

# TOP-DOG!

BY  
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CONQUEST



A Lively Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, and their rivals of Bagshot School.

## THE FIRST CHAPTER

### Uncle James Has His Way

“WHAT shall we do this afternoon, you fellows?”

Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth Form on the Classical side at Rookwood, asked that question of his three chums, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome.

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and dinner was just over. The four chums, for once in a way at a loss for an occupation, had strolled up to the end study where, hands in pockets, they stood gazing out of the window.

In an ordinary way there would have been only one answer to Jimmy Silver's question if, indeed, he had asked it at all. That answer would have been the word “football,” and it would have come from all three of Jimmy Silver's chums simultaneously.

But on this occasion the weather conditions made that reply out of the question.

“It's rotten!” said Raby, somewhat discontentedly, as he gazed out over the quad. “Too hard for footer—not hard enough for skating. Groo!”

Jimmy Silver wagged a reproving forefinger at him.

“Don't grouse now, Raby,” he said, in his best avuncular manner—the manner that had gained for him the half-affectionate, half-derisive title of “Uncle James” throughout junior Rookwood. “There's lots of things to do besides footer and skating, ain't there?”

“What about a run?” said Lovell. “It's a topping day for a run!”

“Too strenuous,” said Jimmy Silver.

“Or a visit to the cinema at Longford?” suggested Newcome.

“Not strenuous enough,” said Uncle James, shaking his head.

His chums glared at him.

“Perhaps you've got a better suggestion, then, Jimmy Silver?” said Newcome, with heavy sarcasm.

“Of course I have,” said Jimmy cheerfully. “We'll strike the happy medium, and go for a walk.”

“Oh, will we!” growled Lovell. “Where to?”

“Coombe village.”



"We're always walking down to Coombe village," growled Lovell. "Not much doing there, that I can see."

"Should like something a bit more exciting this afternoon myself," said Raby.

"Now, a good, long run——" began Lovell.

Jimmy Silver snorted—a loud, and emphatic snort.

"Anything the matter?" inquired Newcome politely.

"I was just wondering who is the leader of this study, that's all," said Jimmy Silver severely. "If I say we're going for a walk to Coombe this afternoon, there's no need for any more jaw that I can see."

"I don't see——" began Raby argumentatively.

"You never do, old man," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "You don't see, for instance, that the Bagshot fellows won't be playing footer this afternoon, either."

"Yes, but——"

"Or that Pankley & Co., of Bagshot, will probably be out for a walk, also."

"Well, what if——"

"And will be going into Coombe, ten to one, where we shall probably meet them."

"H'm!"

"Ah!"

"Um!"

Jimmy Silver's chums began to see the drift of their leader's sapient remarks at last.

"And if we meet them—well, there'll probably be a scrap, won't there?" demanded Jimmy Silver, with the air of one producing an absolutely clinching argument. "Have you dummies got anything more to say now?"

The "dummies" apparently hadn't. The prospect of a scrap with Pankley & Co. of Bagshot—their deadly, if friendly, rivals—was one that appealed strongly to every member of the Fistical Four alike. When Bagshot and Rookwood juniors met there generally was a scrap. And just at present the Rookwooders were feeling rather sore against Pankley & Co. The astute Cecil Pankley had quite recently worked off a little joke on the Rookwooders in the matter of a looted hamper. He had a habit of playing these little jokes, and playing them successfully. In the

last encounter the honours of war had undoubtedly been Pankley's, and the thought was gall to Jimmy Silver & Co. They were determined to get their own back, and an alliance had even been concluded with their rivals, Tommy Dodd & Co., of the Modern side, for the special purpose of "putting the kybosh"—as Jimmy Silver elegantly expressed it—on the common enemy. No plan of action had yet been agreed on, but any chance of meeting Pankley & Co. was to be welcomed.

And it was clear to the Co., now that Uncle James had pointed it out, that if they strolled down to Coombe village that afternoon, now that footer was "off," there would be quite a good chance of such a meeting.

So Jimmy Silver's plan was adopted unanimously—as it generally was—and the Fistical Four set out in blithe spirits.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER

### The Great Idea

JIMMY SILVER was a true prophet.

Directly the Fistical Four turned into the little village street of Coombe, they spied four figures walking along, arm-in-arm, whom they instantly recognised as Pankley, Poole, Putter, and Greene—the famous Pankley & Co., of Bagshot.

Jimmy Silver uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"There the bounders are!"

"Seen us, too!" said Lovell. "Hallo! What's that mean?"

Pankley & Co. waved to them, and bore down upon them with all speed.

"Look out for squalls, you fellows!" said Jimmy Silver, pushing back his cuffs.

Pankley & Co., who were quite near now, grinned when they noticed the action.

"It's all right, my infants," said Pankley, with a friendly wave of the hand. "We aren't going to strafe you this time. It's pax."

"I don't know about that, you cheeky Bagshot bounder!" said Jimmy Silver darkly. "If you think you could strafe us, perhaps you'd like to try it on."

"Pax, I tell you!" grinned Pankley. "Blessed if I ever saw such a quarrelsome set as you Rookwood fellows!"





"Look out for squalls, you fellows!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, pushing back his cuffs as Pankley & Co. came up. "It's all right, my infants!" said Pankley, with a friendly wave of the hand. "We aren't going to strafe you this time. It's pax!" (See Chapter 2.)

"Why, you cheeky villain!" hooted Raby.

"Shush!" said Pankley chidingly. "Just when we've come to hold out the olive branch to you, too!"

"What about that hamper you pinched from us last week?" growled Lovell.

Cecil Pankley raised his eyebrows with an air of pained surprise.

"Oh, come, you aren't going to rake up ancient history like that, surely?" he said. "We're willing to let bygones be bygones, you know."

Jimmy Silver burst into a laugh.

"Well, of all the nerve! You take the bun, Pankley!"

"Quite so, old man, but we're on the peace track this time, really," said Pankley. "We were looking out for you chaps——"

"And we were looking out for you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you listen?" shrieked Pankley.

"I tell you we're giving you an invitation——"

"Oh!"

"You see, it's like this," explained Pankley. "The Head is allowing a conjuring and ventriloquist chap to come and give a show at the school to-night, and we can ask friends in if we like."

"Oh!"

"So we naturally thought of you," said Poole solemnly.

"No gammon!" said Lovell suspiciously.

