



A Rift at Rookwood!

By OWEN CONQUEST

*A specially-written story,
featuring Jimmy Silver & Co.,
the lively chums of the Classical
Fourth at Rookwood School*

THE FIRST CHAPTER A Rift in the Lute!

"HEM!" Jimmy Silver, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, made that remark.

He made it twice.

"Hem!"

Uncle James of Rookwood as a rule was a straightforward fellow, and said what he had to say without hesitation. It was quite unlike Uncle James to beat about the bush.

But he was hesitating now.

His remark was not of the most intelligible order. But his three comrades in the end study seemed to understand it.

Raby smiled faintly.

Newcome winked at the ceiling.

Arthur Edward Lovell knitted his brows.

Lovell was sitting in the armchair, with his right leg crossed over his left. He was gently caressing his right knee. That tender caress indicated that Lovell's knee was not in its most high and palmy state. As a matter of fact, that knee had recently had a severe knock in games practice. Such things will happen in football. Lovell was not the fellow to grouse. He was the fellow

to make light of such an injury. And he was the fellow to make light of it all the more, because if his knee was likely to fail him, it was evident that he could not play in the match with Greyfriars School that was coming along on Saturday. And a Rookwood junior team, in an important fixture, without Arthur Edward Lovell in the half-back line was unimaginable—by Arthur Edward, at least.

"Hem!"

For the third time Jimmy Silver made that cryptic remark.

A football captain's job was not roses, roses all the way, at Rookwood—or anywhere else. Especially did it present difficulties when the captain in question was Jimmy Silver, kind and good-natured to a fault, and loyally attached to the chum whom it was necessary to drop out of the eleven, and who was obviously determined not to see the necessity.

Raby gave Newcome a glance.

"Let's give Morny a look-in," he said.

"Let's!" agreed Newcome.

They strolled out of the study. They felt that it might be easier for Jimmy Silver to

get it out, alone with Lovell. It was thoughtful of them, and Jimmy was grateful. Lovell only smiled in a grim, sarcastic way. He knew what was coming, and he was prepared to contest the point with vigour. Lovell rather prided himself upon the fact that his character possessed, among its other qualities, the firmness of a rock. It had never even occurred to him that this characteristic of his bore some resemblance to the obstinacy of a mule.

"Hem!"

It was difficult to begin, with a fellow like Lovell to deal with, and for a fourth time Jimmy Silver coughed.

"Go it, if you've finished your atmospherics!" said Lovell.

"How's your knee, old chap?"

"Quite all right, thanks," answered Lovell.

"Quite?"

"Quite!"

"Well, I don't see how it can be quite all right after that knock it had, old fellow."

"It's my knee," remarked Lovell, with the accent on the possessive pronoun.

"No pain left?" asked Jimmy.

"I'm not the man to grouse about a little pain."

"Oh, no! But——"

"But what?" said Lovell coldly.

Lovell was a good fellow. He was a loyal chum. He would have stood up for Jimmy Silver against all the wild world. Yet now he was making a difficult and unpleasant task as thoroughly difficult and unpleasant as he could for his best friend.

"Do you think you're really fit for the match to-morrow?" asked Jimmy bluntly.

"Yes."

"Sure?"

"Quite."

"But with that gammy knee——"

"My knee's not gammy."

"Well, bruised."

"I'm not made of putty. What's a bruise?"

"It let you down in games practice to-day," Jimmy Silver pointed out.

Lovell's manner was having some slight effect on Jimmy's placable temper.

"It did not."

"Oh!"

"If you mean my falling down——"

"I didn't mean your jumping up," said Jimmy.

"If you mean my falling down," repeated Lovell icily, "I fell over that clumsy ass Raby. He butted into the way."

"Oh!"

"I'm as fit as a fiddle," said Lovell. "If you want to turn a pal out of the team and put in another man, say so. Don't make out that I'm not fit to play Greyfriars to-morrow. That's humbug."

Jimmy coloured.

"Look here, Lovell, old man," he said, "you got that knock last Wednesday. You've been limping ever since."

"Not what I should call limping."

"Well, what anybody else would call limping, old chap," said Jimmy. "Let it go at that. In games practice to-day you practically crumpled up."

"Rubbish!"

"All the fellows saw it."

"Rot!"

"We have to go all out to give Greyfriars a beating," said Jimmy. "We can't afford to take chances."

"That's why I'm keen on playing."

"Oh!"

"My knee's all right," said Lovell—"practically all right. And to-day isn't to-morrow. Games practice to-day isn't the Greyfriars match on Saturday. Thought of that?"

"Let's look at your knee, old bean."

"No need to look at it. It's all right."

"The fact is, Lovell, you had an awful cough. You've been limping ever since, and you'll be limping for days to come. We play Greyfriars on Saturday and St. Jim's on Wednesday. You may pull round in time for the St. Jim's match, though, to be plain, I doubt it. I'm afraid you'll have to stand out to-morrow."

It was out at last.

"Now you've come to the point," said Lovell grimly. "No good my telling you

that I'm ready to play the game of my life to-morrow?"

"I know you think so, old chap——"

"It's not a matter of thinking. I know."

"Hem!"

"More atmospherics!" said Lovell satirically.

"I'm sorry, old chap," said Jimmy.

"If you were fit, you're the man for the job. But you're not fit. I'd almost rather leave myself out of the team than leave you out, if it could be helped. But it can't be helped, and that's that. Keep smiling, old chap."

"You're chucking me?"

"No."

"You're playing me, then?"

"No."

"It's one or the other."

"It isn't! You're standing out to-morrow because you're not fit. That isn't chucking."

"I've told you I'm fit as a fiddle."

"And I've told you you're not!" answered Jimmy Silver, a little tartly.

"You know more about my knee than I do?"

"More than you choose to know, apparently."

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"It's settled, then. I don't play?"

"Sorry, old fellow—no."

"You can keep your sorrow," said Lovell. "Keep it till the Greyfriars men wipe you off the football field to-morrow! You'll need it then. You needn't have beaten about the bush, Jimmy Silver. I knew you were



"As you're not the fellow I thought you were, naturally I don't care to pal with you any longer. You'll oblige me by not speaking when you see me again." With that Arthur Edward Lovell tramped out of the end study. (See Chapter 1.)

going to chuck me. I knew a lot of the fellows had been on to you about it, and you can't say 'No.' You're weak."

Jimmy made no reply to that. Really, it was rather unreasonable, since Lovell's wrath was founded upon the fact that Jimmy Silver had said "No." But if it relieved Lovell to blow off steam, Uncle James was not the fellow to say him nay.

Arthur Edward Lovell rose to his feet. He winced as he did so—a sharp wince, due possibly to the fact that his hapless knee, thought not "gammy," was not so absolutely sound as a bell as he hoped and believed. He fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver.

"I'm sorry for this," he said grimly.

"So am I, old fellow," said Jimmy amicably.

"I'm sorry, because it shows that you're

not the fellow I've taken you for," said Lovell. "The fellow I thought you were wouldn't chuck a pal out of the football team because other fellows got at him. The fellow I thought you were wouldn't chuck a friend out—for nothing."

"Your knee—"

"Any excuse is better than none, I know," said Lovell. "You needn't recite all that again. As you're not the fellow I thought you were, naturally I don't care to pal with you any longer. You'll oblige me by not speaking when you see me again."

"Lovell, old chap—"

"That's enough!"

Arthur Edward Lovell tramped out of the end study. But his heavy tramp suddenly stopped as his knee gave him an awful twinge, and he was limping before he was outside the doorway.

Slam!

The door of the end study closed behind him with a terrific slam that rang and echoed in every corner of the quarters of the Classical Fourth.

Lovell was gone.

Jimmy Silver sat and stared at the door. Lovell was gone, deeply incensed, simmering with a sense of wrong, burning with resentment. Football was football, and a football captain's duty was plain; but Jimmy Silver's chum was Jimmy Silver's chum, and the captain of the Fourth sat, with a dismayed face, staring at the door that had slammed.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

Quite a Jest!

"HE, HE, HE!"

Thus Tubby Muffin.

Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth, was obviously entertained, and he gave audible expression to his entertainment. Other fellows smiled.

Jimmy Silver frowned. From the general point of view, the incident was amusing. From Jimmy Silver's point of view, it was not amusing at all.

Jimmy, coming out of the School House, met Arthur Edward Lovell face to face.

He had not seen Lovell since Arthur

Edward had flung angrily out of the end study an hour before.

Now he met him again, and it was clear that Lovell's resentment had not cooled. Rather it had improved, like wine, with keeping.

Jimmy smiled cheerily at his chum, hoping that the storm had blown over, and that all was calm and bright.

His friendly smile was a sheer waste.

Not only did Lovell not return it, but he did not seem to recognise Jimmy Silver at all.

He stared straight before him unseeingly, looking through Jimmy, as it were, as if Jimmy was not there!

It was the cut direct!

Utterly ignoring Jimmy Silver, Lovell walked on, with fixed gaze, unseeing. He went into the House.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath.

His cheeks were burning.

It was not pleasant to be cut dead by any fellow, under a dozen pairs of eyes, even when the fellow in question was an unreasonable ass.

"He, he, he!"

The incident seemed so comic to Tubby Muffin that he contributed a second unmusical cachinnation.

There were smiles on several faces. Peele winked at Gower, and Gower nudged another fellow. Mornington laughed. Erroll looked rather grave. Conroy gave a sniff. Raby and Newcome uncomfortably affected to have noticed nothing.

It was unfortunate that the incident had occurred just in front of the House, when fellows were coming in to tea. There had been quite a good audience. There were even two or three men from Manders House on the spot, and the grins on the faces of the Modern fellows were most disagreeable of all to Jimmy Silver. It was bad enough for Lovell to make a fool of himself before the Classics; it was really too bad for him to excite the ridicule of the Moderns, too.

"Dear me!" Cyril Peele was speaking. "Trouble in the happy family circle! Oh, dear, me!"

"He, he, he!"

"Lovell's got 'em!" remarked Putty, of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver walked on, with flushed cheeks. Raby and Newcome walked with him, angry and uncomfortable.

"The silly owl!" said Raby when they were out of hearing of the crowd.

"The footling chump!" said Newcome.

"The ass!" said Jimmy.

"It means a row in the study, then," said Raby. "The frabjous fathead's got his back up."

"Let him keep it up," said Newcome warmly. "I'm fed up with it. Are we going to have a row whenever Lovell can't play in a football match? Suppose the other fellows took the same line? It's altogether too ridiculous!"

"The whole House will be laughing at him!" said Raby.

"They're laughing at him already. How a fellow can be such a howling ass beats me."

"You see," murmured Jimmy Silver, "Lovell's awfully keen on the Greyfriars match. Naturally a footballer is keen on a big fixture—can't blame the chap for that. And it makes him a bit unreasonable."

Jimmy's chums stared at him.

That Uncle James of Rookwood was a remarkably good-tempered fellow, blessed with an unusual gift of patience and toleration, they knew. But this really seemed the limit.

"You're not going to punch his silly nose, then?" asked Raby.

"'Hem! No."

"He's cut you before all the House."

"That doesn't hurt me," said Jimmy. "It hurts him. He hasn't made me look a fool; he's made himself look a fool."

"Well, that's so, of course," admitted Raby.

"Why should I punch the old fellow's nose for making himself look a fool?" asked Jimmy tolerantly. "I wish he'd have a bit more sense. I wish he wouldn't fly into



"Yaroorh! Rescue, Moderns!" yelled Tommy Todd, struggling frantically. From a distance, Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook, of the Modern Fourth, came speeding up to the rescue. (See Chapter 2.)

these tantrums. But he's always been more or less like it, and we like him all the same." "Oh, you're the limit!" grunted Newcome.

"But I wish he'd chuck it," said Jimmy, with a sigh. "The poor old chap thinks he's been treated badly, and thinks he's got a bad grievance. Of course he hasn't, but he thinks so. All the House knows that he's not fit to play to-morrow—all but himself—and he doesn't—"

"He won't, you mean," growled Raby.

"Well, he won't! In some matters our old pal is not very bright," said Jimmy

Silver. "All the House knows that he's cutting up rusty because he's dropped for the match to-morrow—about the most ridiculous thing any man could do. He will be a figure of fun all through Rookwood if he keeps it up. A fellow standing on his dignity is always rather funny, but old Lovell is funniest of all. I wish he'd chuck it. We don't want the end study laughed at."

"Hallo, you men!" Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, hailed the Classical chums under the old Rookwood beeches. "Trouble, I hear."

Tommy Dodd was grinning.

"Rats!" snapped Jimmy.

"What's this about Lovell?" chortled Tommy Dodd. "Is it true that he punched your nose for leaving him out of the footer?"

"No, it isn't, you footling fathead!"

"Well, I heard so. And I heard another story. One chap says he sat down and cried."

"You cheeky Modern worm!" roared Jimmy Silver.

"Isn't that true, either?" queried Tommy Dodd cheerily. "Isn't it true that he blubbed, and one of you men lent him a hanky to wipe away the tears?"

The Classical chums did not answer that. Cheek like this from a Modern called for action, not for words.

As if moved by the same spring, Jimmy and Raby and Newcome hurled themselves upon Thomas Dodd, collared him, and swept him off his feet. To an accompaniment of wild yells from Dodd, they rapped his head on the trunk of the nearest beech.

Rap! rap! rap!

"Whooop! Yoooop! Yarooooogh!"

"Keep it up till he blubs, and then we'll lend him a hanky!" said Jimmy Silver ferociously.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Rap! rap! rap! rap!

"Yaroooo! Rescue, Moderns!" yelled Tommy Dodd, struggling frantically.

From a distance, Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook, of the Modern Fourth, came speeding up to the rescue. The three Tom-

mies of Rookwood were never very far away from one another.

The Classics dropped Dodd, who collapsed on the earth, gasping. They met the other two Moderns at a rush, and Cook and Doyle went spinning under the charge of the trio.

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked back to the House, feeling a little better. Ragging the Moderns had taken the keen edge off their annoyance.

But as they came into their House, on the Classical side of Rookwood, Smythe, of the Shell, met them. There was a derisive grin on the face of Adolphus Smythe.

"Here, hold on, Silver!" he exclaimed.

"Well?" grunted Jimmy.

"Are you playin' me in the Greyfriars match to-morrow?"

