.

Arthur Edward Lovell almost groaned.

He was already about as deep in disgrace with his terrible uncle as he could be. Both his father and his mother had warned him, not once, but many times, to be exceedingly tactful and respectful and conciliatory in dealing with the testy gentleman.

And now—

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Lovell.

"Huh!"

Mr. Wilmington snorted again, and rose from the ottoman. He came across to the four dismayed juniors, and stood in the firelight, his ruddy face red with anger.

"So that is how my nephew speaks of me to his friends, is it?" demanded Uncle Peter.

"Sorry!" gasped Lovell.

"Huh!"

"I—I didn't know you were listening," gasped Lovell.

It was rather an unfortunate way of putting it.

"What?" roared Uncle Peter.

"I—I mean—"

"I shall not complain to your father of your impertinence, Arthur."

"Oh!"

"I shall not trouble your mother with it."

"I—I—"

"I shall deal with you as an uncle has a right to deal with a disrespectful and impertinent nephew."

Smack!

"Yarpooh!" roared Lovell.

He jumped away.

Uncle Peter had boxed his ears!

"You—you—you—" gasped Lovell. "How dare you?"

"What?"

"If you weren't my uncle I'd jolly well back your shins!" roared Lovell furiously.

"Good gad! Is that how boys speak to their elders in these days?" snorted Uncle Peter.

"Good gad! Boys are not flogged enough! That is the reason. In my young days I was flogged—flogged soundly. It has made me what I am."

"Huh!"

The Rookwood juniors jumped. They knew that expressive grunt.

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Arthur Edward Lovell almost groaned.

"That doesn't say much for it," said Lovell. "What—what?"

Uncle Peter made a stride towards Lovell. The Rookwood junior dodged round the dining-table.

"Let's get out of this, you chaps!" he exclaimed.

And the Fistical Four got out. Uncle Peter was left in solitary possession of the dining-room, and his angry grunt followed the chums of the Rookwood Fourth as they went.

The 2nd Chapter. Tremendous!

"I'VE got it!"

It was the following day, and 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 Frook for skating, and had enjoyed their morning, three of them, at least, having forgotten the existence of Mr. Peter Wilmington.

But every now and then 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.

"Well, what have you got, old chap?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Not a cold, I hope?"

"No, as! About Uncle Peter—"

"Oh, Uncle Peter!" said Jimmy. "Why think of him till we get back to the Lodge?"

"Well, you see, I'm bound to," said Lovell.

"The mater's been at me again; she's no end bothered about Uncle Peter's disliking me so much. It's a bit difficult for us to get on to it, but old Peter was a boy once—"

"I suppose he was," admitted Jimmy. "He doesn't look it; but I suppose he must have been, once upon a time."

"Well, when he 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 know 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."