"Honour bright," said Pankley. "We want you fellows to come, and bring some other Rookwood chaps along. It'll be a good show, I think."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"But—but we're after your scalps, you know!" he exclaimed.

Pankley laughed.

"That's all right. You'll have to postpone your little games till some other time, Jimmy



Silver. You won't be able to try any stunts to-night with all our fellows here. We'll give you a safe conduct while you're our guests, of course."

The Fistical Four thawed at once.

"It's jolly good of you, Pankley," Jimmy said cordially. "We're on, of course—eh, you fellows?"

"Rather!" said the Co. promptly.

"Good!" said Pankley, with satisfaction. "Professor Walla-Walla is very good, I believe."

"Professor whatter?"

"Professor Walla-Walla—that's the conjurer's name. He's a Hindoo, or something, I believe. He's a bit of a hypnotist as well as a conjurer and ventriloquist."

"My hat!"

"These Indian chaps are jolly clever, you know," said Putter. "We'll make him hypnotise someone this evening, if poss."

"Yes, rather!"

"What-ho!"

"Well, so-long, you chaps!" said Pankley. "See you up at the school this evening. Seven o'clock sharp!"

"Right-ho! And thanks very much," said Jimmy Silver & Co. cordially.

And Pankley & Co., still arm-in-arm, marched off.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another.

"Well, here's a go," said Jimmy. "We come down to Coombe to strafe Pankley & Co. —"

"And accept their invitation to an entertainment instead," said Newcome. "Who'd have thought it!"

"Well, it's decent of Pankley to ask us, though he is a cheeky bounder," said Jimmy Silver. "We must take some of the other fellows along—Conroy and Mornington, and Tommy Dodd & Co."

"Yes, rather!"

"I think a visit to the bun-shop is the next item on the programme," said Jimmy. "Hallo! Wherefore that worried brow, Raby?"

Raby pushed his cap over his nose and scratched his head, while his chums watched him intently.

"I was just thinking——"

"What with, old man?" inquired Jimmy anxiously.

"You ass! I was thinking that it would be fun if we could get hold of this professor chappie before the show—"

"Professor Walla-Walla?"

"Yes; and stuff him up with a few things about Bagshot, you know. These chaps who give shows at schools always try to find out something about them first, to bring in on the stage."

Jimmy Silver slapped Raby on the back enthusiastically.

"Jolly good, old man!"

"Ow! You ass!"

"Jolly good!" repeated Jimmy, with a chuckle. "You don't often think of anything, Raby."

"What do you mean, you dummy?"

"But when you do, it's a corker," said Jimmy. "If we can get at the professor beforehand, we'll give him some local colour."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Something that will make Bagshot sit up. My hat! I believe I see a big joke in this!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes sparkled, and his chums looked at him eagerly. When Jimmy Silver looked like that, something usually came of it.

"If we could jape the whole crowd of them on their own ground, it would be topping," he said eagerly. "I believe I see a way to do it, too!"

"My hat!"

"What is it, Jimmy?"

"Out with it!"

Jimmy Silver smiled and shook his head.

"No; mum's the word for the present. Let's go and look for the professor first. If he's down here yet, he's sure to be putting up at the Chequer's Inn. We'll buzz along there and ask the boots if he's got a professor on the hotel register."

"Ho, ho! There's never more than one guest there at a time!" grinned Newcome.

"Then here's for Professor Walla-Walla!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the chums hurried off in the direction of the Chequers Inn, the old hostelry in the village High Street.

Their luck was in.



The grinning boots at the Chequers informed them that the professor was in the commercial-room with his assistant.

"His assistant?" said Jimmy Silver. "Anyone else there?"

"No, sir. Only 'im and 'is assistant. 'E's the subjeck!"

"The—the what, Dobson?" said Jimmy Silver, puzzled.

"'Is assistant's 'is subjeck," explained Dobson confidentially. "The professor's a 'ypner-tist, and he 'ypnertises 'is assistant."

"Oh, and what sort of a chap is the assistant?" asked Jimmy Silver, smiling.

"'E's just a boy, sir—a nigger boy about your size, sir."

"Good!" said Jimmy Silver coolly, slipping half-a-crown into Dobson's grubby hand. "Do you think I could have a chat with the professor and his assistant for a few minutes, Dobson?"

"'Old on 'arf a minute, sir, and I'll see," said the boots, grinning.

His chums looked at Jimmy Silver inquiringly.

"What idea have you got in your napper now?" whispered Newcome.

Jimmy Silver smiled serenely.

"We can't go into the pub, anyway," said the practical Raby. "It's out of bounds."

"We oughtn't to, of course," said Jimmy. "But if no one's looking—and just to interview a respectable professor in the commercial-room—I think I might risk it."

"We're coming, too, then!" said the Co. with one voice.

"You asses! We should get spotted for a certainly if we all went in!" said Jimmy.

"You must stand outside the bun-shop next door, and keep cave for me. I shan't be five minutes."

"Oh, all right!"

"The professor will see you, sir!" It was Dobson back again.

"So long, you chaps!"

### THE THIRD CHAPTER

#### Interviewing the Professor

JIMMY SILVER slipped into the commercial-room where he found a dignified-looking



"I've got a wheeze, professor!" said Jimmy Silver eagerly. "I mean, a jape—a little plan!" The professor leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily. "I thought as much—bust me if I didn't!" was his amazing exclamation. (See Chapter 3.)

Hindu gentleman, with a round, pleasant face, surmounted by a white turban.

"The sahib would speak with Professor Walla-Walla?" queried the dusky gentleman with a dignified bow.

Jimmy Silver bowed back, a little nervously.

"If you could spare me a few minutes, sir."

"But certainly." The professor spoke perfect English. "Will the young sahib be seated?"

With a wave of his hand he indicated a



chair, and Jimmy Silver sat down, his cap on his knees.

"I hear you are giving a show at Bagshot School this evening, professor."

"That is correct."

"I—I came to see if I could be of any assistance, in the way of giving you some tips about the school—sort of local colour, you know," said Jimmy Silver ingenuously. "You—you see, I know Bagshot pretty well."

"Are you, then, from Bagshot, young sir?"

"No jolly fear! I—I mean, not exactly," said Jimmy Silver hastily. "I'm from Rookwood School—near by, you know. But I know a lot of the Bagshot chaps very well."

