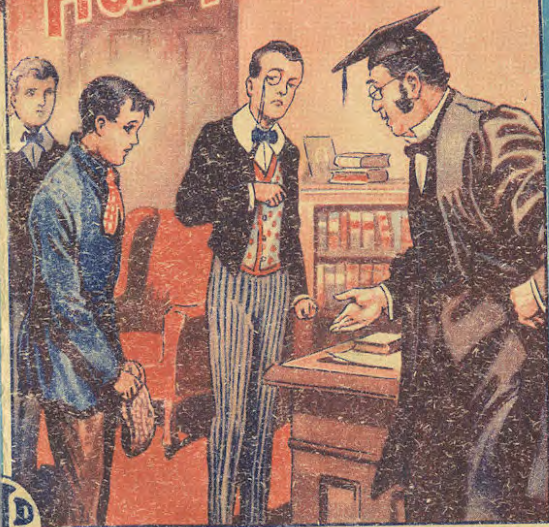


The Boy From Nowhere!

By
OWEN CONQUEST.



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THE BOY FROM NOWHERE!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

A Powerful and Dramatic
Tale of JIMMY SILVER
& Co., the Chums of
Rookwood.

CHAPTER 1. Fag Wanted!

"FAG!"
Carthew, of the Sixth Form at Rookwood was lounging at the corner of the passage, with his hands in his pockets.

He called "Fag!" as Jimmy Silver & Co. came down the staircase.

A dozen of the Third and the Fourth had passed Carthew, and he had not called to them. Evidently he had been waiting for the four chums from the End Study—Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby and Newcome, who were known throughout Rookwood as the Fistical Four.

The four juniors looked at one another; but they did not look at Carthew. They went on.

"Fag!" called the Sixth-Former again. "You'll do, Silver!"

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips.

The chums of the Fourth were going down to football practice, and Jimmy Silver, as junior captain of Rookwood, was wanted on the scene. It was particularly

exasperating to be called upon to fag just then; and Jimmy knew, just as well as if the bully of the Sixth had told him, that Carthew was calling on his services just because it was particularly exasperating.

"I think you hear me, Silver!" said Carthew, coming forward with an agreeable smile upon his face.

"Bother you!" was Jimmy's reply.

"What!"

"Look here, I'm just going down to the footer!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "You can get another fag, Carthew."

Carthew shook his head.

"A prefect must be just," he said. "I can't allow you to shirk and put it on somebody else, Silver."

Jimmy's eyes gleamed.

"Look here," broke out Arthur Edward Lovell, "you can go and eat coke, Carthew! Jimmy's wanted on Little Side."

"Cut for it, and chance it!" whispered Raby.

"Come on!" said Newcome.

Mark Carthew planted himself in the way of the juniors. He did not mean to let his victims escape.

"Silver—" he began.
 "I'm not fagging this afternoon," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "I'm wanted at the footer, Carthew."

"Follow me at once!"

"Cut!" whispered Jimmy.

The Fistical Four made a rush for the doorway.

Carthew was shoved aside, and the juniors fled. But the Sixth-Former was rushing after them in a moment, and his grasp closed upon Jimmy Silver's collar. Lovell and Raby and Newcome dodged out into the quadrangle; but the captain of the Fourth was a prisoner.

"Leggo!" roared Jimmy.

"Come with me, you cheeky young rotter—ah!"

Jimmy Silver jerked his collar away.

Carthew was between him and the doorway now, and Jimmy dodged up the passage.

"Stop!" roared Carthew.

Jimmy stopped—not because Carthew shouted, but because Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, suddenly loomed up before him in the corridor.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him over his glasses.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bootles. "What—what—what is the matter?"

"I have just asked Silver to fag for me, sir," said Carthew smoothly. "He was bolting instead."

Mr. Bootles frowned at the junior.

"That is a highly improper proceeding on your part, Silver!" he said, with severity.

Jimmy breathed hard.

"I'm wanted at footer, sir," he answered.

"Oh, if it is for a football match, Carthew will excuse you!" said Mr. Bootles. "It is understood, Carthew, that on the occasion of a match, a player cannot be called away for fagging duties."

"It's not a match, sir!" said Carthew.

"But Silver says—"

"It's football practice, sir," explained Jimmy.

"Oh, in that case, there is no reason why you should not do as a prefect requires you, Silver! You will obey Carthew."

"But, sir—"

"You hear me, Silver!" said Mr. Bootles, and he rustled on.

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands.

It was rather a risky proceeding to disobey a prefect of the Sixth; but it was quite impossible to disobey a Form-master.

"Are you coming?" asked Carthew, with a grin.

"I'm coming!" said Jimmy shortly.

"Get a move on, then!"

Carthew strode away to his study, and Jimmy Silver followed him, with a somber brow.

Even football practice could have been put off cheerfully to fag for a popular senior like Bulkeley or Neville; but with Carthew it was different. Jimmy more than suspected that Carthew had lain in wait for him, not because he wanted him specially, but on account of the old grudge between them. A prefect had many ways of making his dislike felt by a junior—and this was one of them.

But there was no help for it, and Jimmy did his best to live up to his own maxim, and "keep smiling."

Carthew, at least, found it easy to smile. He was feeling very satisfied.

Jimmy followed him into his study.

"What do you want?" inquired the junior.

"Don't scowl at me!" said Carthew.

"I'm not scowling!"

"You are!"

Jimmy suppressed a retort.

Carthew's hand was on a cane, and it was pretty clear that he only wanted an excuse to use it.

"What I want in a fag," pursued Carthew, "is obedience! Understand that!"

"Oh, rats!" broke out Jimmy.

"What!"

"Rats!" said Jimmy recklessly. "You don't even want a fag this afternoon—you're only trying to muck up my half-holiday, because you're a cad!"

Carthew picked up his cane.

"Is that the way to talk to a prefect?" he asked.

"Yes—your sort of prefect!"

"Hold out your hand!"

Jimmy Silver put his hands behind him.

Carthew came closer to him, with a grip on the cane, and a glitter in his eyes.

"Will you hold out your hand, Silver, or shall I marca you in to the Head?" he asked.

Again there was a struggle in Jimmy Silver's mind. But he had put himself in

the wrong in his exasperation. He knew what the Head would think of a junior who called a prefect a cad for fagging him; and the Head assuredly would never even suspect that so great a person as a Sixth Form prefect was capable of owing grudges to a junior and wreaking them in an underhand manner.

Jimmy's hand came out at last, reluctantly.

"Scush!"

"Now the other hand?"

"Scush!"

"That's better!" said Carthew. "You're the cheekiest fag in the Lower School at Redwood, Silver; but we'll break you in, in the long run. Got anything more to say?"

Jimmy Silver had a great deal more to say, most of it personal and emphatic. But he did not say it.

"Nothing more?" smiled Carthew. "Good! Now I'll tell you what I want you to do."

And the hapless Fourth-Former waited to hear what his lord and master wanted him to do.

CHAPTER 2.

Fagging for Carthew!

CARTHEW of the Sixth picked up a sheet of paper from the table and glanced over it, then he handed it to Jimmy Silver.

"Read that."

Jimmy read it.

It was evidently an invitation to tea for somebody. It ran:

"M. CARTHEW will be glad of the company of — to tea in his study at five o'clock."

The blank was left for the name of the guest to be filled in.

"I want six of these done," said Carthew. "You'll take that paper to Mr. Mooney's study, and give him my compliments, and ask him to allow you to use his typewriter on my account. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Type six of these invites, and put in the names. Here is a list of the names"

Jimmy Silver took the list.

It contained the names of Knowles, Frampton, Catesby, of the Sixth, and Lumsden, Hanson, and Talboys, of the Fifth.

Evidently Carthew was giving a spread in his study upon a grand scale.

* Jimmy grinned a little.

It was usual enough for masters, on occasion of asking a number of fellows to tea, to borrow Mr. Mooney's typewriter, and type out the invitations to save time. It was extremely unusual for anybody but a master to do anything of the kind.

Carthew was "putting on side," so to speak, in adopting that little custom.

He was standing an unusual spread, and he was going to do it in unusual style.

Moreover, his little scheme would keep Jimmy Silver busy for some time, and spoil his half-holiday, in repayment for many instances of "cheek" to lofty members of the Sixth Form.

It was really very deep of Carthew.

"Anything else?" asked Jimmy Silver, suppressing his feelings.

"Lots!" answered Carthew cheerfully.

"When you've typed out the invitations, put them in those envelopes, and take them round to the chaps named. Mind you deliver them all. And mind you type them well without any mistakes. I happen to know that you can use the typer. You've done your footer: reports and things on it, by Mr. Mooney's permission. That's why I've selected you to do this, of course."

"Rot!"

"Eh!"

"I—I mean, is there anything else?"

Jimmy's palms were smarting, and he did not want any more. He knew why Carthew had selected him for duty. But it was useless to argue; he was in for it.

"Plenty more," said Carthew coolly. "After you've delivered the notes, come back here."

"What for?"

"To fag!" answered Carthew agreeably.

"I'm having a little party, and the study's got to be got ready."

"Look here—" began Jimmy hotly.

"Are you going to argue again?" asked Carthew, picking up his cane.

Jimmy suppressed his feelings once more.

"I shall miss all the footer this afternoon, at this rate," he said.

"Awfully sorry—quite grieved, in fact," said Carthew, smiling. "I'm afraid it can't be helped, though. Off with you!"

Jimmy Silver left the Sixth-Former's study with feelings that were almost too deep for words.

He came down the passage with a black brow.

Lovell & Co. met him at the corner, and Mornington and Erroll and several other juniors were with them.

"Finished already?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy shook his head.

"Only just beginning," he answered.

"What's on, then?" asked Raby.

Jimmy showed the papers he carried.

"The silly ass!" exclaimed Lovell.

"What does he want his silly invites typed for, like Bootles or Mooney?"

"By gad!" said Mornington. "It looks to me like a trick to muck up Jimmy's afternoon!"

"That's what it is," said Jimmy Silver.

"Why not hook it?" said Lovell.

Jimmy made a wry face.

"I've been caned once," he said. "I don't want another dose from the Head or Mr. Bootles. Can't be helped."

"It's rotten!" said Erroll.

"All in a day's work," said Jimmy Silver, as philosophically as he could. "You chaps had better get off to footer. You don't want to lose the light."

"Any other fellow could do that for Carthew, if he really wants it done!" exclaimed Lovell. "It's just mean!"

"Caddish!" growled Newcome.

"It would serve him right——" began Mornington.

"Anything would serve him right!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "But what are you thinking of, Morny?"

"You've got to type the names of the invited chaps, and take the invitations to them?"

"That's it."

"Well, I know what I'd do in your place," said Mornington.

"Well, what?"

"I'd put in the wrong names, and deliver them to the wrong persons," grinned Mornington. "It would be rather a lark on Carthew."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"My hat! What a wheeze!" he exclaimed. "It would mean a licking afterwards," remarked Erroll.

Jimmy set his lips.

"It would mean that anyway, most likely," he said. "I've been licked once, and Carthew will find an excuse to give me some more. Besides, as he's always down on me, it's not much good trying to keep the peace. I'm blessed if I don't do as Morny suggests!"

"Carthew may find out in time——" began Erroll.

"No fear! He's going to garnish the study ready for the merry tea-party, and I've got to help him," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm not to be let off till the guests begin to come."

"Safe as houses!" chuckled Lovell. "It's only the thundering licking afterwards——"

"Never mind that," answered Jimmy Silver. "You fellows cut along to the footer."

"We'll be around when the tea-party begins to arrive, though," grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver—feeling much more cheerful now—made his way to Mr. Mooney's study, while his grinning chums started for the football-ground.

Jimmy tapped discreetly at the door of the Shell-master's room.

"Come in!" called Mr. Mooney.

The captain of the Fourth entered.

Mr. Mooney was seated by his study fire, reading, and he glanced up as the junior presented himself.

"Well, Silver?"

"Carthew sends his compliments, sir, and would you allow me to type some notes for him?" said Jimmy Silver primly.

"Certainly."

"Thank you, sir?"

Mr. Mooney returned to his volume, and Jimmy stepped to the desk where the typewriter stood.

He removed the cover, and sat down to the machine.

Carthew had given him a number of little cards to type the invitations upon, and Jimmy slid the first into the machine. He began to type, and paused to reflect.

Knowles was the first name on the list Carthew had given him; but Jimmy Silver

had no intention of using that list. His mind was quite made up on that point.

Carthew was spoiling his half-holiday, and it was only justice to spoil Carthew's tea-party in return. Jimmy Silver believed in reprisals.

As for the row which was certain to follow, that really did not matter very much, for he was unlikely to get through the afternoon without trouble in any case.

Jimmy grinned as he thought of a name for the first invitation.

Mr. Mooney, reading his volume with interest, heard the click of the typewriter without heeding it. The master of the Shell would have been very much astonished if he had known that Jimmy was typing an invitation from Carthew of the Sixth to Mack the school porter. Fortunately, he did not know.

CHAPTER 3.

The Invitations!

MCARTHEW will be glad of the company of J. Mack to tea in his study at 4.15 o'clock."

So ran the first invitation card. Jimmy Silver surveyed it when he took it from the machine, and suppressed a chortle. There was no doubt that old Mack, crusty as he was, would be pleased and honoured by an invitation from a prefect in the Sixth Form. It would be quite an honour for old Mack, and he was sure to put on a clean collar and brush his coat, and adopt his sweetest smile for the occasion. Whether he would get any tea in Carthew's study was another matter. If he did, it would be all right, and if he didn't, it would be a reward to him for reporting juniors of the Fourth not wisely but too well.

"Now for the sergeant!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

And the next card was typed in the name of Sergeant Kettle, the tough old soldier who kept the tuckshop at Rookwood.

Whatever happened to Mack, it would serve him right; and whatever happened to the sergeant, that tough old gentleman could take of himself. It was all right so far. But Jimmy had to consider about the next victim.

He decided upon Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

That dandified youth had many tastes in common with Carthew, and had had tea with him, and would not be surprised at receiving an invitation. He would be able to talk "geegees" with Carthew, if he found the latter in a polite mood. Probably he wouldn't, but that was Adolphus' own look-out.

Fourth on the list came Cyril Peele, the cad of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver did not like Peele, so it was really kind of him to include that shady youth in the list of invitations to a tea-party in the Sixth-Form passage.

The fifth on the list was Jobson of the Fifth Form. Tobias Jobson was the poorest fellow at Rookwood, and much looked down upon by snobbish fellows like Smythe, and Peele, and Carthew. He was always shabby, and generally short of school books, which he sold when he was especially hard up. Jobson was not a clever fellow, but he had one saving quality—he was a hard biter with his bony fists. If there was trouble in Carthew's study, it was Carthew who would get the butt-end of it, in dealing with Jobson of the Fifth. Jimmy was quite satisfied with that selection.

He considered a good deal before he typed out the last card. Finally he decided upon Mr. Bootles, and again he came near interrupting Mr. Mooney's peaceful perusal with a chortle. But he suppressed it in time.

Mr. Bootles had given him the job of fagging for Carthew that afternoon, so it was only fair that Mr. Bootles should have some of the benefit of his fagging. That was how Jimmy Silver looked at it.

In each of the invitations, Jimmy had specified a different hour. He did not want all the invited guests to arrive together—certainly they would have become suspicious if they had met in the passage on the way to Carthew's study.

The first invitation was for four-fifteen, and Jimmy timed them at fifteen-minute intervals, so that Mr. Bootles, the last on the list, would arrive at half-past five.

Satisfied with his work, Jimmy Silver rose from the typewriter at last, and covered the machine. He slipped the cards into the envelopes, and left the study quietly.

It remained to deliver the invitations.

Jimmy Silver found Smythe of the Shell first, with Peele. The two nuts were chatting in the passage with Howard and Tracy and some more of the merry society of the "giddy goats" of Rookwood.

Adolphus Smythe put his eyeglass into his eye, and bestowed his usual supercilious glance upon Jimmy Silver as the latter came up to the nutty group.

"Here you are!" grunted Jimmy.

"Begad! What on earth's that?" yawned Adolphus.

"Invitation to tea."

"My dear little kid, I don't come to tea with fags of the lower forms," said Adolphus loftily, and his nutty friends chuckled.

"It's from Carthew, fathead. I've got the job of delivering them," growled Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, hand it over!"

Adolphus Smythe took his invitation, and Cyril Peele took the next. Jimmy Silver walked on to deliver the rest.

"Carthew's doin' it rather in style, what?" remarked Adolphus. "Bit of a silly ass, you know—who ever heard of typing invitations to tea? I'm goin', all the same. It pays to be civil to the Sixth."

"Jolly good spread, most likely," remarked Peele.

"Might have asked the rest of us, while he was about it," grunted Tracy.

"Well, he can't ask everybody," said Adolphus. "Quarter to five will suit me all right, I suppose."

"Mine says five o'clock," remarked Peele.

"That's rather odd."

"Look at it!"

"I dare say Carthew would like a bit of a chat with me before tea," remarked Adolphus thoughtfully. "That's it, I suppose. I'm rather friendly with Carthew."

"Swank!" said Townsend.

"Well, he's asked me earlier, anyhow," said Adolphus, with dignity. "Comin' out to watch the kids at footer? Ought to encourage the young beggars a bit, you know."

And Adolphus & Co. sauntered away to encourage the junior footballers with their lordly presence.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver arrived at the

porter's lodge, where he found old Mack in his usual crusty temper, with a surly eye.

But old Mack looked a little less surly when he opened the envelope and found Carthew's gracious invitation within.

"My heye!" said Mr. Mack.

"Any answer?" asked Jimmy Silver, with a grin "I've got another note to deliver to the sergeant."

"Say I'll come, and werry pleased," said Mr. Mack.

"Ta-ta!"

Jimmy Silver walked on to the school shop. Tubby Muffin was flattening his fat little nose on the window-panes, hungrily eyeing the forbidden fruit within.

"I say, Jimmy, can you lend me a bob—"

Jimmy walked in.

Sergeant Kettle came out of his little parlour, and Jimmy handed him the note across the counter.

The sergeant seemed a little puzzled as he read it.

"This 'ere is rather queer," he said.

"I ain't never been asked to tea with one of the young gentlemen before. I s'pose it's all right. Say I'll come and werry glad, Master Silver."

"Any old thing," said Jimmy cheerfully, and he strolled out of the shop.

"I say, Jimmy, if you've got a tanner—"

Jimmy dodged Tubby Muffin and hurried on. He had still two more invitations to deliver.

He found Jobson of the Fifth in his study.

Jobson had a study to himself; nobody of the Fifth cared much for his company, besides, Jobson could never by any chance have stood his "whack" in a study tea. He generally had his tea in Hall, excepting when some good-natured fellow asked him to a feed. Jobson seldom or never refused invitations of that kind.

But Jobson was very touchy about his poverty, and he had been known to cuff fags on the bare suspicion that they were looking at his old clothes. Jimmy Silver had been one of the happy recipients of a thump from Jobson on that suspicion. Jimmy did not care twopence whether Jobson's clothes were old or new, and he

had been looking at the pigeons on the occasion when Jobson supposed he was looking critically at Jobson's old trousers. Naturally, these manners and customs on the part of the shabby Jobson did not make him popular.

"What the thump do you want?" inquired Jobson politely, as the Fourth-Former entered his study.

Jimmy threw the envelope on the table.

"Waiting for an answer," he said.

The shabby Fifth-Former opened the envelope, and his frowning face cleared as he saw the contents.

"Tell Carthew I'll come with pleasure," he said. "Well, you young idiot, what are you staring at? Do you think I want a fire in the study?"

Jimmy did think so, as a matter of fact; but it was no business of his, and he dodged out without arguing the point with the touchy Fifth-Former.

Last on the list, he arrived at Mr. Bootles' study.

The master of the Fourth raised his eyebrows a little as he glanced over the typed invitation.

"What? What? Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles. "I am afraid—ahem!—however, I will come. You may tell Carthew that I shall come, Silver."

"Yes, sir!"

And Jimmy retired.

He was strongly tempted to join his chums on the football-ground now that his round of deliveries was over; but he turned his footsteps towards Carthew's study. The bully of the Sixth eyed him when he came in.

"Well?" he snapped.

"I've done it!" said Jimmy Silver.

"You've delivered all the notes?"

"Yes, and they're coming."

"Good! What did you go into the tuck-shop for?"

Jimmy started.

"I saw you from my window," said Carthew. "You've been wasting time, grubbing, Silver; and I told you to be quick!"

"I haven't been grubbing!"

"Then what were you doing in the tuck-shop?"

"Speaking to the sergeant."

"You can tell that to the Marines!"

said Carthew, with a grin. "It won't do for me. Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"I think I shall get you into order, in the long run," said Carthew," as Jimmy rubbed his hand and breathed hard. "Now pile in and get the study tidy. I'll keep an eye on you, and touch you up if you require it. Don't try to scamp through. You're not going till the guests arrive."