Jimmy stared at him.

He would have been as likely to play Snooks, of the Second Form, as the superb Adolphus. Adolphus knew all about neckties and silk socks, but what he did not know about football would have filled whole libraries. It did not occur to Jimmy for the moment that Adolphus was pulling his leg, though he might have been apprised of that fact by the grinning faces of several other fellows standing round.

"Playing you?" repeated Jimmy.

"Yaas, little me."

"No, you ass."

"Not playing me?" demanded Adolphus.

"No, fathead."

"Then I shall cut you dead next time we meet," said Smythe, of the Shell. "I shall give you the marble eye in the quad, and the frozen mitt in the common-room. Consider yourself cut dead."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared a dozen fellows.

Even Raby and Newcome grinned.

"My turn," said Howard, of the Shell.

"Are you playin' me in the match to-morrow, Silver?"

"Don't be a silly ass!"

"Then I shall cut you dead!" chortled Howard. "We're all goin' to take a tip from Lovell!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Jimmy! If you don't play me to-morrow I won't speak to you! He, he, he!" Jimmy Silver kicked Reginald Muffin with considerable vigour and still more satisfaction, and went on his way. (See Chapter 2.)



"Are you playin' me, Silver?" demanded Tracy, of the Shell.

Evidently this was a little "rag" concocted among the Shell fellows.

Jimmy Silver suppressed his feelings and went up the staircase. He left a chuckling crowd behind him. The peculiar proceedings of Arthur Edward Lovell were undoubtedly adding to the gaiety of existence at Rookwood.

In the Classical Fourth passage Jimmy encountered Valentine Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth. Morny smiled at the sight of his clouded face, but looked grave again at once.

"Jimmy, old man," he said.

Jimmy looked at him.

"It seems that you're for it," said Mornington. "Look here, I've got an idea that I'll pass on to you for what it's worth."

"Well?"

"You know that donkeys' ages ago they used to play R u g g e r matches with fifty or sixty a side."

"I've heard of it. What on earth about it?"

"What about introducin' somethin' of the sort in Soccer at Rookwood?"

Jimmy stared at Mornington.

"Wandering in your mind?" he asked.

"Not at all. It's the only way."

"The only way for what?"

"To save yourself from bein' cut by all Rookwood, if every fellow who wants to play in matches and can't is goin' to cut you."

"You silly ass!" roared Jimmy.

"My dear man——" grinned Mornington.

"Oh, sit down!"

Mornington sat down rather suddenly, and Jimmy Silver passed him and strode into the end study. He was getting a little cross by this time. Even Uncle James' temper was not absolutely perfect.

Lovell was in the study.

He was bending over a crossword puzzle, Lovell being given to crosswords. Certainly he saw Jimmy come in, but he did not heed him. Jimmy stood and looked at him for some moments, with growing exasperation.

"Lovell!" he said at last.

No answer.

"Lovell!"

Grim silence.

"You footling ass!" shouted Jimmy.

Arthur Edward looked up at that.

"I think I've asked you not to speak to me, Silver," he said icily.

"Look here——"

"You've treated me badly. I think you've acted rottenly. I'm done with you. Shut up, and leave a fellow alone!"

"Lovell," said Jimmy quietly, "can't you see that you're making yourself look a footling ass to the whole school? The fellows have made a standing joke of it already. This study will be laughed to death. What would happen if every fellow who can't play to-morrow took the same line? Can't you see that it's ridiculous to cut up rusty when you're left out of a match?"

"I've not cut up rusty for that, and you know it."

"Then what——"

"I've cut up rusty, as you call it, because I've been treated rottenly. You've let fellows talk you into treating me rottenly."

"Raby didn't say that when I had to leave him out of the Bagshot match," said Jimmy patiently.

"Raby was left out because he was crocked."

"Well, you're crocked."

"I'm not crocked."

"Look here, Lovell——"

"Would you mind shutting up?" asked Lovell politely. "I'm rather busy with these crosswords."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath; refrained, with wonderful self-control, from jamming Lovell's head into the coal-locker, and left the study. In the passage there was a howl from Tubby Muffin.

"I say, Jimmy! If you don't play me to-morrow I won't speak to you! He, he, he!"

Jimmy Silver kicked Reginald Muffin with considerable vigour and still more satisfaction, and went on his way.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Just Like Jimmy!

THE following morning there were many smiling faces in the Lower School at Rookwood.

The jest was still going strong.

There were, in fact, only two unsmiling

faces—Jimmy Silver's and Arthur Edward Lovell's.

Jimmy was worried.

Lovell was not worried. Lovell was wrapped in dignity as in a garment, lofty with an Olympian loftiness.

He was angry. He felt that his anger was justified. Had he been asked, like the prophet of old: "Doest thou well to be angry?" he would have answered unhesitatingly: "I do well to be angry."

It was not uncommon for a fellow who fancied himself at football to display irritation if he was left out of a big fixture. Fellows could not always see eye to eye with their skipper on such matters. Even reasonable and sensible fellows, on such occasions, doubted the judgment of their captain. Even a hard-headed fellow like Conroy could not help feeling that Uncle James was rather losing his grip if he was replaced in goal by another man. Even Raby, though he admitted that he had been rather crocked on the date of the Bagshot match, had hardly considered that he was sufficiently crocked to be left out. Even Mornington, at a time when he was so obviously off colour that he was not fit to play in the Third, had been extremely and bitterly sarcastic when he was passed over for a fixture. Such feelings were natural to fellows keen on the game.

So far from being roses, roses all the way, a football skipper's path was often set with thorns.

But every fellow, excepting Lovell, bowed as a matter of course to the decree of fate. Fellows did not elect a captain for the purpose of quarrelling with him every time they disagreed with his judgments. It was to be noted, too, that every fellow except the fellow concerned always agreed with Jimmy's judgments, which seemed rather to indicate that Jimmy was right every time.

A man who was keen on a big match did not like being passed over; that was human nature, and nobody found fault with it.

Only, a fellow was expected to take it like a sportsman, even if it appeared to

him personally that his captain was suffering from obvious and palpable mental defects.

Lovell was the only fellow who failed to do so.

But Lovell was a law unto himself.

He would have derided, as much as anyone, a fellow who could not take his exclusion from a match in a sportsmanlike spirit. Lovell prided himself on his sportsmanship. Had he realised that he was no good for the Greyfriars match, not only would he have endorsed Jimmy's judgment, but he would have offered to stand out of his own accord.

The trouble was that he did not realise it.

Even so, it was his duty to submit gracefully. It was open to him to believe, if he liked, that his captain was suffering from some form of juvenile senility in leaving him out. But he was bound to take the sentence smiling. And so he would have done but for a certain obtuseness which characterised Arthur Edward, of which his chums were well aware, but which was unsuspected by Arthur Edward himself.

Having decided, on his own judgment, that he was not only fit for the game, but particularly and conspicuously fit for it, Arthur Edward could only attribute his exclusion to questionable motives on the part of his skipper. Jimmy Silver had been talked over by other fellows. That was the meaning of it—to Lovell. It was not, therefore, as a footballer who had been passed over that he resented Jimmy's action. It was as a friend who had been let down,



Lovell was about to rush at Tommy Dodd and smite him hip and thigh. Jimmy's detaining hand on his arm stopped him. "Hold on, old chap! No scrapping just before a match!" he said. (See Chapter 3.)

as a player who was needed by the side, and whose exclusion might mean disaster to the side.

This was a fine distinction which wholly satisfied Lovell.

But on the rest of the House that fine distinction was quite lost. To all the other fellows, Lovell was a man who was cutting up rusty because he was left out of a fixture for good and obvious reasons.

Such an attitude was supremely ridiculous. It was not the first time that Lovell's hasty temper and mulish obstinacy had caused a rift in the end study and entertainment in the Classical Fourth. But this time it was, as Morny said, the limit. Lovell, wrapped in Olympian dignity, feeling that he did well to be angry, was impervious to criticism. Meanwhile, the whole Lower School were laughing at him. His attitude had become a standing joke, and the juniors laughed loud and long.

Hence the worry in Jimmy Silver's brow that Saturday morning.

In class that morning, Jimmy was worried and thoughtful, but his unusual thoughtfulness was not due to any unusual attention to his lessons.

Jimmy was worried about Lovell.

Lovell was his chum, and Lovell's wrong-headedness made no difference to that.

Lovell, while making himself look an ass to all Rookwood, was evidently unconscious that he looked an ass. Jimmy Silver was only too painfully conscious of it.

Every jest, every gibe, which passed over Lovell like water over a duck, stung Jimmy Silver on his friend's account.

It was intolerable to Uncle James that a fellow who was his friend, who was really a good fellow, who shared his study, should be making himself the butt of the House.

There were few things that Jimmy would not have done to extricate Lovell from the ridiculous position in which he had placed himself. It was painful to Jimmy, and it was a reflection on the end study.

And there were disagreeable fellows in the Classical Fourth—fellows like Peele and Lattrey and Gower—who were always up against the end study on principle, and who openly rejoiced at this split in the study. They rejoiced to see a man of that study let himself down, and let down his friends, by taking up an attitude that was, in the general opinion, infantile.

As for the Modern fellows, they greeted the affair as a screaming joke. Manders' House echoed with jests on the subject. All sorts of stories were current, but the most popular one was that Lovell had sat down and cried like a baby when he was dropped from the team. The story was further developed to the effect that Lovell's friends had offered to buy him a toy engine to play with while the football was on. Some Modern fellows said that it wasn't a toy engine, but a doll that squeaked. There was no doubt that the Modern juniors were enjoying the jest. And it made Jimmy Silver writhe with discomfort and blush for his friend.

So Jimmy was worried.

In morning break, Lovell stalked in the quad, ignoring his friends, much to the entertainment of the other fellows.

In solitary state he stalked, inflexible.

He was angry, and he did well to be angry! He was dignified, and he hugged his dignity. Even yet it had not dawned upon him that his lofty and resentful attitude was enough, as Putty of the Fourth expressed it, to make a cat laugh. Whether it would have stirred the risible faculties of a cat or not, certainly it made Rookwood laugh.

His crooked knee twinged as he stalked, but he did not regard that. He had made up his mind that his knee was not crooked, therefore it wasn't crooked; and those twinges were nothing—less than nothing.

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, burst into song when Lovell passed him. The song he chanted was: "Oh, dry those tears!"

There was a roar of laughter.

Lovell glared round.

He saw a circle of grinning faces, and for the first time, perhaps, he had an inkling how matters stood.

His faced flushed crimson.

"Poor little kid!" said Tommy Dodd. "Wazzums dropped out of the footer, and diddums blub?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Then Jimmy Silver was guilty of a weakness, more in keeping with his character of kind-hearted Uncle James than with that of a football captain who was out to win matches. He stepped to Lovell's side. Ridicule of his pal by the Classics was bad enough; but from the Moderns, the rival House at Rookwood, it was more than Jimmy could stand.

Lovell was about to rush at Tommy Dodd and smite him hip and thigh. Jimmy's detaining hand on his arm stopped him.

"Hold on, old chap! No scrapping just before a match," he said.

"I'm not playing."

"You are."

"What?"

"You're playing right-half."

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver slipped his arm through Lovell's, and walked him away. The die was cast!

The Modern fellows were left staring. So were the Classics. They could scarcely believe their ears.

As Lovell's pal, Jimmy had reason to be satisfied. All was calm and bright once more. But as junior football captain of Rookwood, he suffered from deep remorse.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER The Voice of Authority!

"ROT!"
"Rubbish!"

"Bosh!"

"He can't!"

"He shan't!"

"It's the limit!"

"The outside edge!"

Those remarks, and many more, were called forth by the sight of the name of A. E. Lovell in the list of players for the Rookwood match, duly posted up before dinner that day.

Jimmy Silver was one of the most popular fellows at Rookwood School. He was liked all through the Classical side, and even his rivals on the Modern side could not help liking him. He was almost as popular in Manders' House as in the School House. It was unanimously—or almost unanimously—agreed that he was the best junior football captain that Rookwood had ever turned out. Even old Bulkeley, the captain of the school, was not more popular than Uncle James.

But there was a change now.

Jimmy's popularity was at its lowest ebb.

Even Raby and Newcome looked glum, though they loyally supported their leader.

With one voice the Modern side condemned him. With few dissentient voices, the Classical side followed suit.

It was not playing the game! For the first time on record, Uncle James, of Rookwood, was accused of not playing the game, and his friends did not know what to say.

That the Greyfriars match would be a tough match, that Rookwood could not hope to beat Harry Wharton & Co. without putting their best men into the field, all the

school knew. Even with Rookwood going all out, victory was still on the knees of the gods.

And in that match, almost the most important of the season, Jimmy was playing a dud.

It was unthinkable.

Lovell had sulked his way back into the team. That was how the fellows looked at it—not Lovell, of course. Lovell was satisfied that Jimmy had, after due reflection, decided to do the right thing. Jimmy Silver knew that, for various reasons, he had decided to do the wrong thing. He did not expect the other fellows to be pleased. Had he expected it he would have been woefully disappointed.

"He can't mean it," breathed Tommy Dodd. "Why, there are twenty Modern men better than Lovell!"

"That's rot!" said Mornington. "You Moderns can play footer. But there are fifty Classical men better."

"You Classical ass!"

"You Modern chump!"

"Oh, don't rag!" exclaimed Conroy. "We've got to put this plain to Jimmy, all of us, Moderns and Classics alike. We're all Rookwooders, and we want Rookwood to put up a good game."

"Hear, hear!"

There was a rush to seek Jimmy Silver after dinner. He was easily to be found. But he had no comfort for the exasperated footballers.

"It's rot!"

"Rubbish!"

"Lovell's crooked!"

"He will crack up at the first rush!"

"He will let down the side. You know it!"

"For goodness' sake, Jimmy——"

"Don't all speak at once," said Uncle James. "I quite understand. If you want me to resign, I'm your man. Mornington's a good man to skipper the side, and I'll stand out. Leave it to Morny."

"Nothin' of the sort," said Mornington. "You're an ass, Jimmy Silver, but you needn't be a silly ass!"

"You're not going to resign, fathead,"

said Putty, of the Fourth. "We'll lynch you if you do!"

"Cut that out!" snapped Tommy Dodd. "I won't allow you to resign, even if you offer the job to a Modern."