"So! That is very interesting. You could doubtless give me some very useful information, and help me with my show?"

"Yes, I think so, sir."

The Hindu gentleman eyed the junior keenly for a moment.

Then he leaned forward with a smile, and tapped Jimmy Silver gently on the knee.

"And may I ask why the young sahib is anxious to be so helpful to the poor professor?" he asked softly.

Jimmy silver started.

The professor was evidently a cautious gentleman. Perhaps he had been "had" before. It was evident to the keen-witted junior that he would not "swallow whole," as it were, any information he chose to give him about Bagshot.

There was only one thing to do, and that was to take the professor into his confidence, and take the chance of his being a "sport."

And that was what Jimmy did.

"I thought, as a matter of fact, professor, that it would be a good opportunity to play off a joke on the Bagshot fellows," he said, with a disarming smile.

The professor nodded and smiled.

"Ha! Rivals—eh?" he chuckled. "It would be a good joke, no doubt; but I cannot afford to have my performance spoiled for a schoolboy joke, young gentleman."

"Certainly not, sir," said Jimmy eagerly. "But I have got a wheeze, professor—that is, a jape—I mean, a little plan."

The professor leaned back in his chair and laughed heartily.

"I thought as much," he exclaimed. "Bust me if I didn't see it in your eye when you came in! Fire ahead, my son, and let's hear this precious plan of yours!"

Jimmy Silver stared with all his eyes on hearing the dusky gentleman make use of such extremely colloquial English expressions. It struck him for the first time that Professor Walla-Walla might not be such a purely Eastern product as he appeared to be at first sight. But, in any case, he seemed to be a very pleasant fellow, with a keen sense of humour.

So Jimmy Silver "fired ahead."

For the next ten minutes, Dobson, lurking outside the door of the commercial-room, heard a rapid buzz of conversation, punctuated by many bursts of laughter.

At last there was the scrape of a chair on the floor, and Jimmy Silver opened the door.

"I'll be here at five-thirty sharp, then, professor," he said.

And there was a crackling sound as of a Treasury-note being transferred from one owner to another.

"Thank you, Master Silver. Yes, that will be in plenty of time."

"So-long, then, for the present, professor!"

"So-long, young sahib!"

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"All serene, Dobby?"

"Yessir. Coast's quite clear."

"Good egg!"

Jimmy Silver slipped out of the Chequers almost into the arms of his chums lurking outside.

"All right?" queried Newcome, glancing at Jimmy's smiling face.

"O.K., my infants!"

"Tell us," demanded Raby and Lovell in a breath.

"All in good time. Let's get back to Rookwood, and I'll tell you on the way."

"Right-ho!"

And the four swung off down the village street, with their heads very close together, like a set of conspirators—as, indeed, they were.



## THE FOURTH CHAPTER

### Exit Pankley & Co.

THERE was a buzz of voices and an air of suppressed excitement in the big school-room at Bagshot. It was close on seven o'clock, and all the school, including the masters and a sprinkling of guests, were assembled to witness the performance of the famous Professor Walla-Walla.

Conspicuous in the front row were a number of Rookwood juniors, with their hosts of the Bagshot Fourth Form—Lovell and Raby and Newcome, and Controy and Grace and Rawson, and half a dozen others.

"Why isn't Silver here?" Pankley was saying to Lovell. "He said he was coming, didn't he?"

"So he is," replied Lovell. "You'll see him presently, old scout. He had to go down to Coombe about five o'clock, but he'll turn up here all right. I know he wouldn't miss the show at any price."

"Rather not!" cried Newcome solemnly. "He's been looking forward to it all day. So have all of us."

"Good!" said Putter, of Bagshot, with satisfaction. "It ought to be a pretty good show, I think. I hear the professor always gives his audiences a surprise or two before his show's over."

The members of the Rookwood Co. manfully suppressed their chuckles at this innocent remark of Putter's. In view of certain knowledge that they possessed it struck them as being distinctly funny. They confidently expected that Professor Walla-Walla's audience would experience a surprise or two before the evening was out.

There was a sudden hush as the professor noiselessly appeared on the stage, followed by his coffee-coloured boy assistant, who rejoiced in the name of Lal Ram.

The professor was dressed in a magnificent purple garment, somewhat resembling a dressing-gown, but richly embroidered in a curious Oriental design. He wore a turban, as did his assistant, who was a slim figure, dressed in loose white garments, which formed a startling contrast to his dusky skin.

The stage was furnished with Oriental screens and rugs, carefully arranged in ad-

vance, no doubt, by the astute professor. And in that setting the two dusky, curiously garbed figures perfectly presented the illusion of a corner of the mystic East, transported to the precincts of Bagshot School.

Without a moment's waste of time the professor plunged into a series of the most amazing conjuring tricks. A table on which were half a dozen tumblers full of water, was covered for a few seconds with a silken cloth. A wave of the professor's wand, and the cloth was whisked away, to reveal each tumbler filled with liquid of a different hue. The professor then proceeded to juggle first with two, then with all six of the tumblers, without spilling a drop of the liquid, which he then calmly poured off into a basin. The wonderful Indian plant trick, in which the professor, from a seed placed on the floor, produced, by easy stages, a plant a couple of feet high by simply covering it half a dozen times with a rush basket, was performed under the eyes of the staring audience. Articles of all sorts disappeared, to reappear instantly in another place, in bewildering succession.

The boy-assistant, Lal Ram, was kept busy removing out of the way the articles which the professor continually produced from nowhere. The professor worked with lightning rapidity. Once, when Lal was not quick enough for him, he became angry, and ordered the boy into a large rush basket. Lal stepped in and coiled himself up in it meekly enough. The professor slammed down the lid, seized a sword, and, with a grim expression, jabbed again and again through the rush basket, from which, to the horror of the audience, heart-rending groans and cries were heard. These finally died away, and the professor, his vengeance satisfied, opened the basket amidst a breathless silence. It was empty! And before Bagshot had recovered from this shock, Lal stepped on to the stage from the wings without the flicker of a smile on his impassive features.

"Well, I'm blessed!" gasped Poole. "I've heard of that trick before, but I'm blessed if I ever saw anything like it! It's marvellous!"

"I thought Jim—ahem!—young Lal was done for that time, I must say!" said Lovell, who



had been following this apparently gruesome drama with a fascinating gaze.