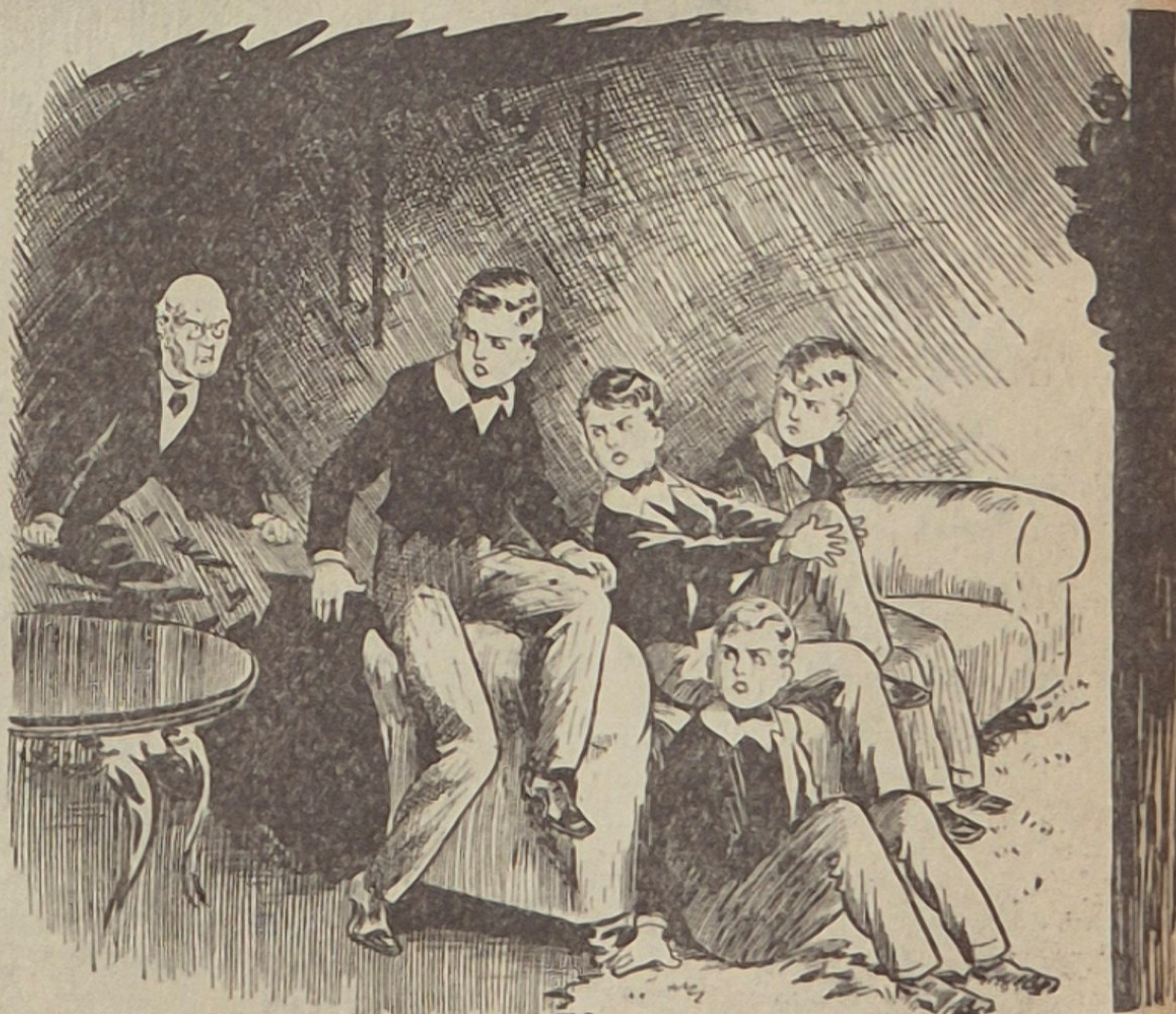
"He put in twenty years in India and came home rich," went on Lovell. "According to what the mater tells me he was a sort of earthly providence all the time. Well, that's jolly decent. The mater's very fond of him, or, of course, she wouldn't be bothered with such a hunk at Christmas time; and the pater 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 backed 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.



UNCLE PETER SHOWS HIMSELF! "Huh!" The Rookwooders jumped. They knew that expressive grunt. Arthur Edward Lovell stared round the dusky room in horror. His comrades followed his glance, almost equally horrified. Through the dusk they were aware of a form rising from a recumbent attitude on the ottoman to a sitting posture, and of two glinting eyes that glared at them over gold-rimmed glasses. It was Uncle Peter! Jimmy Silver & Co. wondered how much he had heard of their conversation.

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"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 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 on 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 dacoits 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?"

"That's the idea," said Lovell. "Three ruffians set on old 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 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 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 just 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! What a prospect!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Well, it's likely enough," said Lovell.

"He spent his leave a good deal at our place, years ago when he came over from India, when I was a kid. I remember him snacking my head when I was quite a nipper. The mater says he's a very affectionate man, though his manner is against him."

"It is—it is!" said Jimmy.