"That's bosh, Jimmy, and you know it," said Erroll. "You've got to play, and you've got to play as skipper. But for goodness' sake don't play a man who you know will crumple up in the first ten minutes!"

"Lovell says he's fit."

"Do you believe he is?"

No reply.

"Did you believe it yesterday when you dropped him?"

Silence.

"Jimmy, old chap——"

"Have a little sense, old fellow——"

"This is a matter for the football com-

mittee," said Gower. "I think the committee ought to call on Silver to resign the captaincy."

"Shut up, Gower!"

"Kick him, somebody!"

"Yaroooooh!" Cuthbert Gower departed with a loud yell, and his voice was heard no more in the excited discussion.

Jimmy Silver smiled faintly.

"Let it drop," he said. "If you're not satisfied with me, give me the chuck! Otherwise, let it drop."

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Chump!"

"Frabjous ass!"

It was some consolation to the footballers to blow off steam. But it was all the consolation they had.

"Get off the field, Lovell!" Lovell did not stir. "You hear me?" exclaimed Bulkeley, staring at him. "I'm down to play," said Lovell doggedly. "Junior captain is always allowed to pick his own men." (See Chapter 4.)



When the Rookwood junior team—seven Classicals and four Moderns—went into the changing-room, Arthur Edward Lovell was one of the Classical seven. Jimmy Silver's manner was very quiet and subdued. He had made a mistake, and he knew it. He would have been glad if the fellows had given him the "chuck," as he had asked them to do. That would have relieved him at once of his responsibility as football captain, and his promise to play Lovell. But that was not to be. Jimmy could not be spared from the eleven; his captaincy could not be spared. It was better to play a passenger in the team than to lose Jimmy. All the fellows knew that, and they knew that if Jimmy played, Lovell played. They had to swallow it. But they did not get it down easily. Their looks and remarks in the changing-room might have made Lovell's flesh creep had not Lovell been absolutely certain that, when the game came to be played, the fellows would alter their opinion, and would realise how very fortunate they were to have Arthur Edward at right-half!

Meanwhile, his knee twinged unregarded.

Jimmy Silver led his men down to the field. Three or four voices called attention to the fact that Lovell was limping. Jimmy Silver turned a deaf ear. The die was cast now. He was playing Lovell on Lovell's own firm assurance that he was fit, and he had to let it go at that.

When Harry Wharton & Co. arrived, they could not help noticing there was some

suppressed excitement in the Rookwood ranks. They could not help hearing a good many remarks that were passed among the fellows, Modern and Classical, thronging round Little Side. Bob Cherry, of the Greyfriars Remove, put his foot into it all innocently.

"Had a knock?" he asked Lovell.

He was rather surprised to see a fellow who obviously limped among the doughty champions of Rookwood.

Lovell glared, much to Bob's surprise.



Through the open window the shout of "Goal!" came ringing. It was first blood to the Greyfriars men, in the first ten minutes of the game. Lovell's lips curled. He had been left out of the match! (See Chapter 5.)

"I had a knock some days ago," he snapped.

"Oh! Nothing much?"

"Nothing at all."

"Oh!"

"The limpfulness of the esteemed Lovell seems rather terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, of Greyfriars.

"Rot!"

"Eh?"

"Bosh!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh did not make any more remarks to Lovell.

Mornington tapped Jimmy Silver on the shoulder as Bulkeley, of the Sixth, who was to referee the match, came down to the ground.

"It's not too late yet, Jimmy," breathed Morny. "Send that dud off. You were goin' to play Putty in his place. Putty's here, waitin' and ready. Send that dud off while there's time."

"Give us a rest," answered the wretched Jimmy.

"You howlin' ass——"

"That's enough! Get into the field."

"Look here, Jimmy——" muttered Conroy.

"Cheese it!"

"You Classical ass——" breathed Tommy Dodd.

"Are you getting into the field or not?" snapped Jimmy Silver.

The sorely-tried temper of Uncle James of Rookwood seemed to be failing him.

Bulkeley, of the Sixth, good-humoured and cheery, came up. He glanced over the footballers, and his eyes rested on Lovell. Arthur Edward at that moment was suppressing a wince, caused by an agonising twinge.

"Lovell's playing, Silver?" asked the Rookwood captain.

"Yes."

"His knee looks bad."

"D-d-does it?"

"Come here, Lovell."

Lovell had no intention of admitting, even to himself, that his knee was bad. But he was instinctively trying to keep it away from the view of Bulkeley, of the Sixth. But the captain of Rookwood, with all his cheery good-humour, had an eye that nothing escaped, especially on the football field. He had noticed Lovell's involuntary limp, and he had noticed his discoloured knee, and he was surprised, and he wanted to know. Junior matches and junior players were matters that the juniors settled for themselves; but the captain of the school was Head of the Games, and he exercised his supervision when it was needed. It seemed to Bulkeley that it was needed now.

Lovell had to come at his call. He came

unwillingly. He made desperate efforts not to limp as he came. Nevertheless he limped.

"What's the matter with your knee, Lovell?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" repeated Bulkeley.

"Nothing!" said Lovell doggedly.

"You're limping."

"I'm not."

"What?"

"Not exactly limping," amended Lovell. Even Arthur Edward realised that he could not speak to the captain of the school as he spoke to the junior captain, though he was strongly disposed to do so.

"Not exactly?" repeated Bulkeley. "Here, let's have a look at your knee! You young ass, you're thinking of playing football with a bruise like that!"

"Yes."

"I don't blame a man for being keen on the game, and want to keep on. But to begin a match in a crooked state is simply silly. I dare say your keenness accounts for it, and I won't blame you. The blame rests on your skipper for putting you in the team. That leg of yours will double up and let you down as soon as you get going."

"It won't!"

"You may think it won't, but it will," said Bulkeley, "and more than that, you may turn a little injury into a big one by playing the goat. Silver, you've only got to look at Lovell to see that he ought not to play. What the thump do you mean by it?"

Jimmy's cheeks crimsoned.

There were smiles among the footballers. They smiled all the more because it was pretty clear now that the Rookwooders were not going, after all, to carry that passenger through the game.

"You don't generally play the fool like this, Silver," said Bulkeley, staring at the wretched junior captain. "Have you lost your common sense? You know as well as I do that Lovell ought to be resting his leg; he ought not even to take a long walk at present, let alone play football. If this is the way you pick out your men, I fancy

that the Lower School had better look for another captain. This won't do!"

"I—I——" stammered Jimmy.

He deserved it, and he knew it. He had no defence to make. He could only stammer and blush crimson, and wish that the football field would open and swallow him up.

"Send that man off," said Bulkeley abruptly.

"Look here——" began Lovell hotly.

"That will do, Lovell. You're not fit to play, and it's my duty as Head of the Games to see that you don't. Silver has made a mistake—a silly mistake—unless he picked out his men with his eyes shut. I'm surprised at this, Silver, and you'd better not let it happen again!"

"Nunno!" gasped poor Jimmy.

"Pick out another man! You're keeping your visitors waiting. Get off the field, Lovell!"

Lovell did not stir.

"You hear me?" exclaimed Bulkeley, staring at him.

"I'm down to play," said Lovell doggedly. "Junior captain is always allowed to pick his own men."

Bulkeley gave him a long, hard look.

"Go back to the House, Lovell, and go to your study, and write out two hundred lines of Virgil," he said quietly. "Say one word more before you go, and I'll make you bend over and give you six, here and now, with the Greyfriars men looking on. Cut!"

Lovell opened his lips, but shut them again. Black bitterness was in his face as he limped off the field.

Jimmy Silver signed to Putty, of the Fourth.

That eager youth was ready very quickly. He joined the ranks of the footballers before the limping Lovell had disappeared from sight. The whistle went, and the game began—minus Lovell.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER The Greyfriars' Match I

"GOAL!"

The shout reached the ears of Arthur Edward Lovell in the end study.

That celebrated study was blessed with two windows, one of which looked on the quadrangle, the other on the playing fields. At the latter Lovell had stationed himself.

He had gone to his study as ordered. Even Lovell, seething with angry resentment as he was, did not want to be given "six" on the football field, under the eyes of the visitors from Greyfriars. He had gone to his study, but he was not thinking of writing out the lines Bulkeley had given him. The lines could wait. He stationed himself at the window that gave a view of the distant football field and watched. Through the open window the shout of "Goal!" came ringing.

It was not a Rookwood shout.

A good many Greyfriars men had come over with their team, and they were watching the game with the Rookwood crowd. And every Greyfriars voice joined in the shout as Harry Wharton drove the leather in.

"Goal!"

"Bravo!"

"Goal! Goal!"

It was first blood to the Greyfriars men, in the first ten minutes of the game.

Lovell's lips curled.

He had been left out of the match. It was by Bulkeley's order, but he had not failed to see how that order had brightened the faces of all the eleven; even Jimmy Silver had been scarcely able to conceal his relief. Even Jimmy, who had consented at long last to play him, was glad that he was ordered off the field by the Head of the Games. He was out of it, but his absence did not seem to be making the side prosper. The first goal had fallen to the visitors. They could hardly have started better had Lovell been in the home side, game leg and all.

His eyes never left the field. The running figures were small in the distance, but Lovell's eyes were good, and he picked out every man with ease. He saw the Greyfriars attack come on again; he saw the ball shoot in from the foot of the dusky junior, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. Conroy, in the Rookwood citadel, barely saved. There was

a struggle before the home goal, and though the defence was made good, the Rookwooders had to go all out, and it was a close thing. The game swung away to midfield, and for a long time it stayed there or thereabouts, Rookwood never somehow getting fairly away.

Lovell's sneer became more pronounced.

He had been turned out, to the general satisfaction of the team, but his turning out had not turned it into a winning side. At half-time only one goal had been scored, and that was scored by the visitors. And the home goal had had a series of hair's-breadth escapes.

Lovell was a patriotic Rookwooder, and he wanted his school to win, even without him. Nevertheless, there was a bitter satisfaction in seeing them outclassed by Greyfriars in the circumstances.

If they were going to be beaten, their satisfaction at Lovell's exclusion was a little premature, at least. With Lovell in the team, game leg or no game leg, they could only have been beaten.

In the interval the players were breathing hard. It had been a gruelling half, and both sides were feeling the effects of it.

The whistle went again.

Lovell continued to watch, with a very unpleasant expression on his face. Sneers certainly did not improve his good looks.

The change of ends gave the Rookwooders the advantage of the wind, which was fresh and keen. But their luck did not seem to improve. Harry Wharton & Co. came on hard and fast, passing the ball like clock-work; one of those rushes with quick, short passing for which the Greyfriars men were well known. The defence was good, but the attack was better, and Conroy, in goal, was beaten to the wide. The ball went in from the foot of Herbert Vernon-Smith, of Greyfriars.

There was a yell from the Greyfriars supporters.

"Goal!"

"Good old Bounder!"

"Goal!"

Two up for Greyfriars, and a beautiful

blank for Rookwood. Lovell shrugged his shoulders sarcastically.

To judge by the fellows' looks when Bulkeley sent him off the field, sending him off made the match into a walk-over for them. It did not look like it now.

But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not beaten yet.

Jimmy, at centre-half, was a tower of strength to his side, but he was conscious of a little weakness at his right hand. The two teams were, as a matter of fact, much of a muchness; both of them so good and so resolute that a feather's weight might almost have sufficed to turn the scale. Putty, of the Fourth, was a good man; but it was useless to try to think that he was anywhere as good as Lovell at his best. Lovell at his best, at right-half, would have given Rookwood the extra ounce they wanted. Jimmy Silver knew that, and he would have given much to have had Lovell—at his best—as his right-hand neighbour. But Lovell at his worst would have been of no use—a fact overlooked by the sarcastic youth watching from the distant study window. Putty was nowhere near Lovell's form at his best, but he was leagues ahead of Lovell's form with a game leg.

Still, Rookwood were not beaten. There came a change in the fortunes of the game, one of those sudden changes that make the game so enthralling to both players and spectators. Rookwood, hitherto hopelessly bottled, broke out in grand style, and the Greyfriars men, who had seemed to be carrying all before them, seemed now to be nowhere. There was a roar from Rookwood when the ball went in from Raby's foot.

Some of the excited fellows were still yelling when another roar started, to greet a goal landed by Mornington.

"Goal! Hurray! Goal!"

Lovell stared.

He was glad—of course he was glad. Any Rookwooder who was not glad to see his side take goals was worthy only of kicking, and Lovell would willingly have been the first fellow to kick. But along with his dutiful gladness there was a pang. He wanted the side to win that fixture; he was sure of that.

But he did not want his exclusion from the eleven to be justified by results. Very much indeed he did not want that. His wishes being so very mixed, it was rather fortunate that Arthur Edward Lovell had no control over the fortunes of the game.

He watched grimly.

Ten minutes to go and a level score. Putty was on his back, and very slow to get up. When it came to putting on pace and feeding the forwards, Putty was all there; but in stopping rushes he was nothing like Lovell. He was quick and keen, but infinitely better in attack than in defence. Lovell was a first-class man at both—with a sound leg. Putty's sound legs did not seem much use to his side, Lovell reflected satirically.

Shots seemed to be raining on the Rookwood goal. As fast as the Greyfriars attack was driven off, it rallied and pressed again. Minutes were short now, and Greyfriars did not want a draw. There was no doubt that they were a fine team, and that they kept up the mustard right to the finish. Many eyes were turning on the clock tower over the beeches. It was almost on the point of time when Hurree Jamset Ram Singh drove the ball in. There was a roar.

"Goal!"

"Good man, Inky!"

"Hurrray!"