"He's a scorcher!" said Pankley enthusiastically. "Look at him now!"

The professor was nonchalantly producing fully-inflated toy balloons from an empty lemonade bottle and sending them floating over the heads of the audience, who scrambled wildly for them.

When the last toy balloon had been secured and the disturbance had somewhat subsided, the professor advanced to the footlights and held up his hand.

"Will one of the young sahibs from the front row kindly oblige by stepping up on to the stage? I require a member of the audience to assist me a few minutes."

The professor's eye rested upon Putter as he spoke, and Pankley and Poole nudged their chum, one on each side.

"Go it, Putty!"

"On the ball!"

Putter, with a sheepish grin, rose from his seat and scrambled up on the stage, amidst loud applause from the Bagshot Fourth.

"Salaam, sahib!" exclaimed Professor Walla-Walla, diving his hand into Putter's pocket the instant he set foot on the stage, and producing a live buck rabbit therefrom. "Allow me to relieve your pockets from the miscellaneous livestock you appear to carry round with you!"

In bewildering succession, amidst roars of laughter from the audience, the professor produced two guinea-pigs, a couple of pigeons, a white rat, and a whole colony of mice from various pockets in Putter's clothes; while, as a climax, which fairly brought down the house, he extricated a young alligator about four feet long from under the dismayed youth's jacket.

"Putty's a walking circus! Blessed if I knew he was so fond of pets as all that!" chuckled Pankley.

"You do look a silly ass, Putty!" yelled Poole's voice. "Why don't you get your hair cut?"

There was a roar of laughter at this sally, and every eye was turned upon Poole, who sat bolt upright in his chair, with a somewhat surprised grin on his face.

Putter turned crimson, and glared down at his chum from behind the footlights.

"Stow it, Poole, you ass!" he growled.

"But you do look an idiot, you know, old man!" came Poole's voice again.

Pankley and Greene turned their gaze upon Poole with looks of blank astonishment, while a fresh yell of laughter came from the now thoroughly interested Bagshot fellows.

"Chuck it, Poole, you dummy!" muttered Pankley.

"Don't rag your own pal in front of the whole school!" said Greene chidingly.

Poole had a look of bewilderment on his face.

"I—I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bagshot.

Putter on the stage almost choked. He came to the edge of the platform with a furious expression on his crimson countenance, and glanced down at Poole. The professor, with a look of bewilderment on his dusky face, stood beside him.

"Shut up, Poole," hooted Putter furiously. "I'm getting fed up with this, you——"

"Keep your wool on, old dear! You're making a fearful exhibition of yourself, you know!"

Pankley and Greene sitting next to Poole, had no doubt at all that the voice came from their chum. And they gasped at him in blank astonishment. The audience, including the Rookwood contingent, gave a yell of delight. Putter and Poole were known to be close friends, and members of the famous Pankley & Co., the leaders of the Fourth Form at Bagshot. And this little family breeze, as it were, taking place in public, struck them as funny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

Putter simply danced with rage.

"By Jove, I—I'll hammer you, Poole, if you say another word!" he foamed.

"You look like a stuffed dummy, old man!"

"M-my hat! I—I'll——"

"Does your mother know you're out?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a roar of wrath, Putter, now thoroughly enraged, leaped off the platform and made a bull-like rush at his old friend Poole.

Poole, who seemed to be in a dazed state, made no resistance.



In a moment the grasp of his furious chum was upon him, and he was yanked out of his chair, while Pankley and Greene sprang up in dismay.

The Bagshot fellows rose in their seats, and gave a delighted cheer. Everyone was roaring with laughter, and shouts of encouragement and chaff were hurled at the combatants from all sides.

"Go it, Putty!"

"On the ball!"

"Have it out on the stage, won't you?"

"Dot him one, Pooley!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putter had got Poole's head in chancery, and was pommelling away as if for a wager. That treatment seemed to wake Poole up as if from a trance. He struggled furiously, and lashed out in all directions.

Pankley gave a roar as he caught one from his wildly threshing fists on his ear.

"Ow! Yow! You dummies!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the crowd.

"Stoppit, can't you!" roared Greene, who had just caught a lashing fist on the chin. "Stoppit, you idiots!"

Pankley and Greene rushed to separate their chums, who were trampling furiously about, and overturning chairs on all sides, in a wild and whirling combat.

The whole room was in an uproar. The junior members of the audience and many of the senior ones, and even the masters and visitors, were almost in hysterics. The incident was so unexpected, and the effect of it so obviously unrehearsed, so funny, that they could not help it.

One or two seniors, laughing, made a rush through the crowd towards the centre of the

disturbance. Putter and Poole and Pankley and Greene now appeared to be locked in a tight embrace, swaying furiously about amongst the overturned chairs of the front rows.

There was a chorus of shouts and cat-calls as the seniors forced their way over to the struggling group.



With a roar of wrath Putter, thoroughly enraged, leaped off the platform and made a bull-like rush at his old friend Poole. In a moment the two were going it, hammer and tongs.

(See Chapter 4.)

"Hurrah!"

"Let 'em have it out!"

"Put 'em on the stage!"

"This is better than the conjuring!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The seniors reached Pankley & Co. at last and laid none too gentle hands upon them.



The indignant Putter was forcibly separated from the gasping Poole; Pankley and Greene were grasped with the others, and, amidst wild cheers from the audience, the whole four were bundled willy-nilly out of Big Hall through a convenient side-door into the passage.

Lovell turned to Newcome, wiping tears of merriment from his eyes.

"Worked like a charm!" he whispered. "The professor's ventriloquism, of course! Jimmy put him up to it!"

"Never saw anything so priceless in my life!" choked Newcome.

"Poor old Pankley & Co.!" gasped Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## THE FIFTH CHAPTER

### Lal Ram Speaks

THE excitement occasioned by this incident had barely subsided when a fresh commotion arose, this time from a corner of the big school-room where the mighty men of the Bagshot Sixth Form were congregated.

A terrific hubbub of snarling and snapping and yapping arose, as of a full-sized dog-fight in progress.

Grrr! Grrr! Bow-wow! Yap, yap!

Fellows craned their necks on all sides to see where the fight was, and the group of seniors broke up hastily as the snarling and yapping went on apparently under their very feet.

There was a roar of voices from all sides.

"Where are they?"

"Separate them!"