"There's no shadow of doubt on that point. His jolly old manner is awfully against him. I should suspect him of being about as affectionate as a wild tiger fresh from the jungle."

"Well, the mater knows. It quite touched me when she spun the yarn last night," said Lovell.

"She's distressed at her brother not liking me. She wants us to be fond of one another. Well, if I can make the old codger attached to me, it's my duty. Chap ought to please his mother if he can, I suppose."

"Certainly," said Jimmy. "I'm with you

play kind affection for her sons Arthur Edward and Teddy. She would have liked to see Arthur Edward and Teddy very fond of their Uncle Peter. It did not seem likely to come to pass."

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 Humish manners of a relation of his. Lovell felt it keenly.

Teddy Lovell had gone away to stay with

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garding 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.

Really, he seemed to think that he was still at his bungalow on the Hugli, where khidmutgars and punkah wallas trembled at his frown. It was painful to reflect on the life his punkah wallas must have led.

Mr. Lovell was rather subdued, as was natural in the circumstances. He was a ruddy, cheery man, but his brother-in-law had a rather depressing effect on him. Mrs. Lovell was rather troubled. She was deeply attached to her brother, whose good qualities she knew as no one else did. Certainly they did not show on the surface. She would have liked to see him dis-

play kind affection for her sons Arthur Edward and Teddy. She would have liked to see Arthur Edward and Teddy very fond of their Uncle Peter. It did not seem likely to come to pass."

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STANDING UP TO IT! "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. 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.

all the way there! But there are ways of doing these things."

"I've thought of a way. It stands to reason that old Peter must have some gratitude in him, if he's affectionate and so on, as the mater says. Saving him from robbery with violence is simply bound to touch his heart. I'm relying on you chaps to back me up."

"Oh dear!"

"It's as easy as falling off a form," said Lovell.

"You know old Peter goes for long walks alone. He's fond of his own company—goodness knows why! Nobody else is. Well, you ambush him on one of his long walks—easy as anything. I do the rest."

"Suppose something should go wrong, and he should tumble to it?" demanded Raby.

"That's all right if you follow my directions carefully," explained Lovell. "So long as you don't try to manage things for yourselves, nothing will go wrong."

"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 3rd Chapter. Out and Dried!

LUNCH at Lovell Lodge that day was not the brightest of functions. Uncle Peter had not forgotten the episode of the previous day.

He was cross. The dictatorial old gentleman, too much accustomed to having his own way and re-

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 become 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 distant 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 wallas 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 Aesop, 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 insistences 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 fat-headed 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 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, you think it's a fatheaded 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 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 to-day—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-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—the physiological moment—"

"The physiological 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."

(Continued overleaf.)



"It may!" murmured Raby.
"It will, if you fellows don't make a muck of it," said Lovell confidently. "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 4th 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. Loyal 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.

They were not very burly for footpads; although sturdy fellows for their age, they were, of course, youthful for that line of business. Probably the highways and byways had never been haunted by such diminutive footpads before. It was to be hoped that Uncle Peter would not notice it in the darkness and the surprise and the general excitement.

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 Caesar of old, he was to come, to see, to conquer.

With hefty blows he was to knock the footpads right and left—at least, that was his intention. Possibly the three amateur footpads had some other intentions on that detail.

Defeated single-handed by the heroic rescuer, the trio were to flee, to wash their faces, and resume their ordinary attire, and to walk back to the Lodge, where they would hear with surprise and admiration of the attack on Uncle Peter and his heroic rescue by Lovell.

By that time, of course, Uncle Peter's crusty surliness would have melted away under the influence of gratitude, like snow in the sunshine. That, at least, was Lovell's confident expectation. Possibly he was right—if all went well. What chiefly worried the juniors was the deep and uneasy doubt that all mightn't go well.