The Rookwood crowd cheered, too. They

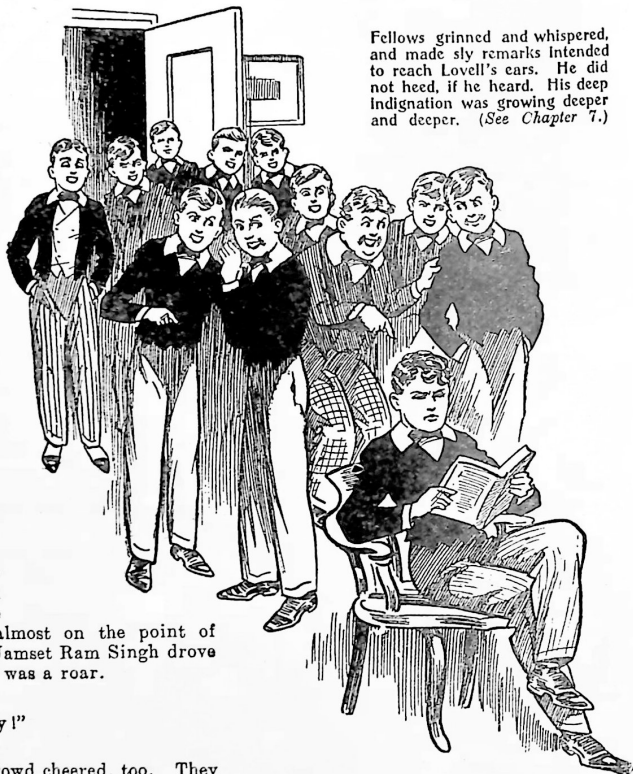
could cheer good men when the good men beat them. The whistle went.

"Hard cheese, old scout," Harry Wharton remarked to Jimmy as the men came off. "It was touch and go."

"The touchfulness was great, and the goalfulness was terrific," observed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"It's a jolly old uncertain game," he said. "I rather think we should have done it if I hadn't lost one of my best men."



Fellows grinned and whispered, and made sly remarks intended to reach Lovell's ears. He did not heed, if he heard. His deep indignation was growing deeper and deeper. (See Chapter 7.)

"Not in your lifetime!" said Bob Cherry emphatically; and then, remembering that he was a visitor, he added hastily: "I mean, very likely. Hard luck on you to lose him, whoever he was."

Jimmy laughed.

"All serene. We'll take it out of St. Jim's next week," he said cheerily.

Lovell turned from the study window.

Rookwood had been beaten. Leaving Lovell out had not won the game for them. Lovell tried to feel sorry that Rookwood had captured a defeat. But he did not succeed very well. There was more of an angry, resentful satisfaction in his breast than of regret, though he did not acknowledge it to himself. They had left him out, and they had been licked. It was rough on Rookwood, but serve them jolly well right!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

Lovell's Last Word I

"NEXT Wednesday——"

The Fistical Four of Rookwood were at tea in the end study on Monday when Lovell began.

Relations were still rather strained in the end study.

Lovell was not the fellow to bear a grudge except in certain circumstances when he felt that his personal dignity and self-respect demanded that he should be unforbearing. That, at least, was how it appeared to him.

A fellow with a proper sense of dignity and a well-developed self-respect could scarcely forgive fellows who had been glad to see him pushed out of a football match upon which he had set his heart.

On the other hand, Raby and Newcome felt rather sore at Lovell playing the goat, and letting down the end study thereby.

Jimmy Silver had a worry on his mind, caused, of course, by Arthur Edward Lovell. The St. Jim's match was due on Wednesday, and Lovell was taking it as a matter of course that he was going to play for Rookwood.

His knee was on the mend, slowly but surely; and if Lovell considered that it was mended sufficiently to play on Saturday,

still more did he consider that it would be right as rain on the following Wednesday.

Jimmy Silver did not think so.

After losing the Greyfriars match, Jimmy was more keen than ever on beating St. Jim's when they came over; and after the scene with Bulkeley on Little Side he was less keen than ever on making the serious mistake of playing a man who was not up to the mark.

It was not pleasant for the junior captain to be called over the coals before a crowd of fellows by the Head of the Games. And Jimmy could not take refuge in anger and indignation, because he knew perfectly well that old Bulkeley's reprimand was deserved. He had acted weakly and good-naturedly, and he had been called to order. Not for Lovell, or a whole tribe of Lovells, would Jimmy have repeated that mistake. Friendship was one thing and football was another. He had forgotten that once, but he was not likely to forget it again.

If Lovell was fit to play on Wednesday, well and good. But he knew that he would not be fit—not for a match like that with Tom Merry & Co., of St. Jim's. A week at least was required for Lovell's game knee to get back to its pristine state. So Jimmy knew that there was an argument coming, and more trouble with the headstrong Arthur Edward, and he was growing irritated and fed up at the prospect.

"Next Wednesday——" repeated Lovell, looking round the tea-table.

"Well?" murmured Jimmy.

"The first eleven will be away at Bagshot," said Lovell. "Bulkeley's playing the Bagshot First on their ground."

"That's so," said Jimmy more cheerfully. He had been afraid that Lovell was about to begin on the topic of the St. Jim's match on Wednesday.

"So Bulkeley will be away that afternoon," said Lovell.

"Yes."

"He won't referee for us, and he won't be on the ground at all."

"No."

"So he won't be able to meddle again."

"Eh?"

"So it will be all serene," went on Lovell.
"Who's going to ref.?"

"Neville, of the Sixth."

"Well, Neville's not captain of the school or Head of the Games, or an interfering, meddling ass," said Lovell.

"Are you calling Bulkeley an interfering, meddling ass?" inquired Raby.

"Yes."

"Then you're a silly chump!"

"And a howling duffer!" added Newcome.

"Order!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Lovell looked unpleasant.

"I call him an interfering, meddling ass," he said. "I'll call him what I like. Anyway, Neville won't meddle. It will be all serene."

"How's that?" asked Jimmy.

"I mean that as Bulkeley won't be here, he won't be on the spot to butt in and send a man off the field," said Lovell. "You'll be able to play me against St. Jim's without being interfered with."

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

It had come!

But Jimmy Silver was ready now. The time of weak good-nature was past. Jimmy had had his lesson; rather a severe one. If Lovell chose to go off at the deep end again, he could go, and it couldn't be helped. Jimmy had no intention whatever to take risks with the St. Jim's match in order to save Arthur Edward's arrogant self-esteem.

"We'd better have this plain, Lovell," he said. "You won't be fit for the game on Wednesday, and I can't play you."

"Rot!"

"Rot or not, there it is," said Jimmy tartly.

"You did so jolly well without me in the Greyfriars match," jeered Lovell. "You won all along the line, what?"

"No; but that has nothing to do with it."

"You think matters would have been worse if Bulkeley hadn't hoofed me off the ground?"

"Yes. We were beaten by one goal. We should have been beaten by four or five if we'd carried a passenger in the game."

"Oh!" This was a new view to Lovell.

"So that's what you think, is it?"

"It's what I know."

"And what every man in the House knows," snapped Raby—"and in the other House, too."

"Everybody excepting you, old bean," said Newcome.

Lovell compressed his lips.

"Of course, I don't admit anything of the sort for a single moment," he said.

"Can you alter facts by not admitting them?" inquired Raby.

"Oh, cheese it! Look here, Jimmy Silver

"What's the good of jaw?" asked Jimmy restively. "You must really leave such things to my judgment, Lovell."

"That's not the question. You're a weak ass, and you let yourself be talked over by any fellow who takes the trouble to pull your leg," said Lovell scornfully.

"Oh, rot!"

"My knee is better now; it will be better still the day after to-morrow. You thought I was fit to play on Saturday."

"I did not."

"You were playing me, only Bulkeley butted in."

"Because I was rather an ass."

"Then you were playing a man you considered unfit for the game? What sort of a football captain do you call yourself in that case?"

Jimmy Silver looked at him. He was accustomed to a good allowance of unreasonableness from Lovell. But really this from Lovell was the limit!

"Put it plain," said Lovell scornfully. "You made up your mind to do the right thing on Saturday, only that meddling ass Bulkeley butted in. Now the fellows have got at you again."

"Oh, give us a rest!" exclaimed Jimmy impatiently. "You're not fit, and you don't play. Think what you jolly well like, but there it stands."

"I'm left out?"

"Yes."

"You mean that?"

"Do you want me to say it a dozen times

over, or get it set to music and sing it?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

Raby and Newcome grinned. It was plain English from Uncle James at last, and exactly what Lovell needed in their opinion.

Arthur Edward Lovell rose from the table. His face was almost pale with anger.

"That does it," he said. "I've been giving you a chance to play up decently. But I suspected all the time that you had this trick up your sleeve."

"Trick?" repeated Jimmy.

"This dirty trick!" emphasised Lovell.

"Oh, don't be an ass! Are you the first man that's ever been left out of a Soccer side?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, exasperated. "Why, I'm leaving out Putty, after trying him on Greyfriars. I'm going to try a Manders man in the place. But Putty isn't howling indignation up and down the passage."

"That's different."

"I don't see the difference."

"Putty's no good. I knew you would lose to Greyfriars when you bunged him in in my place. I don't blame you for that. It was Bulkeley's doing. But I knew it."

"Oh, dear!"

"Putty knows he's no good, if he's got any sense," said Lovell. "That's where the matter's different."

"You mean you've not got any sense?"

"No," roared Lovell, "I don't. I mean that Putty was the wrong man, and I am the right man."

"Bow-wow!"

"Very well," said Lovell, between his teeth. "I'm turned down! A set of the fellows have been trying to bring it about, and they've got round you. My own pals have turned me down. I more than half expected it after the way you acted last week. I'm done with the lot of you!"

Lovell tramped to the door.

No doubt he fully expected to be called back. No doubt he would have disregarded the call. But he was not called back. The almost inexhaustible patience of Uncle James of Rookwood had been exhausted at last. Not a word was spoken as Lovell

went, and the door slammed behind him unheeded.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER

In Coventry!

"MORE trouble!" sighed Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jevver see such a howling ass?" inquired Conroy.

"Never!"

"Well, hardly ever!" chuckled Putty, of the Fourth.

In the junior common-room that evening, Arthur Edward Lovell sat in solitary state.

His comrades came in, and he did not heed them.

Jimmy Silver gave him a friendly glance, and Lovell deliberately turned his head away.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

He was fed up, which, in the circumstances, was not surprising. If Lovell chose to play the goat again and make himself a figure of fun in the House, he had to be given his head. Jimmy Silver could do nothing but let him rip, and trust to time and reflection to bring him to his senses.

There were many smiles in the room.

Lovell had a "Hobby Annual" for company, and he seemed to be reading sedulously. A "Hobby Annual" was very good company, and perhaps Lovell was enjoying it.

Still, as he was not turning the pages, he could not have been making very great progress with the perusal.

Fellows grinned and whispered, and made sly remarks intended to reach Lovell's ears. He did not heed, if he heard. Only, his deep indignation was growing deeper and deeper.

Morny strolled up to him at last. It was Morny's mischievous desire to draw the indignant and sulky youth.

"Turnin' up on Wednesday?" asked Mornington.

No reply.

"You'll come along and give us a cheer, what?"

Lovell fixed his eyes on Mornington. He was conscious that all eyes in the room were



Lovell, his face flushing with anger, struck the hand savagely from his shoulder. "Oh!" gasped Jimmy. (See Chapter 8.)

fixed on him. He spoke clearly and distinctly:

"Sheer off!"

"What?"

"I don't want you to speak to me. I'm fed up with you."

"Oh!"

"Is that plain enough?" sneered Lovell.

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"Quite!" he assented. "You mean you want to be a sulky fool, and get laughed at by all Rookwood. Some fellows have a queer idea of enjoyin' themselves. Are you cuttin' everyone who thinks you're making a

howlin' ass of yourself? That means cuttin' all the school."

"Shut up!"

"What?"

"Shut up!"

Mornington clenched his hands. But he shrugged his shoulders and turned away. There was a laugh from some of the juniors. Lovell sat with his eyes fixed on his book.

Two or three other fellows addressed remarks to him, which were received in stony silence.

It was true that their object was to draw him, and no doubt Lovell was aware of it. All the Form were against him now, and his own friends had joined in the general conspiracy. That was how the hapless Arthur Edward looked at it; to that length had

sulky resentment, recklessly indulged, led him. Well, he didn't care. He was sure that he didn't care; he told himself many times that he didn't care a straw. If he was let down by his friends, mocked by the rest of the Form, he didn't care a straw. Solitary dignity was enough for him. They should see that he didn't care.

Soon enough the fellows let him alone.

If Lovell chose to sulk, he could sulk. If he chose to send himself to Coventry, he could abide in that lonely and chilly place as long as he liked. It was his own business.

Lovell did not go to the end study, as usual, for prep. He was cutting his old friends, and he would not share the study with them. His indignation was growing to a white-hot pitch.

He did his prep. in the Form-room, which was solitary and silent and rather chilly, but quite in keeping with Arthur Edward's present mood.

After prep. he was in the junior common-room again, in solitary state, hugging his lonely resentment.

His friends did not approach him.

It was the most serious breach that had ever occurred in the happy circle of the Fistical Four, but there was nothing they could do to heal it. Lovell's requirements were fixed too high for reconciliation. First of all, he had to be put down for the St. Jim's match. That was impossible. So there was nothing to be done.

In the Classical Fourth dormitory it was the same. Lovell went to bed without a word.

After lights out, Jimmy Silver called out cheerily from his bed:

"Good-night, Lovell."

There was no answer.

Jimmy laid his head on his pillow and went to sleep. But it was long before Lovell slept. Indignation and sulky resentment did not conduce to balmy slumber.

When the rising-bell clanged out in the morning, and the Classical Fourth turned out, Jimmy Silver made one more attempt.

"Coming for a trot round before brekker, Lovell?"

Lovell stared him in the face and did not answer.

That was the finish. Jimmy made no further attempts. He was growing indignant himself by this time.

In class that morning Lovell was something of an Ishmael. In morning break he stalked off by himself, still limping a little. His game knee was much better, but it was not mended yet by any means. Some of the fellows were punting about an old footer. Lovell did not join them. He stalked away, lofty and unapproachable.

Nobody heeded.

Lovell had sent himself to Coventry; that was what it amounted to. He could stay there as long as he liked so far as the rest of Rookwood was concerned. If he chose to step out of the common life of the Form, it was inevitable that the life of the Form should go on its way, unregarding him. Lovell, perhaps, had not expected that. To stand aloft on a pedestal of un-

approachable dignity was one thing; to be left unregarded on his pedestal was another. Probably he did not find it pleasant. But not for worlds would he have shown that he did not like it, or have made the slightest advances to any man in the Fourth Form. He was more disposed to snub any advances that might be made to him. But he did not have the opportunity; none was made.