"Kick them out!"

Snarl, snarl! Yap, yap, yap!

Visitors, masters, and boys sprang to their feet and looked under their chairs and all around. No one actually saw the dogs, but several of the more excitable thought they did.

"There they are!"

"Where? Where?"

"Catch hold of 'em—quick!"

Yap, yap, yap!

The whole hall was in an uproar for the second time on that eventful night. The barking and snarling seemed to come from different parts of the room every minute. The

masters shouted instructions, and several ladies among the visitors took refuge from the supposed fray by standing upon the chairs.

"Open the door!" roared someone. "Kick 'em out into the passage, after Pankley & Co.!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Several doors leading into the passage were flung open by willing hands, and immediately the snarling and snapping became fainter, and finally died away along the passage.

The doors were shut again and the audience began to settle down in their seats, in a heated and excited condition.

Comments on the mysterious dog-fight were heard on all sides.

"The beggars have sheered off at last!"

"Wonder how the brutes got in?"

"Sounded like the Head's dog, one of 'em."

"Thank goodness they've cleared off! Now we can get on with the show."

The Rookwood contingent resumed their seats with the others, almost hysterical with laughter. They were all in the secret, and knew that the dog-fight, the product entirely of Professor Walla-Walla's marvellous gift of ventriloquism, was all part of Jimmy Silver's plan for livening up the Bagshot entertainment.

As Newcome whispered to Raby, if they had not expected it they would have been as completely deceived as the rest of the audience, so realistic was the wily professor's imitation of a dog-fight.

As the attention of the audience was once more turned to the professor and his assistant on the stage, a further slight diversion was caused by the return of the luckless Pankley & Co., who slipped into their seats from the side-door as unobtrusively as possible.

They looked a very sheepish quartette, and they were received with universal chuckles and some cheering.

Pankley had a black eye, and Greene a very much swollen nose, while Putter, with a crimson countenance, kept dabbing viciously with his handkerchief at a cut on his lip.

The unfortunate Poole had come off the worst of the four. Putter had not spared him, while he had his head in chancery, and Poole



boasted a black eye, a swollen nose, and a cut lip as well!

Many were the chuckles and comments as they slipped quietly into their seats.

"Faith, an' here come the Kilkenny cats!" remarked a very Irish voice from somewhere in the back row.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Order! Order!"

On the stage the professor was waiting for his audience to settle down once more. His assistant was sitting in a chair at the back of the stage, with his head thrown back, motionless.

The professor held up his hand.

"If the sahibs will kindly give me their close attention for a time," he said, "I will endeavour to show them an amazing phenomenon of the East, which has never before been presented in this way upon the British stage!"

"Hear, hear!"

"By the power of my will, aided by his own voluntary effort, I will proceed to put my young assistant, Lal Ram, into a species of trance. His mind will then be free to absorb the thoughts of the audience, with the result that he will be able to answer questions put to him concerning past events connected with the great school here"—here the professor

made a profound salaam, amidst loud cheers—

"of which we can have no possible knowledge. Under favourable conditions, my young pupil can venture upon prophecies as to the future. When ever he has done this, sahibs, I may say that his prophecies have turned out to be correct in every detail."

The professor salaamed again, and a dead silence fell upon the deeply interested audience.

Bagshot was profoundly thrilled, and

followed every movement of the dusky professor with intense concentration.

Only the Rookwood contingent, for some reason, seemed to be struggling to suppress grins.

Amidst a breathless hush the professor marched solemnly over to where Lal Ram was sitting motionless in the chair. He placed one fat hand upon the boy's dusky forehead, and passed the other up and down in front of his face, muttering

strange incantations, whilst he gazed deeply into the boy's eyes.

After a couple of minutes of this the professor appeared satisfied. He removed his hand from Lal Ram's forehead, and paced back to the footlights.

"Now, will any sahib kindly put a question to me about any event, connected with the school in some way, that has happened fairly recently?" said the pro-



Amidst a breathless hush, the professor made mysterious passes before the dusky features of his assistant, muttering strange incantations as he gazed deeply into the boy's eyes. (See this page.)



fessor. "We will then see if my pupil can answer it."

There was a moment's silence.

Lovell leaned over towards Pankley.

"Ask him about our last footer-match!" he whispered. "What the score was, and anything else about it."

"Good!" said Pankley. "I will!"

And he put the question to the professor, amidst a buzz of approval from the audience. The match had been played in Bagshot, and practically every boy in the big school-room had witnessed it. It was generally considered, therefore, to be a good test for the Hindu seer.

The professor spoke to Lal Ram in a language that sounded like the rapid drawing of corks.

There was no reply for a moment, then Lal began to jerk out rapid sentences in a low voice.

"Ullamalloo ram jat kai wallah!" he exclaimed—at least that is what it sounded like to the thrilled audience. "Don, sahib, gunga lal din!"

The professor waved his hands in some excitement.

"Lal Ram speaks!" he exclaimed. And he hastily began to interpret the profound remark of his young assistant.

"Lal sees great playing-ground in front of noble building, sticks at one end, sticks at the other end, like so!"

And the professor indicated the construction of the ordinary goalposts with his expressive hands.

There was a murmur of applause from the Bagshot fellows. They evidently approved of the description of their football-ground, with Bagshot School in the background.

"When from a little house at one end of the ground came running one, two, six, eleven little boys, white-garbed for the fray!"

The professor waved his hands, and smiled an expansive smile, evidently well pleased with his descriptive powers in translating Lal's cork-popping inutterings into the English language.

The expressions on the faces of the Bagshot audience were somewhat puzzled. Some of the fellows grinned a little. The Bagshot team

had been the first to leave the pavilion, so the Hindu's description of Pankley and his men as "little boys" was rather amusing to all those who were not in the team.

"Then follow a team of young stalwarts clothed in many colours!" continued the professor. He was evidently now speaking of the Rookwood team, who had played in colours, while Bagshot had sported white. "The fray is joined, the ball flies from foot to foot; but it is soon seen that the superiority rests all with one side.

Dead silence from the audience!

"The little white players are overmatched by the sturdier and more skilful team of many colours! Once, twice, thrice the ball is shot between the sticks! Then there is a pause, and the players cease for a time from striving!"