They had seen Uncle Peter start on his walk to the village, and had noted, without pleasure, the hefty stick he carried under his arm. Once upon a time Mr. Wilmington had been attacked by dacoits in the Indian jungle. Ever since he had been ready for such happenings, so the attack was not likely to surprise him or to strike him as a "spoof" affair. If all went well, he would not suspect a spoof. But would all go well? The more Jimmy Silver & Co. thought about Uncle Peter's big stick the less they liked the idea of it. They agreed that the big stick was to be left away from Uncle Peter at the first rush. That was all very well; but suppose Uncle Peter did not play up, as it were? Suppose the big stick was not left away as per programme—and suppose it landed with terrific smites on the craniums of the Rookwood juniors? It was a big stick, a hefty stick—the

kind of stick that no fellow would willingly catch with the top of his head. Jimmy Silver & Co. disliked the idea of that big stick intensely.

The only solace in the whole affair was that, if all went well, not only would Mr. Wilmington learn to love his dutiful nephew, but in the process of educating him on that point he would be bumped over in the snow and rolled in it. Undoubtedly there was solace in that anticipation. Still, the amateur footpads wished that he had left the big stick at home—or, alternatively, as the lawyers say, that he would forget it and leave it at the vicarage.

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.

Exactly when he was to return from the vicarage they did not know. They had to wait till he turned up. It was not a pleasant vigil. Lovell had spoken of that as a trifle. It was not a trifle to the anxious and worried juniors lurking under the hedge in the bitter winter wind. They felt more and more inclined every moment they waited to bring down Uncle Peter with a terrific bump when they rushed him; but they were feeling almost as keenly disposed to deal with his nephew in the same manner.

The moon was up, glimmering on hills and fields and snowy hedges and lanes. It sailed higher and higher in a steely sky. The light was an advantage in one way—an irascible Anglo-Indian had to be seen to be collared. But it had its disadvantage—the ambushed juniors found that they were growing too visible to the eye as they lurked in the gap in the hedge.

They had to go back through the gap, into the field behind the hedge. It was no use standing there for Uncle Peter to see them a dozen yards off when he came along.

This made the prospective attack a little more difficult. Instead of a sudden rush, carrying all before it, there had to be first a scramble through the gap out into the lane, and then a rush. But it could not be helped.

With snow over their shine to add to their general discomfort the three hapless juniors waited on the inner side of the hedge, spying through the gap to watch for Mr. Wilmington.

"How long?" mumbled Newcome at last.

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

"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-es!" muttered Newcome.

"Oh dear!" murmured Raby.

"Follow your leader!" said Jimmy desperately. "We've got to get 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 him down.

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

(Continued on the next page.)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers upon any subject.



Address your letters to: Editor, BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A NEW START.

A new programme for the New Year! That is the grand slogan of the BOYS' FRIEND. Don't forget it. New days mean new measures. There will be yards of such downright excellence in the BOYS' FRIEND in the days of 1926 as will out-distance all triumphs. Let's have that quite clear. There's jolly good reason for looking for something better in a brand new time. You will get it in the BOYS' FRIEND.

GOOD WISHES FOR 1926.

You never want to take good wishes as read. I offer the best to all my myriad chums all over the world. Starting on a New Year is starting on a brilliant fresh adventure. We are plunging ahead into a land of splendid possibilities. We will make those possibilities bed-rock facts before we have done. Here's good fortune to everybody!

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE.

This week's grand number of the old paper is worthy of the time. It is full of good things. You have the first of our grand new series of fifteen thousand word sports stories, "A Lad o' the Lowlands!" by John W. Whewy, is a football yarn of which anybody can be proud. The gripping instalment of "The Digger 'Tec!" by Hamilton Teed, leads us into novel surroundings, and Alfred Edgar has a good yarn to spin in No. 1 of the series entitled "Garage Jim!"

NEXT MONDAY.