Jimmy Silver set to work without a word. But his mind was made up on one point—to dodge out of the study as soon as the first guest arrived. After the arrival of the guests, it was probable that Carthew of the Sixth would be dangerous at close quarters.

CHAPTER 4.

A Surprise for Carthew!

"H'M!" Mr. Mack's cough could be heard in the Sixth Form passage, before the arrival of Mr. Mack at Carthew's door.

"H'm!"

Footsteps stopped outside the study. Tap!

"H'm!"

Jimmy Silver was giving the finishing touches to the study under Carthew's malvolent eye. Quite a handsome spread was there. Carthew was in funds, and he was doing the thing in style.

Carthew kept an eye on the good things, and Jimmy could not carry out the little schemes that occurred to him with reference to them. He would have been very pleased—in the circumstances—to put ashes in the butter, and ink in the teapot, and salt in the candied fruits. But all he found an opportunity to do was to mix pepper in the jam. However, he put in the pepper with a liberal hand, unseen and unsuspected. It was little, Jimmy considered; but he consoled himself with the reflection that it was little but good.

"H'm!"

Jimmy had done all, and more than all, that a fag could possibly be required to do, before old Mack's cough was heard at the door. But Carthew was still keeping him busy. It was his amiable desire to keep Jimmy busy until it was too dark for football.

"Come in!" rapped out Carthew, as the school porter tapped rather timidly at the door.

"I'll open the door," said Jimmy Silver, rather hurriedly.

"You needn't!"

But Jimmy did. He wanted to be near the door when explanations began.

Jimmy Silver threw the door hospitably wide, and old Mack was disclosed to view; a very prim and brushed old Mack.

He was wearing his Sunday coat, his collar was clean, and his tie was almost neatly tied. He wore gloves, and his face was shining from recent soap and water.

Old Mack was quite a new Mack, and Jimmy gazed at him with admiration in his gaze. He had never supposed that an invitation to tea would rejuvenate old Mack in this way.

Carthew stared at his visitor.

He concluded that Mack had come with some message from the Head, and he was irritated. He did not want to be bothered with the Head just then. He was not expecting his tea-party till five, but he was going to keep his hapless fag polishing and garnishing till that hour.

"Well, what is it?" snapped Carthew.

Old Mack blinked.

"Which I've come, Master Carthew," he replied.

"I can see you've come! Silver! Come back, Silver!" roared Carthew, as Jimmy dodged out of the study.

The junior considered it judicious to be deaf to that summons.

"Silver" yelled Carthew.

Jimmy vanished round the nearest corner.

The prefect started angrily towards the door; but he paused as old Mack coughed again. If there was a message from the Head, that message had to be attended to before Jimmy Silver.

"What is it Mack?" he demanded. "A message?"

"I've come to tea, sir."

"What!"

"Tea!" said Mr. Mack, in surprise.

"Are you potty?" asked Carthew blankly.

"I 'ope not, sir!" said Mr. Mack, with dignity. "I come 'ere to tea, and I cert'nly 'ope here's nothin' potty in comin' to tea."

"You silly old aas—"

"Hay?"

"Do you think I have school-porters to tea in my study?" shouted Carthew, amazed and enraged. "Get out!"

Mr. Mack jumped.

"Get out?" he repeated.

"Yes, you cheeky old donkey!"

"My heye!" said Mr. Mack. "You don't want me to tea, Master Carthew?"

"Are you drunk?" was Carthew's counter-question.

"Which I ain't touched a drop!" exclaimed Mr. Mack indignantly. "If you think I've been drinking, Master Carthew—"

"You must have, to play the idiot like this. Anyhow, get out! I'll report this to the Head if you don't go at once!"

Mr. Mack was a dignified old gentleman in his way. He drew himself up, and looked at Carthew of the Sixth with scornful reproval.

"If them's the manners of a gentleman, Master Carthew, I thank my stars I was born in a 'umble spear!" he said. "I don't need telling twice, sir! I come 'ere perlite and civil, not because I wanted your tea, Master Carthew. Don't you think it! You're a low feller, Master Carthew!"

"What?" yelled Carthew.

"And I'd say the same before the 'End himself!" said old Mack, warming up. "I called you a low feller, Master Carthew, and I repeat them words—low feller! You're no gentleman, sir, to hact like this 'ere!"

And old Mack walked out of the study, leaving Carthew of the Sixth rooted to the floor with astonishment and rage.

With great dignity, Mr. Mack retired to his own quarters, greatly shocked at Carthew's want of hospitality towards an invited guest.

"My hat!" muttered Carthew at last. "Is the man mad? What on earth made him think I'd have a dashed servant to tea? Drunk, I suppose."

Carthew looked into the passage, and shouted for Jimmy Silver. That cheery young gentleman was already on the foot-ball-ground.

The prefect debated in his mind whether to hunt for him or not; but he had a premonition that Jimmy Silver would prove elusive, and he decided to postpone vengeance till the juniors came in at lock-up.

He returned to his chair by the fire, and sat down to smoke a cigarette and look

over a racing paper—a favourite amusement of the estimable Carthew. After all, he did not need Jimmy any more; he had only been inventing tasks for him.

He thrust the cigarette hastily into the fire, and slipped the racing paper under a cushion, as a knock came at the door.

"Come in!" he grunted.

It was Sergeant Kettle who entered. It was half-past four.

Like Mr. Mack, the sergeant was in his best bib and tucker, so to speak. He had been surprised by an invitation to tea in a Sixth Form study, and he had done honour to the occasion. Very neat and prim the sergeant looked in his carefully-brushed black coat, with his creased trousers, and shiny boots. Seldom had Mr. Kettle been seen to look such a dandy on week-days.

"Well?" said Carthew.

"Well, sir?" said Mr. Kettle.

"What do you want?"

This was so surprising a question to be addressed to a gentleman who had been asked to tea, that the sergeant raised his eyebrows, and stared at the Sixth-Former. Mr. Kettle was a stiff old gentleman; and dignified as Mr. Mack was, his dignity, compared with that of the sergeant, was as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine. Mr. Kettle had lorded it in his day, over squads of "bally recruits," and he had not forgotten it. He stiffened irritably.

"Well, why don't you answer?" snapped Carthew irritably.

"If you come to that, sir," said the sergeant tartly, "I don't know that I want anything."

"You don't want anything? What the thump have you come here for, then?"

"I came because I was asked, and I'm sorry I came," said Mr. Kettle. "If this is your idea of a joke, Master Carthew, I'd like to have you in the old barrack-square for half an hour, and I'd teach you something funnier. You're no gentleman, Master Carthew!"

And the indignant sergeant right-wheeled to the door.

"You thundering cheeky old fool!" shouted Carthew. "How dare you speak to me like that?"

Sergeant Kettle left-wheeled.

"You're a young gentleman in this school, Master Carthew," he said, "and I'm school sergeant. But I don't take the rough edge of any man's tongue, or boy's either! I've had your sort on the parade-ground,

and I've tamed them, sir, till they'd feed out of my 'and! You'll apologise!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Apologise!" thundered the old warrior, towering over the shrinking Carthew. "And at once, before I lay you over my knee, Master Carthew, and spank you!"

"S-s-s-spank me!" stuttered Carthew.

"That's the word, and sharp!"

Carthew jumped back as the irate sergeant towered nearer.

"I—I apologise!" he spluttered.

It was only in time. Amazing as it was, the sergeant evidently meant to suit the action to the word.

Snort!

That was Mr. Kettle's acknowledgment of the apology. Then he right-wheeled once more, and tramped out of the study.

Carthew sank into his chair in utter amazement.

Outside, a group of smiling juniors watched Sergeant Kettle tramp back to the school shop with a purple face. Jimmy Silver closed one eye at his comrades.

"The merry visitors are coming!" he remarked.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 5.

Guests Galore!

ADOLPHUS SMYTHE tapped at the door of Carthew's study at a quarter to five, and opened it.

Smythe of the Shell was wearing his best and brightest waistcoat, his eyeglass, and his best and brightest smile.

But Carthew did not smile as he looked at him.

The bully of the Sixth was in a puzzled and irritable temper. He could not understand the cause of the mysterious conduct of Old Mack and Sergeant Kettle; but he understood that he had been threatened and humiliated, and that he had to save his skin, apologised to one whom he elegantly described as a dashed servant.

That was more than enough to make Carthew savage and ratty; and he was in no mood to return Adolphus Smythe's agreeable smiles.

"Good-afternoon!" said Adolphus, by way of graceful greeting.

Carthew gave a grunt.

"You needn't come in."

"Eh?"

"I'm expecting some fellows to tea soon," said Carthew. "You can buzz off. Shut the door after you."

Adolphus blinked so widely that his eyeglass dropped to the end of its cord. He was as surprised by Carthew, as Carthew had been by old Mack and the sergeant.

"But—but I've come to tea!" babbled Adolphus.

"You cheeky young cub!"

"Eh?"

"I'm having some of the Fifth and Sixth to tea. Do you think I want silly fags along with them?" snapped Carthew.

"I—I—I've come—"

"Get out!"

"You—you—you don't want me to stay to tea?" burred Adolphus.

"I think I've said so. Are you getting out, or shall I shy this cushion at you?"

"Oh, gad!"

Adolphus stood hesitating at the doorway. He felt that there was a misunderstanding somewhere.

"You—you've forgotten—" he began.

Whiz! Crash!

"Yoooop!"

The cushion smote Adolphus under the chin, and he disappeared into the passage. There was a loud bump as he landed there.

"Chuck that cushion in and clear!" snapped the Sixth-Former.

Adolphus scrambled up, with wild wrath in his eye. Adolphus was not a warlike youth. But even the worm will turn. A reception like that, after an invitation to tea, was too much even for Adolphus.

Carthew had asked him to "chuck" the cushion in; and Adolphus chucked it—not quite as Carthew meant.

His wrathful and indignant face gleamed in at the door, his hand whirled up with the cushion, and it flew. Crash! It landed fairly upon Carthew's nose, flattening him back in his chair. And the moment the cushion flew, Adolphus flew, even faster than the cushion.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!" spluttered Carthew.

He leaped to his feet, and leaped to the door; but Adolphus Smythe was vanishing round a corner like a racehorse.

"Come back!" raved Carthew.

Adolphus Smythe was not blessed with much sense, but he had too much sense to obey that command. He vanished.

"I—I—I—I—I—I—" gasped Carthew.

He turned back into the study and grasped

a cane, and rushed out into the passage. But there he paused. His guests were almost due; and it was no time to chase the fleeing Adolphus. With muttered remarks of an emphatic nature, Carthew re-entered the study in a frame of mind that would have done credit to a Prussian Hun.

He calmed himself a little as five o'clock approached. His guests were due at that hour—if Jimmy Silver had typed the invitations and delivered them as commanded. And Carthew did not dream, as yet, that he hadn't.

Prompt at five o'clock came a sound of footsteps in the passage. Carthew rose to his feet and worked up an agreeable smile to greet his guests, and as a tap came at the door, he called out very cheerily:

"Come in, old chap."

He started as the door opened and revealed Cyril Peele, of the Fourth. Peele had been in his study for the last half-hour, garnishing himself, and he certainly looked very nice—worthy to join any tea-party in any study. He smiled almost affectionately at Carthew, very pleased to be addressed as "old chap" by his host.

Carthew did not smile affectionately. He glared.

"You!" he grunted.

"Yes, old chap," said Peele, thinking that he might use that friendly expression as Carthew had set the example.

"What! You impertinent little mongrel!" exclaimed Carthew. "What do you mean?"

"Oh! I—I—I—"

"I'll old chap you, you shiny little beast!" said Carthew.

"I—I—I— Oh!" stammered Peele. "I—I—I say, isn't Smythe here yet?"

He glanced round the study for Adolphus.

"Smythe's been here," said Carthew. "Did you expect to see him here?"

"Yes, of course. I—"

"Is my study a place for you to make appointments with your faggy friends, you little sweep?" exclaimed Carthew, in angry amazement. "By Jove! I don't know what the fags in this school are coming to! Still, as you're here, you can fag at cooking—that young cub Silver has bolted. I want a fag to dish up the eggs. You can get on with it; my guests will be here any minute now."

Peele blinked at him.

"My hat! Did you ask me here to fag, then?" he exclaimed indignantly.

"I didn't ask you at all; but now you're here, you can fag!"

"Look here, I've come to tea—Yaroooh! Leggo my ear, you beast!" wailed Peele dolorously.

"You've come to tea, have you?" said Carthew grimly. "Blessed if I ever heard of such cheek! Look after those eggs!"

"B-b-but I— Yaroooh!"

"Do you want me to begin on your other ear?"

"Yow-ow! No!"

"Then shut up, and pile in!"

And Cyril Peele, with a face like a demon, began to fag for Carthew. And he was still fagging away, with a demoniac expression, when fresh footsteps sounded in the passage. And Carthew rose once more to greet his guests as Jobson of the Fifth walked in.

CHAPTER 6.

Peppery!

JOBSON of the Fifth nodded genially to Carthew. Carthew stared at Jobson of the Fifth.

"Not late, old scout?" asked Jobson genially.

"Late for what?" snapped Carthew.

"Tea, of course!"

"Tea?"

"I see you haven't started," said Jobson, rather puzzled that his host did not ask him to sit down. "All serene!"

"I'd like to know what you're driving at!" said Carthew tartly. "I've asked some Fifth Form chaps to tea—"

"Then I'm the first arrival?"

"Yes; and the sooner you clear the quicker!"

"What?"

"When I want a scarecrow to tea, I'll get one out of a field!" said Carthew. "There's the door!"

Jobson looked at him.

"I came here to tea," he said, "but—"

"You should wait till you're asked, then!"

"I was asked!" shouted Jobson.

"Not by me."

"By you!"

"Rats!"

"You cheeky cad!" exclaimed Jobson, his face crimson. "You asked me to tea, and I've come! Don't try to come the prefect over me, Carthew! You can't scare a Fifth

Form chap—not me, at any rate! I'd wipe up the floor with you as soon as look at you! You asked me to tea!"

"I didn't!" roared Carthew.

"You did! I've got your note here!"

"My—my note!"

Jobson threw the invitation-card on the table. Carthew glanced at it, and then the expression on his face became extraordinary.

He began to understand.

"S.S.Silver brought you this?" he stammered.

"Yes, he did."

"The—the young villain! I—I catch on now! That's why the fellows haven't come! That young villain's taken the invites to the wrong people!" gasped Carthew. "I—I—I'll skin him!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele.

Carthew made a jump at the Fourth-Former, whose ill-timed merriment was not agreeable, and Peele made a jump for the door and escaped. Jobson stepped in Carthew's way as the bully of the Sixth was pursuing.

"Hold on!" he said. "Never mind Peele now! You asked me to tea, Carthew, and now you treat me in an insulting way—"

"I never asked you to tea!" raved Carthew. "It was Silver's doing! I don't want shabby outsiders at my table, I can tell you! You'd better get some new clothes before you come here— Yaroooh!"

Carthew did not have time to continue his hospitable remarks. He had touched Jobson of the Fifth upon the tenderest spot, and Jobson had him by the neck before he could get further.

"Leggo! Help! Yoop!" howled Carthew, as his head went into chancery, and a bony set of knuckles beat a tattoo on his nose.

"Shabby boulder—hay?" said Jobson, thumping away as if he mistook Carthew's hapless features for a punchball. "New clothes—hay? Yah, you snob! Take that—and that—and that—and that!"

"Yoop! Yawp! Help! Yah! Oh! Leggo!"

Thump, thump, thump!

The two seniors went trampling wildly round the study in a deadly grip, Carthew's head still in chancery, and Jobson's bony knuckles beating drum-taps on his nose.

Carthew's foot went into the dish of eggs on the fender, and there was a crash. There

was another crash as Jobson kicked over a piled plate of toast.

"Yow-ow-ow! Woop! Leggo!"

"Take that—and that!"

"Yurrrggghh!"

"Bless my soul! What—what—what——" stuttered Mr. Bootles.

Jobson of the Fifth hastily released his victim. It was possible that Carthew had had enough punishment for his reference to the Fifth-Former's old clothes. He looked like it, at all events.

"Oh! Ah! Sorry, sir. Only a game!" gasped Jobson.

And he melted out of the study.

Carthew stood mopping his nose.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him.

"Really, Carthew——"

"Ow, ow! Groogh! Hoooh! Ow! Wow!"

"You should not play these rough games in the study, Carthew!" said Mr. Bootles mildly. "A certain amount of horseplay is permissible among the juniors, but in a senior's study—a prefect's study——"

"Groogh!"

"This is not the way to receive a guest, Carthew!"

Carthew jumped.

He realised that it was another guest.

"You—you——" he stammered.

"I have come to tea, Carthew, as you desired!" said Mr. Bootles, with dignity. "But, really—— Ahem! Hem!"

An exclamation trembled on Carthew's lips, but he restrained it. He hadn't asked Mr. Bootles; but to tell him now, now that he had come, would place the Form-master in too ridiculous a position. Any other uninvited guest could have been dealt with, but not a Form-master. Carthew could prove that he was not to blame for the misunderstanding, but that would scarcely disarm Mr. Bootle's resentment for being made to look ridiculous.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, yes, yes!" gasped Carthew, trying to suppress his feelings. "Oh, certainly, sir! Very—very kind of you, sir, I'm sure!"

"My intention was to be kind, Carthew," said Mr. Bootles graciously.

"Oh! Ah! Yes, yes, sir! P-p-pray sit down, sir!"

Mr. Bootles sat down.

It was clear to Carthew now that none of his expected guests had received invitations, and that he need not expect Knowles & Co. That did not matter so much, now

that he was landed with Mr. Bootles. It was always Carthew's policy to make himself agreeable to the masters, and he proceeded to do his best in that line with Mr. Bootles.

It was not easy to preside at a hospitable board with grace and ease, and at the same time to make surreptitious dabs at his nose with his handkerchief. But Carthew did his best.

"I—I'm afraid the eggs are done for, sir," he stammered, "and—the toast! Will you try the shrimps, sir, or the sardines? Or—or perhaps you'd care to try the jam, sir?"

"Thank you, Carthew! I will take jam!" said Mr. Bootles.

The little Form-master smiled genially over the festive board as he helped himself to jam, blissfully ignorant of what Jimmy Silver had done to that jam.

But he soon made the discovery.

There was a sudden explosion at Carthew's tea-table. Little Mr. Bootles leaped to his feet, spluttering and coughing and sneezing with amazing vim.

"Groogh! Ooooooh! Atchoo—choo—schooh! Grooooooh!"

"Wha-a-at——" stuttered Carthew.

"Groogh! Ooooooh! Yurrrghh!" spluttered Mr. Bootles. "Wretched boy! Rascal! Ooooooh! You—you dare—you have dared—oooooh—to ask me to—ooooh—to ask me to tea and place pepper—groooch—in the—ow—jam! Yurrrrrg!"

"I—I didn't—I haven't—I——"

"Gr-r-r-r-r! Give me that cane, Carthew!" shouted Mr. Bootles, utterly outraged and wrathful. "I have never—oooooh—heard of such a—grooh—insolent—ow—dastardly trick—grooh—unworthy of a small boy—ow—and you a prefect in the Sixth Form! Ooooooh!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroo! I didn't—I never—I wasn't—— Yaroo!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"There!" panted Mr. Bootles. "You will not—ooooh—play such a trick upon a Form-master again! Atchoo—atchoo—choo! Wretched boy! Atchoo!"

And Mr. Bootles swept out of the study.

Carthew of the Sixth remained alone, groaning.

It was half an hour later that rapid and heavy footsteps sounded along the Fourth Form passage. Jimmy Silver & Co., who had just finished tea in the End Study,

looked at one another as they heard the footsteps.

"Here he comes," murmured Jimmy Silver. "Look out for trouble, you fellows."

"What-ho!"

"We're standing by you, Jimmy!"

There was a crash as the study door burst open, and the heated and furious face of Carthew looked in.

"There you are, you young scoundrel!" he roared, letting the ashplant he had thoughtfully brought with him slip into his hand. "Yes, here I am, Carthew," remarked Jimmy Silver mildly.

"I've got you now, anyway," said Carthew, with savage satisfaction, coming into the study and shutting the door. "I'm going to give you something to remember this time, Silver! You've been asking for a hiding, and now you're going to get it! Bend over that chair!"

For answer, Jimmy Silver whipped his handkerchief from his pocket, and, bending down, took the poker from between the bars of the grate and skipped round to the far side of the table, where his chums lined up at his side. The end of the poker glowed redly, and Carthew eyed it with angry amazement.

"Put that poker down, you young fool!" he roared, advancing round the table, ashplant in hand. "I'm not standing any nonsense, mind that!"

"You'd better keep your distance, Carthew," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "I'm not going to be bullied, you know, by you or anyone else. So keep off, unless you want this on your boko!"

"You—you young——" Carthew fairly spluttered with rage. "Why, I'll skin you!"

He made a rush round the table and Jimmy gave a lunge with the poker and the next moment there was a fiendish roar from the prefect, and he dropped his ashplant with a clatter.