The professor had evidently reached half-time. The expressions on the faces of the Bagshot audience by this time were simply extraordinary. The professor was accurate in his description of the match, in so far as the score was concerned, which was three to nil in favour of Rookwood at half-time. But with the rest of his description Bagshot by no means agreed.

There were shouts and hoots from the juniors in the audience.

"Rats!"

"Rot!"

"He's talking rot."

"That black kid's dotty!"

The professor stepped forward, and waved his hands wildly, with an anxious expression on his fat, dusky face.

"Sahibs, sahibs, if you make noise it waken Lal! He does not know what he say!"

The noisy juniors quietened down, and there were voices raised from the seniors' seats.

"Order there!"

"Give the professor fair play!"

"Let the kid go on!"

With an anxious look, the professor bent over the motionless Lal. The boy began to talk again in his queer language, and the Hindu conjurer held up his hand for silence.

"After the pause the game is resumed, with the same result. The white players are feeble and unskilled, and two times more do they



of the coloured garments roll the ball between the sticks before the game ends itself. Does Lal speak truly, sahibs?" finished the professor anxiously.

There was a roar of rage from the Bagshot Fourth Form, and simultaneously a roar of uncontrollable laughter from the rest of the audience. It suddenly seemed to strike even the Bagshot fellows, all except those in the Fourth Form, as being an excruciatingly funny description of Pankley's team of Fourth-formers' vain struggle against Jimmy Silver's Rookwood team. Never had Pankley & Co. been so thoroughly and so publicly "roasted" as by this pair of seemingly quite innocent Hindus. In their apparently quite unsuspecting way they had done less than justice to

the actual display that Pankley & Co. had given on the field, and had shown them up in front of the whole school—and some of the Rookwood fellows, too—as a pack of helpless duffers.

Pankley & Co. simply writhed, while the audience yelled with laughter.

"You fat black villain!" roared Pankley, shaking his fist up at the dismayed-looking Professor Walla-Walla. "You spoofer!"

The professor spread out his hands.

"But, sahib——"

"Your blessed Lal is talking piffle!" hooted Putter. "Piffle, do you hear?"

"Rats!" roared a dozen voices. "He was quite right! Go ahead, professor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"How do you like it, Pankley?"

"You can't play footer, old man!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pankley & Co., and the rest of the Bagshot Fourth Form team turned red and furious faces to the yelling crowd. The redder and the more furious they got the more the crowd yelled!

"The—the howling dummies!" breathed Pankley wrathfully. "If I get hold of that black heathen of a Lal, I—I'll spifficate him!"

"The young rotter must be spoofing us!" gasped Poole. "I don't believe he was in a trance at all!"

"This is the limit, and no mistake!" snorted Greene.



"You fat black villain!" roared Pankley, shaking his fist angrily at the dismayed-looking professor. "You spoofer!" (See this page.)



"Made absolute fools of us, don't you know," said Putter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Rookwood fellows, of course, were almost in hysterics. It seemed funny enough to the Bagshot fellows to see their own Fourth-form footer team "roasted" in this manner. To the Rookwood fellows, who were in the know, the way Jimmy Silver's little plot was working out was excruciatingly humorous.

"Blessed if I can stand much more of this!" gasped Lovell, who was clinging helplessly to Newcome, and almost weeping with mirth. "I—I shall simply bust!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled the Rookwooders, feeble with laughter.

"Look out!" stuttered Raby. "The professor's off again."

## THE SIXTH CHAPTER

### Who's Top Dog?

THE professor, who appeared mystified by the uproar his assistant's description of a football match had caused, was making an attempt to attract the attention of the audience from the unfortunate Pankley & Co. to himself once more.

"Will the sahibs ask some question concerning the future?" he bleated.

Then there came a roar from Lovell of Rookwood.

"Ask him who'll win the next junior football match with Rookwood, professor—whites or colours?"

"Hear, hear?"

"Bravo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The suggestion was received with cheers and yells of laughter. It just fitted in with the mood of the audience.

The professor blinked at Lovell a little doubtfully, then:

"I understand, sahib!" he said, and, with a little bow to the grinning audience, he went over to his boy assistant, who still lay back motionless in his chair.

He bent down, put a question to him in his strange language, at the same time putting his fat hand on the boy's brow.

There was an expectant hush as the audience, now thoroughly enjoying themselves, with the

exception of Pankley & Co., listened for the gifted young seer's reply.

"Hi chum him rum!" came from Lal, in low but clear tones.

The professor, with an expression of portentous solemnity, walked back to the footlights with measured tread.

For a moment there was a breathless silence.

The professor appeared to hesitate. Immediately there were shouts of encouragement.

"Go it!"

"What does he say?"

"Out with it!"

The professor held up his hand.

"Lal Ram says that the sahibs of the many-coloured shirts will win, by seventeen goals to nil!"

There was a moment of stunned silence.

Then a great gust of laughter fairly shook the school-room, mingled with a roar of wrath from the junior members of the Bagshot audience.

Pankley & Co. sprang up in a body, and made a rush for the stage. Those of the Rookwooders who were not too helpless with laughter laid restraining hands upon them.

Amid a perfect pandemonium of shouts and laughter, a wild and whirling struggle commenced once more amidst the first few rows of chairs, this time on a much more extensive scale than before. Pankley & Co. were again the centre of it, and Pankley & Co. were driven almost to desperation by all that they had had to put up with on that eventful evening.

The Bagshot masters, convinced that this was the end of the evening's entertainment, left the school-room with their visitors, laughing loudly, leaving the seniors to deal with the uproar as best they could.

After a short struggle with Raby and Newcome, Pankley and Putter managed to scramble on to the stage, chiefly because the Rookwooders were too doubled up with laughter to cope with them effectively.

The two heroes of the Bagshot Fourth gazed wildly round the stage.

"Where are they?" hooted Pankley. "Where are the black villains?"

"We'll scalp 'em! Where are they?" echoed Putter ferociously.



But the Hindu professor and his hopeful assistant had departed. Pankley and Putter raged round the stage, looking behind all the screens, but no sign of them did they discover.

All the "props" had gone, too, only the screens and carpets, borrowed from various quarters in Bagshot School, remained.

"They can't have gone far, especially with all their props to carry," said Pankley sulphurously. "Let's run down to the gates!"

"Good egg!" cried Putter.

The two juniors left the stage by the back entrance, and bolted out of the big school-room, and down the passage. Poole and Greene were limping along the passage, fresh from the fray in the big school-room, and Pankley rallied them to his standard.