Such a situation, once unthinkingly brought about, was not easily remedied. As the day wore on, Lovell found lonely dignity less and less of a comfort to him; but the only effect of that was to increase his resentment and his bitterness. He heard, without joining, the football talk, especially about the St. Jim's match. His bitterness grew. Jimmy Silver, once his best chum, was thinking only about that match with St. Jim's, forgetful of his lost chum. A bitter desire grew in Lovell's heart to see the Rookwood junior eleven soundly beaten, even more soundly than by Greyfriars. He was now in a mood in which he would willingly have brought about their defeat, had that been possible to him. Self-imposed solitude was not improving the character of Arthur Edward Lovell.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER

Left On His Own !

"JIMMY!"

"Hallo!"

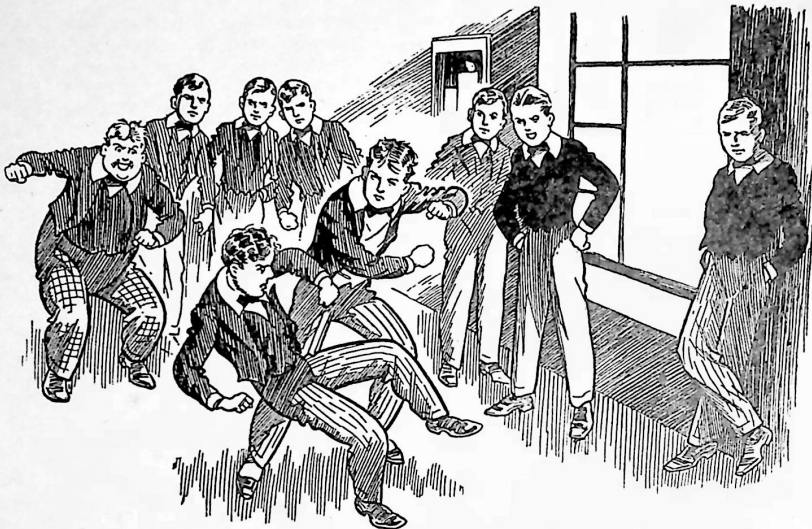
"You're wanted."

Jimmy Silver & Co. were punting a ball about after class that day when Tubby Muffin rolled out of the House with that message.

Lovell was stalking unheeded under the beeches at a distance. Scarcely a glance fell upon him. Even as a jest, Lovell's attitude had palled on the Rookwood juniors. Even the Moderns had tired of cracking jokes about him. He had simply dropped out, and was left where he dropped. Which, of course, was one more deep grievance for the unhappy fellow who had allowed sulky resentment to master him and cloud his understanding.

"You're wanted on Dicky Dalton's 'phone, Jimmy," called out Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, my hat!"



Mornington knew that he had an opening, and he did not lose the chance. He piled in with his right and left, and Lovell went sprawling and crashing along the passage. (See Chapter 9.)

"Mr. Dalton told me to call you. It's a trunk call from St. Jim's," added the fat Classical.

"Oh!"

"Something about the match to-morrow," said Raby. "Nothing up, I hope. Better cut in, Jimmy."

Jimmy Silver ran into the House.

It was uncommon enough for a Fourth Form man to be asked for on the telephone, and certainly he had not expected a call from St. Jim's. If it meant that anything was to interfere with the match on the morrow, it would be a blow for Jimmy. He was anxious to know.

The receiver was off the telephone when Jimmy Silver reached his Form-master's study. Richard Dalton gave him a kind nod.

"Tom Merry has rung up from St. Jim's, Silver. You may take the call. It is about the football match to-morrow."

"Thank you, sir."

Jimmy Silver picked up the receiver.

"Hallo! That you, Merry?"

"Yes. Is that Jimmy Silver?" came Tom Merry's voice over the wires.

"Speaking."

"About the match to-morrow, old chap. We're writing, but I thought I'd ring you up and give you a bit longer notice, so that you needn't waste the date. I'm awfully sorry that we're prevented from coming over."

"Anything happened?"

"You bet, or we shouldn't be calling off a footer match," answered Tom Merry. "We couldn't let you know sooner, as it only turned up to-day."

"Nothing serious, I hope."

"We don't know yet. Two fellows are down with influenza, rather suddenly. They're in sanny now, of course. Whether it's gone any further, or going any further, the doctor can't tell yet; but he has advised the Head to cut off all out matches this

week. Rot, you know, but doctors are doctors, and the Head is the Head, and we can't help ourselves."

Jimmy smiled.

"I dare say the doctor's right, old bean," he answered.

"Well, of course, we shouldn't like to bring the 'flu over to Rookwood, and you wouldn't quite like that, if we did," said Tom, with a laugh. "I don't believe there's any danger myself. All my men are sound as a bell. But we have to give the medical johnny his head, so there you are. I'm letting you know at the earliest possible moment. You won't get a letter till the morning."

"Thanks."

"What about Wednesday week?" asked the St. Jim's junior captain. "Have you got that date open?"

"Luckily, yes. We had a House match here for that date, but we can postpone it if you can come over."

"Call it Wednesday week, then. If we've really got a 'flu outbreak here, we shall know for certain long before that, and I can let you know. But I'm sure it will be all right."

"That's settled, then."

"Good-bye, old chap."

"Good-bye, kid."

Jimmy Silver put up the receiver.

His face was thoughtful as he walked out of the House. It was rather a blow for the match to be postponed; but on reflection Jimmy Silver realised that it was not such a blow after all, in the peculiar circumstances. Lovell's game knee, which was too "game" for play on the morrow, would certainly be all right on the following Wednesday. Lovell would be able to play in the St. Jim's match, after all. Irritating as Lovell's attitude was, Jimmy was glad of a chance of reconciliation, of extricating Arthur Edward from the ridiculous position he had taken up. And he was equally glad of the chance of getting Lovell back into the team, for Lovell, in his old form, was the best man available at Rookwood. What had seemed rather a blow at first was, as Jimmy realised, a blessing in disguise.

So Uncle James' face was bright when he rejoined his comrades in the quad.

"Well?" said a dozen voices.

Jimmy explained.

"Oh, rotten!" grunted Mornington.

"Beastly!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Well, nobody likes a fixture put off," remarked Jimmy, "but this will make it all right for Lovell to play."

"What?"

"Look here——"

"Lovell will be right as rain long before next Wednesday," said Jimmy Silver. "It's all serene."

"You're goin' to play him, after all his thunderin' cheek, and his playin' the goat——"

"I'm going to play the best man for the job. Lovell's the best man for the job when he's fit. That settles it."

Mornington made a grimace.

"Well, you may be right," he said. "But if I were footer captain I'd leave him out for the rest of the season after the way he's acted."

"Same here," said Tommy Dodd.

"Yes, rather!" said Putty, of the Fourth, emphatically.

"And lose matches?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Br-r-r-r! If we beat St. Jim's with Lovell in the team, it will fix it in his silly head for good and all that we can't win without him."

"Never mind what it fixes in his silly head so long as we beat St. Jim's," said Jimmy cheerily. "Anybody know where he is?"

"Stalking like a spectre under the beeches, scowlin' at any man who comes within ten yards of him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver smiled, and walked away to the beeches there and then. He soon discerned Lovell, leaning against an old tree, with his moody gaze fixed before him on vacancy. With the corner of his eye, however, Lovell spotted Jimmy Silver coming up. He detached himself from the tree, turned his back on the captain of the Fourth, and walked away.

Jimmy Silver breathed rather hard.

"Lovell!" he called out.

Arthur Edward did not turn his head.

Jimmy broke into a run and overtook him.

"Lovell! Stop a minute!"

"Leave me alone, can't you?" snapped Lovell.

"But I want to tell you——"

"Shut up!"

"I want——"

"Will you leave me alone?" almost snarled Lovell. "We're not friends now, and I'm done with you! Keep your distance!"

"I tell you——"

"Shut up!"

Lovell swung away again. Jimmy Silver caught him by the shoulder to detain him, and Lovell, his face flushing with anger, struck the hand savagely from his shoulder.

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

It was a sharp rap on his wrist.

Jimmy Silver's eyes flashed, and he clenched his hands hard, and made a stride at Lovell. For the moment it looked as if he would hurl himself at his one-time chum, hitting out right and left. Lovell put up his hands in a twinkling, his eyes gleaming over them, a sneer on his face. Evidently he was not averse to a scrap.

"Come on!" he said between his teeth.

Very nearly Jimmy Silver took him at his word. It required all his self-control to keep his hands down. But he dropped them and unclenched them. Lovell gave a taunting laugh.

With burning cheeks and beating heart, Jimmy Silver turned away. The taunting laugh followed him. Jimmy did not look back. He was determined that he would not be drawn into actual conflict if he could help it. He strode away, unheeding, though his eyes were gleaming with anger.

The next time Arthur Edward Lovell came across the captain of the Fourth, Jimmy Silver's face was as grim as his own. The olive-branch, offered so often and rejected, was not offered again, and Lovell was left to go on his own wilful way, unregarded and unfriended.

THE NINTH CHAPTER

A Licking for Lovell I

"I'd have licked him!"

"Well, he could lick him if he liked."

"Not worth it."

Arthur Edward Lovell, coming along the Classical Fourth passage, heard those remarks from a group of the Classical Fourth.

He knew what they were discussing.

A good many eyes had witnessed that little scene under the beech-trees. Jimmy Silver's self-control, admirable in itself, did not find many admirers in the Form.

The general opinion in the Classical Fourth was that Arthur Edward Lovell was asking for a licking; begging and praying for one, as Valentine Mornington expressed it. That the captain of the Fourth was fully able to give him what he was asking for was common knowledge. And the Classical juniors saw little to commend in Jimmy's self-restraint. A sulky fellow, who quarrelled with all his friends and put on airs and graces all round, would have been all the better for a thrashing in the opinion of the Rookwooders.

Lovell's eyes flashed as he heard.

One day in Coventry—self-imposed as it was—had intensified his bitterness to an alarming extent. Solitude led to brooding, and brooding over grievances, real or fancied, could only make matters worse. He was left alone now, disregarded, looked on, if he was looked on at all, as a fellow who did not matter, a fellow whose persistent wrongheadedness made it advisable to leave him severely alone.

Lovell was possessed by a fierce desire to show the fellows that he did matter. He was ready for a quarrel with anybody.

So he stopped on his way up the passage, and turned a grim and savage look on the group of Classics.

Tubby Muffin detached himself from the group and sidled away. Peele, of the Fourth, became interested in the view from the nearest window. But there were five or six other fellows who were not in the least alarmed by Lovell's black looks.

Conroy and Putty and Oswald eyed him coolly. Mornington laughed in his face.

"You're speaking of me, I think?" said Lovell, between his clenched teeth.

"Hallo! Found your voice?" grinned Mornington. "Now you've found it, would you mind keepin' it for the fellows who want to hear it—if any!"

"Were you speaking of me?"

"Tremble, you chaps!" said Mornington. "Lovell's ratty! This is where our knees knock together."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you're afraid to own up——"

Mornington laughed.

"I was speakin' of you, and wonderin' why Jimmy Silver didn't whop you as you asked him to," he replied. "I'd have done it in his place, without half so much askin'!"

"Same here," said Conroy.

"And here," said Oswald.

"Well, you've got a chance now," exclaimed Lovell. "Put your hands up, Mornington, you cad!"

And Lovell rushed at the dandy of the Fourth.

Morny's hands were up in a twinkling.

The next second a fight was going on in the Classical Fourth passage. Fellows came hurrying out of the studies.

"A fight!" yelled Tubby Muffin into the end study. "Lovell and Morny! He, he, he!"

"The silly ass!" breathed Jimmy Silver.

And he came out into the passage.

The fight was going strong. The slim and graceful Mornington was giving ground before the more burly Lovell, but he was fighting hard, with a set, grim face. And suddenly, as Lovell pressed him fiercely, there was a pause, and Lovell stumbled.

It was his game knee again. He had forgotten it, but it had failed him in the critical moment.

Morny did not know why his attack tailed off; he was fighting hard, and he was excited. He only knew that he had an opening, and he did not lose the chance. He piled in with right and left, and Lovell

went sprawling and crashing along the passage.

"Man down!" yelled Tubby Muffin.

"He, he, he!"

"Shut up, you fat idiot!" growled Jimmy Silver.

He ran up to Lovell. The sight of his hapless friend, sprawling under the blows of a fellow who in ordinary circumstances was no match for him, went to Jimmy's heart. Lovell's wrongheadedness had led him into this—into open conflict with his Form-fellows, and he was not equal to what he had so wilfully and recklessly taken on.

Jimmy dropped on a knee beside him.

Lovell was gasping dazedly. He made an effort to rise, and sank back again. But as Jimmy gave him a helping hand, Lovell brushed it roughly aside. He was not a fellow to be pitied.

He staggered up.

"Lovell——"

"Mind your own business, hang you!"

Jimmy Silver stepped back.

"Come on, Mornington, you rotter!" snarled Lovell.

But by that time Valentine Mornington had realised the cause of Lovell's collapse, and he had dropped his hands.

"Chuck it," he said. "Wait till your jolly old leg's mended, old bean. You've got only one leg to stand on."

"That's a lie!"

"Every fellow here can see it. What's the good of playin' the fool, Lovell? You're no more fit for fightin' than you are for footer."

That did it! Lovell rushed at him fiercely, and Morny, willy-nilly, had to resume the combat.

"Give him what he wants," grinned Peele. "He won't be happy till he gets it!"

Lovell's attack was hot and fierce, and again Morny had to give ground. But again that unfortunate leg played false. It was odd that Lovell would not admit even to himself that he had a game leg when that game leg was obviously letting him down. But to admit it even to himself was to admit that he had been utterly

wrongheaded all the time, hopelessly in the wrong all along the line. Not for a ny consideration would Lovell have admitted that. So he declined to see the obvious; and there are, of course, none so blind as those who are determined not to see.

N e v e r t h e l e s s, whether Lovell chose to admit it or not, the knee was undoubtedly "gammy," and it c r o c k e d. Lovell almost fell, as he felt a frightful twinge; the next moment he quite fell as Morny's fist was dashed in his face.

Crash!

That was the end of the fight.

When Lovell rose, slowly and painfully he limped away, with a black and bitter face. He was licked, and he knew it. Bitterest of all was that it had happened under the eyes of all the Classical Fourth, under the eyes of Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome. They were glad, of course; certainly they had not looked glad, but Lovell did not doubt that they were glad.