"Oh! Yoop! I'm burnt!"

"I told you so," said Jimmy calmly. "It's only your hand, though—and the poker hardly touched it! It'll be your boko next time!"

"Why, you—yow—you murderous young villain!" Carthew sucked his burnt hand, where the poker had just touched his knuckles, and glared at Jimmy as if he could eat him. "I—I'll skin you. I'll flay you!"

"Well, get on with the skinning and

flaying," said Jimmy, while his grinning chums chortled. "I'm keeping hold of this poker, anyway. All's fair in war, you know, Carthew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, you—you must be mad, you young hooligan!" stuttered Carthew, almost beside himself with fury. "Defying a prefect, after what you did this afternoon, too! Why, I—I'll report you. I'll get you expelled for this!"

"Oh, report away!" said Jimmy Silver. "Anyway, Carthew, get out of this study. I'm fed up with you, you know!"

"What?" howled Carthew.

"Fed-up!" said Jimmy coolly. "Besides, we want to do our prep, so clear out, please!"

Jimmy advanced a step and made a lunge with the poker in the direction of Carthew. The poker was cooling off, though it was still unpleasantly hot; and Jimmy decided he had better get the prefect out of the study before it was quite cold. Without the hot poker to discourage him, Carthew would be decidedly dangerous at close quarters. So Jimmy made a lunge, and Carthew skipped back with the agility of a mountain goat.

"You—you dangerous young villain!" he shrieked. "Give me my ashplant!"

"Rats! Get out!"

"Yes, get out, Carthew," chimed in Arthur Edward Lovell. "Thanks for calling, but we're rather busy!"

"You young scoundrels——"

"Oh, cut it out! Here's for you!"

Jimmy made a pass at the infuriated prefect and Carthew's nerve failed him. He clawed open the door and fairly bolted out of the study.

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

Carthew turned and shook his fist at them, with a face "like a demon in a pantomime," as Lovell afterwards remarked.

"Wait! Just you wait!" he gasped, almost inarticulate with rage. "I'll see what Bulkeley has to say about things!"

He tramped off furiously down the Fourth Form passage. Jimmy Silver kicked the door shut and dropped the poker into the grate with a clang. Then he turned rather a grave face on his chums.

"Well, I've done it now," he remarked.

"May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, I suppose."

"Carthew's a beastly bully," said Lovell.

"All Rookwood knows it, including old

Bulkeley. If Carthew takes the matter to Bulkeley, you'll get a fair hearing."

Jimmy nodded thoughtfully.

"That's right enough. After all, you're entitled to defend yourself against a beastly bully, even if he happens to be a prefect."

"Of course, there's that little trick you played him this afternoon," murmured Newcome.

Jimmy Silver grinned.

"Well, that paid him out for his beastly bullying. Besides, he won't say much about that to Bulkeley," he added sagely. "It would make him look too big a fool."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Jimmy!"

It was the voice of Tubby Muffin, of the Fourth, who put his head in at the study door.

"What do you want, Fatty?"

"I say, what have you been doing to Carthew?" squeaked Tubby. "I saw him going down the passage scowling like—like anything!"

"Well, Carthew generally is scowling," observed Raby.

"He nearly knocked me over, and made me drop the tea-pot, too," Tubby Muffin rattled on. "Smashed to atoms, it was."

"Hard lines, Tubby."

"Oh, it wasn't my tea-pot; it was Higgs'," said Tubby, indifferently.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Higgs'll cut up rusty, very likely, but it was Carthew did it. He'd better get a new one out of Carthew."

"Some hopes!" grinned Newcome.

"Carthew was in a fearful wax," pursued Tubby. "You're in for it, Jimmy Silver! I heard him tell Bulkeley—"

"Bulkeley!"

"Yes! He met old Bulkeley in the Sixth Form passage, and fairly jabbered at him! And Bulkeley said, very sharp, 'Tell Silver to come to my study at once, Muffin!' Just like that he said it!"

"Did Bulkeley send you here to fetch Jimmy, you fat idiot?" roared Lovell.

"Yes. Aren't I saying so?" squeaked Tubby.

"Why didn't you give the message at once, then?" howled Lovell. "You and your drivels about teapots! Bulkeley will have been waiting for Jimmy—"

"He, he, he! He looked in an awful wax, too! I—Yow! Yoop! Wow!"

Tubby Muffin broke off in a hurry as Lovell's large size in boots clumped upon

his tight trousers. He flew down the passage with loud howls.

"The fat duffer!" snorted Lovell. "Better buzz along quick, Jimmy old man. Old Bulkeley doesn't like to be kept waiting."

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "Now for it!"

And he walked cheerily out of the study, leaving his chums rather anxious on his behalf. For, after all, as Jimmy himself well knew, defying a prefect—even when that prefect was Mark Carthew—was a serious offence at Rookwood.

CHAPTER 7.

The Captain's Justice!

IN response to a sharp "Come in!" Jimmy entered the captain's study and shut the door quietly. He was quite calm and composed, although his heart was beating a trifle faster than usual. "Uncle James" of Rookwood was famous for his nerve, and it did not desert him now.

George Bulkeley, captain of Rookwood, sat at his desk, and by him stood Mark Carthew, with a black scowl upon his face. Bulkeley's expression was very stern as he eyed the junior in front of him.

"Now, Silver," he began, "Carthew here has laid a very serious complaint against you. He has told me a most amazing story; and I want to hear what you have to say about it. I warn you it's a pretty serious matter, from what I can gather."

"Yes, Bulkeley," said Jimmy demurely. "The little demon can't deny it!" hissed Carthew.

Bulkeley gave him a sharp look.

"He hasn't heard it yet, Carthew! Give the kid a chance!"

Carthew gritted his teeth.

"I suppose you believe what I told you, Bulkeley?" he fumed. "If the captain of the school doesn't back up his prefects—"

"Please leave me to get at the rights of the matter in my own way, Carthew," said Bulkeley coldly. "Now, young Silver, did you or did you not, muck up Carthew's tea for him when you were lagging in his study this afternoon?"

"Yes, Bulkeley."

"Did you, or did you not, threaten Carthew with a red-hot poker when he went to your study to punish you later?"

"Yes, Bulkeley."

"Threaten me! The little demon burnt my knuckles with it and threatened to jam it in my face! Might have blinded me!" booted Carthew.

"Do you admit actually burning Carthew with the poker, Silver?"

"Yes, Bulkeley."

"You see!" hissed Carthew. "The little scoundrel——"

"Half a moment, please, Carthew!" Bulkeley looked at the junior before him with knitted brows. "Have you anything to say in excuse for such outrageous behaviour, Silver?"

"Only that Carthew bullied me, Bulkeley," said Jimmy quietly. "And the End Study doesn't like being bullied! He picked on me to fag for him all the afternoon, just as I was going down to the footer, and licked me twice for nothing at all——"

"It's a lie!" howled Carthew. "The little beast was slacking, so I touched him up a bit, that's all."

"You licked me twice for the sheer pleasure of bullying," retorted Jimmy. "Bulkeley knows I'm not a slacker! You're a bully and a cad, Carthew, and all Rookwood knows it!"

"Why, you—— I—I——" Carthew simply stuttered with fury.

"You thought you'd take it out of me while you'd got the chance," continued Jimmy coolly. "But I wasn't letting you bully me for nothing—it's too much for any chap to stick. And when you found you'd caught a Tartar, and made a fool of yourself, you brought Bulkeley into it!"

"You young villain!"

With a face convulsed with fury, Carthew sprang at Jimmy Silver and caught him a ringing box on the ear before the junior could dodge aside. Jimmy staggered back, landing out as he did so, and Carthew caught his fist on the end of his rather prominent nose. He gave a howl of pain and wrath, and rushed at Jimmy again.

But George Bulkeley, who had been caught unawares by this sudden scuffle, sprang to his feet and swung Carthew back with a powerful grip upon his arm.

"Stop that, Carthew, you fool! Stop at once, I say!"

"That little rat! I—I'll smash him——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" said Bulkeley sternly. "Stand back at once!"

There was a commanding ring in the captain's voice that Carthew did not dare to disobey. Jimmy Silver, rubbing his tingling ear ruefully, grinned in spite of himself. He felt that Carthew had given himself away before Bulkeley rather badly. It was worth a box on the ear to see old Bulkeley put Carthew in his place.

George Bulkeley was looking quite angry now.

"You listen to me a moment, Carthew," he said sternly. "You brought me into this, more or less as Silver said, when you found you could not handle it yourself."

Carthew spluttered indignantly, but Bulkeley held up his hand.

"Oh, yes you did! It's the truth, whether you like it or not. Well, I told you I'd take the matter in hand, and so I will. And please remember that my decision is final."

Carthew sneered.

"Well, you've heard Silver admit that he did all I accused him of! What is your decision, then?"

"Silver admitted everything, but accused you of bullying."

"You surely don't believe the little brute?" snarled Carthew.

"On the contrary, I do believe him," said Bulkeley calmly. "I have had trouble about your bullying before, Carthew, and in point of fact it is pretty well known in Rookwood to be a failing of yours."

"Why, you——"

"The way you went for Silver just now shows what sort of a temper you have—you can't even control it in my study!"

"That little demon——"

"That's enough of that, Carthew! You asked me for my judgment, and you shall have it. My idea was, at first, that a prefect's beating for Silver would meet the case——"

"Thanks awfully, Bulkeley!" murmured Jimmy.

"But since I believe now that the whole trouble arose simply because you tried to bully the kid——"

"It's a lie——"

"I believe it's true! I shall therefore merely give the kid three for cheeking a prefect. Bend over that chair, Silver!"

Without a word, Jimmy Silver complied. Swish! Swish! Swish!

Three sharp strokes, and Bulkeley threw his ashplant into the corner.

Jimmy Silver straightened up.

"All serene, kid! You can cut!" said Bulkeley.

"What! Three! Three for mucking up my party, spoiling my food, poking my knuckles, dotting me on the nose?" roared Carthew.

"It was jolly well worth it!" said Jimmy Silver with a grin. And he was gone!

"Three!" raved Carthew. "And that's how you uphold the authority of the prefects, Bulkeley! No wonder the fags are out of hand, no wonder—"

"Now, see here, Carthew!" said Bulkeley pleasantly. "I'll give you a piece of advice, if you like, free, gratis and for nothing! Don't try bullying young Silver any more, if you value your dignity as a prefect. He's too hot for you. As he says, the end study in the Fourth Form passage don't put up with bullying. Why should they? Those Form kids are real hot stuff!

And next time you get into trouble with the End Study, I shan't protect you! So I warn you. Must you go? Then, bye-bye!"

And pushing the inarticulate, gasping prefect gently but firmly out of the study, Bulkeley closed the door, sat down in his armchair and plunged into the important business of selecting the Rookwood team for next Saturday's footer match, smiling gently to himself the while.

CHAPTER 5.

Taken in Hand!

THERE was a knock at the door of Smythe's study at Rookwood, and Adolphus Smythe, the prize "nut" and slacker of the junior school, hastily removed a cigarette from his mouth. Smythe of the Shell was enjoying—more or less—an after-dinner cigarette when the knock startled him.

He pitched the cigarette hastily into the fire, and waved a newspaper round his head with the rather hopeless idea of clearing off the smoke before the door was opened. For if it happened to be his Form-master at the door, or a prefect of the Sixth, the cigarette would have had painful results for the sportive Adolphus.

The door opened.

Fortunately for Adolphus it was not Mr. Mooney; and it was not a prefect. Adolphus, caught in the act of frantically waving the newspaper, in the midst of a little cloud of smoke, blinked at his visitor.

It was Jimmy Silver of the Fourth Form.

It was the day after his little turn-up with Mark Carthew, and he was feeling full of beans.

Jimmy came in cheerfully, grinning at the sight of Adolphus and the waving newspaper.

"Startled you, old top?" he inquired.

"Oh, you rotter!" stuttered Adolphus.

He threw aside the newspaper. Certainly he had been startled; but it was not necessary to attempt to deceive the captain of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver could see as much smoke as he liked in Smythe's study.

"What the thunder do you want?" growled Adolphus. "I don't remember askin' you here, Jimmy Silver."

"I want you, old chap."

Adolphus frowned, and extracted another cigarette from his case and used it to point to the door.

"Hook it!" he said.

Jimmy Silver did not hook it. Adolphus lighted the cigarette, with a scowl of defiance.

"Come in, you fellows!" called out Jimmy.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome, of the Fourth, followed their leader into the study. Adolphus eyed the Fistical Four uneasily through the haze of blue smoke. He was not on friendly terms with the chums of the Fourth—far from it. And he was not pleased to see the cheery quartette in his study.

"Here we are, old scout!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a grin. "Is Smythe ready?"

"Are you ready, Smythe?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I'm ready to see the last of you," growled Adolphus. "What the merry dickens do you mean by shovin' into a fellow's quarters like this? Shut the door after you."

"We've come to speak to you about the footer," explained Jimmy.

Adolphus raised his eyebrows.

"Oh!" he said, a little more amicably. "If you've decided to do the right thing, Silver—"

"I have!"

"Good! I'm prepared to play in the Bagshot match on Saturday," said Adolphus graciously.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled.

"It isn't exactly that," said Jimmy. "This morning I put up the list for the Bagshot match, as at present constituted"

"I know that!"

"And somebody had the cheek to scribble on my paper."

Adolphus grinned.

"It was your list!" said Jimmy. "You wrote 'Rotten' across my list."

"I thought it rotten," explained Adolphus calmly. "Your selections always are rotten, Silver. You don't know how to pick out footballers. Not one of my friends in the team—and not me! You know I'm open to play for Rookwood Juniors. You left me out. I thought I'd let Rookwood see what I thought of your dashed list."

"Cheeky ass!" said Lovell wrathfully.

Adolphus shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, "you've put forward your claims often enough, Smythey. You played for Rookwood before I was skipper, and you played the goat. But I'm going to give you a chance."

"I'm ready."

"Good. Come on."

Smythey of the Shell stared.

"Come on! What do you mean? There's no match this afternoon," he said.

"I shouldn't ask you to come on if there were," smiled Jimmy Silver. "I'm going to give you a chance, as I said. Not a chance to muck up a match for Rookwood, of course; but a chance to get fit to play. See? Slacking about in a study, smoking cigarettes, isn't the way to get fit for footer. We're going for a tramp this afternoon—a ten-mile tramp across the heath. You're coming with us."

"Wha-a-at?"

The Fistical Four chuckled at the expression on Adolphus Smythey's face.

Ten-mile tramps were not in Adolphus' line. Indeed, Adolphus found it quite exertion enough to saunter elegantly across the quad.

"Savvy?" asked Jimmy.

"Look here——"

"You're kicking up a shindy because you don't get a look-in in the footer. Well,

the first step is to make yourself fit for footer! You see that?"

"Go an' eat coke!" was Adolphus reply.

"After a ten-mile tramp you'll feel quite a new man."

"I'm not goin' for a tramp!" roared Adolphus. "I've got some chaps comin' to see me here this afternoon!"

"Banker and smokes—what?"

"That's my bizney!" said Adolphus loftily.

"My business, too, when you write 'Rotten' across my footer list because your name isn't in it," answered Jimmy Silver coolly. "You're coming out for training."

"I'm not!"

"Your mistake! You are! Come on!"

"I won't!" yelled Adolphus.

"Tired?" asked Jimmy Silver sympathetically. "Never mind; we'll help you. Lend him a hand, you chaps."

"You bet!" grinned Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you rotters!" gasped Adolphus Smythey, repenting, rather too late, that he had inscribed his lofty opinion on the junior footer list. "I tell you I won't come!"

"And I tell you you will!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four closed round the nut of the Shell.

Four pairs of hands were laid upon him at once, to assist him out of his comfortable and luxurious armchair. Luxurious armchairs and cigarettes certainly were not a proper preparation for strenuous football; and Adolphus had asked for it.

The Shell fellow clung desperately to the arms of the chair.

"Leggo!" he shrieked.

"All together!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four pulled, and Adolphus still clung. The armchair shrieked on its castors towards the door. At the door it jammed, and Adolphus was plucked out of it into the passage. He landed in the passage in a sitting position, with a loud bump.

"Ow!"

"Come on, old top!" said Jimmy affably.

"Leggo!"

"This way!"

Adolphus was lifted to his feet, with Jimmy Silver and Lovell grasping his arms. Raby and Newcome walked behind, as he

was led away down the passage, and when he hung back Raby put in an application of his boot which quite bucked Adolphus.

And the great chief of the Giddy Goats of Rookwood was marched out into the quadrangle in a frame of mind that would have done credit to a Prussian Hun.

CHAPTER 9.

Rough on Adolphus!

"BULKELEY!" howled Smythe. Bulkeley of the Sixth was in the quad talking to Neville when Adolphus came out with his escort.

The two Sixth-Formers glanced round.

"Hallo, what's this game?" asked Bulkeley.

"Yow! Make 'em lemme go, Bulkeley!"

"Now, Silver——"

"Only taking Smythe for a walk, Bulkeley," explained Jimmy Silver, with great meekness. "Smythe claims a place in the junior eleven, and won't be happy till he gets it. So we're going to give him some exercise."

Bulkeley laughed.

"Slacking in your study, as usual, Smythe!" he exclaimed. "I've routed you out about a dozen times myself. What do you want to stick indoors for on a fine, frosty afternoon?"

"It's—it's c-c-cold!" stammered Smythe.

Adolphus did not care to explain that he had invited a little smoking-party to his study that afternoon. Such an explanation would not have done for the captain of Rookwood.

"Cold, is it?" said Bulkeley. "You'll get colder crouching indoors. Go out and get some exercise!"

"Look here, Bulkeley——"

"Rubbish!"

Bulkeley walked away with Neville, and Adolphus was left to the tender mercies of the Fistical Four.

"Come on, old sport!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Leggo, you beast! Bulkeley ought to interfere: he's a prefect!" howled Adolphus. "Leggo!"

"Bulkeley knows the kind of slacking worm you are, you know," said Jimmy. "This way! March! Your boot handy, Raby?"

"What-ho!"

"I—I—I'm coming!" gasped Adolphus. And he came.

With feelings too deep for words, Adolphus marched down to the gates with the playful Fourth-Formers. His chums, Howard and Tracy, stared at them in the quad, but they did not intervene. In the gateway, Mornington of the Fourth was found, with Erroll, and they both looked very curiously at Smythe and his companions.

"Hallo! Are you kidnappin' our prize nut?" asked Mornington.

"Taking him for a walk! We're going to make him fit for footer!"

"Oh, gad! You've got all your work cut out, then."

"Lend me a hand, Morny, you rotter!" howled Smythe.

Morny laughed.

"What a polite an' graceful way of askin'!" he remarked. "I won't lend you a hand, Smythe; I'll lend you a foot. There!"

"Yaroooooh!"

"Any more assistance required?" asked Morny.

"Ow! You beast!"

Adolphus Smythe got out of the gates without further assistance, in quite a hurry.

The Fistical Four took the road towards Coombe, and Smythe of the Shell reluctantly took it with them.

"Cheer up, old chap," said Jimmy Silver comfortingly. "We're only going to do ten miles——"

"Oh, dear!" moaned Adolphus.

"You'll feel better after the first five or six——"

"Ow!"

"Right across the heath, you know," chuckled Lovell. "It's rather rough going, but you'll get used to it."

"Yow! You awful rotters!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus had to walk as Jimmy and Lovell kept a grip on his arms. He was feeling quite tired by the time the village of Coombe came in sight.

The juniors did not enter Coombe, but struck off by a footpath through the wood for the open heath.

Adolphus' steps lagged on the footpath. He was breathing heavily. By the time

the walkers came out on the heath he was gasping.

"How do you feel after the first mile?" inquired Newcome.

"Ow!"

"Feel up to the other nine?" chortled Raby.

"Oh, you rotters!"

"Stick it out, Adolphus! This is the way to get into the junior eleven, you know," said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "Beast!"

The heath was under the feet of the Rookwood juniors now. The ground was rough, and the "going" was heavy. Adolphus felt that life was hardly worth living as he tramped wearily on. His natty boots were soon thick with mud, and did not look at all like the elegant boots of the greatest nut at Rookwood. Perspiration was streaming down his face, and his eyeglass hung unregarded at the end of its cord. His beautiful white collar was growing damp. His look was that of a suffering martyr. All the woes of the universe seemed to have settled upon the shoulders of the Giddy Goat of Rookwood, to judge by his expression.

And still he tramped on.

The second mile landed the party out in the midst of the lonely heath among the old deserted quarries. Adolphus lagged more and more, and even George Raby's boot failed to keep him up to time.

And the thought of doing another three miles out, and then five whole miles back, made Adolphus almost hysterical.

Jimmy Silver closed one eye to Lovell, and Adolphus' arms were released at last.

"You can manage without help now, old fellow," said Jimmy. "You're sticking it really well."

"Yow-ow!"

"Perhaps you'd like to run for a change?"

"Yah! Beast!"