"Down to the gates, you fellows—quick!"

Poole and Greene, jaded as they were, pricked up their ears like a couple of war-horses at their leader's clarion call.

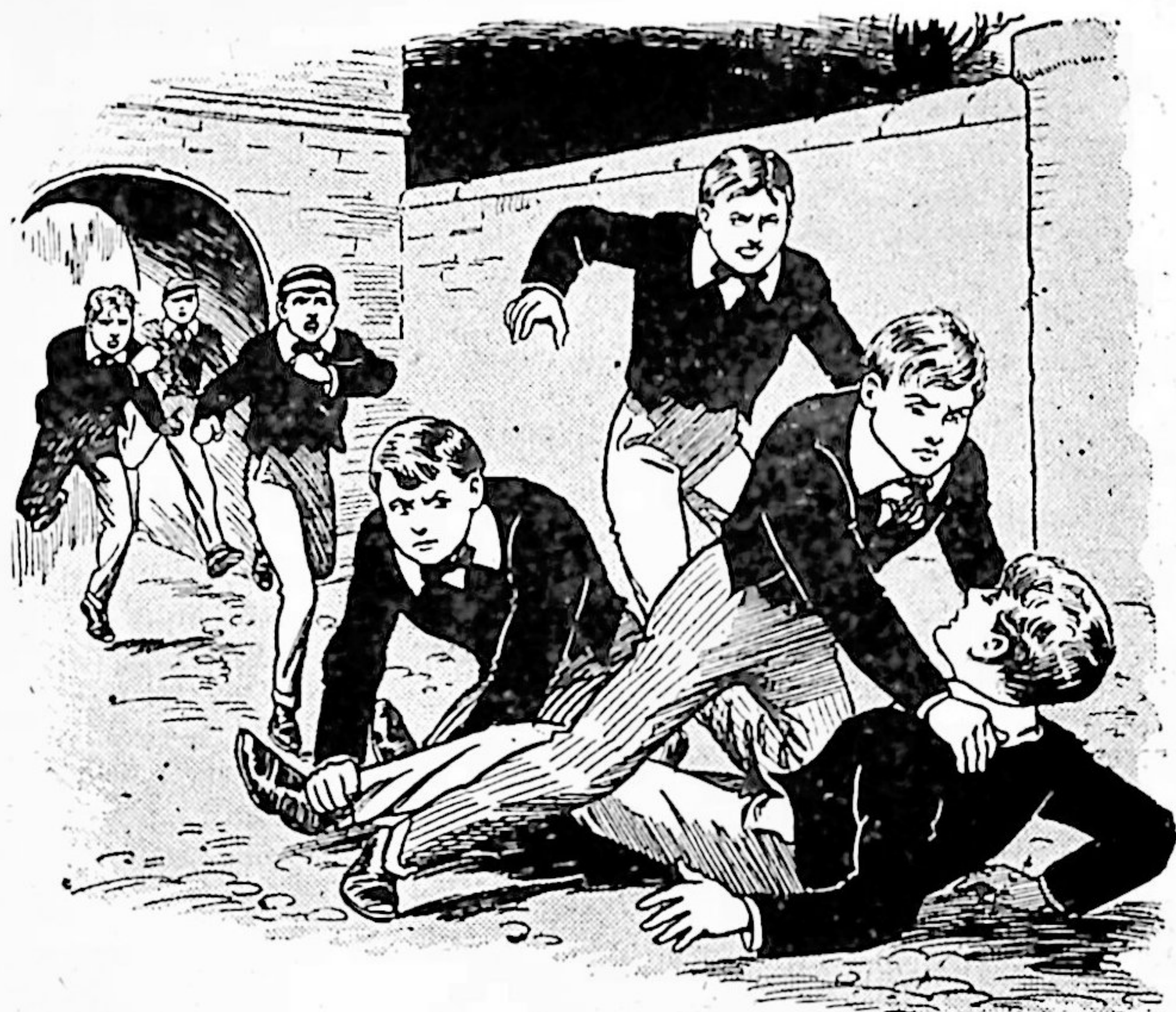
"Right-ho!" called Poole.

And they followed Pankley and Putter.

Pankley & Co. dashed out of the school-house door and across the playground towards the big school gates. In the glimmer of the starlight Pankley caught a glimpse of two figures moving in front of him in the direction of the gates. One was tall and bulky and the other shorter and slim, and between them they carried a bulky basket.

Pankley gave a yell of triumph.

"Here they are, you fellows! On to 'em!"



"Rescue, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver, before Pankley could stifle the cry. There was a rush of feet, and Lovell's voice sounded through the darkness: "This way, you chaps! Coming, Jimmy!" (See Chapter 6.)

The figures in front, evidently startled, stopped, and set down the basket with a bump.

"Mind your eye!" exclaimed a voice, and a voice that the Bagshot juniors knew well. "Here's Pankley & Co.! Run for it!"

Pankley gave a roar.

"Jimmy Silver! You—you spoofer! Collar him!"

"Run for it, professor!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

But the professor hesitated, and wrung his hands helplessly.

"My props!" he wailed. "I can't leave my props!"

Then Jimmy Silver, otherwise Lal Ram, hesitated, too, and was lost!

"Back up, then!" he gasped. "Ow! Grooh!"

Four pairs of hands were laid upon him almost at the same instant, as Pankley & Co. made a dash at him.



Then Jimmy Silver was down.

With Pankley sitting on his chest and Poole on his legs he could only gasp breathlessly.

"Groo-hoo! Gerroff!"

Pankley gasped, too.

"Got you!" he grunted victoriously.

"Gerroff me chest!"

"Some other time, Mr. Jimmy Lal Ram Silver!"

"Help! Help!" gasped Jimmy breathlessly.

There was a rush of feet, and the sound of Lovell's voice in the darkness.

"This way, you chaps!"

"Rescue, Rookwood!" shouted Jimmy Silver, before Pankley could stifle the cry.

"Coming, Jimmy!" shouted Lovell, recognising his chum's voice on the instant.

In a moment Pankley & Co. were surrounded by a dozen shadowy forms. The Rookwood juniors on their way down to the gates had arrived in the nick of time to rescue their leader.

Pankley & Co. turned to flee, but it was too late. They were surrounded, and grasped by many hands.