"Licked to the wide!" said Peele. "And that's the fellow who thinks he can play St. Jim's, when he can hardly stand on his gammy leg!"

That was the last remark Lovell heard as he went.

He did not show up in the junior Common-room that evening. His defeat at fisticuffs had been the finishing blow to his pride,



"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy. He wrenched at the door-handle. But the door was fast. Evidently it was locked on the outside. "Here, open that door!" he shouted. There was a low laugh on the landing outside.

(See Chapter 10.)

and he would not let mocking eyes behold the signs of damage on his face. He kept away from the other fellows, and was not seen till dormitory. Then he went to bed without a word or a look at the rest.

Probably he expected some chipping. But the Classical fellows said nothing on the subject. They let him alone, and, in fact, ignored his existence.

But that ignoring of his existence was the unkindest cut of all.

Lovell lay awake long after the rest of the Form were asleep. His swollen nose and other damages helped to keep him wakeful.

And the thoughts that were passing through the mind of the poor wrongheaded fellow now would have startled his Form-fellows had they guessed.

THE TENTH CHAPTER

Desperate Measures I

JIMMY SILVER stared round the end study. It was Wednesday afternoon; the afternoon which should have been devoted to the St. Jim's match, but for the unexpected postponement of that fixture.

A scratch match had been arranged for that afternoon to fill up the blank, and incidentally to keep the Rookwood junior footballers up to the mark.

Jimmy had come up for his football boots. He kept them in the study. Raby and Newcome, like most of the fellows, kept their football things in the changing-room. On such matters there was a good deal of communism among the Rookwooders, and a fellow who could not find his shirt or his boots did not hesitate to help himself to anybody else's if they would fit more or less. This was not as it should have been, and sometimes a master or a prefect would descend on the fellows and institute a new order of things—which lasted until that master or prefect forgot about the matter, and no longer. Jimmy was rather particular about his boots, as every footballer should be. He kept them in the study, where they were not liable to get mixed with any other fellow's.

But on the present occasion it looked as if some borrower, short of boots, had dropped into the end study to look for some.

For they were gone.

Jimmy looked round the study and stared round it. He glanced into the cupboard, and he peeped under the table and peered over the top of the bookcase. No boots met his eye.

He looked cross.

Really, it was too bad, when a fellow took so much trouble with his football boots, if a reckless borrower had tracked him to his lair, so to speak, and borrowed the boots there.

"Bother!" said Jimmy.

It was annoying—all the more because the other fellows had gone down to Little Side, and were expecting Jimmy to join them there. He did not want to waste time rooting over the House for somebody else's boots to replace his own.

There was a step outside the end study.

"Hallo, you! Seen my boots?" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Yes."

Jimmy started.

It was Lovell's voice.

Jimmy swung round to the door. Arthur Edward Lovell was looking in, with his hands in his pockets and a sarcastic grin on his face.

Jimmy stared at him. He did not quite understand Lovell's expression, and he was surprised by Lovell speaking to him at all in the present circumstances.

"You've seen them?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, where are they?"

"In the top attic."

"Eh?"

"Top attic."

"How on earth could my football boots get into the top attic?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in amazement. "They couldn't walk up there, I suppose?"

"They could be taken there."

"Do you mean that some silly ass has been larking with my boots, just when I want them to put on," exclaimed Jimmy. "Who was it?"

"I," answered Lovell coolly.

"Well, you thundering ass," said Jimmy, "if you've taken my boots up to the attic, you can jolly well go and fetch them down again! See?"

"Fetch them yourself!"

"Look here, Lovell——"

"Go and eat coke!"

Lovell lounged away.

"You silly ass!" roared Jimmy Silver, in great exasperation. "What the thump do you mean by playing a kid's trick like this?"

Lovell made no answer.

He had lounged away to the passage

window, and stood staring moodily out into the quad, heedless of Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy drew a deep breath.

He was annoyed and irritated by such a childish trick, but he was more surprised than either. It was not like Lovell to play such a trick, and an infantile prank of this sort was certainly not in keeping with the attitude of lofty dignity Lovell had adopted. Really, it was difficult to understand.

Lovell had told him where the boots were; apparently it was his object to give Jimmy a tramp up two or three flights of stairs to the old attic to fetch his boots. Such a trick was absolutely puerile; it almost made Jimmy wonder whether Lovell was quite in his right mind. Still, he knew where the boots were now, and he started to fetch them.

The old attics at the top of the building had been disused for many years, except by the spiders. They were hardly ever entered, except occasionally by some fellows like Peele and Gower, to smoke cigarettes in great secrecy and with a feeling of devilment. The top attic was a very secluded room, with a tiny, cobwebby window looking out over sloping slates and chimney-tops, and nothing else but the sky. The stairs were narrow and steep, and Jimmy did not feel good-tempered as he laboriously mounted them.

He reached the top attic at last and went in.

The room was empty save for dust and cobwebs. In the far corner his boots were to be seen, in the dim light from the tiny window.

Jimmy Silver hurried across the room.

He picked up the boots and turned.

Bang!

The door of the little attic closed suddenly and sharply. The sudden bang made him jump.

Jimmy stared at the door.

It opened outwards, and it had been flung to. There was no draught on the little landing or the narrow stair to cause it to bang shut.

Jimmy ran across to the door and pushed it.

It did not move.

He had not noticed, when he entered, that the key was on the outside of the lock. But he noticed now that it was not on the inside.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy.

He wrenched at the door-handle.

But the door was fast. Evidently it was locked on the outside. Jimmy banged on it with his fist.

"Here, open this door!" he shouted.

There was a low laugh on the landing outside.

"Lovell!" exclaimed Jimmy, in wonder.

"You've got it."

"You utter ass! Unlock that door!" shouted Jimmy. "The fellows are waiting for me on Little Side."

"I know that. Let them wait!"

"Lovell——"

"You're bagged," came Lovell's cool, steady voice through the keyhole. "You're landed, you rotter! You've asked for this, and now you've got it. You've left me out of the St. Jim's match, and now I've left you out. See? I'm going out for the afternoon, and taking the key with me. Ta-ta!"

Steps were heard descending the narrow stair.

"Lovell!" roared Jimmy Silver.

There was no reply. The footsteps were gone. Only the echo of Jimmy Silver's voice answered him.

Bang! bang! bang!

Jimmy thumped savagely on the door.

"Lovell! Come back, you thumping ass! My hat! I'll jolly well lick you for this! Come back, you howling chump!"

But there was no answer, and he realised that Lovell was gone, taking the key with him.

Jimmy Silver was a prisoner in the attic.

It was scarcely credible, though it had happened. Jimmy ceased to shout and thump on the door at last. Lovell was gone, and he knew that no one else could hear. The top attic was too far from the inhabited portions of the building for that. Unless Lovell chose to come back and release him, he was a prisoner for the afternoon.

"The ass!" breathed Jimmy. "The utter idiot!"

Evidently the conveying of the football boots to the top attic had not been the childish trick Jimmy had supposed. It had been designed to get him there, so that he could be locked in. Lovell evidently had followed him quietly up the stairs, and slammed the door on him and locked it, trapping him with perfect ease. Not for an instant had Jimmy suspected or expected anything of the sort until it happened. Even now he could hardly believe it. It was difficult to comprehend that sulky resentment and hugging a grievance could so far change the nature of a fellow who had always been open and honourable and frank, with all his headstrong ways. There was something smacking very unpleasantly of treachery in what Lovell had done—astonishing enough in a fellow like Lovell.

And why had he done it?

To keep Jimmy out of a practice match? It was not that. Jimmy realised that Lovell, so completely estranged from the rest by his own wrongheaded conduct, did not even know that the St. Jim's match had been postponed.

He believed that Tom Merry & Co. were arriving at Rookwood that afternoon for the game—that they might arrive any minute now. And, believing that Jimmy Silver was wanted on the football ground for one of the biggest fixtures of the football season, he had tricked him into that lonely attic and locked him in.

As he realised that, Jimmy felt a flush of anger and his eyes sparkled.

He knew that there was no hope of release.

He could have shouted till his throat was husky and hoarse, and no one would have heard him. No one had the least suspicion where he was. If the fellows looked for him, certainly they were not likely to look in the attics. He was there till Lovell chose to release him, and Lovell had said that he was going out for the afternoon. Had the St. Jim's match been taking place that day, Jimmy Silver would have been out of it.

"The rotter!" breathed Jimmy.

Then he laughed.

He could not help it.

It was uncomfortable enough to pass a half-holiday locked up in a lonely attic. It was disagreeable to miss a game on Little Side—even a practice game. But that was all there was to it. No real harm was done. The big fixture, which Lovell believed he was missing, was not to take place till a week later.

Jimmy laughed aloud.

Lovell had taken to scheming and plotting in his sulky resentment, but scheming and plotting really were not in his line at all. He was about the worst schemer and plotter at Rookwood. This was exactly like Lovell; he was given to blundering and making endless mistakes; but he had never blundered so conspicuously and ridiculously as when he took on the rôle of schemer and plotter.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jim's laugh rang through the attic.

There was something so supremely ridiculous in Lovell's having locked him up away from a practice match, in the firm belief that he was keeping him away from a big fixture, that Jimmy roared over it.

Lovell had acted badly—very badly; but a fellow who did his bad actions in this way, whose scheming was run on these absurd lines, was evidently not cut out by Nature for a rascal. Jimmy was no longer feeling angry. The situation was too absurd for that. He laughed loud and long, and settled down to wait as cheerfully as he could.

On Little Side, the fellows wondered why Jimmy did not come. One or two fellows came up to the House to call him, and did not find him. Certainly they never dreamed that he was locked up in the attics. They supposed that he must have been called away, and went back to the football. It was a matter of no great consequence, a man more or less in a practice game. Had the St. Jim's match been on that afternoon, assuredly the matter would have been very different. Jimmy would have been hunted for high and low: his absence would have spread dismay all through the Lower School. But the St. Jim's match was still a week distant, and nobody thought of it in

connection with Jimmy's absence from Little Side. The practice went on serenely, while Jimmy was enduring his incarceration in the top attic as calmly as he could.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER Perplexing!

ARTHUR EDWARD LOVELL came in at the gates of Rookwood, rather tired and dusty.

He had spent a long afternoon by himself, tramping in country lanes and leafless woods. Such a tramp as he had often enjoyed in company with his chums, but which he had not found very enjoyable all on his lonely own.

He was tired now, he was dusty, he was dispirited.

He had walked out of Rookwood, with the attic key in his pocket, angry triumph in his breast, giving one sarcastic, sneering glance in the direction of the football ground as he went.

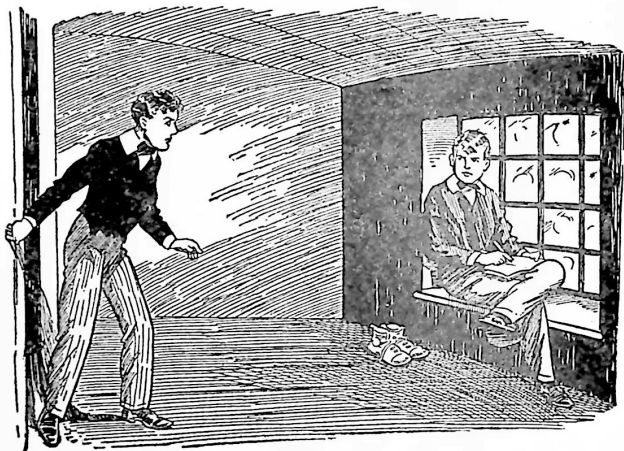
But during his long and solitary walk, his feeling of triumph had evaporated, and his success in his wretched scheme left a bitter taste in his mouth.

The consequences, too, had to be thought of when he came back to the school. Headstrong and reckless as he was, Lovell had to think a little when he turned his footsteps homeward towards Rookwood.

The dusk was falling. Football, of course, was long over. How had the match gone?

Defeat, of course. With Lovell out and Jimmy Silver out, two reserves would have had to be played at centre and right-half, and that was more than enough to settle Rookwood's chances. At their best they were

no more than a match for Tom Merry & Co. Without their captain, Rookwood had no chance of pulling off a victory, and that was a certainty. The St. Jim's match was not one of those games in which hurried changes could be made in the team at the last moment, and second-rate men given a chance. It was a match in which Rookwood had to go all out. An ounce of quality more or less might make all the difference. Lovell believed that his own exclusion would bring about defeat, as he believed that it



Lovell looked in. "So you've come?" said Jimmy Silver's quiet voice. Jimmy was seated in the little window-seat, with a pencil in his hand and a pocket-book on his knee. (See Chapter 11.)

had brought about defeat in the tussle with Greyfriars. With Jimmy Silver missing also, there was not the shadow of a doubt. The only question was, by how many goals had Rookwood been licked?

Had Lovell had the sense of his sins, as it were, an overwhelming defeat of the Rookwood side would have pleased him. Somehow the idea of it did not please him, however. He had deliberately brought it about, as he fancied, by locking the junior captain in the attic. Yet he did not want

the side defeated, as he dimly realised. He did not want the visiting team to pile up a ridiculous margin of goals. He did not want Tom Merry & Co. to return to St. Jim's thinking that Rookwood had forgotten how to play Soccer.

What he did want was rather vague.

As usual, he had acted without reflection, carried away by headstrong impulse. Not as usual, he had acted badly—indeed, wickedly—and though he would not think so, or believe so, the lurking consciousness of it was horribly discomfiting.

He had been justified, he said to himself a score of times. A fellow keen to play, entitled to play, fit to play, he had been turned out by a sort of conspiracy among the others, to whom his captain, his own chum, had weakly given ear. That was the extraordinary view Lovell took of the matter.

From that point of view, he felt justified in hitting back in the only way he could. As for the match, it was lost anyhow when the football captain followed such methods. Had not the Greyfriars match been lost?

But that point of view, which had satisfied Lovell right up to the end, right up to the time when it was too late to repent, somehow ceased to satisfy him when it was too late. What he had done had, in fact, given him a shock, and that shock had opened his eyes a little.

One thought made him still obstinate, defiant, unyielding. That was the thought of the consequences.

He had to face them; he knew that. The Rookwooders would be ready to lynch the man who had kept their captain out of a big fixture. Any sign of repentance on Lovell's part would be attributed only to a cowardly desire to escape his punishment. At that thought, Lovell set his teeth. He would be ragged unmercifully; he would be turned out of the football club. If the matter came to the ears of the masters, he might be flogged and even expelled from the school. Well, the fellows should see at least that he could face the music without flinching.