Adolphus Smythe sank breathlessly on a big stone by the footpath. He sat and pumped in breath.

The Fistical Four halted.

Four grinning faces looked at the exhausted Adolphus.

"And that's the chap who claims a place in the junior eleven!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "What would he be like

after the first half against St. Jim's, for instance!"

"Oh, dear!" moaned Adolphus. "You rotters! I've got to get back. I can never do it! Ow!"

"And you haven't done more than two miles and a half yet."

"Out of ten!" chuckled Newcome.

"Ain't you ready to go on, Smythey?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Ow! No!"

"We can't hang about waiting for you, you know."

"Rotter!"

"Look here, if you don't get a move on, Smythey, we shall go on without you, and shan't take you for a walk at all!" said Jimmy.

Adolphus started.

The hopeful expression that came on his face was too much for the Fistical Four. They yelled.

It dawned upon Adolphus that the cheery Co. had been pulling his leg, and that that dreaded ten-mile tramp was not to be a reality, after all.

"Come on, you chaps," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You can crawl home, Smythey. We're not going to take you ten miles. We don't want to have to carry your body home to Rookwood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But next time you meddle with the footer list," added Jimmy severely, "we'll really make you walk ten miles. That's a tip! Scat!"

Adolphus laboured to his feet. He was only too glad of the chance to "scat." Fearful lest the Fourth-Formers should change their minds, he started on the homeward way, limping wearily along the rough track. He turned once, to shake a fist at the juniors, and then limped on.

Adolphus of the Shell had had his lesson; it was likely to be a wrecked and doleful Adolphus that crawled into Rookwood again, and certainly he was not likely to be cheerful company at the smoking-party that afternoon.

"I fancy Smythey won't write 'rotten' on the footer list again," grinned Jimmy Silver. "We'll make him walk all round the heath if he does. Now, you fellows, hoof it; we've got a long way to go!"

And the chums of the Fourth hoofed it cheerily.

CHAPTER 10.

Nobody, from Nowhere!

"MY hat! Smythe!"

Jimmy Silver jumped.

It was an hour or so since Adolphus had departed, and the chums of the Fourth had tramped a good distance. They had stopped now in a hollow of the heath, near one of the old disused quarries, for tea—tea consisting of bread and cheese, eaten with a keen appetite after their tramp on the heath.

Jimmy Silver glanced up at the sound of footsteps, and uttered an ejaculation as a figure appeared in the hollow.

"Smythe!"

At the first glance it looked like Smythe of the Shell.

But if it was Smythe, he had changed his clothes since the Fistical Four had seen him last, for the newcomer was clad in a tattered and soiled old suit of cheap tweeds—quite a contrast to Adolphus' elegant Etons.

The Fistical Four stared at him.

The newcomer was a fellow of Smythe's age, and of the same build, and his features were remarkably like Smythe's, though they lacked the somewhat lackadaisical expression of the great Adolphus.

"Smythe, or his twin brother!" said Lovell in amazement.

"It's Smythe!" said Raby, with a grunt. "I've heard of his dodge before, changing his clothes when he is going pub-haunting!"

"There's no pubs here!" said Newcome.

"It's jolly queer," said Jimmy Silver, his eyes fixed curiously on the newcomer.

The latter's movements were curious enough.

He did not see the Fistical Four seated on the stony bank in the hollow; he did not once glance towards them.

As he came on into the hollow, tramping wearily, he was constantly glancing behind him, over his shoulder, as if in fear of pursuit.

The Rookwood juniors watched him with growing astonishment.

"Somebody's after him!" murmured Lovell.

"Looks like it!"

"Prefect!" said Raby. "He's been pub-haunting in that clobber, and a prefect has been stalking him, you bet!"

"If it's Smythe!" said Jimmy.

"It's Smythe right enough!"

The newcomer continued to advance into the hollow, still without looking in the direction of the Fistical Four. Suddenly he stopped, and spun round, his face going white, and the Rookwooders followed the direction of his gaze. Where the path from the open heath dipped into the hollow, a second figure appeared in sight.

It was that of a short, thick-set man with a stubby chin and a broken nose. His voice came to the ears of the Fistical Four as he strode quickly towards the tattered youth.

"Found you again, hang you!"

"What the merry thunder," murmured Lovell in blank amazement.

Jimmy Silver rose quickly to his feet.

"I rather think we chip in here," he said in a low voice.

The tattered youth broke into a sudden run, and in a moment more, with the ruffian close behind him, he had run into the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm and stopped him.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

"Hold on, Smythe!"

"Let me go!"

The broken-nosed man stopped abruptly at the sight of the Fistical Four. There was a thick cudgel in his hand, and he grasped it and came on again, more slowly.

Jimmy Silver stepped between him and the fugitive, with a gleam in his eyes.

"Stop!" he said curtly.

The tattered youth ran on up the hollow, but he was evidently at the end of his strength, for he stumbled and fell. Lovell and Raby and Newcome drew quickly to Jimmy Silver's side. They were utterly puzzled by the strange affair, but it was clear enough that the tattered youth, whether he was Smythe or not, was in need of protection.

The ruffian eyed the four schoolboys surlily.

"Out of the way!" he snapped.

"You'll let Smythe alone!" said Jimmy Silver quietly.

The broken-nosed man stared at him.

"His name ain't Smythe!" he said.

"Well, whatever his name is, you'll let him alone," said Jimmy Silver.

"If I can!"

"Rats!"

The broken-nosed man swung up his cudgel.

"You mind your own business," he said. "I'm looking arter that kid. Now, I give you a second to clear."

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands hard.

The broken-nosed man was evidently a dangerous ruffian, and his cudgel looked formidable; but the Fistical Four did not think of budging. They faced the ruffian coolly.

"Are you going outer the way?" demanded the ruffian.

"No!"

"Then look out!"

The broken-nosed man rushed forward, whirling the cudgel.

The juniors scattered before the rush, and the slash of the weapon swept only the air; but the next moment Jimmy Silver rushed in, and before the ruffian could raise his cudgel again the captain of the Rookwood Fourth hit out. The blow caught the ruffian on the side of the head, and he staggered, with a howl.

"Down with him!" panted Jimmy. His chums did not need telling.

As the ruffian staggered, they rushed on him together, and the next moment he was down in the grass.

Lovell jerked away the cudgel from the sprawling ruffian, and sent it spinning over the bushes in the hollow.

Raby's knee was jammed on the rascal's chest, and Newcome trampled recklessly on his legs, to the accompaniment of wild howls from the broken-nosed gentleman.

"Ow, ow, ow! Let up! Leave off! I give in!" howled the broken-nosed man. "Give a bloke a chance! Ow, wow!"

He struggled desperately in the grasp of the Rookwooders, and tore himself loose, and scrambled to his feet.

"At him!" yelled Lovell breathlessly.

But the ruffian was already taking to his heels. The odds were too much for him. As the juniors rushed at him again, he fled, and vanished at top speed out of the hollow.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Lovell. "This beats Banagher! Who the thump was he, and what was he doing to Smythe?"

"I don't think it's Smythe, after all!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Then who the dickens is it?"

"We'll soon see!"

The Fistical Four, rather breathless after the struggle, approached the tattered youth, who was on his feet now.

He stared at them uneasily, but the appearance of the Rookwooders was reassuring, and he made no attempt to run.

"Now, then, old top!" said Jimmy Silver. "We want to know who you are. You look like Smythe of Rookwood, but I can see now that you're not Smythe. Who are you?"

The boy did not answer; only stared at the Rookwooders with an expression of doubt and perplexity that was strangely touching.

"What's your name?" asked Lovell.

He shook his head.

"I don't know!" he answered in a low voice.

"Wha-at?" ejaculated Lovell.

"You don't know your own name?" yelled Raby.

"No."

"Well, my hat!"

"Where do you come from, then?" asked Jimmy Silver, fairly blinking at the stranger in his amazement.

"I—I don't know."

Lovell eyed him suspiciously.

"He's pulling our leg!" said Arthur Edward, with a grunt.

"Look here, kid, you must know who you are, and where you come from?" said Jimmy Silver.

The boy shook his head again.

"I—I don't know! I can't remember."

"You can't remember your name?"

"No."

"My only hat!"

"Who was that chap after you, then?" asked Raby.

"I—I don't know. I—I was a prisoner," stammered the boy. "I—I got away. I have been wandering on the heath. I—I don't know how I came here." He pressed his hand to his brow. "It's no good—I can't remember."

Jimmy Silver whistled.

The trouble and distress in the stranger's face were evidently genuine. Amazing as it was, his statement was plainly true; he had lost his memory. Ill-usage or terror had probably been the cause—it was easy to see that the hapless lad had suffered. In the presence of such a calamity, the

clums of Rookwood hardly knew what to say, or to do, and for some time they stood staring blankly at the stranger without a word.

CHAPTER 11.

The Nameless Boy at Rookwood!

JIMMY SILVER broke the silence at last.

"He's got to be looked after," he said. "He's jolly like Smythe of the Shell to look at, and Smythe may know something about him. Must be a relation of Smythe's. I should think. We'd better take him to Rookwood."

"Rookwood!" repeated the boy, with a start.

"Hallo! You know Rookwood, do you?" exclaimed Jimmy.

The nameless boy passed his hand across his forehead again, as if in an effort to remember.

"No," he said at last, "I—I must have heard of it, but I can't remember."

"Well, this beats everything!" said Lovell blankly. "We'd better take him along to the school, and let the Head see him. We can't leave the poor chap here, anyhow, with that ruffian hanging about."

"You'll come with us, kid?" asked Jimmy Silver compassionately.

The nameless boy nodded.

"Come on, then!"

The Fistful Four turned homeward, the boy without a name walking quietly with them.

He did not speak, as the juniors tramped on across the heath, but his eyes continually roved from side to side, as if on the look-out for danger.

Jimmy Silver & Co. kept a look-out for the broken-nosed man, but that gentleman did not reappear, and they entered the Connaught road at last.

"Hallo! Here's Morny!" said Lovell, as Mornington and Erroll came in sight on the road to Rookwood.

Morny stopped, his eyes dwelling curiously on the tattered youth.

"Whom have you got there?" he asked.

"Blessed if I know," answered Jimmy Silver. "We found him on the heath, and he's lost his memory."

"Gammer!" said Morny incredulously.

"Honest injun!"

Mornington scanned the tattered youth's face.

"He looks like Smythe!" he remarked.

"Yes, we noticed that; and we're taking him to Rookwood to see whether Smythe knows anything about him."

"By gad! We'll come along!"

"Poor chap!" said Erroll. "He looks as if he'd been through it."

"He does, and no mistake!" said Jimmy.

Tubby Muffin was the next Rookwood fellow met on the road, and Tubby displayed a great interest in the stranger at once. Tubby joined the party, very curious to know all about the affair. The nameless boy did not seem to take any interest in the fellows that surrounded him; his face was darkly clouded and troubled, as if he were wrestling with some inward problem. Several more Rookwood fellows joined the party on the road, all surprised and interested by the strange story, and it was quite a little army that marched up to the gates of Rookwood at last, with the nameless stranger in their midst.

There was a buzz of excited discussion in the crowd; but the boy without a name did not speak. He remained wrapped in his own thoughts, and only his startled eyes occasionally wandered round him questioningly. In the quadrangle, as Jimmy Silver & Co. headed for the School House, they were stopped by Carthew of the Sixth.

"Who the thump are you bringing into the school, Silver?" exclaimed the prefect.

Jimmy Silver explained, and the bully of the Sixth gave a scoffing laugh.

"Likely story!" he exclaimed. "Some young rogue, of course, and he's taken you in!"

"It's true enough, Carthew," said Jimmy.

"Rubbish! Here, young shaver!" Carthew caught the nameless boy roughly by the shoulder. "Who are you?"

"I don't know."

"What's your name?"

"I don't know."

"That's not good enough for me," said Carthew. "You'll get into trouble for bringing a young tramp into the school. Silver. Turn him out at once!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed.

"We're going to take him in," he answered. "I think Smythe of the Shell may know something about him."

"Rot!"

"You can see he's like Smythe——"

"There's a resemblance, but that's nothing. He's a tramp, and he's going out. Get a move on," added Carthew roughly, and he jerked the nameless boy towards the gates.

The tattered lad went unresistingly.

"Stop that, Carthew!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver angrily. "I tell you he's not going."

"You'd better not argue with a prefect, Silver."

"Let him alone!"

"I'm going to turn the young rascal out!" growled Carthew.

"Stop him!" said Jimmy Silver, between his teeth.

"Hands off, Carthew!"

"Stand back, you young sweeps! Yow-ow-ow!" roared Carthew, as the juniors rolled him over.

"Come on, kid!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver breathlessly; and he seized the nameless boy by the arm and ran him on to the School House.

Carthew staggered to his feet.

There was a crowd of grinning juniors round him, and the bully of the Sixth was crimson with rage.

"Silver, Lovell! I—I—I'll——" he spluttered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew made a rush after the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had reached the School House, and were leading the nameless boy in, when Carthew overtook them in the doorway.

"Now, you young rascals!" roared the Sixth-Former.

"Carthew!"

It was Mr. Bootles' voice.

The master of the Fourth had seen the curious procession from his study window, and he was coming out to inquire, when Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived. Carthew dropped his hands suddenly.

"Mr. Bootles! These young sweeps have——have——"

"I saw what happened, from my window," said Mr. Bootles severely. "You will have the kindness to restrain your temper, Carthew! Silver, who is this——this person that you have brought into the school?"

Jimmy explained once more.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "That is very remarkable! You may take the lad into my study, Silver! I will question him myself!"

"Yes, sir!"

The Fistical Four bestowed a triumphant grin on Carthew of the Sixth, and marched their protegee away to the Form-master's study. Mr. Bootles rustled after them, in a state of great doubt and astonishment. Within ten minutes, all Rookwood knew of the arrival of the nameless boy from nowhere.

CHAPTER 12.

Great News for Smythe!

"SMYTHE!"

Bang!

"Smythey!"

Thump!

"Oh, gad!" ejaculated Adolphus.

Adolphus was in his study, resting. Howard and Tracy of the Shell were with him, and there was a cloud of cigarette-smoke in the study. But Adolphus declined the attractions of banker. After his terrific walk—nearly four miles—he wasn't in a condition for banker, as he pathetically explained to his chums.

There was a sudden commotion at Smythe's door. The door was locked, as a precaution, so it had not opened when the handle was turned from outside. Tubby Muffin's fat fist thumped on the panels, and Tubby's fat voice bawled through the keyhole in tones of great excitement.

"Smythe! Smythey! Smythe!"

"Buzz off, you fat wasp!" shouted Smythe angrily. "You're not comin' in here! Buzz off!"

Thump! Bang!

"Let me in, old chap!" howled Tubby through the keyhole. "I've got news for you, Smythey!"

"Cut off!"

Thump!

Tubby Muffin was full of news, and he evidently meant to impart it to Adolphus whether Adolphus liked it or not.

"By gad," said Smythe, breathing hard. "We shall have the prefects here if that fat idiot keeps up that shindy! Let him in, Tracy, and we'll scrag him!"

"What-ho!" said Tracy.

Tracy of the Shell unlocked the door and

threw it open. Tubby Muffin rolled in, almost tumbling over in his hurry.

"Smythey!" he gasped. "Oh! Ah! Leggo! Yaroooh!"

Tracy and Howard seized the fat Classical junior, and Reginald Muffin gave a yell of alarm.

Bump, bump!

It was not Tubby's fist bumping on the outside of the door this time. It was Tubby's head bumping on the inside, and the voice of Tubby rang far and wide with anguish:

"Yow-ow-wow-wow!"

"Give him some more, and kick him out!" said Adolphus, with satisfaction. "Bang his napper! Don't mind the door!"

Bump, bump!

"Yaroooh!" roared Tubby. "Help! Yooop! Leggo! Smythey, you beast, I came to tell you——"

"Give him some more!" grinned Adolphus.

"Your brother's come!" howled Tubby.

Adolphus stared.

"Eh? What? My brother?" he exclaimed.

"Ow! Yes! Ow!"

"Why couldn't you say so before, then, you fat idiot?" exclaimed Smythe. "Where is he?"

Howard and Tracy released the fat Classical. Tubby Muffin rubbed his head ruefully, and blinked at them.

"Well, where is he?" demanded Smythe. "I didn't know my brother was comin'. Are you gammonin', you fat bouncer?"

"He's in Bootles' study!" gasped Tubby. "I—I mean, I suppose he's your brother, Smythey, as he's so like you."

Adolphus sat upright.

"What are you burblin' about?" he demanded. "Has my brother come, or hasn't he? Who's like me, you burblin' jabber-work?"

"That chap——" gasped Tubby.

"What chap?"

"That young tramp——"

"Tramp!" repeated Adolphus.

"Yes," spluttered Tubby. "You haven't heard? Jimmy Silver found him wandering on the heath. He's lost his memory——"

"Eh?"

"He's almost in rags and tatters!" said Tubby breathlessly. "Carthew was going to turn him out of gates for a tramp. But he's awfully like you, Smythey. The fellows think he must be your brother!"

"A tattered tramp, and like me!" said Adolphus Smythe, with a glare at Tubby that almost cracked his eyeglass.

"Just like you, only rather good-looking!" said Tubby.

"What?"

"I mean, he's just like you, only he doesn't look such an idiot!"

"You cheeky, fat bouncer!" roared Adolphus Smythe, in great wrath. "Here, collar him, you chaps! Give him some more! What are you chortlin' at, you pair of thumpin' asses?"

Howard and Tracy certainly were chortling, but they made a move to collar the news-bearer again. But Reginald Muffin dodged out of the doorway in time.

"Yah!" he howled, from the passage. "I only came to tell you, you beast! I suppose you're trying to keep it dark that you've got a brother a tramp, Smythey!"

"Collar him!" yelled Adolphus furiously.

But Tubby Muffin fled.

Smythe of the Shell kicked the door shut, and sat down in his armchair again, with a ruffled brow. He frowned at Howard and Tracy, who were grinning.

"That's jolly queer news!" remarked Tracy. "A tramp, like you! We'd better go and see him!"

"It's only Muffin's silly rot, of course!" snapped Smythe. "How could a tramp be like me, you dashed idiot?"

"You haven't got any tattered relations?" grinned Howard.

"If you want a thick ear, Howard, you——"

"Hallo! Here he comes back again!"

Footsteps approached the study door again. Adolphus, with a vengeful glitter in his eyes, jumped up and seized a cushion.

"By gad, I'll teach the fat idiot to bring his silly yarns here!" he exclaimed. "The minute he opens the door I'll squash him!"

And Adolphus stood with the cushion uplifted in both hands, ready for the intruding head of Reginald Muffin.

There was a tap on the door, and it opened.

Crash!

The cushion descended.

"Yooooop!"

"Got him!" yelled Adolphus. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's Jimmy Silver!" howled Tracy.

"Oh gad!"

It was indeed the captain of the Fourth

who had received that sudden swipe, and he sat in the doorway, with a dazed look. He jumped up, and made a rush for the startled Adolphus.

Smythe dodged round the table.

"Here, keep off!" he yelled. "I thought it was Muffin! I—oh—ah—leggo—blow! Yow-ow!"

Jimmy Silver's grasp was upon Smythe, and he jerked the cushion away. Then the cushion rose and fell, and Adolphus Smythe rolled on his expensive study carpet.

"There, you silly ass!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "There and there and there!"

"Ow! Stop it! I thought it was Muffin!" wailed Adolphus.

"You'd better make sure it's Muffin next time, then! There and there and there!"

"Help!"

Jimmy tossed the cushion into the chair at last.

"Bootles sent me here, you howling ass!" he said. "You're to go to his study at once!"

Adolphus sat up, gasping.

"Ow! Ow! I won't go! Bootles isn't my Form master. Tell him to go and eat coke! Ow!"

"You're wanted at once, you silly ass!" said Jimmy. "You've got to see a chap who's just come—"

"Hallo! The chap Muffin was speaking about?" exclaimed Tracy. "The chap who's like Smythe?"

"That's it."

Adolphus Smythe scrambled breathlessly to his feet.

"There isn't any chap, and he's not like me!" he gasped. "This is some rotten yarn you've started, Jimmy Silver!"

"Fathead! He's in Bootles' study now, and Bootles is waiting for you!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver impatiently. "He sent me to fetch you."

"I'm jolly well not goin'!" said Smythe sulkily, trying to get his tie straight before the glass. "Bootles ain't my Form master."

"Am I to tell him that?" snapped Jimmy Silver as he stepped into the passage.

"H'm! You—you can tell him I'm comin'!" said Adolphus, on second thoughts, which are proverbially the best.

Jimmy Silver grinned, and went down the passage, and Adolphus, having tied his tie and smoothed his jacket and brushed his hair, followed him, in a far from amiable mood.

CHAPTER 13.

Awful for Adolphus!

"COME in, Smythe!" said Mr. Bootles, blinking at the Shell fellow over his glasses, as Adolphus presented himself in the study doorway.