With the four Bagshot prisoners arraigned in front of him, surrounded by the grinning Rookwood juniors, Jimmy Silver held forth in the hour of his triumph.

"Now, you Bagshot bounders, listen to your Uncle James a moment!" he said, wagging an admonitory forefinger at the sulphurous Pankley & Co. "The hour has come when we must part! But before we do so, let us have a few moments' sweet converse!"

There was a cackle from the appreciative circle of Rookwooders. But Pankley & Co. replied only with glares.

If looks could wither, Jimmy Silver would undoubtedly have shrivelled up on the spot. As it was, he did not seem to be affected the least bit. He only grinned!

"And now, gentlemen," said Jimmy. "When I say 'gentlemen,' I mean you Rookwood chaps, of course——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have one question to ask you, gentlemen. Who's top dog—Rookwood or Bagshot?"

He asked this question with the air of one propounding a point of the gravest importance. He was not kept waiting long for an answer.

There was a roar from a dozen voices.

"Rookwood!"

"Uncle James" smiled, and waved his hand airily. He was thoroughly enjoying himself.

"Exactly!" he said gently. "And now, what do the Bagshot bounders say in answer to the same question?"

"Bagshot!" shouted Pankley & Co., defiantly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy sighed and shook his head.

"It seems extraordinary!" he said, in a pained voice. "After all the trouble we have taken this evening, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Would it make any difference if I mentioned that there are miles of strong twine in the professor's prop-box, Pankley, to tie you four up with?"

"Oh!" said Pankley.

"And lots of make-up and feathers and things to decorate you with?"

"Ugh!"

"Groo!"

Pankley & Co. shuddered, and the Rookwood juniors yelled again.

Jimmy Silver went on with a serious face.

"We're a bit late as it is, but we don't mind being late and getting a few lines, as long as it's in a good cause, Pankley, old scout! If we tied you four up so you could just crawl back to the school——"

"Ugh!"

"And painted your faces——"

"Groo!"

"And jammed feathers in your hair——"

"Oh!"

"And put notices on your backs, just to let the fellows know who'd done it, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Rookwooders.

"Would it alter your opinion on this important question, I wonder?"

Pankley & Co. fairly wriggled. After all they had been through that evening, and the way they had been held up to ridicule in their own school, they would have a sufficient



amount of chaff to put up with from their schoolmates as it was! But if they crawled in finally, rigged out in the manner Jimmy Silver so graphically described—well, it seemed to the unhappy Pankley & Co, that life would not be worth living!

"Of course," went on Jimmy Silver sweetly, "it wouldn't be necessary to proceed to these extreme measures."—and he waved his hand towards the prop-box—"if you would express a more reasonable opinion about which school is top dog! We should simply bid you good-night, and let you go, in that case."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Rookwooders.

The conflicting expressions upon the faces of the Bagshot fellows was almost too comic.

They were fairly in the toils, and they realised it.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver at last, in dulcet tones. "Which school is top-dog, gentlemen of Bagshot?"

Pankley & Co. looked at one another with sickly expressions. Pankley's lips moved, but no words came. Then, reluctantly, he nodded.

"Rookwood!" came almost in a whisper from four pairs of lips.

But Jimmy Silver was merciless.

"Louder!" he demanded. "Say it as if you meant it! Now, who is top dog?"

"Rookwood!" shouted the Bagshot bounders, goaded to desperation.

Jimmy Silver chortled loud and long.

"Let the beggars go!" he said. "They know who's top dog at last!"

"Hurrah!"

Laughing and cheering, the Rookwooders released the unhappy Pankley & Co. Then, with the comfortable feeling of fellows who deserved well of their country, they gathered up the big prop-basket, and with the professor, grinning broadly, in their midst, they marched off down the road towards Rookwood.

"Nighty-night!" sang out Jimmy Silver. "If he'll let us know when he wants it, we'll come along again some time, and remind him again!"

But answer came there none!

## Greyfriars Champions



### LORD MAULEVERER

*(Champion Slacker)*

"To sleep, perchance to dream;" I cite  
The maxim of Mauleverer;  
At slacking, morning, noon and night,  
No fellow could be cleverer.  
He loves to lie and take his ease  
In fields where sheep-bells tinkle;  
Sinking to slumber by degrees—  
A modern Rip Van Winkle!

For taking part in sport or game,  
Mauly shows no proclivity;  
In fact, he hates the very name  
Of action or activity!  
When Cherry rouses him at dawn  
With noisy animation,  
His lordship gives a sleepy yawn,  
And murmurs "Botheration!"

He finds it "too much fag" to swot  
At Homer or at Plato;  
While as for games, they make him hot,  
And flushed as a tomato!  
He loves to languish in the shade  
Beside the waving willow;  
Alone with pints of lemonade,  
And the green sward for pillow!

Come, Mauly! Shake your noble leg!  
And stagger each beholder;  
I'll race you all the way to Pegg,  
And swim you to the Shoulder!  
To dream away youth's golden hours  
Is folly most appalling;  
Wake up and exercise your powers!  
The briny deep's a-calling!



# GLORIOUS GRUB!

By TUBBY MUFFIN

(of Rookwood).

TELL me not, in mournful numbers,  
Life is but an empty dream:  
If a pie your plate encumbers,  
And there's strawberries and cream!

Life is lovely! Life is ripping!  
If the tuckshop is your goal;  
Don't despair! there's toast and dripping,  
Saveloy and sau-age-roll!

Not privation, nor starvation,  
Is our destined end or way;  
But to eat, with jubilation,  
Glorious grub the livelong day!

In the world's broad field of battle,  
In the camping-ground of Life,  
Do not chew the cud, like cattle,  
Eat roast mutton, with a knife!

Trust no tabloids, howe'er pleasant,  
Let your meals substantial be;  
Dine on duckling or on pheasant,  
Gobble doughnuts for your tea!

Lives of epicures remind us  
We can make our lives first-rate;  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Not a crumb upon our plate!

Not a crumb to tell the story  
Of our glorious feasts and feeds;  
Of the glamour and the glory  
Of our picnics in the meads.

Dull would be the world and dreary,  
And I'd feel inclined to "blub"  
If there were no tuckshop cheery,  
Stocked and stacked with Glorious  
Grub!

Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate!  
Munching, crunching, gaily chewing—  
Learn to leave an empty plate!