Like Pharaoh of old, Lovell hardened his heart. He was ready to oppose sullen defiance to the condemnation of all Rookwood.

He tramped up to the House.

It was near time for call-over, and many fellows were going in. Nobody, as was usual now, spoke to Lovell or took any heed of him.

But Lovell was puzzled.

The fellows did not look as if any disaster had occurred that afternoon. There were no angry looks, no sign of excitement.

Surely they had not pulled off the match after all, in spite of the loss of two instead of one of Rookwood's best men?

It was impossible.

The fellows were not even discussing the game or Jimmy Silver's absence. Lovell caught a good deal of talk among the fellows as he went in, but no one referred to St. Jim's. No one spoke of the game; no one seemed concerned about Jimmy being away.

It was mystifying.

Never had Lovell's exclusion weighed so heavily upon him. It needed all his stiff-necked pride to keep him from speaking to some of the fellows and asking them questions.

He remembered that Neville, of the Sixth, was to referee the match. He could speak to a Sixth Form man. He sighted Neville, and went up to him.

"Did you referee for the junior team today, Neville?" he asked.

Neville glanced at him.

"No," he answered.

And he walked on.

So Neville hadn't been referee. Somebody must have been, if the game had been played at all; but, without knowing who, Lovell could not ask him what had happened.

Conroy called to Lovell as he went upstairs. Perhaps he forgot that Lovell had sent himself to Coventry, or perhaps he did not care.

"See anything of Jimmy Silver out of gates, Lovell?"

Lovell started and looked round.

"No."

Evidently the fellows did not yet guess Lovell's agency in the junior captain's disappearance. They were really not likely to guess, and they would not know till Jimmy told them.

"Wasn't he with you on Little Side?" Lovell asked, his intense curiosity to know what had happened overmastering his sulky reserve.

"No."

"You played without him?"

"Yes."

"You don't seem to have missed him much," said Lovell, more and more mystified by Conroy's evident indifference.

"No. What did it matter, anyhow?" said the Australian junior. "I was only wondering where he'd got to."

"Oh!"

Utterly perplexed, Lovell went on up the stairs as Conroy walked away whistling.

The loss of Jimmy Silver that afternoon could not have been the crushing blow that Lovell had supposed it would be. But he could not understand. He had expected to find the juniors seething with excitement and wrath, and he found that nobody cared a straw. Really, it was mystifying.

He tramped up the narrow stairs to the attics.

On the landing outside the top attic he stopped, and drew the key from his pocket. Roll-call was due in ten minutes now, and Jimmy Silver had to be released, unless he was to be inquired after by the masters. Lovell inserted the key in the lock and turned it.

He pulled the door open.

"So you've come?" said Jimmy Silver's quiet voice.

Lovell looked in.

Jimmy was seated in the little window-seat, with a pencil in his hand and a pocket-book on his knee. He had been passing the time with some exercises in Latin verbs; not a very enticing way of passing a half-holiday, but better than idleness. He put the pencil and book into his pocket, and came across to the door.

Lovell eyed him.

He was prepared for assault and battery; indeed, he fully expected a fight with Jimmy Silver to be the beginning of what he had to go through. He was not fit for a scrap. He was tired, and his long tramp had caused his knee to twinge painfully; he had overtaxed the limb that was not yet recovered. But he faced the captain of the Fourth grimly. Fit or unfit, he was ready.

Jimmy Silver looked him full in the face.

What Jimmy read there did not make him angry. It rather made him sorry. He did not raise his hand, and Lovell, flushing, abandoned his defensive attitude.

"You've missed the match!" he jeered.

A faint smile played over Jimmy's face for a moment. Even yet Lovell did not know that his wonderful scheme had missed fire, and had no suspicion of his egregious blunder.

Jimmy could not help wondering what his feelings would be like when he made the discovery.

"You don't seem to care," said the mystified Lovell.

"Not very much."

"I suppose Rookwood were licked?"

"Do you?"

"They'd have been licked anyhow, so it doesn't matter."

"It doesn't matter, certainly," agreed Jimmy.

"If you're looking for a scrap, I'm ready."

"Thank you," said Jimmy Silver politely. "I'm not looking for a scrap."

He passed Lovell and went down the stairs.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

Funny!

"JIMMY!"

"Jimmy Silver!"

"Here he is!"

"Where on earth have you been, you ass?"

A dozen voices greeted Jimmy as he joined the fellows going into Big Hall for call-over.

"Why didn't you come down to the footer?" demanded Raby.

"You were going to follow us down," said Newcome.

"What have you been doing?"

Jimmy Silver did not reply for a moment or two. He had already made up his mind that he would say nothing of what Lovell had done. Perhaps he erred on the side of kindness and forgiveness—if, indeed, it is possible to err in that direction. Lovell had acted badly, rottenly, unscrupulously. Jimmy knew all that. But he knew also that he did not want to see the finger of scorn pointed at his old chum, that he did not want to see Lovell ragged by the Form, ragged first and cut afterwards by all the Classical Fourth.

Jimmy Silver did not want that. And if it was not to come to pass, he had to keep silent.

Had Lovell kept him out of the St. Jim's fixture, he could scarcely have been silent. The excitement would have been too great. He would have had to explain why he had failed his side. But Lovell's preposterous blundering saved him from that painful necessity. There was no need to explain why he had failed to attend a practice match.

"What on earth have you been doing all the afternoon?" demanded Raby.

"Verbs," answered Jimmy.

"What?"

"Latin verbs."

His chums stopped and stared at him.

"You've put in a half-holiday doing Latin verbs?" yelled Raby.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat! You're fonder of them than I am."

"Well, you must be a howling ass," said Putty, of the Fourth. "We thought you were coming down to the practice, too. You might have sent us word that you weren't coming."

"So I might," agreed Jimmy. "Sorry."

"Blessed if I catch on at all," said Newcome. "You arranged the practice, and we expected you to turn up. Morny captained the side as you weren't there. You never said a word about swotting this afternoon."

"I hadn't thought of it then," said Jimmy.

"Well, you're an ass," said Newcome.

"Thanks."

"A howling ass!" said Raby.

"More thanks."

"Fathead!" said his two chums together, and then they went into Hall, and the subject dropped.

Arthur Edward Lovell came last into Hall, only in time to answer to his name.

The Classical Fourth took no notice of him. He realised that Jimmy Silver had not spoken yet. After roll-call the fellows were dismissed, and Lovell, as was his habit now, loafed away by himself, with a clouded face.

He did his prep. in the Form-room, as was his new custom. He expected to be interrupted by an indignant mob of juniors, arriving to rag the fellow who had kept their captain out of a match.

But he was not interrupted.

Prep. over, Lovell left the Form-room. He had nothing to do with himself, except to hug his grievance on the top of the lonely, lofty pedestal of dignity he had set up for himself. He lounged about aimlessly, only affecting a brisk air when he saw a Classical fellow glancing at him. Not on any account were the fellows to know that he felt lonely and miserable—not on any account whatever; though, as a matter of fact, they knew it perfectly well, such of them as gave him any thought at all.

When was the ragging going to begin?

Lovell was ready to face it when it came, and he knew it must come. The thing itself would be bad enough, but not so bad as this harassing state of expectation, this wretched suspense.

Was Jimmy Silver deliberately keeping him in suspense, letting the consequences of his action hang over his head, like a sword of Damocles, by way of punishment?

That must be it, of course.

Lovell gritted his teeth at the thought. It revived all his old anger, all his old bitterness and resentment. He had done what all the fellows would call a dirty action—a treacherous, disloyal trick; and he was

ready to face his punishment. Punishment was his due, but not being played with in the manner of cat and mouse.

He tramped up to the Classical Fourth passage.

As he was seen heading for the end study, some of the Classical fellows exchanged glances and smiles. They anticipated a row. Not one of them had the faintest idea of what was working in poor Lovell's moody, miserable mind.

Lovell threw open the door of the end study.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome had finished prep. They looked round together at Arthur Edward Lovell's dark and lowering face in the doorway.

"Hallo! Bill Bailey's come home again," remarked Raby.

Jimmy Silver and Newcome grinned.

Lovell scowled.

He came into the study and shut the door after him. He fixed his eyes on the captain of the Fourth.

"You haven't told the fellows yet, Silver?"

"No."

"When are you going to tell them?"

"Never."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Never."

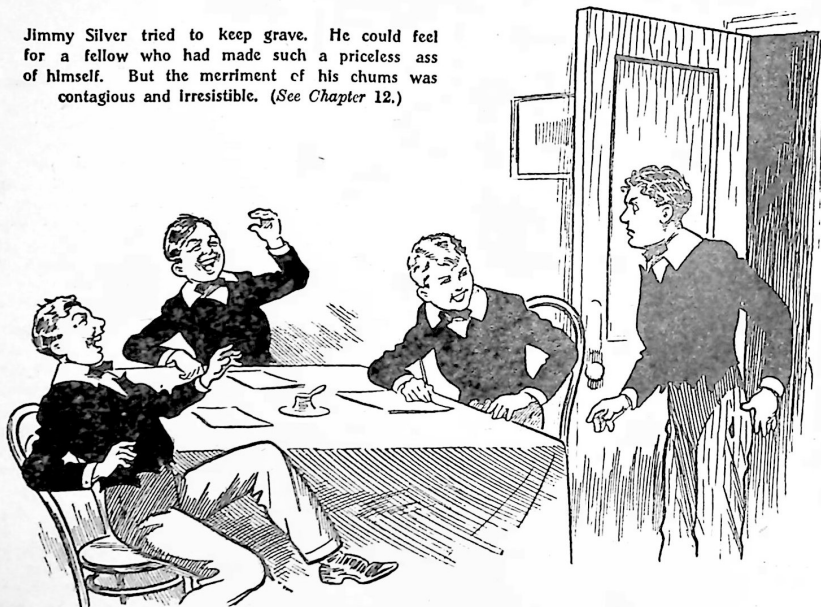
Lovell stared.

Raby and Newcome looked at one, then at the other. What Lovell was driving at was a mystery to them.

"You're not going to tell them?" breathed Lovell at last.

In spite of himself, in spite of angry pride and sulky resentment, his face lighted. The ordeal he had expected as a matter of course was "off." Not merely the ragging—Lovell

Jimmy Silver tried to keep grave. He could feel for a fellow who had made such a priceless ass of himself. But the merriment of his chums was contagious and irresistible. (See Chapter 12.)



Rapiers At Rookwood!



To face page 201.

Drawn by E. E. Bristow.

An Affair of Honour Between Two Rookwood Masters!

Rapiers at Rookwood!

IN the "good old days" of the eighteenth century, when George the Third was King, it was a fairly common custom, among the aristocracy, to settle disputes by means of duels.

Naturally, you would not expect to find highly respectable schoolmasters indulging in sword-play to settle their differences; yet in the summer of 1794 a thrilling duel was fought in the vicinity of Rookwood School. The gentlemen concerned in this "affair of honour" were Mr. Roger Lynd, the master of the Fourth, and Monsieur L'Esperon, the excitable little French master. For some time the two masters had been bitterly estranged, and the climax was reached when Monsieur L'Esperon sent a private challenge to his colleague. The challenge was accepted, secret preparations were made for the duel, and only two other masters (who agreed to act as seconds) were taken into the duellists' confidence.

Despite these precautions, the whisper passed through the Fourth that Mr. Lynd and the French master had arranged to cross swords. When the two masters met, in a clearing of the wood, a number of juniors ambushed themselves near the spot. They were fearful for the fate of Mr. Lynd, their quiet, studious Form-master; but they need not have feared, for Mr. Lynd proved himself a master of swordcraft. Monsieur L'Esperon fought fiercely. In his excitement, he launched a series of wild attacks, and often recklessly exposed himself to the rapier of his opponent.

Mr. Lynd could have settled the issue on several occasions had he chosen, but he refrained from taking advantage of the openings with which his opponent presented him. The boys looked on breathlessly, and presently they had the great joy of seeing their Form-master disarm the Frenchman, sending his rapier circling through the air, and causing Monsieur L'Esperon to topple helplessly at his feet.

This ended the matter, and the two masters became fast friends.

could have stood that. But the scorn and contempt that he knew would be his portion,—the averted, contemptuous faces of the Rookwooders—he had escaped that! He drew a deep, deep breath. At that moment, somehow, everything seemed to become clearer in his troubled mind. He had dreaded the condemnation of the fellows because, in his heart of hearts, he knew that he deserved it. He had not admitted the knowledge, but it was there.

"It's all serene," said Jimmy. "No harm done, and nothing to make a song about."

"Oh!"

"What on earth are you two fellows bubbling about?" demanded Raby. "What has Lovell done?"

"Oh, nothing to speak of."

"Look here, you ass, what does all this mean?" exclaimed Newcome. "What are you making a mystery about?"

"Nothing much."

"I locked Jimmy Silver up in the top attic this afternoon," said Lovell deliberately. "I'm not afraid to own up! You can shout it out to all Rookwood if you like!"

"You—you—you locked Jimmy up in an attic?" stuttered Raby.

"Yes."

"So it was there you did your giddy Latin verbs, Jimmy?"

"A fellow had to do something," said Jimmy, with a smile. "It was rather a bore. No need to say anything outside this study."

"But what did the silly ass play such a kid's trick for?" exclaimed Raby. "Are you going off your rocker, Lovell, with your sulks?"

"I did it to keep Jimmy Silver out of the St. Jim's match."

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Because he left me out. And I'm not sorry!" added Lovell defiantly. "You can do what you like about it."

Raby and Newcome stared at him blankly. They stared at him as if fascinated.

"You—you—you——" babbled Raby. "You locked Jimmy up this afternoon to—to—to keep him out of the St. Jim's match?"

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Newcome.

The absurdity of it seemed to have struck him all of a sudden. He roared.

Raby joined in.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver tried to keep grave. He could feel for a fellow who had made such a priceless ass of himself. But the merriment of his chums was contagious and irresistible. Jimmy, in spite of himself, joined in the roar of laughter that rang through the end study.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell stared at the three. He simply could not understand. Anger, scorn, rage, resentment, he could have understood; but not this outburst of uncontrollable merriment.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three, almost weeping with mirth.