Adolphus came in, with knitted brows.

The Fistical Four and the nameless boy were in the study with Mr. Bootles. In the corridor outside, at least two score of fellows were collected, all in a state of considerable excitement.

The arrival of the boy without a name had caused a sensation, all the more because his remarkable likeness to Smythe of the Shell had been observed by all. That Smythe must know something about him was the general idea; the resemblance was too strong to be anything but a family likeness, in the opinion of the Rookwood fellows.

And there was much chuckling among the juniors at that idea. For the tattered stranger was not, so far as appearances went, a credit to the lofty and aristocratic Adolphus, and it looked as if some poor relation of the Smythes had turned up by a curious chance. If the noble Adolphus had any poor relations, he was careful to keep them strictly dark; they had not been heard of at Rookwood before. Now one, at least, was heard of, and was attracting general attention—if indeed the boy from nowhere was a relation of Smythe's.

Smythe glanced at the tattered lad as he entered the study, and could not help being struck by a familiarity in his look. The likeness, naturally, was not so obvious to Adolphus as to other fellows, but even Adolphus could see, in the tattered youth's features, a resemblance to the countenance he was accustomed to see in the glass.

But that resemblance weighed nothing with Smythe. Not for the world would he have admitted that this tattered and muddy youth could possibly be a relative of his.

"My dear Smythe," said Mr. Bootles, in his mild tones, "I have sent for you to see this lad—"

"Well, sir?" grunted Adolphus, as Mr. Bootles paused.

"Look at him, Smythe!"

"I'm looking at him," answered Adolphus, as disrespectfully as he dared.

"The circumstances are most remarkable, Smythe," pursued Mr. Bootles. "I have questioned this unhappy lad, and it appears that he has suffered from some shock that

has deprived him of his memory. Evidently he has been ill. Now, the boy bears a most remarkable resemblance to you, Smythe, in personal appearance——"

"I don't see it, sir!" growled Adolphus.

Mr. Bootles peered at him over his spectacles.

"It is very plain—in fact, striking, Smythe," he said mildly. "You are both apparently of the same age, and extremely alike in feature. Indeed, if this lad were dressed as you are dressed, I think it would be difficult to tell one from the other."

Smythe set his lips.

"Even if the fellow happens to be like me, I don't see that it concerns me, sir," he answered. "I don't know anythin' about him."

"That is what I wish to ascertain, Smythe. The likeness is perhaps a family likeness——"

"Nothin' of the sort."

"You speak very positively, Smythe," said Mr. Bootles, with another blink at the dandy of the Shell.

"I'm quite positive that that ragged outsider isn't any relation of mine," answered Smythe savagely. "Jimmy Silver's started this up against me, to make the fellows talk——"

"Kindly do not talk nonsense, Smythe," said Mr. Bootles severely. "I noticed the resemblance at once, and that is why I sent for you. This lad is quite a respectable lad, though his clothes are so old and tattered. He speaks quite nicely, and evidently belongs to respectable people. He has lost his memory, and has, doubtless, wandered from home. If you could tell me anything about the lad, Smythe, it might enable me to get into touch with his parents and——"

"I can't!"

"You have never seen him before?"

"Never!"

"Have you any relation—a cousin or a brother—about the age of this boy?"

"My brother's five years older than I am," grunted Smythe.

"But a cousin——"

"I've got six or seven cousins, but none of them like that frowsy tramp!" snorted Adolphus.

The nameless boy flushed, and Jimmy Silver gave Smythe an expressive look. But for the presence of Mr. Bootles, Jimmy would have given him something more emphatic than a look.

"You cannot help me in the matter, then,

Smythe?" asked Mr. Bootles, with a glance of strong disapproval at the angry Adolphus. The Form master was plainly disappointed.

"No, sir!"

Mr. Bootles turned to the nameless boy again.

"My dear lad," he said kindly, "have you ever seen Smythe before? Do you recognise him?"

"How could he recognise me, sir?" broke in Adolphus passionately. "I tell you I've got nothin' to do with the fellow."

"Kindly be silent, Smythe, and allow the lad to answer."

Adolphus set his lips. The nameless boy looked at him long and earnestly and shook his head at last.

"I do not know him, sir," he said quietly.

"Is the name of Smythe familiar to you, my poor boy?" asked Mr. Bootles.

"I—I think I have heard it, but—I do not remember."

"Of course he doesn't know me," muttered Adolphus, much relieved, however, that the tattered stranger did not claim him as a relation. "How could he know me? He's never seen me before, an' I've never seen him."

"That is all I wished to know, Smythe," said the Fourth Form master coldly. "You may go."

Smythe of the Shell quitted the study, glad to be dismissed. His face was dark as he tramped away through a grinning crowd in the corridor. Whether he knew the nameless boy or not, he could see that the juniors meant to take the view that the boy from nowhere was a relation of his.

"His brother, right enough," Tubby Muffin remarked, as Smythe passed him. "I dare say he's been in the workhouse, you know; looks like it. Have you got any more relations in the workhouse, Smythe? He, he, he!"

Smythe stamped on savagely and disappeared into his own study in a Hunnish frame of mind. It was like the nameless fellow's cheek to resemble him, from the lofty Adolphus' point of view, and Smythe was not at all disposed to admit that the resemblance was so close as it appeared to others.

And there was a lurking fear in Adolphus' breast that the tattered stranger might, in very truth, turn out to be a relative of his. The Smythes had not always flourished in wealth, and Adolphus was

aware that he had relations whom he had never seen, and whom he never mentioned at Rookwood. There were Smythes "in trade"—an awful thought to Adolphus. There were even Smythes who worked—still more awful thought—wretched Smythes who did not even spell their name with a "y," and yet who were indubitably related to the Smythes of Smythe Lodge. Such horrors Adolphus had always carefully kept out of his thoughts, and now—

Suppose this tattered wretch was a relation, after all? Suppose it came out, and all Rookwood knew! Adolphus groaned in anguish of spirit at the thought.

Luckily, the fellow would soon be gone. Tracy came back to the study with the news that Mr. Bootles had taken "Master Nobody from Nowhere" to the Head. Dr. Chisholm was to decide what was to be done with him.

"He oughtn't to have been brought to Rookwood at all!" exclaimed Adolphus savagely. "Jimmy Silver only did it to worry me—the cad! It's all rot about losing his memory—spoof all along the line!"

"Bootles believes him!" remarked Tracy.

"Bootles is an old fool!"

Tracy gave him a very curious look.

"You're sure you don't know the chap?" he asked.

"You silly ass!" roared Adolphus. "How could I know a ragged tramp?"

"Well, the fellows think——"

"Hang the fellows!"

"After all, everybody's got relations he don't want to trot out into the lunelight!" said Tracy comfortingly.

Smythe gritted his teeth.

"I tell you he's not my relation!" he hissed.

"All serene, old top! Don't get excited," said Tracy soothingly. "He's not your relation, then, if you like. Queer about the likeness, though, ain't it?"

"Oh, shut up!"

Smythe strode out of the study and slammed the door, leaving Tracy grinning. The dandy of the Shell tramped out into the growing dusk of the quad, affecting not to see the smiling glances turned upon him by the juniors he passed.

In an unenviable frame of mind, the snob of Rookwood paced under the old beeches. After all, the fellow would go soon—that was his only comfort. He would be sent to the workhouse or the police-station. Rook-

wood, at least, would see the last of him. But he had not gone by the time the gates were locked, and Smythe came back into the house in an apprehensive frame of mind. He met Jimmy Silver in the hall.

"Has he gone?" he asked.

"That chap? Oh, no," answered Jimmy.

"He's not going."

Smythe almost staggered.

"N-n-not going!" he ejaculated.

"No; the Head says he's to stay at Rookwood, and be looked after till his people are found."

"Oh gad!"

Adolphus turned away without another word. The Head had decided, quite oblivious of Adolphus' view on the matter, and that night the nameless boy from nowhere slept under the old roof of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 14.

Something for Smythe!

THWACK!

And a loud yell.

Dr. Chisholm paused in surprise.

If the Reverend Head of Rookwood had visited the Fourth Form quarters oftener, he would probably not have been surprised at hearing a yell from the end study.

But in the passage where the Classical Fourth lived and moved and had their being the Head was an infrequent visitor, an exceedingly rare bird.

The reverend gentleman did not know that his unusual and unexpected appearance in that quarter caused dismay—indeed, consternation.

He did not know that a warning whisper of "Cave!" ran along the passage when he was sighted on the staircase. He did not know that Conroy, who was changing out of footer rig in his study doorway, made a sudden bolt for cover, and rolled into his study tangled in trousers. He did not know that Peele, who was smoking a cigarette by the window, jammed it hurriedly into his pocket, and stood in growing horror as the lighted end gradually burned through his jacket lining. He did not know that Higgs and Putty Grace, who grinned sheepishly at him as he passed, had been engaged in desperate combat while he was still in the offing. Many things went on in Rookwood that the Head did not know.

But when, in his stately progress along the silent and respectful passage, he arrived at the end study, he knew that trouble was going on in that celebrated apartment.

For the door of the study was closed, and the warning "Cave!" had not reached Jimmy Silver & Co. in their quarters. And there was no time for any fellow to cut in and warn them. The Fistical Four of the Fourth pursued their occupation, whatever it was, while the reverend and terrifying gentleman bore down upon their study. And their occupation seemed to be of a strenuous nature, and distinctly unpleasant to somebody. For somebody was yelling furiously.

Thwack!

"Yooooop!"

"Give him six, Jimmy!"

That was Lovell's voice, quite audible to the Head as he paused in surprise.

"Yow-ow! Leggo, you rotters!"

That was the voice of Adolphus Smythe, of the Shell.

What Smythe of the Shell was doing in a Fourth Form study was not clear, except that he was getting a licking there. There was no doubt about the licking.

Thwack!

That was the sound of a cricket-stump, evidently landing upon trousers.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Smythe's voice again.

"Good!" Raby's voice this time "This will do you good, Smythey! Don't be such a cad, you know!"

"Or such a snob!" said Newcome.

"Yah! Oh, lemme gerrup!"

"But you've only had four out of six, Smythe!" This was Jimmy Silver's voice.

"Steady!"

Thwack!

"Help!"

"Bless my soul!" said the Head.

He strode forward and threw open the door of the end study.

Quite a surprising scene met his gaze; surprising to the Head, that is.

Probably it would not have surprised anyone else at Rookwood.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was extended on the study carpet.

He was spread-eagled there, face down.

Lovell stood on one of his legs, Raby on the other. Newcome sat gracefully on his shoulders. Jimmy Silver wielded the cricket-stump.

The Fistical Four seemed to find the thing amusing. Adolphus Smythe found it anything but that. But Smythe's point of view, naturally, was rather different from that of the Fistical Four. There is a great distinction between the active and passive voices of the verb "to whack."

Jimmy Silver heard the door open, but as he had his back to it, he did not see what an awe-inspiring figure appeared there. So he simply called over his shoulder

"Buzz off! We're whacking Smythe!"

"Silver!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver jumped almost clear of the floor as he spun round. He knew that awful voice.

The voice of the great, huge bear in the fairy-tale was "not a circumstance" to it.

"The—the Head!" babbled Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Oh, crikey!"

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

The Fistical Four, with breathless ejaculations, faced the awful vision in the doorway.

Smythe rolled over on the floor and sat up.

Dr. Chisholm surveyed the scene with a glance that struck terror to the end study—not easily terrified as a rule.

Jimmy Silver blinked at the Head as he might have blinked at a gorgon. The Head appeared a good deal like a gorgon at that moment; but Jimmy did not feel like a Perseus. He felt more like one of the fabled gorgon's hapless victims that were turned to stone.

Silence reigned in the end study for a second; a silence that could be felt.

The Head broke it.

"What does this mean?" he inquired.

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked helplessly at one another. No answer was forthcoming.

"Get up, Smythe!"

Smythe got up.

"Is this a case of bullying?" The Head's voice rumbled like distant thunder. "Have I, by sheer accident, come upon a case of rank hooliganism in the Fourth Form of Rookwood School?"

"Nunno, sir!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"What were you doing to Smythe?"

Really, it was a superfluous question. The Head knew perfectly well what Jimmy

Silver & Co. had been doing to Smythe. But he seemed to expect an answer.

"W-w-w-whacking him, sir!" mumbled Jimmy.

"I am aware that you were beating him, Silver!"

"Ye-es, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

He did not add that, in that case, the Head needn't have asked. Arguing with a headmaster was never any good.

"And why," said the Head, "were you beating him?"

No answer.

"I am waiting," the Head remarked icily, "for a reply."

Jimmy Silver blinked at his chums again. But they could not help him. What was the good of telling the Head that they were beating Smythe of the Shell for his soul's good? That he had asked for it, and wouldn't be happy till he got it!

The Head turned to Smythe, as the Fistical Four seemed to be tongue-tied.

"What was the cause of this unseemly scene, Smythe?"

Adolphus gasped.

As the injured party, Smythe ought to have been willing to explain, but he wasn't. "I—I—" he stuttered.

"Well?"

"I—I don't complain, sir!"

"Quite so, Smythe; but I have asked you a question, and I expect an answer."

Smythe's eyes rolled helplessly. Evidently he had a great reluctance to explain why the Fistical Four had been whacking him.

"Why are you in this study, Smythe?"

"I—I came to speak to Silver, sir."

"To quarrel with Silver?"

"Oh, no, sir!"

"You came on a peaceful visit to this study?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"And then you were treated as I saw?"

"Ahem!"

"Kindly answer me, Smythe."

"I—I—I may have said somethin' Silver didn't like, sir," stammered the unhappy Adolphus.

"What did you say that Silver did not like, Smythe?"

Adolphus writhed.

"Just a—a—a remark, sir, that's all! I—I don't mind, sir. I—I'm not complainin'."

But the Head, having arrived on that extraordinary scene, was there to see justice done. If the Fistical Four had been guilty

of bullying, there was severe punishment in store for that happy band. But the Head—who was known to all Rookwood as a "downy old bird"—was beginning to suspect that the punishment he had witnessed had been justly administered—that, in fact, Smythe of the Shell had asked for it. And he meant to know the facts.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me what was the remark you made to Silver which led to this unseemly disturbance, Smythe?" asked the Head, with polished politeness but iron determination.

Smythe breathed hard.

"I—I may have made a remark about young Nobody," he mumbled.

"Whom?"

"Young Nobody, sir."

"Do you mean the unhappy lad to whom I have granted the shelter of Rookwood until his family can be communicated with, Smythe?"

"Ye-e-es, sir."

"Indeed! And what was the remark?" Smythe wriggled.

"If you do not explain fully, Smythe, I shall conclude that you have been speaking of that unhappy lad with malice and ill-nature, and have, in fact, deserved the punishment you have just received."

Smythe was silent.

"Very well," said the Head. "You may go, Smythe. You will take five hundred lines of Virgil. I shall speak to your Form-master."

"Yes, sir!" gasped Smythe.

And he made his escape.

CHAPTER 15.

Under Jimmy's Protection!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. stood silent. They were wondering uneasily how the affair was going to end. Adolphus Smythe's punishment was just, otherwise the Fistical Four would not have administered it. But they hardly expected a mere headmaster to have sense enough to see that. But the headmaster of Rookwood evidently possessed more sense than the heroes of the Fourth gave him credit for.

His glance at the chums was now quite benignant.

"I came here to speak to you, Silver," he said.

"Thank you, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "M-m-may I—I offer you a chair, sir?"

"You may, Silver."

Jimmy did.

Dr. Chisholm sat down, the four juniors respectfully standing, waiting for the verdict, as it were. But the Head made no further reference to the whacking of Smythe. That matter seemed to have passed from his mind.

"I came to speak to you about the boy you brought to Rookwood yesterday, Silver," said the Head. "Mr. Bootles has told me what you told him. You found this boy wandering on the heath?"

"Yes, sir."

"You interfered between him and a ruffianly man who appeared to be in pursuit of him?"

"Yes, sir."

"You did quite rightly in bringing him to the school," said Dr. Chisholm. "It was the proper step for you to take, Silver."

"Thank you, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"We—we thought you would approve, sir, in the—the circumstances. And—and as the chap was so like Smythe to look at, we thought Smythe might know something about him."

"That has not proved to be the case, however?"

"No, sir. Smythe's never seen him before."

"Has Smythe spoken to this boy?" asked the Head.

"I—I think so, sir."

"Does he feel the same sympathy towards the unhappy lad that I believe is felt by most of the Rookwood boys?"

"I—I—I think he doesn't like him very much, sir," stammered Jimmy. "The chaps have been rather chipping old Smythe about it, sir—making out that the kid is a relation of his, as they're so alike."

"Why should Smythe mind that?"

Jimmy coughed.

"Well, the chap is rather—rather tattered, sir; and—and Smythe thinks he's a tramp, or something."

"I see. However, the boy is no tramp," said the Head. "I have questioned him very closely, and the school doctor has examined him, and it is clear that he has been subjected to ill-usage and hardship, and the shock he has received has caused him to lose his memory. Dr. Bolton has hopes that

he may recover completely when his health is restored, and he may then be able to tell us his name and acquaint us with his story. Kindness and care are what he chiefly needs now; and for that reason I shall allow him to remain at Rookwood and attend classes here until some discovery can be made. I have learned from him that he has been at school before, and that he is quite able to take his place in a junior Form here. I am therefore placing him in the Fourth Form, and my object in coming to see you in your study, Silver—"

The Head paused a moment.

"Yes, sir," murmured Jimmy.

"My object is to tell you that I think of placing him in this study for—"

"Oh, sir!"

"For the time that he remains at Rookwood. After consultation with your Form-master, Mr. Bootles, I am of opinion, Silver, that you may be relied upon to treat this unfortunate lad with kindness and consideration, and to afford him any protection he may need—"

"Oh!"

"The scene I witnessed when I arrived here, Silver, made me think for a moment that I was mistaken."

Jimmy was silent.

"But on consideration, Silver, it confirms me in my opinion. As the new boy is in a somewhat delicate state of health, Silver, he will benefit by the care of a thoughtful friend, and such, I think, you will be to him."

"I—I'll try, sir!" stammered Jimmy.

"Thank you, Silver!"

The Head rose.

He gave the Fistical Four a gracious smile as he quitted the study.

The Co. looked at one another.

They did not venture to speak till the Head's footsteps died away on the staircase at the other end of the passage. Then Arthur Edward Lovell made the remark:

"Well, I'm blowed!"

"The Head," said Raby sagely, "is a downy old bird. He sees things, you know. He knows as well as we do that Smythe is down on that poor kid, and was saying rotten things about him, and asked for a study whacking. And he knows that we won't let Smythe rag him."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"All very well," grunted Lovell. "But

we don't want five in a study. I'm sorry for young Nobody, but we——"

"It will only be till his people are found, though," remarked Newcome.

"Yes, that's so."

"Dash it all, we're bound to stand by him," said Jimmy Silver. "I don't know what it's like for a chap to lose his memory, but it can't be pleasant. And he seems a decent kid, too."

"Oh, he's all right!" said Lovell.

"We'll make him welcome," said the captain of the Fourth. "We'll treat him well, and perhaps we can cure him among us. More likely than old Sawbones, I think."

"Yes, rather!"

The study door reopened, and the fat face of Tubby Muffin looked in, greatly excited.

"I say, what did the Head want?" chirruped Tubby.

"Oh, just dropped in for a chat," answered Jimmy Silver carelessly.

"Gammon!"

"We're on rather chummy terms with the Head, you know," explained Arthur Edward Lovell. "We rather pull together."

"Look here, what did he want?" asked Tubby. "I thought it was a licking; but I didn't hear any howling."

"You'll hear some soon, if you don't take your face away!" said Lovell darkly.

"I say, young Nobody's coming up the passage," said Tubby, changing the topic. "I say, he's in Etons now, and looks quite respectable. Smythe's awfully wild at fellows saying he's a relation of his——"

"That ought to make the new fellow wild, not Smythe!" growled Lovell. "Hallo, here he is!"

The new junior appeared in the doorway. Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at him with interest.

When they had found the unfortunate lad wandering on Coombe Heath, he had been tattered and ragged, and Smythe of the Shell might be excused for having taken him for a youthful tramp.

But there was a great change now.

He was in Etons, neat and trim, newly washed and brushed, and looked like any other junior at Rookwood—a good deal more presentable than Tubby Muffin, in fact.

He hesitated in the doorway.

There was a flush on his rather good-looking face—good-looking, though it was

in other respects remarkably like that of Adelphus Smythe.

"May I come in?" he asked rather timidly.

"Trot in, old scout!" said Lovell heartily.

"The Head told me to come here and——"

"That's right!"

"I'm to stay at Rookwood for the present," said the new junior. "I'm to be in this study, the Head says."

"Welcome as the flowers in May, old top!" said Jimmy Silver reassuringly. "Jolly glad to see you here!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. solemnly.

And the new boy, much encouraged, came in.

"Memory ain't come back yet?" asked Lovell curiously.