Another bumper programme to look forward to! Arthur S. Hardy writes the second of our long sports completes. In "The Substitute Centre-Forward" you will find all the best traditions of Footer. Jim Gryce, of the

Rovers, has a striking part to play in this boldly original story of the fight in the Third Round of the Cup. Other good things for next week include "Lovell Does the Trick!" a rattling holiday tale of the Rookwood chums, "Taming a Road-Hog!" by Alfred Edgar, and a powerful instalment of Mr. Teed's serial. In the telling account of what happened to the genus road hog, that cheery mechanic, Jim Fryer, is bound to get much applause.

FOOTBALL NEWS AND GOSSIP.

"Goalie" has some very suggestive remarks to make next week about football in general. Surprises have been plentiful as the season has swung on. Take note of the observations of this expert. He is the man to follow. I must draw attention to Nos. 19 and 20 of the "Schoolboys' Own Library," out Friday next. No. 20 has a special appeal to my chums of the "B.F.," in that it contains a long, spiffing yarn of the Fistic Four of Rookwood. Get on to this. By the way, in two weeks' time look out for "H.R.H., Inside-Right!" by Sydney Horler.

ALWAYS ADVANCING.

But these splendid features I have been mentioning are merely a suggestion of the excellent fare which will mark the BOYS' FRIEND in 1926. That tried old favourite, young as he is in years, Dou Darrel, to wit, will be making his welcome appearance. There are new sensations coming at Rookwood. Mr. Owen Conquest has been talking to me of late of certain new ideas he has in view. These promise a series of yarns as humorous and exciting as anything yet. It has always been the business of the old "Green 'Un" to weigh in with fresh notions. It is the paper with the novel point of view, and it is this way of look-

ing at the world which is arresting and certain in its appeal to all. Of course, the starting into a new land like that of 1926 is in itself perhaps as good a treasure hunt as can be imagined. There is all the fascination of getting going again with a new impetus. But apart from all that the BOYS' FRIEND will not fall short of adventure in all parts of the world. Its recent yards of exploration have had a real boom; those to come will do even better. Then as for its school tales, well, Rookwood, in the hands of the talented and versatile Owen Conquest, can speak for itself. Each new Jimmy Silver tale is crisper and brighter and more pungent than its forerunner. Last year we had the pleasure of witnessing the doings of young Noughts and Crosses, otherwise Clarence Cuffy, also the sad delinquencies of Marcus Manders. Look out for further treats.

OUT IT RIGHT OUT.

My counsel to a chum in training is to give up tobacco while in training. He has written me several letters on the subject. I asked Mr. Percy Longhurst to send him the regular training schedule. My correspondent now asks me whether I think just a little smoking would matter. Personally I think it might. It sounds too much like the thin end of the tricky wedge. It is a good rule, when there is anything at stake, to make a sharp divide. Smoking has its uses, if the frame is set, but its possibilities for untold mischief, when the physique is not all it should be, are very numerous indeed. My friend can bet his boots on it that stopping smoking won't do his general health any harm.

JUMPING TO IT.

Another pal tells me that he shrinks from one thing that looms ahead of him in the early days of this jolly old New Year of which we have been talking. He is sixteen, school is over, and he has been found a job, and he is going to work. There you have the whole plaguey business in a nutshell. The new recruit is not over pleased with the idea. Of course, in a sense he is not. The new start means dropping all sorts of pleasant, easy-going habits. A certain sense of freedom has to be jettisoned, but a larger sense of freedom comes in its place. So many fine fellows have not got jobs to go to. It will be all right. Just the first plunge. We have all been through it. In about a week my chum will be smiling

at his reluctance to join up with the vast army of the workers of the world.

OLD COPIES.

Tom Fish, Hazel House, Gunthwaite, nr. Penistone, Yorks, asks how he is to get hold of the back copies of the BOYS' FRIEND. He will find this very difficult indeed. Second-hand booksellers sometimes have the old issues in stock, but there is no certain means of securing papers published a long time back, and which have been out of print for years.

A YOUNG FARMER.