Lovell set his lips.

"So you think it's a laughing matter?" he exclaimed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes, rather," gasped Raby. "Oh, my hat! You locked Jimmy up to-day to keep him out of a match that comes off in a week's time! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Newcome. "You should have kept him locked up for a week! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell's face was a study.

"Hasn't the match been played?" he stuttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Raby and Newcome.

"It's postponed till next Wednesday!" gasped Jimmy Silver, wiping his eyes. "That's why it doesn't matter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Pip-pip-postponed!" stuttered Lovell.

"Yes."

"Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the three, going off into another paroxysm at the look on Arthur

Edward Lovell's speaking countenance. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell, with a crimson face, tramped out of the study and banged the door after him. A yell of merriment followed him as he went. Lovell's first—and last—essay as a plotting schemer had had the effect of sending the end study into hysterics. That was all; and later on, when Lovell's ears had ceased to burn, and he thought the matter over quietly, he was glad, deeply and intensely glad, that it had had no other effect.

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

Lovell Sees Light!

"It was rotten!"

Lovell said that to himself.

Had he said it to Jimmy Silver, as certainly he ought to have done, all would have been calm and bright.

But Lovell, though he had reached the stage of repentance, had not by any means reached the stage of owning up to it.

Towards the end study he was feeling far from reconciled. No fellow likes being laughed at; no fellow likes the knowledge that he has made a priceless ass of himself. Especially was this the case with a fellow whose sense of dignity was so highly developed.

When he thought of the absurd blunder he had made and the merriment in the end study, Lovell's ears still burned.

Still, he had reached the point of taking a detached view of his own conduct, and to himself he admitted that it was "rotten." He was deeply thankful that, after all, Jimmy Silver had not been kept out of the St. Jim's match by his trickery. Luck had favoured him, inasmuch as no harm had been done. He was glad of that. But he had intended to play what he now realised, rather late, was a very dirty trick—a very scurvy trick indeed. He was ashamed of it to the very bottom of his heart.

Only he would not say so.

If he said so, the fellows would think he wanted to make it up, might even think that he was angling for a place in the team

next week; might think all sorts of things derogatory to his lofty pride.

So he said nothing.

After what had happened he did not, of course, expect Jimmy Silver to give him a place in the eleven again. Even Lovell was able to realise that he had forfeited all claims to be considered now.

A fellow who deliberately acted against the success of his own school was not the fellow to be selected to play for the school. That became clear to Lovell's mind.

Jimmy had kept the secret; the incident was to be allowed to die away and be forgotten. That was more than the hapless Arthur Edward had any right to expect, and he knew it. Friendship, after what had occurred, was out of the question. Trust was out of the question. Lovell felt a pang of remorse and shame as it came into his mind that when the actual date of the match came round the junior captain would be taking precautions against him. Naturally Jimmy would be on his guard next time. There was not going to be any "next time" so far as Lovell was concerned. But he had parted with any right to be trusted.

It was a bitter reflection.

That reflection led to further reflections. Lovell's own conduct, and his tardy realisation of its rottenness, had given him a painful shock, and the shock had opened his eyes to many things. He had a sort of glimpse of his own headstrong wilfulness; he even began to understand that he had been hopelessly in the wrong from the beginning. All through Thursday he had a painful ache in his game knee, due to his long tramp on Wednesday afternoon. It was painful, it was irritating, and it drove into Lovell's obstinate mind at last the knowledge that he really had been crooked, and that he had wilfully shut his eyes to the fact. The leg that would not stand a long tramp was evidently not a leg to be depended upon in a hard and fast game of football. When a thing was absolutely obvious, Lovell could see it. He saw it now.

Only a deep sense of injury had afforded him some sort of justification for his action.

It was driven into his mind that the injury was a fancied one.

That completed his sense of shame and humiliation.

During the following days, Lovell was the most thoroughly miserable fellow at Rookwood or anywhere else.

In his own eyes he stood condemned, and that made him understand how the others must look upon him—how all Rookwood would have looked upon him had not Jimmy kept his secret. For a fancied wrong he had played a scurvy trick on his best chum, and his chum had only retaliated by saving him from the general condemnation that was his due. It was no wonder that poor Lovell felt wretched about it.

But he was not going to say so.

Repentant and ashamed as he was, he was still Arthur Edward Lovell, and too lofty to own up or make the first advances towards a reconciliation. And his ears still tingled over his absurd blunder and the laughter it had caused. He had failed lamentably in his bungling attempt to act like a rascal, but he had succeeded admirably in making a fool of himself. So his lofty back was still up, on that account at least. The fellows who had laughed at him should not see him coming round making it up.

So Arthur Edward Lovell still went on his lofty way, on the most distant terms with his former friends, though he was dropping into the old friendly terms with other fellows in the Classical Fourth.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver had heard from St. Jim's. The influenza scare had turned out only a scare after all, and the next Wednesday was definitely fixed as the date of the postponed match.

On Monday, Jimmy stopped to speak to Lovell when the Classical Fourth came out of their Form-room.

"How's your knee?" he asked.

Lovell hesitated before replying, but he replied:

"Quite all right now, thanks."

He paused, flushed, and added:

"It was pretty bad. But it's all right

now. Thanks for asking." Then he walked hurriedly away.

Jimmy Silver looked after him with a curious expression on his face. This was a great concession from the lofty Lovell. He had actually owned up that his knee had been a "game" knee.

On Tuesday, when Jimmy was busy with pencil and paper in the end study, making up the football list that was to be posted that evening, Raby, who had been looking very thoughtful, made a remark.

"About to-morrow, Jimmy——"

"Yes?" said Jimmy, looking up.

"Better keep an eye open. If that footballing ass plays any more tricks, it will be serious this time."

"Oh, he won't!" said Jimmy cheerfully.

"He's ass enough for anything, you know," remarked Newcome.

Jimmy shook his head.

"It's all right," he answered.

Jimmy Silver was assured that there would be no more trouble with Arthur

Edward. And Uncle James, as usual, was right.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

The St. Jim's Match I

"Quite a good lot!"

Valentine Mornington made that remark, among a crowd of fellows who were reading down the list for the St. Jim's match, in the junior common-room that evening. Morny, apparently, was satisfied with the list; no doubt all the more because his own name was there.

"Right as rain!" remarked Conroy.

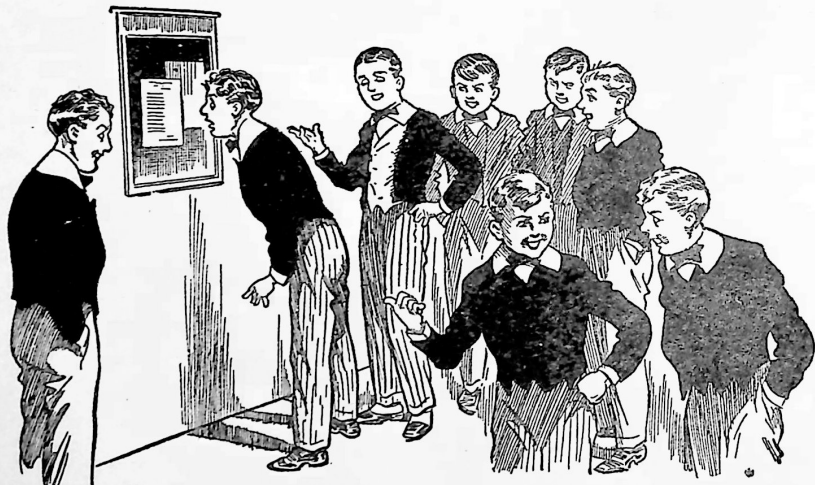
Conroy was down to keep goal.

"Might have been better," Putty of the Fourth observed, with a shake of the head, and there was a laugh. Every fellow whose name was not in the list felt that he could have suggested improvements.

Arthur Edward Lovell appeared in the doorway, and glanced at the group of juniors.

He coloured uncomfortably.

But for his own wrongheadedness, as poor



Lovell blinked. It was rather difficult for Arthur Edward Lovell to believe his eyes. "J.J.-Jimmy's playing me after all!" he ejaculated blankly. (See Chapter 14.)

Lovell was at last conscious, his own name would have been there. That game knee, the cause of so many troubles, was mended at last! It was as well as ever.

Mornington glanced round, and smiled as he saw him.

"Seen the list, Lovell?" he asked.

"No."

"Take a squint at it."

Lovell joined the group, and looked over the list. He looked, and then he stared. It was rather difficult for Arthur Edward Lovell to believe his eyes as he read:

"Conroy; T. Rawson, T. Doyle; T. Cook, J. Silver, A. E. Lovell; T. Dodd, V. Mornington, C. Erroll, G. Raby, Towle.

Lovell blinked.

The name that jumped out to meet his eyes, as it were, was "A. E. Lovell."

He stared at it.

"Knee all right, old bean?" grinned Mornington.

"Oh!" gasped Lovell. "Quite! But——" He stuttered.

"If you don't feel quite up to the mark, old bean, you can leave it to me," remarked Putty, of the Fourth.

"Or me," suggested Oswald.

"Or me," said half a dozen voices.

"J-J-Jimmy's playing me, after all!" ejaculated Lovell blankly.

"Why not?" asked Mornington. "If you're fit, there's no reason why not, is there?"

"N-n-no. But—but——"

"You don't think he'd give you the go-by because you've been givin' him the marble eye, do you? What's that got to do with football?"

Lovell made no answer.

He left the crowd of juniors, with his brain almost in a whirl. He made his way to the end study.

"Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver was there. He gave Lovell a nod and a friendly grin, just as if nothing had ever happened. Raby and Newcome regarded his crimson face curiously.

"Hallo, old bean," said Uncle James.

"I—I—I've seen the list," stammered Lovell.

"Satisfied with it?" asked Jimmy.

"You've put my name down."

"Naturally."

"Oh," said Lovell.

"You're fit, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, when you're fit, you're the best half-back we've got—excepting little me, of course," smiled Jimmy. "I shouldn't be likely to lose you if I could help it. We want to beat St. Jim's."

Lovell stood silent for some moments.

"I'm fit," he said at last.

"Good."

"I'll play—if you can trust me."

"That's all right."

"I'm fit," repeated Lovell. "But—but—but the other day, when you played Greyfriars, I wasn't fit. I thought I was. I—I mean, I was a silly, obstinate chump, and I thought—I thought I was—if you get me." "Quite."

"Bulkeley was quite right to send me off the field. I ought never to have been there."

"That's so," assented Jimmy. "My mistake."

"It wasn't your mistake. At least, it was I who made you make such a mistake. Playing the fool as I did," said Lovell. "I know now that I should have let the side down. I'm jolly glad Bulkeley sent me off. I—I've been a fool, Jimmy."

"Quite!"

"A silly, fat-headed, unreasonable sort of ass," said Lovell. Now that he had made up his mind to it, Arthur Edward was going the whole hog.

"You have," agreed Jimmy Silver.

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and Newcome cordially.

"I—I'm sorry," Lovell gulped.

"Don't mench, old bean," said Jimmy Silver. "Let's forget all about it. Bygones are bygones."

"I—I've been a fool," repeated Lovell. "I didn't see it—but I saw it afterwards, and wouldn't own up. I own up now."

"Better late than never," remarked Raby.

"I—I own up! I got my back up over

nothing, and then one thing led to another, and I did a rotten mean thing. Look here, Jimmy, you can scratch my name out of the list, and I shan't say a word."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"I won't do that," he said.

"I wouldn't grumble."

"The other fellows would. We want to beat St. Jim's, you ass. Greyfriars beat us because you were standing out. We don't want history to repeat itself to-morrow."

Lovell was silent. His heart was full of an emotion that he could never have expressed in words.

"You're a good sort, Jimmy, old chap," he gasped at last. "I—I'd do anything I could to make up."

"Help us beat St. Jim's to-morrow, and we'll call the account square."

"And don't play the goat again!" suggested Raby.

Lovell nodded.

"You can rub it in," he said. "I know I deserve it. Rub it in as hard as you like."

"No fear," said Raby, repentant at once. "It's all serene, old chap. Look here, it's time for prep. Go and get your books out of the Form-room, and bring them to the study."

"I'll come and help you carry them," said Newcome.

Lovell gulped. Sulky resentment, lofty pride, had vanished now, and Arthur Edward was feeling all the better for it.

"I—I say, I'm jolly glad to be friends again," he gasped.

"And so say all of us!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Hear, hear!"

And all was calm and bright.

The rift at Rookwood had closed again.

Once more the Fistical Four were happily reunited. The end study was itself again, and cheery good-fellowship reigned in that celebrated apartment, not to be disturbed again in a hurry, for Lovell was not likely to forget the lesson of his late experiences.

In many little ways Lovell showed his changed mood. Obviously, he wanted to make up for his shortcomings. He even

seemed to have come to doubt whether his own opinion was really the last word that could be said on any subject. More than that could hardly be expected of Arthur Edward.

Best of all, he made up his mind to justify Jim's choice of him to play St. Jim's, and to prove a credit to his side, by playing the game of his life—and he did.

When Tom Merry & Co. came over from St. Jim's they found the Rookwood junior eleven at the top of their form, and uncommonly hot stuff to tackle; and there was one fellow in the home team whom the visitors agreed was regular mustard. That fellow was the right half-back, Arthur Edward Lovell.

It was a gruelling game, and in the first half no goals were scored; in the interval, both sides were breathing hard and deep. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of St. Jim's, shook his head seriously as he sucked a lemon.

"You fellows will have to pull up your socks, you know," he told his comrades. "We've got all our work cut out to beat Wookwood. I vewy neahly bagged a goal, but that fellow—what's his name?—Shovel, or somethin', got in the way. He seems wathah a good man."

"He does," agreed Tom Merry.

"We shall weally have to go all out to win this match," declared Arthur Augustus sagely.

St. Jim's went "all out" in the second half. But it booted not, as a poet would say. Every attack broke up short of success. Right up to the finish the game looked like a draw; but then came an overwhelming attack from the home side, and it was Arthur Edward Lovell who gave Mornington the ball he slammed into the St. Jim's net.

There was a roar from all Rookwood.

"Goal!"

"Rookwood wins!"

Arthur Edward Lovell's face was bright when he walked off the field with his friends. Every cloud had rolled by, and the chums of the end study forgot that there ever had been a rift at Rookwood.

THE END