The new junior shook his head and coloured again.

"Jolly queer, isn't it?"

"It is very strange," said the junior in a low voice. "It troubles me very much. I cannot remember my name. When I try to think of the past it makes my head ache. I don't know what's happened to me."

"You don't remember your father even—or your mater?"

"I have no father or mother," said the new boy in the same quiet tone. "I am sure I should remember them if I had."

"Poor kid!" murmured Lovell, rather touched.

"But you must have some relations," said Jimmy Silver.

"I don't know!"

"You've been to school before?"

"Yes; it is all familiar to me here. I was able to answer the questions the Head put to me—things seemed to come fresh into my mind as he asked me," said the junior. "I—I think if I was asked my name and it was mentioned I should know it then. But unless it is mentioned to me I do not think I shall ever remember it."

Lovell uttered an exclamation.

"Why, that makes it all serene!" he exclaimed. "We've simply got to mention all the names there are, and as soon as we hit on the right one—why, there you are!"

The junior smiled faintly, and Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"That's rather a big order," Jimmy remarked. "I suppose there are about a million names."

"We'll do it alphabetically," said Lovell,

much taken with his idea. "Now, is your name Ayres?"

"I don't know!"

"Arthur?"

"I don't know!"

"Aintree?"

The new boy shook his head.

"Leave the rest till after tea, old chap," suggested Jimmy Silver, while Raby and Newcome grinned.

The Fistical Four sat down to tea with the new junior. Evidently there was no time for Lovell to run through the complete list. But Lovell did not give up his scheme. Every now and then he turned to the new boy and shot a question at him.

"Is your name Ambleside—Anson—Arkwright—Abney—Acton—Atkins—Alison—Allinson—"

It was a sort of accompaniment to tea, and Raby remarked that it was as good as an orchestra. But the new junior did not answer to any of the names propounded by the enterprising Lovell; and even Arthur Edward was daunted by the reflection that the required name might begin with a Y or a Z.

CHAPTER 16.

No Clue!

THE next day the new junior took his place in the Fourth Form of Rookwood.

He was the object of much curiosity there.

Mr. Bootles was very kind to him, and all the fellows followed the Form-master's example in that respect. Even Higgs, the bully of the Fourth, moderated his usual manners and customs a little. Even Peele and Gower were considerate.

The strange misfortune that had befallen the new junior touched the imagination of the Rookwood fellows.

To lose one's memory was, they all agreed, a "jolly queer" thing, and not a pleasant one.

The new boy bore his misfortune with a quiet patience and fortitude which the juniors considered showed that he had plenty of pluck.

He fell into the ways of the Fourth at once.

It was clear that the Form work was not new to him; every item of it, though it

came newly to him, awoke some chord of memory and was familiar at once.

That seemed to argue in favour of Lovell's theory; and the juniors agreed that if someone by chance mentioned his name before him the new fellow would know it and regain his lost identity.

Fifty fellows, at least, had asked him whether his name was Smythe, prompted by his resemblance to Smythe of the Shell. But his name was not Smythe, though he admitted that the name was familiar, and that he must have heard it before. Somewhere in the hidden past he had known or heard of a Smythe.

And that confirmed the general impression that he must be a relation of Adolphus—an impression not shared by Adolphus himself, and which he indignantly repudiated.

In class that morning Lovell sat beside the new junior, and interrupted lessons every now and then with some question such as:

"Is your name Jones—Robinson—Huggins—Buggins—Wiggins—Snooks?"

Arthur Edward seemed really inexhaustible.

But to each question the new junior responded only with a smile and a shake of the head.

"You are speaking, Lovell!" said Mr. Bootles at last.

Lovell looked up.

"Only asking the new chap if his name is Staggers, sir," he answered, with an air of conscious virtue.

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"Kindly do not ask the new boy in class whether his name is Staggers, Lovell," he replied.

"No, sir! But it just occurred to me that his name may have been Hooker—"

"Really, Lovell—"

"Or Snike—"

"You will kindly let the subject drop till after lessons, Lovell!" said Mr. Bootles with asperity. "Otherwise, I shall cane you."

"Oh!" said Lovell.

And he let the subject drop till after lessons; but as the Fourth went out of the Form-room that morning he tapped the new junior on the shoulder and demanded:

"Is your name Asquith?"

And the new junior grinned and shook his head again.



An amazing scene met the Head's gaze. Smythe was on the floor, held down, whilst Jimmy Silver wielded a cricket-stump. Jimmy heard the door open, but he did not see the Head. So he called over his shoulder: "Buzz off! We're whacking Smythe!" (See Chapter 14).

"I believe I've heard the name," he answered, "but it's not mine."

"Oh, you've heard it!" exclaimed Lovell, thinking that he was on the scent.

"I think so."

"Well, then——"

"Fathead!" said Jimmy Silver. "There's some political johnnie of that name. I've seen it in the papers."

"Oh, so have I, now I come to think of it!" admitted Lovell. "I say, kid, is your name Armitage?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or Belknap?"

Jimmy Silver marched the new junior out into the quad before Lovell could get any further along the alphabet.

What to call the new junior, as he possessed no name of his own, was rather a puzzle at first; but the juniors fell into the habit of alluding to him as the "Kid"—excepting Adolphus Smythe, who referred to him with scorn as "Young Nobody."

The Kid looked very cheerful in the quad with the Fistical Four. Their kind friendship was very grateful and comforting to him.

The chums of the Fourth took him down to the footer-ground, and they made the discovery there that he could play footer. He showed considerable skill at the game, too, which was a gratifying discovery to his new friends.

As they came back to the School House for dinner they fell in with Smythe of the Shell, walking loftily with his friends Howard and Tracy.

Smythe gave the new junior a scornful glance.

He would probably have added scornful words, but he had not forgotten the lesson he had received in the end study the day before.

The Kid paused and glanced at him rather timidly, and then came up to speak to him.

"Excuse me, Smythe——" he began.

Smythe eyed him haughtily.

"Don't speak to me!" he snapped.

The new junior coloured painfully.

"I don't mean to give offence," he said quietly. "You must have noticed, Smythe, how like you are to me in looks."

"I haven't!"

"The other fellows have, then."

"What rot!"

"You cheeky ass, Smythe!" exclaimed Lovell hotly. "You know it's the case. You're as like as two peas, excepting that the Kid looks a decent chap, and you look a born idiot and snob!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus glared and came very near punching Lovell's nose. Fortunately for him he did not come too near that proceeding. Lovell's nose would not have suffered so much as Adolphus'.

"I think we must be related, as we are so alike, Smythe," said the new junior. "You know, I have lost my memory. If it is possible that you know something of my people——"

"I don't!"

"But——"

"And don't want to!" added Adolphus, with a sneer.

"You must have some relations whose name is different from your own, I suppose?"

"Of course I have!"

"I may be one of them."

"Rot!"

"Will you tell me the names so that I may possibly recognise my own?"

"No, I won't!" said Smythe. "You're no connection of mine. You're a rotten tramp, and you've shoved yourself in here under false pretences. I don't believe for a minute that you've lost your memory; I think it's all bunkum from beginning to end, and what you want here is most likely to steal the spoons! That's what I think! And you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, you nameless rotter!"

The conversation was not continued, for Jimmy Silver & Co. interrupted it at that point by collaring Adolphus Smythe and rubbing his nose in the quadrangle.

Then they went in to dinner with the Kid, leaving Adolphus spluttering frantically, in a frame of mind impossible to be described!

CHAPTER 17.

A Startling Discovery!

"ROTTER!" grunted Tubby Muffin. Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth felt angry and aggrieved.

He was standing before the cupboard door in Smythe's study—and the door was locked.

That afternoon, in the school shop, Tubby's greedy eyes had watched Smythe of the Shell as he laid out a whole ten-shilling note in purchases. And those purchases, evidently, had been placed in the study cupboard—to wait there till tea-time. Apparently Smythe was standing a tea that day on an unusual scale. And, to Tubby Muffin's delight, Smythe had come out of his study afterwards and walked down to the gates.

Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth was not likely to lose an opportunity like that!

He felt that Smythe deserved to be raided.

The sins of Smythe were many. He had cuffed Tubby Muffin after missing a cake only a few days before. Just as if Tubby was capable of bagging a fellow's cake! As a matter of fact, Tubby had bagged it; but he felt indignant at the suspicion, all the same. Smythe couldn't really know that he had bagged it, and he had no right to suspect Reginald Muffin without evidence. He was a suspicious beast.

Besides, he was a beast in many ways! He smoked in his study—strictly against rules. He was down on the new kid, who was a harmless enough fellow and had lent Tubby a shilling. Taking one consideration with another, as the song says, Tubby felt that Smythe thoroughly deserved to have his feed raided.

Having satisfied himself on this point—it did not take him long—Reginald Muffin nipped into the study.

And then he found the cupboard locked, and the key gone!

"The suspicious rotter!" Tubby murmured, in unspeakable indignation. "Just as if he suspected that a fellow might be after his grub! Low, I call it!"

Tubby regarded the cupboard wistfully with greedy eyes, like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise.

He glanced at the poker. But burglary was rather too risky, on reflection. Yet to leave the feast there—waiting for Smythe's return—was impossible! Tubby could not drag himself away.

He was still contemplating the locked cupboard when footsteps came along to the study door. Along with them came the sound of a voice:

"This way!"

It was Smythe's voice!

"Oh, lor!" gasped Tubby.

Smythe had caught him—or would have caught him in another minute. But Tubby in direful anticipation of what would happen if Smythe did catch him, made the most of that minute. One wild glance round the study, and then Tubby Muffin's plump form vanished under the table. That table was covered by a very handsome cover—everything in Smythe's study was handsome. The cover was long enough to hide most of the fat form of Muffin as he crouched under the table.

Muffin crouched there, with his knees drawn up to his chin, palpitating. If Smythe found him—

The door opened.

"Here you are, father."

Tubby Muffin groaned inwardly.

He had concluded when Adolphus Smythe started for the gates that the dandy of the Shell was going out. Instead of which, it was clear now that Adolphus had only gone to the gates to meet his father, evidently paying him a visit at Rookwood that afternoon.

Doubtless that unusually magnificent spread was in honour of the parental visit. And while the spread was being partaken of above, Tubby Muffin was to have the pleasure of crouching below, not even able to share the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Tubby suppressed his feelings. He debated in his fat mind whether Smythe would refrain from kicking him because his father was present—and decided that Smythe wouldn't. So he sat tight.

There was a murmur of voices, but Tubby did not heed the conversation between Adolphus and his father. Generally he was inquisitive, but just now he was not interested—all his thoughts were of himself and his extremely uncomfortable position.

He wondered how long this was going to last. Worst of all, he was likely to be late for tea in his own study—besides missing Smythe's tuck, he would miss his own tea! The way of the transgressor was uncommonly hard this time.

A pair of boots, adorned with white spats, were planted close by Tubby, as Mr. Smythe sat down. Tubby just dodged them. A more elegant pair of shoes were planted on the other side of him, and Tubby

just dodged them, too. He seemed likely to come to grief among the footgear of the Smythe family.

Smythe pater and Smythe filius were having tea, and the somewhat fat and wheezy voice of Smythe pater ran on almost incessantly. And Tubby's attention to the conversation was suddenly roused as Adolphus ejaculated:

"Ten thousand pounds?"

"Yes, my boy."

"That's a lot of money, father."

"It will be yours when you come of age, Adolphus," said Mr. Smythe, "provided that your cousin, Charles Clare, is not found."

"That's jolly odd, sir!" said Adolphus. "I've never seen this chap Clare, but I remember hearing his name mentioned. I thought he was at school somewhere."

"Quite so. He was at Lynton."

"Isn't he there now?"

"No. That is the very peculiar part of the story," said Mr. Smythe. "I came down specially to see you about the matter, Adolphus, as it appears clear now that your cousin will not be found. Doubtless he has met with some accident, and has died. Of course, I am grieved to think so."

"Oh, of course!"

"As I had never seen the boy, however, I find myself able to think of the misfortune with fortitude."

"H'm!"

"As you know, Adolphus, we have never been on terms of intimacy with the Clares. And when the boy was left an orphan, his father's will left him to the care of the headmaster of Lynton, instead of in my charge. Naturally, I was sorry, as the boy was very ill-provided for. I should, of course, have felt it my duty to take charge of him, as he was your mother's nephew. However, it was not required of me. The headmaster of Lynton, an old friend of Mr. Clare, accepted the charge cheerfully; and no communication passed between the boy and me."

"I think I remember hearin' somethin' about it, father. Will you have another cup of tea?"

"Thank you! Now, from that time to this I confess that I have not given Charles Clare a thought," said Mr. Smythe. "His existence was recalled to me when your Uncle Richard, your mother's brother, died

in South Africa, and his will was made known. By the terms of his will his money was to be equally divided between Charles Clare and yourself, Adolphus. He considered that your elder brother was already sufficiently provided for. The sum amounts to ten thousand pounds."

"Ah!"

Tubby Muffin was listening with all his fat ears now.

And he thought he detected a rather curious change in the tone of Adolphus Smythe.

A very odd thought had come into Tubby's mind as he listened, and he divined that the same thought had occurred to Adolphus.

Mr. Smythe went on.

"Your Uncle Richard's will was made years before his death. It provided that his fortune should be equally divided between you and your cousin, Charles, if both were living; otherwise, the whole sum was to go to the survivor. If your cousin is not found, therefore, you will inherit the ten thousand pounds."

"He—he's supposed to be dead?"

"Certain legal steps will be necessary for his death to be presumed," said Mr. Smythe. "But that will be only a matter of form if he is not discovered, which seems now to be hopeless."

"But—but what can have happened to him?"

"That is a mystery. I have visited the headmaster of Lynton, and learned all that he could tell me. It appears that Charles Clare left the school one half-holiday to ramble in the woods. As he did not return he was searched for, and later the police were called in. The search, in fact, has never ceased."

"And he hasn't been found?"

"No. His cap was picked up on the beach at low-water, but no other clue was discovered. It is presumed that he was cut off by the tide at the foot of the cliffs and drowned. That is the only possible presumption in the circumstances, although the Lynton headmaster has not given up hope, and thinks it may be a case of kidnapping. That, of course, is nonsense. No one would be likely to kidnap the boy. There was no object."

"I—I suppose not."

"Not at all. But the headmaster attacked

some importance to the fact that a ruffianly man, with a broken nose, was seen in the neighbourhood about the same time, and afterwards disappeared. It appears also that a flashily-dressed stranger was seen in the village, where he passed a number of counterfeit currency-notes. There is not the slightest shred of evidence to connect either with the missing boy; but the Lynthorpe headmaster appears to have been attached to Clare, and he refuses to give up hope that he may yet be living.

"But—"

"But it will not be difficult to have his death legally presumed," said Mr. Smythe. "And your uncle's fortune will come to you when you are of age, Adolphus."

"Not before, father?"

"Certainly not!"

"I—I suppose I could borrow on it, though, if I wanted?"

"If you attempt to do anything of the kind, Adolphus, I shall request Dr. Chisholm to administer a very severe flogging to you!"

"I—I don't mean that, of course! I was only thinking—"

"Do not think anything of the kind, then!" said Mr. Smythe severely. "You have an ample allowance, Adolphus—more than sufficient, unless you are recklessly extravagant."

Smythe of the Shell did not answer that. It was not feasible to explain to his parent that he was, as a matter of fact, recklessly extravagant, and that he owed money right and left. There were several gentlemen in the bookmaking and billiards-sharpening line who were anxious to see the colour of Adolphus' money.

Adolphus was not very bright in some things, but he knew that a fellow who was to receive ten thousand pounds in a few years need not be short of money.

Mr. Smythe rose from the table.

"I came down to acquaint you with your good-fortune, Adolphus," he said.

"Thank you, father! I'm jolly glad to hear it, of course. I—I suppose there's no danger of Clare turning up?"

"None at all, in my opinion!"

"He might have wandered away, and—"

"Why should he?"

"Suppose—suppose he fell in with some—some ruffian, and got a knock on the head or something—"

"Then he would have been found."

"He might have lost his memory, or something like that—"

"What utter nonsense!"

"Of—of course! I was only thinking. But, of course, it's all right!" said Adolphus. "Shall I come to the station with you, father?"

"My cab is waiting at the gates. You may come to the gates, my boy."

Smythe pater and Smythe filius quitted the study.

When they were gone Tubby Muffin rolled out from under the table, his fat face simply ablaze with excitement.

"Phew!" murmured Tubby. "Phe-e-e-w!"

And he rolled out of the study as soon as the coast was clear.

CHAPTER 18.

A Rogue and a Fool!

"IS your name Meggs?"

Mr. Smythe heard Arthur Edward Lovell ask that question as he was walking down to the gates with his elegant younger son.

He glanced at Lovell and his companion, the latter a very quiet-looking junior, with a rather sad cast of face.

The clouded face broke into a smile as the junior shook his head.

"Well, is it Wiggs, then?"

"No."

"Or Scoggins?"

"No."

Arthur Edward Lovell was going on with his list as Mr. Smythe walked out of hearing, much to the relief of Adolphus.

For reasons of his own, Adolphus of the Shell did not want his father to come into contact with the schoolboy without a memory.

Adolphus' face was dark with thought—not pleasant thought—as he walked down to the gates with his father.

There were strange and rather guilty reflections working in the mind of the dandy of the Shell.

"Is it known what Clare was like to look at, father?" he asked, as the stout gentleman took his seat in the station cab.

"Yes. I was shown a photograph of him. He is like you, Adolphus."

"Oh!"

"Quite like you," said Mr. Smythe. "Indeed, his photograph might be taken for yours. By the way, I noticed a boy just now who resembles you in the quadrangle. That is rather curious——"

"A new fellow here," said Adolphus carelessly.

"Oh! A Rookwood boy?"

"Yes. He's one of Jimmy Silver's set, in the end study."

Mr. Smythe nodded, and shook hands with his son, and the cab rolled away with him.

Adolphus stood staring after it for some time, his brows corrugated with deep thought.

Slowly he turned, and made his way back to the School House.

Lovell was still talking to the new junior, and Smythe, as he passed, heard him say:

"Is your name Dickens?"

Smythe stalked on.

Of all the fellows at Rookwood, including the new boy, Adolphus Smythe was the only one who could have answered Lovell's questions. But he could have answered them now—and he knew it.

Tubby Muffin was lounging on the steps, and he watched Smythe come in, with a very curious grin on his fat face.

Smythe did not notice him.

He went directly to his study, and shut the door. There, he did not sit down, and did not light a cigarette as usual. He paced to and fro in the study, his brows wrinkled, his lips twitching.

His thoughts would not rest.

"I don't know for certain," he muttered. "I can't know! What I may happen to suspect isn't evidence. Besides, I hate the fellow!"

He set his lips.

"He's a rotter! I've been ragged and clipped on his account. Hang him! I'm not bound to say anything. Besides, I don't know that it's the truth, either."

The study door opened, and Howard and Tracy came in. Adolphus spun round towards them with savage irritation.

"Pater gone?" yawned Tracy.

"Yes. Get out!"

"Eh? Can't a chap come into his own study?" demanded Tracy, in astonishment.

"I—I've got a headache. Leave me alone for a bit——"

"Not specially anxious for your com-

pany, if you come to that," answered Tracy. "Didn't the pater tip you?"

"No."

"Old hunks! Come on, Howard! Adolphus has got 'em!"

And Adolphus' study mates cleared off, much to his relief. He did not want company just then.

He resumed his restless pacing of the study.

The path of honour and duty lay clearly before Smythe of the Shell, if he had chosen to see it. But he did not choose to see it; he was determined not to see it—determined, at least, not to follow it.

But that determination brought with it a sense of guilt that was extremely disconcerting.

Adolphus had plenty of petty sins upon his conscience; but hitherto nothing of such a serious nature. He was almost startled by the discovery of a vein of rascality in his nature, of which he had not before suspected the existence.

Tap!

The door opened again, and the fat face of Reginald Muffin of the Fourth grinned in.

Smythe gave him a furious look. He was in no mood for Tubby Muffin just then.

"Get out, you fat rotter!" he shouted angrily.

Instead of getting out Reginald Muffin came in, and closed the door after him. Smythe of the Shell advanced upon him with his fists clenched, and his eyes gleaming savagely.

"You fat rascal! What do you want here? I'll pitch you out, neck and crop——"

"Better not, old bean!" said Tubby. "It won't pay you."

There was a peculiar significance in Tubby's look and tone that struck Smythe. His hands dropped to his sides.

"What do you mean?" he muttered huskily.

Impossible as it seemed that the fat Classical could know anything of his affairs, Tubby's look sent a cold shiver of apprehension down Adolphus' back.

"I know what I mean," grinned Tubby. Smythe's hands clenched again.

"I heard," explained Tubby calmly.

"Wh-a-at?"

"I was under the table."

Smythe almost staggered.

"Under the table, while my father was here," he scarcely articulated.

Tubby Muffin nodded cheerfully.