A correspondent in the Midlands is determined to make farming pay, and as a start he has established a small allotment, where he has grown vegetables with some success, while his chickens have paid their way. In a comparatively short time he will come into a small legacy of £80, and he asks me whether he should buy a piece of land up to the full extent of his windfall. I do not think that would be wise. He had far better keep a little reserve of capital behind him as a sort of insurance. I think there is no doubt, from what he says, that he will succeed in his venture, since he has that most valuable quality—enthusiasm, and he attends to detail.

A CAPITAL LETTER.

R. Barrett, of Brightlingsea, writes to me as follows: "Please excuse me writing to you, but I feel it is necessary to let you know how I enjoy the 'B.F.' As you will see, I am a girl, so no doubt you will be surprised to receive this. My brother, who is twenty-two, has taken the 'B.F.' ever since I began to read it, and I am nearly sixteen now. A good while, is it not? I think that the stories are absolutely it. My brother and I discuss the various characters as if they really live, as they seem to. We like especially the yarns about the Bombay Castle and Rookwood School. The Don Darrel series were fine, too. I should like some more of his adventures. Wishing you the best of luck." I am much obliged to my Brightlingsea reader for her kind remarks. But I must tell her that I was not surprised, though gratified, by her remark that she was a girl, for the BOYS' FRIEND appeals to all. It always has done that.

Your Editor.

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 gaped. 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 5th 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.

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

It was no uncommon thing for a fellow who aided Arthur Edward Lovell in a stunt to "come a mucker." But this mucker was absolutely unnerving.

Jimmy made a desperate effort to wrench himself loose from the grasp of Uncle Peter. He might as well have tried to escape from the coils of a boa-constrictor.

Mr. Wilmington's grasp was on his collar as if riveted there. His large hand grasped the collar of Jimmy's coat, his muffler, and his shirt-collar. It was a large handful, and Mr. Wilmington's extensive hand had closed on it and held it as if his fingers were the teeth of a bulldog. There simply was no escape for Jimmy Silver. He was a helpless captive to Uncle Peter's bow and spear.

Lovell stared at the two.

He was so utterly dismayed and confounded that he could do nothing but stare. Uncle Peter did not recognise Jimmy, so far. Indeed, Lovell did not know him; he only knew that one of his comrades had been captured. It really did not matter which. One was enough!

"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.

"Possibly the other rascals might have helped this young villain to escape, if you had not interfered when you did."

"Oh dear!"

"Yes, my boy, I probably owe it entirely to

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 hurried 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



UNMASKED! 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! It was Jimmy Silver!

you that I have been able to capture this rascal."

"Oh crumbs!" "Come along with me, Arthur. Those dastardly ruffians may return. Let us lose no time in getting to the house and telephoning for the police."

"I—I say, uncle—"

"You have raised yourself very much in my estimation, Arthur," said Mr. Wilmington, as he started for the Lodge, fairly dragging the hapless prisoner along by the collar. "I did not think you had so much pluck, by Jove! The way you knocked those ruffians over was splendid. I mean it—splendid! There is more in you than I believed. You are something more than the silly, cheeky, namby-pamby schoolboy I supposed you to be. I had the lowest possible opinion of you, Arthur—indeed, I could not wholly comprehend how my sister's son could be such a worthless young noodle!"

"Oh!"

"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.

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 deepest 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 so 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 juniors 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—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 do not 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—"

"I—I meant it for the best," groaned Lovell. "The matter 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 to-morrow—I will not stay here to be insulted! Huh!"

"Uncle—"

"Mr. Wilmington—"

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

"Uncle—"

"Mr. Wilmington—"

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 widest stretch of imagination, Arthur Edward Lovell's wonderful stunt could not be called a success.

THE END.

("Lovell Does the Trick!" is next Monday's magnificent long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. on holiday. Be sure you read it, chums. Order your copy of the Boys' Friend to-day and avoid disappointment!)

Let your Editor know what you think of the stories in this issue, boys!