"I heard every word, old top!" he remarked.

Adolphus Smythe sank helplessly into a chair. He could only stare at Tubby's fat, grinning face as if fascinated. Muffin knew. It was not only with his own conscience that Smythe of the Shell had to contend, then. There was Tubby Muffin's knowledge to be taken into account. For the moment, it was an overwhelming blow.

"You needn't pitch into me, old sport!" rattled on Tubby. "If you do, I'll go straight to Jimmy Silver and tell him. He, he, he!"

Adolphus breathed hard.

"You haven't told?"

"No."

Smythe tried to pull himself together. He realised that he was giving himself away to the Paul Pry of Rookwood.

"There's nothing to tell, of course," he said.

"You seem jolly anxious about it, all the same," grinned Tubby. "Why didn't you tell your father about young Nobody?"

"Why should I?" muttered Smythe.

"You know who he is now," chuckled Tubby. "So do I."

"Nonsense!"

Tubby Muffin chortled.

"I tell you I heard all your pater said. Any fellow who heard him would have known at once who Nobody was. Dash it all. If Jimmy Silver knew you had a missing cousin, do you think he wouldn't tumble at once? All the fellows believe already that young Nobody is a relation of yours. But it's not known that you've got a cousin at school who's disappeared from school. Do you think it isn't plain enough for a blind donkey to see?"

Adolphus panted, but did not reply.

It was plain enough, and he knew it.

"Why, you asked your pater yourself whether that chap Clare might have lost his memory!" said Tubby, grinning.

"That shows what you were thinking."

"You spying cad!" hissed Smythe.

"Oh, draw it mild! I just happened to be under the table. I hope you don't mean to insinuate that I would listen!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin warmly. "If you mean that, Smythe, I'll get out at once!"

I've got something to tell Jimmy Silver that he might like to hear about his new pal."

Tubby turned to the door.

"Stay here!" gasped Adolphus.

"Certainly, old top, as you're so pressing!" said Tubby Muffin affably.

Smythe of the Shell looked at the fat Classical as if he would bite him. There was a short silence.

"Of—of course, there's nothing in this," said Adolphus at last haltingly. "Perhaps something of the kind may have crossed my mind, but, of course, there's nothing in it. But—but I don't want my affairs chattered all over Rookwood, and that nameless cad making out that he's a relation of mine."

"Of course you don't!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "You don't want to whack out ten thousand quids with him."

Adolphus winced.

"If you'll hold your tongue, Muffin——" he said, at last.

"My dear chap, if you ask me as a pal, of course, I shan't say anything!"

"I—I do, then!" gasped Adolphus.

Tubby waved a fat hand.

"All serene! Rely on me! I say, Smythey, old bean, could you lend me a quid?"

Then Adolphus understood. Without a word, he placed a pound-note in Reginald Muffin's fat hand. Reginald Muffin bestowed a fat wink on him, and rolled out of the study.

Adolphus Smythe was left alone with his thoughts. He did not find them pleasant.

CHAPTER 19.

Lovell's Luck!

"CARKER?"

"No."

"Chivers?"

"No."

"Chinkins?"

"No."

"Chumgun?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a roar of laughter in the end study in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood. It interrupted Arthur Edward Lovell. The string of questions came to a stop.

"Chuck it, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver, in a tone of patient remonstrance, as Lovell glared at the laughing juniors. "You're making the Kid tired, and the study tired. Give us a rest!"

"You leave the list till to-morrow," suggested Raby.

"To be continued in our next!" remarked Newcome.

And the Kid grinned.

Ordinary names, extraordinary names, super-extraordinary names figured in Lovell's list. And at any moment Lovell was liable to turn upon his new chum, and shoot a question at him, in class or in the quad, in the study or on the football field.

Sooner or later, Lovell was convinced, he would hit on the right name, and all would be calm and bright, so to speak.

The Kid was grateful for Lovell's kind efforts—though it is possible that he found his friend a little bit of a bore at times. He was too polite to say so, but Lovell's older friends weren't. They often said so.

But Lovell was a stickler.

After bestowing a crushing glare upon his irreverent chums, he went on regardless:

"Is your name Chumpey?"

"Oh gad!" Mornington of the Fourth looked in at the doorway of the study. "Is that a game, Lovell?"

"No, it isn't!" snapped Lovell. "Don't interrupt! Is your name Choodles, Kid?"

The new junior chuckled.

"I hope not!" was his reply.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sooner or later," said Lovell, with a glare at the grinning Mornington, "we shall hit on it. Then the Kid will know it, and we shall be all serene. When he knows his name his memory will come back all right, I believe. If you're going to cackle, Morny—"

"Not at all," answered Mornington, with a grin. "I say, Kid, is your name Rumpelstilchen?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Shut up!" roared Lovell. "I tell you I'm on the right track, and I'm going to find out the chap's name!"

"Suppose his name happens to be Zeno or Zadkiel?" suggested Morny. "At this rate you'll have worn him out before you get to it!"

"Rats!"

"About time we got down to footer," remarked Jimmy Silver. "It's still light enough to punt the ball about a bit."

"That's what I came to tell you," said Mornington.

"Rot!" said Lovell. "You fellows can go and punt the ball; I'm going to work through this list."

"But the Kid is coming, too."

"Bosh! It's more important for him to recover his memory than to play footer!"

"Aren't you tired, Kid?" asked Raby.

The new junior hesitated.

As a matter of fact, obliged as he felt to Lovell, he was rather tired of the examination which bade fair to have no end. Certainly he wanted to recover his lost memory—and he believed that if he heard his name spoken it would be familiar to him at once, and the cloud upon his mind would roll away. But there were limits. Lovell had taken him through some hundreds of names already; and there were thousands yet to come. And the chance of hitting on the right name seemed slight.

"Is your name Chuckster?" continued Lovell, before the wail of Rookwood could answer Raby.

"I—I think not."

"Is it Christian?"

"No."

"Or Cecil?"

"No."

"Or Ching-gach-gook?" asked Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Or Ching-Ching?" pursued Mornington.

"Shut up!" roared Lovell. "How could his name be Ching-Ching? Don't you be a funny ass, Morny—this is a serious matter. Kid, is your name Cavanagh?"

"No."

"Or Casanova?" chuckled Mornington.

"Or Casabianca?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you dry up, Morny? Go and play footer or marbles or something. Is your name Cecil—no, I've done Cecil. Is it Charley?"

"Oh!"

It was a sudden startled exclamation from the Kid.

He started to his feet.

All eyes in the study were upon him at once.

"Charley!" shouted Lovell triumphantly. "Is it Charley?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah!"

"Well, wonders will never cease!" remarked Newcome. "Fancy that ass Lovell scoring a bullseye like that!"

"Charley!" said Arthur Edward with great satisfaction; and the Kid smiled and nodded.

Lovell beamed with triumph.

There was a buzz in the end study—even Mornington was impressed with seriousness at last.

Lovell's wonderful method, which had been a standing joke in the Form for a week, had succeeded—so far as the Christian name was concerned, at least.

The new junior was quite pale for the moment. There was conviction in his face. His first name, at least, was found.

"Well, my hat!" said Mornington. "Lovell isn't such an ass, after all. Is your name Charley, Kid, really?"

"I am sure of it," said the new junior breathlessly. "I—I was sure I should know it if it was spoken to me. It's the same in other things. I had forgotten Julius Caesar and all the school work, but the moment I saw the Gallic War again I remembered all I knew of it. It's as clear as anything—now I hear it. My name's Charles!"

"Charles what?" asked Lovell eagerly.

The new junior shook his head.

"I don't know!"

"Doesn't the first name suggest the second?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"No."

"Never mind," said Lovell complacently.

We'll have it sooner or later. We've got the front name, anyhow."

"Good egg!"

"I think I've pretty nearly got through it," added Lovell. "I'm beginning on D now. Now, then—Dale—Dunkley—Dinwidie—Dixon—Dodd—"

Jimmy Silver & Co. left Lovell to it. And "Charley" bore it with great patience,

giving Lovell his head, as it were. But Lovell got through his list of D's by tea-time without any further discovery being made.

CHAPTER 20.

Smythe's Pal!

"TUBBY!"

Putty Grace of the Fourth stood in the doorway of No. 2, and shouted.

It was tea-time, and, wonderful to relate, Tubby Muffin had not turned up at Study No. 2.

Tubby Muffin was seldom punctual in other matters, but he could always be depended upon at meal-times. But on this occasion Tubby Muffin was conspicuous by his absence.

Grace of the Fourth was naturally exasperated. When Tubby Muffin wasn't wanted—which was nearly always—he was there! Now that he was wanted, he wasn't there!

Jimmy Silver & Co., coming in from footer, passed along the passage, and Grace called to them.

"Seen Muffin?"

"Tubby?" said Jimmy Silver. "Yes; he's downstairs with Smythe of the Shell. Tubby seems quite chummy with Smythe lately."

"Bother Smythe! We've got kippers for tea, and it's Tubby's job to cook them!" growled Putty Grace. "I thought he'd scented out those kippers long ago. I'll give him chumming with Smythe, the fat boulder!"

And Grace headed for the stairs wrathfully.

Tubby Muffin's ability as a cook were some compensation in Study No. 2 for Tubby's voracious appetite, and for the fact that he seldom, or never, stood his "whack" in the study tea. Indeed, when Higgs or Jones minor complained on that score, Tubby was wont to point out that he was chef, and did most of the cooking, and to remind his study mates that they should not muzzle the ox that trod out the corn, as it were.

As there was little doubt that Reginald Muffin would drop in in time to annex the lion's share of the kippers, Putty naturally did not see any reason why he should not

cook them. So he started in search of Tabby.

Muffin was not to be seen below, and Putty headed for the Shell passage, to look in Smythe's study.

Of late Tabby Muffin had been seen a good deal with Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

They seemed to have struck up a friendship, which was rather remarkable, for there was little in common between Adolphus, the elegant dandy of the Shell, and Tabby Muffin, the glutton of the Fourth.

Adolphus had never concealed his lofty contempt for the fat and grubby Muffin—till of late! Now he was frequently seen walking with him, and Tabby sometimes dropped into his study.

And there Putty Grace found him now.

Adolphus Smythe was reclining in his armchair, with a dark and moody expression upon his face. Tabby Muffin was seated on the corner of the table, with his fat little legs dangling.

"If you don't want me to tea, I—" he was saying, as Grace arrived at the door.

"You know I don't!" muttered Smythe.

"Oh, very well, I'll drop in and see Jimmy Silver."

"You can stay if you like."

"That's not good enough!" answered Tabby Muffin independently. "I hope I'm not the kind of fellow to go round the studies cadging for a tea."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Grace, staring in at the open doorway in astonishment.

Tabby's hope, as he stated it, was certainly ill-founded; for he was, in point of fact, celebrated for his little way of going round the studies cadging for a tea.

"If you want me here," went on Tabby, "you can put it politely and hospitably, and I may decide to stay. Most certainly I shall not remain where I am not welcome."

Adolphus Smythe bit his lip hard.

"You can stay!" he mumbled. "I—I mean, I hope you'll stay to tea, Muffin, old chap."

Tabby smiled sweetly.

"As you're so pressing, I don't mind!" he said.

Grace strode into the study.

"You're wanted, Fatty!" he announced.

"Eh?"

"Kippers to cook!" explained Grace.

Tabby Muffin glanced at his study mate

over his shoulder with an expression of lofty contempt.

"Kippers!" he repeated derisively.

"Yes—kippers!"

"Do you think I'm going to cook kippers for you?" demanded Tabby Muffin scornfully.

Grace stared.

"What do you mean, you fat idiot!" he inquired politely. "If you don't come and cook them, you jolly well won't eat them!"

Sniff!

"Are you coming?" demanded Grace.

"Certainly not!"

"Well, you fat rotter!" exclaimed Grace. "I don't like cooking kippers. I shouldn't have got them, only you can handle them. Don't you want to come to tea?"

"No."

"Not come to tea!" said Putty dazedly.

"You!"

"I'm having tea with Smythe," answered Muffin. "I'm rather fed with you measly teas in No. 2, Grace. I don't care for 'em! Keep your mouldy old kippers! The fact is, I've been too obliging to you fellows in No. 2. I've never received proper thanks. I'm not going to do any more cooking for you!"

"Then you won't have any more free feeds in the study!" hooted Grace, in great wrath.

Tabby sniffed again.

"Keep your mouldy old feeds!" he answered.

"You're sticking Smythe for a tea to-day!" said Putty. "I suppose Smythe isn't going to have you to tea every day, is he?"

"Oh, Smythe's my pal now!" answered Muffin airily. "Smythe's always glad to have me here, ain't you, Smythe?"

"Yes!" gasped Adolphus.

"Well, my hat!" said Grace. "I always thought you were a silly ass, Smythe; but you're a sillier ass than I ever thought, at you stand that fat clam when you're not bound to. We wouldn't have him in our study a minute if we could help it!"

"Look here, don't you be cheeky, Putty Grace!" roared Tabby Muffin. "You buzz off and don't worry! I tell you I'm fed up with your mouldy Fourth Form feeds!"

Grace looked from one to the other. That Adolphus Smythe was not really yearning for Tabby's society was pretty clear from the expression on his face.

Why he should endure Tubby's company when he didn't want to was a deep mystery.

"Well," said Grace, at last, "you can please yourself Tubby!"

"I should jolly well think so!" said Tubby Muffin loftily.

"But you can be civil about it."

"Eh?"

"Otherwise, you're liable to be mopped off that table and bumped on the carpet."

"Look here——"

"Like this!" explained Putty.

"Yaroooooh!" roared Tubby Muffin, as Putty Grace demonstrated what was likely to happen in case of incivility.

Tubby landed on the carpet with a bump.

Then Putty strolled out of the study. Tubby sat on the carpet and gasped for breath.

"Yow-ow-ow! Grooogh! Why didn't you pitch into him, Smythe?" he howled.

Smythe was grinning. Apparently the bumping of Tubby Muffin afforded him some satisfaction.

The fat Classical scrambled up, still gasping, and shook a fat fist at the Shell fellow's nose.

"You rotter! You think it's funny!" he gasped. "I've a jolly good mind to go to Jimmy Silver at once, and tell him——"

"Shut up!" panted Smythe hastily.

Howard and Tracy came into the study. Both of them looked rather grimly at Reginald Muffin of the Fourth.

"That fat slug here again!" growled Tracy.

"He—he—he's staying to tea!" said Adolphus feebly.

"Is he?" said Howard. "You've had that fat cad twice to tea in a week, Smythe. That's twice too often. We're not standin' it."

"No jolly fear," said Tracy.

Tubby Muffin eyed Smythe's study-mates uneasily. Adolphus had his own reasons for conciliating the fat junior, but Tracy and Howard did not share them, or even know of them. They were astonished at the elegant Adolphus having taken up Tubby Muffin at all, and they certainly did not intend to allow Tubby to make himself at home in their quarters.

Howard threw the door wide open.

"Travel!" he said curtly.

"Look here, Smythe's asked me to tea!" said Muffin.

"Smythe can come to tea in your study if he likes. He's not goin' to have you here."

"I—I say——" began Smythe weakly.

"What do you want him to tea for?" demanded Howard.

"I—I——"

"Because I'm his pal, you know," said Tubby.

"Well, Smythe can pal with you somewhere else, not here. Are you goin'?" snapped Howard.

"N-n-n-no!"

"Then you'll be put!"

Howard grasped the fat Classical and spun him towards the doorway. Tracy landed a kick behind the hapless Tubby as he went. Tubby rolled into the passage with a roar.

"Come back, and we'll shove your head in the coal-locker," said Howard warningly, as he closed the door.

Tubby Muffin did not come back.

CHAPTER 21.

Adolphus Puts His Foot Down!

"DANGLE, Dunkle, Dinkle?" Arthur Edward Lovell was at it again.

There was a tea-party in the end study. The Fistical Four, and their new study-mate, and Putty Grace, and Jones minor. There was no tea in Study No. 2 that evening. Higgs had gone down to tea in hall, and Grace and Jones dropped in at the end study as guests. Lovell was furnishing a little entertainment at the tea-table with his list of D's for the benefit of the new boy, when Tubby Muffin's fat face looked in at the door.

"Seat!" said Jimmy Silver, as the fat classical looked in with his most ingratiating smile.

"I—I've been looking for Grace!" said Tubby.

"Buzz off!" was Putty's reply.

"I—I'm ready to cook the kippers, you know," said Tubby. "I—I was only joking, you know, old chap."

"Smythe booted you out, after all?" grinned Putty.

"I'd like to see Smythe boot me out!"

said Tubby Muffin truculently. "No fear! Smythe wouldn't jolly well dare."

"I don't see why he shouldn't, if he don't want you in his study," said Jimmy Silver.

Tubby winked mysteriously.

"That's all you know," he answered.

"Smythe won't quarrel with me; he knows better."

"What the thump do you mean, you fat duffer?"

"Oh, nothing! Smythe was jolly keen to have me, of course, but those cads, Howard and Tracy, cut up rusty. I—I say, Putty, about those kippers—"

"Too late!" chuckled Putty. "I've traded off those kippers to Rawson, and I'm having tea here. So you can travel!"

"Oh, I don't mind having tea here, too!" said Tubby.

"There are a good many others who mind, though," remarked George Raby. "Every chap in the study, I think."

"Hear, hear!"

"Where will you have it?" continued Raby, picking up a loaf, and taking aim.

Tubby Muffin hastily retired from the end study.

He rolled away disconsolately down the passage, and looked in at No. 4, where he found Mornington and Erroll at tea. Mornington made a dive for the poker as Muffin looked in, and once more Reginald Muffin retired hastily. He gave a snort as he rolled away to the stairs. There was nothing for it but tea in Hall, unless he ventured back into Smythe's quarters. And that he did not care to do, while Smythe's study-mates were at home.

Tea in Hall was not worth much to Tubby Muffin. It was plain but good, and there was plenty of it, such as it was. But it was not what Tubby Muffin wanted. Tubby liked living on the fat of the land, and since he had chummed with Smythe of the Shell, he had succeeded fairly well in doing so. The plain school fare was exceedingly unpalatable to Reginald Muffin, after what he had grown accustomed to of late.

He rolled out of Hall with a frowning fat face. He was labouring under a sense of injury. The sight of Tracy and Howard going into the Common-room relieved his mind, and he made his way to Smythe's study once more. He found the great Adolphus alone there.

Smythe of the Shell did not give him a

welcoming look. The look that he gave him was a very dark one, but Reginald Muffin did not mind. He rolled cheerfully into the study.

"Anything left for me?" he inquired.

"Nothin'!" answered Smythe shortly.

Tubby's eyes gleamed.

"I'm afraid this won't do, Smythe!" he said. "I've made friends with you, but it was understood that I was to be treated decently in your study. I've been chucked out by your study-mates."

"I can't help what Howard and Tracy do," muttered Smythe.

"You'll have to help it, somehow," said Tubby Muffin in a bullying tone. "I'm not goin' to stand it, Smythe."

Adolphus' eyes glittered, but he did not reply.

"You'll have to manage Tracy and Howard somehow," said Tubby. "If I'm not treated civilly in this study I shall have to drop your friendship."

"You sneakin', blackmailin' cad!" said Smythe, between his teeth. "Don't talk about friendship to me. You've practically given the thing away already. A dozen fellows have noticed it. Tracy's just asked me whether I'm under your rotten thumb in any way. What do you expect them to think, when you plant yourself on me as you do?"

"Look here——"

"You've been hauntin' me like a shadow for a week," said Smythe, with a malevolent look. "You've had four pounds out of me already."

"You have made me some small loans," said Tubby Muffin, with dignity. "I suppose it was of your own accord."

"I'm not going to stand it any longer," said Smythe. "What you're doin' is blackmailin'."

"And what you're doing—what's that?" asked Tubby Muffin. "If Jimmy Silver knew about your missing cousin——"

"I'm comin' to that!" said Smythe, between his teeth. "You've made up a yarn that that nameless cad is a relation of mine. I don't want that yarn spread about Rookwood——"

"Because it's true, and because there's a fortune at stake!" grinned Tubby Muffin.

"Never mind that! I've paid you to hold your tongue," said Smythe, his eyes glittering. "I've thought it out! If you say a

word about that yarn now, you'll have to let it out that you've been blackmailin' me. I can prove that you had the currency notes from me—it don't want much proving, as all the fellows have noticed that you have been in funds lately. Now, you fat rotter, I'm not handin' out any more. Not a shillin', and you're not coming to my study to tea again! If you speak to me in the quad I'll cuff you."

"Will you?" said Tubby defiantly.

"Yes, I will, hard. Go and spin Jimmy Silver the yarn, if you like, and when it comes before the Head, I'll spin mine!" said Smythe venomously. "What do you think the Head will do with a blackmailer—a fellow extortin' money to keep a secret! You'll be kicked out of Rookwood."

Tubby Muffin started.

That view of the matter had not presented itself to his fat mind before, indeed. Tubby had hardly realised that he was extorting money from Smythe of the Shell. Tubby was a good deal more fool than rascal. He had simply considered that he was on a "good thing," and decided to make the most of it, without reflecting further.

There was something like dismay in his fat face, and Adolphus Smythe grinned as he noticed it.

"You say one word about my cousin that's missin' from Lynthorpe School," he went on, "just one word, and see what happens! You wouldn't know anythin' about it but for your sneakin' eavesdroppin'! Just one word, and I'm down on you, and the Head will know what you've been doin'."

"You—you wouldn't be rotter enough to make out to the Head that—that I've been extorting money from you!" gasped Tubby.

"What do you call it, then?"

"You—you've made me some small loans."

"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"You're an awful cad, Smythe," said Tubby Muffin indignantly. "Making out that I've extorted money, just because I've had a small loan or two from you! Low, I call it! I shall refuse to accept another loan from you, I can tell you that. If you offered me a pound note at this moment, I should refuse to touch it!"

"You won't have the chance, I know that!" grunted Smythe.

"Of—of course, I don't want to quarrel with you," said Tubby, on further reflection.

"I happen to be hard up at present, and if you like to hand over ten bob, and call it square, I—"

Smythe of the Shell picked up a cricket-stump.

"I give you one second to get out!" he said.

Tubby Muffin gave him one blink—and departed. Smythe kicked the door shut after him, with a smile of satisfaction.

"I've bottled up that spyin' cad, at any rate!" he murmured.

But Adolphus of the Shell congratulated himself a little too early. He had not quite bottled up Reginald Muffin yet.

CHAPTER 22.

For Sale!

"**W**ORKING! What's the matter?"

Putty Grace made that genial remark, as he came into Study No. 2 after tea.

Tubby Muffin was seated at the study table, with a sheet of impot paper before him, a pen in his fat fingers, and a very thoughtful expression on his face.

He jumped as his study-mate came in, and hastily caught up the sheet upon which he had been scribbling.

"Prep. already?" asked Putty.

"Nunno!"

"Lines?"

"N-no!"

Grace looked curiously at his fat study-mate. Tubby Muffin's face was crimson and confused. He looked as if he had been caught in some guilty act. Perhaps he had.

"What have you got there?" asked Grace.

"N-n-nothing."

"You've been writing something."

"Only a-a-an exercise."

Tubby Muffin hastily crammed the paper into his pocket, and rolled to the door. Grace stared after him blankly. It was evident that Tubby did not want him to see what he had written on that paper, though what his reason for secrecy could be was a puzzle.

"What on earth is he up to now?" murmured Grace. "Tubby, you duffer, what silly game are you playing now?"

Muffin was deaf to that question; he rolled hurriedly down the passage. He

stopped at the head of the stairs, and took the paper from his pocket—after a hasty glance back to make sure that Grace was not following him. In the gaslight, Tubby read over the paper he had written, and gave a nod of satisfaction.

"That's all right!" he murmured. "That'll do the trick! Awful rotter! Accusing me of extorting money! I'll show him!"

"Hallo! What are you mumbling about, Fatty?" asked Jimmy Silver's cheery voice, as he came along to the stairs.

Tubby Muffin jumped, and again the mysterious document was hastily thrust out of sight.

"N-n-nothing!" he stammered.

"What have you got there?"

"N-n-nothing—I mean, an exercise. I—I was just mugging up some—er—deponent verbs!" stuttered Muffin.

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver stared at Tubby. That podgy youth was about the last fellow at Rookwood to be mugging up deponent verbs if he could possibly help it.

Tubby eyed him nervously. He realised that the captain of the Fourth was suspicious; as, indeed, Jimmy Silver could not very well help being.

"I—I say, Jimmy——" he stammered.

"Well?"

"I—I—it's deponent verbs, you know," stammered Tubby. "I—I wasn't going to take them to Smythe—I mean——"

"Look here, you inquisitive worm!" said Jimmy. "You've been kicked up and down the passage lots of times for spying into fellows' letters. Is that somebody's letter you've got there?"

"Nunno!"

"What is it, then?"

"It—it—— Look here, Jimmy Silver, you mind your own business!" gasped Tubby Muffin.

"This is my business, I think!" said Jimmy. "Haven't I promised you a swapping next time you meddle with another fellow's letters?"

"I haven't!" roared Tubby. "It—it's deponent verbs—I mean, it's a letter from home! There!"

"Not much difference between deponent verbs and a letter from home, is there?" remarked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"Nunno! Exactly!" gasped Muffin. "I—I say, lemme pass!"

"Not just yet, old top! If you've not got hold of somebody else's letter, what are you telling lies for?"

"I—I say, Jimmy—— I—I'm not, you know. The—the fact is——"

"Well, what is the fact?" inquired the captain of the Fourth grimly.

"The—the fact, you know——" stuttered Tubby.

Tubby's brain worked rather slowly, and he could not, for the life of him, invent the required fact on the spur of the moment.

"Well, I'm waiting to hear the fact!"

"It—it's a letter home," gasped Tubby at last. "I'm writing to my pater, you know, and—and I was just reading it over, to—to see that the spelling was all right, you know. Look here, Jimmy, you're not going to see my letter to my pater. It's private!"

Jimmy Silver looked long and hard at Tubby's confused face. He did not believe a word of the fat Classical's explanation; but he was puzzled. If the mysterious document was, by any chance, a private letter of Tubby's own, Jimmy, of course, did not want to see it.

"Well," he said at last, "it's possible, but there's no need for you to tell whoppers, if that's the case. I'll ask the fellows whether anybody's missed a letter, and, if there's one missing, I shall know where to look for it. Then you'll get warmed!"

"All right!" gasped Tubby, in evident relief.

And he scuttled away, Jimmy Silver making no further move to detain him. But he followed Tubby with his glance, and saw him disappear into the Shell passage.

Tubby Muffin was calling on Smythe again, apparently. It looked as if the mysterious document was connected, in some way, with Tubby's new and inexplicable friendship with Adolphus. Jimmy Silver went on his way in a very puzzled mood.

Tubby Muffin, in great relief at his escape, rolled into Smythe's study, where he found Adolphus smoking a cigarette. The dandy of the Shell gave him a savage look.

"I've told you not to come here!" he said.

"I've called on business!" said Muffin loftily.

"You've got no business with me, you fat cad!"

"I—I want to sell you something."

"Rats! Clear off!"

"You'd better look at it, Smythe. If you don't buy it, I'm going to ask young Nobody to make me an offer for it."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Will you look at it?" grinned Tubby.

Smythe eyed him in silence as he drew the mysterious document from his pocket. Tubby spread it on the table, and Smythe glanced at it. It was quite an interesting document.

"THIS IS TO CERTIFY that young Nobody, who has lost his memory, is reely Smythe's cousin, Charles Clare, who has been missing from Lynthorpe Skool. Smythe is keeping it a secret bekause the money will cum to him if his cousin doesn't turn up."

Smythe's cigarette dropped from his lips as he blinked at that precious paper. Reginald Muffin looked at him with a bland grin.

"You've accused me of extorting money from you for keeping your rotten secrets, Smythe," said Tubby Muffin, with crushing dignity. "Any fellow who knows me knows that I would scorn the action. I shall refuse to accept a loan from you on any occasion after this, and I utterly decline to come to tea in your study any more, even if you ask me on your bended knees. I may say that I despise you!"

"What have you written this down for?" hissed Smythe.

"I suppose I can write what I like!" said Tubby Muffin cheerily. "If I choose to write down something on paper, why shouldn't I? If you like to buy it, it's your look-out. The price is ten shillings."

Smythe gritted his teeth.

"Young Nobody would give me more than ten shillings for it, and you know it," said Tubby Muffin. "I'm really making this offer out of friendship. You needn't chuck it in the fire, Smythe—I can easily write it out again, and if I do I shall offer it to Jimmy Silver first."

Smythe of the Shell seemed to breathe with difficulty.

"Mind, I'm not asking you to buy that paper!" said Tubby Muffin impressively. "You're not going to have any excuse for pretending that I'm asking you for money! Not the slightest! You can buy that paper

or not for ten shillings, just as you choose. I dare say I can find another market if you don't."

Smythe looked silently at Reginald Muffin. If looks could have slain, there would have been a sudden casualty in Smythe's study then. Fortunately for Reginald Muffin, they couldn't.

Tubby rose briskly to his feet.

"Is it a bargain?" he asked.

Without a word the dandy of the Shell placed a ten-shilling note in Tubby's podgy hand.

"Mind, I'm not urging you!" said Tubby. "Buy or not, just as you like! Well, as you're determined, I'll accept the offer. The paper's yours."

Tubby Muffin rolled out of the study with a smiling countenance; and Adolphus threw the tell-tale document into the fire. Then he sat, with a dark and sombre brow, staring at the fire—a prey to troubled thought.

Tubby Muffin's essay as a merchant was likely to be followed by more; and Smythe of the Shell was beginning to wonder whether the game was worth the candle.

CHAPTER 23.

At the Judgment Bar!

"WHAT the dickens——"

"Loggo!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. rose to their feet in amazement as Tubby Muffin was propelled into the end study. Arthur Edward Lovell uttered an annoyed exclamation. It was a couple of days since the discovery that the new junior's Christian name was Charles, by Lovell's elaborate method. With all Lovell's untiring efforts, the surname had not been discovered. He had advanced as far as K now, and the chums of the end study were listening, with grinning faces, to the interrogatory, when the study door was pitched open and Tubby Muffin was propelled in, with Putty Grace's grip on his collar.

It was, perhaps, a welcome relief, as well as a surprise, to the occupants of the study—excepting Arthur Edward Lovell. It could not be denied that Lovell had made a discovery by his method already; but it was equally not to be denied that it was possible to have too much of a good thing.

Even the Kid was growing a little restive as Lovell ran through his almost unending list of K's.

"Is your name Kenyon, Kent, Kingsley, Klondyke, Kummel, Klinker, Kooch——"

Then came the interruption.

"Sorry to intrude," said Putty Grace cheerfully. "I've brought this malefactor to you, Jimmy, as captain of the Form."

"Lemmo go!" roared Tubby Muffin. "I ain't a malefactor! I'll jolly well punch your nose, Teddy Grace!"

"Look here, you clear off!" said Lovell. "I'm nearly at the end of the K's now——"

"Oh, there is an end?" asked Raby, as if relieved.

"Just going to begin the L's," said Lovell.

"Help!"

"Look here, Raby——"

"What's the matter with Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Has he been raiding anybody's grub, or reading somebody's letter?"

"No!" howled Muffin.

"Worse than that!" said Grace. "Look here, you'd better look into it, Jimmy; it may be serious. You know what an idiot Muffin is——"

"I'm not an idiot!" roared Muffin.

"Of course, he's a little fat rascal," continued Putty. "But he's more fool than rascal. Ain't you, Tubby?"

"No, I'm not!" yelled Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Whether he's been robbing a bank, or robbing somebody in the studies, I don't know," said Grace. "But it ought to be looked into."

Jimmy Silver became grave.

"Suppose you explain?" he suggested. "Give the K's a rest for a bit, Lovell, old chap."

"That's all very well——" began Lovell.

"Of course it is. Go ahead, Putty!"

"Lemme gerrout!" howled Muffin.

"I'm not going to stay here. It's mine!"

"What's yours?" asked Newcome.

"My money!" sported Tubby Muffin.

"I'm jolly well not going to lend Putty any, I know that! That's what he wants! Yah! If you don't leave off shaking me, Putty, you rotter—— Groooooch!"

"Tubby's got another ten-shilling note," said Putty quietly. "He's had a ten-shilling note every day for the last few days. Be-

fore then he was sporting postpaid-notes. You fellows must have noticed how flush of money he's been lately."

There was a general nodding of heads in the end study. The Fistical Four had noticed that—indeed, it would have been difficult not to notice it. Tubby Muffin was generally so impecunious that it was quite a surprising state of affairs for him to be in funds. Undoubtedly he had been in funds of late; he had been, for a week past, the best customer at the school shop, the old sergeant who kept the shop having been astounded by the extent of his purchases, and still more by the fact that Tubby was prepared to pay ready cash for them.

Tubby in funds was quite a remarkable Tubby, and fellows outside the Fourth Form had observed his unusual wealth.

"Now he's got another note," said Putty. "I've been thinking about it for days——"

"None of your business!" sniffed Muffin.

"I don't want to see my study-mate expelled for stealing," retorted Grace.

Tubby Muffin breathed wrath.

"You—you awful rotter! Do you think I would steal?" he spluttered.

"Well, I hope you wouldn't! But you can explain to Jimmy Silver, as captain of the Form, where you get your money from."

Every eye in the study was fixed upon Reginald Muffin curiously. His sudden access of wealth really did need some explaining.

"You see, I've taken notice of the matter," continued Grace. "I've made certain that Muffin doesn't get it by post. It's not tips from his relations. I thought I ought to look into it, as Tubby's just the idiot to land himself into trouble without knowing what he's doing."

"Quite so!" assented Jimmy Silver.

"He hasn't had any letters for two days. Yet he had a ten-shilling note yesterday, and spent it in the tuck-shop; and he's got another this afternoon. It's in his fist now."

Muffin's fat fist was closed tight.

"It can't be his own money!" said Grace. "It ought to be explained, I think. But I leave it to you as skipper, Jimmy. That's why I ran him in here when I found he had a new note."

Jimmy Silver nodded. His face was very serious now. He had wondered a little about Tubby's surprising wealth; but, not

being the fat Classical's study-mate, he had not known quite how extensive that wealth was.

"Tubby—" he began.

"Look here, anybody would think I was a thief!" said Tubby Muffin, in an injured tone, blinking round the study. "Can't you fellows mind your own business? You don't jaw Townsend when he swanks about with a fiver!"

"Towny's people are rich, and they send him fivers sometimes," said Jimmy.

"Well, my people are rich!" said Tubby. "I've told you so often and often!"

"Gammon!" granted Lovell.

"If anybody here doubts my word," said Reginald Muffin, with dignity, "I prefer to retire from the study."

"I dare say you do," remarked Putty, putting his back to the door. "But you're jolly well not going to all the same!"

"Not till you've explained, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver. "Where have you got all those currency-notes from?"

"My people——"

"You haven't had any letters for two days!" snapped Putty.

"My pater sends me remittances by special messenger sometimes," said Tubby Muffin.

"Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly blinked at the fat Classical. Tubby was celebrated for the size and frequency of his "whoppers," but this special "whopper" was beyond Tubby's usual limit.

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "Do you think anybody is going to believe that?"

"If you can't take my word, Lovell——"

"Your word!" snorted Lovell.

"Look here, I'm not going to be insulted in this study! You let me pass, Grace, you cheeky rotter!"

"Where did you get the money, Tubby?" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "If it's your own you needn't mind explaining."

"Of course I don't mind explaining!" said Tubby genially. "Nothing secretive about me, I hope. The fact is, my uncle's died in South Africa, and left me ten thousand pounds!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And they've given you ten bob on account?" hooted Putty.

"Exactly!"

"Oh, dear!" said Jimmy Silver, almost overcome.

"Now let me pass, Grace—now I've explained."

"You thumpin' ass!" exclaimed Lovell. "You'll have to think of a better explanation than that! That one won't wash!"

"If you can't believe the exact truth, Lovell——"

"The truth!" said Raby. "Oh, my hat!"

"Better take him to Mr. Bootles, I think," said Jimmy Silver. "If he'd come by the money honestly he wouldn't be lying like this. The fat idiot must have been burgling some fellow's desk!"

"I haven't!" shrieked Muffin.

"Then where did you get the money?"

"I—I—I——"

There was a chuckle in the end study. Reginald Muffin was evidently cudgelling his brains for a new explanation which would "go down." Apparently he was prepared to furnish explanation after explanation till he hit upon one that would satisfy his questioners.

"I—I won it!" gasped Tubby at last.

"Oh, you won it!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "How did you win it?"

"I—I bought a Lottery Bond——"

"You whatted a which?" yelled Lovell.

"One of those French Lottery Bonds, you know, that you read about in the newspapers," said Tubby, blinking at them. "That was it! I—I won the first prize, you know."

"Don't he take the cake!" said Newcome admiringly.

"I hope you're satisfied now!" said Muffin, with an air of dignity. "You can let me pass now, Putty, you rotter!"

"You haven't quite satisfied us yet!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "In the first place, nobody ever wins a prize in a lottery; and in the second place, boys ain't allowed to enter them; and in the third place——"

"Oh, I didn't know that!" stammered Tubby. "What I mean is that I won the money on a horse."

"You spotted a winner—what?" chuckled Raby.

"Yes, exactly!"

"What winner?"

"I—I—I forget!"

"Hallo, here's another chap that's lost his memory!" grinned Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you tell the truth?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Can't you see that this is a serious matter?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you the exact facts, Jimmy, as I know you'll take my word. I won the money at banker."

"Not at roulette?" inquired Lovell sarcastically. "You didn't buzz off to Monte Carlo last half-holiday?"

"Nunno!"

"And where did you win the money at banker?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I—I was playing with—with Mornington—"

"Morny, doesn't play banker now!" said Jimmy angrily. "Anyway, we'll soon settle that. Cut off, somebody, and ask Morny to step in here!"

Tubby Muffin spluttered.

"I—I say, my mistake. Now I come to think of it, it wasn't Morny. You—you needn't trouble to call in Morny."

"I thought not! Try again, you awful Ananias!"

"I—I played banker with Carthew of the Sixth—"

"And won?"

"Yes. Fairly cleaned him out, you know!"

"We'll ask Carthew—"

"I—I say, Carthew would be wild if you spoke to him about it!"

"I'll risk that," said Jimmy Silver, rising from his chair. "Keep him here while I ask Carthew—"

"Don't you do anything of the kind!" spluttered Muffin. "I—I forgot. It wasn't Carthew, now I come to think of it. Not Carthew."

"Next lie!" said Lovell. "Keep it up!"

"It—it was Smythe, of the Shell!" said Tubby Muffin desperately. "Now you know!"

"Oh! You've been playing banker with Smythe of the Shell, and you've won money from him?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Ye-es!" gasped Tubby.

"What an awful whopper!" said Putty. "Smythe plays banker, but he wouldn't lose to a silly dummy like Muffin."

"I—I say, I'm awfully clever at banker, you know! I'm really a dab at it, as—as at most things, you know!"

"If you're a dab at banker as you are at most things you must be a regular

corker!" remarked Jimmy Silver. "But I'll cut along and ask Smythe."

"I'll come with you."

"Oh, you don't mind my asking Smythe!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in surprise.

"No."

The juniors stared at Tubby Muffin. Surprising as it was, it seemed that they had tracked out the truth at last.

"Keep him here till I've spoken to Smythe," said Jimmy Silver briefly; and he quitted the study.

Tubby Muffin made a movement to follow, but Putty raised his boot, and Tubby changed his mind. He sat down in Jimmy Silver's chair to wait. The chums of the Fourth waited rather eagerly for Jimmy's return. Lovell even forgot to finish his list of K's.

In five minutes the captain of the Fourth came back into the end study. There was quite a peculiar expression on his face.

"Well, Jimmy?"

"It beats me!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Tubby's told the truth! Smythe owned up when I asked him whether Tubby had been winning money from him at banker."

"My hat!"

Tubby Muffin grinned in great relief. He had wondered very uneasily whether Adolphus would have sense enough to take his cue. Evidently Smythe had guessed how matters stood when Jimmy Silver questioned him, and he had supported Tubby's version. There was general astonishment in the end study. That Tubby had won money at banker was surprising enough, but that he had told the truth was more surprising still.

"So that's it?" said Lovell.

"I told you so, didn't I?" gasped Tubby.

"Why couldn't you tell the truth at first then?"

"Well, you see, I—I—"

"I told Smythe what Tubby said, and he admitted it," said Jimmy Silver. "I thumped him for playing cards with a Fourth-Form chap. I've barked my knuckles on his nose, blow him! As for you, Muffin—"

"You jolly well let me out of this study!" said Tubby Muffin, in alarm.

"You've been gambling with Smythe—"

"I—I haven't—"

"What!"

"I—I mean, I—I have——"

"One dozen with the fives' bat!" said Jimmy Silver. "And if you ever do it again, two dozen!"

"Look here—— Leggo! Yoooop!"

The following five minutes were painful to Tubby Muffin. Lovell laid on the dozen with the fives' bat, and he put his beef into it. Tubby Muffin was roaring as Putty led him from the study by one fat ear.

Jimmy Silver had a very thoughtful expression when he was gone. Lovell restarted after the interval, as it were, with his list of K's, but Jimmy did not heed him. Smythe of the Shell had corroborated Tubby's statements, but Jimmy was not wholly satisfied. He felt that there was something more—something that had not been revealed—though he could not guess what it was. And it was long before he could dismiss the matter from his mind.

CHAPTER 24.

A Pig in Clover!

"**A**ND six jam-tarts!"

"Yes, Master Muffin!"

"And a plum-cake!"

"Yes, Master Muffin!"

"And a seed-cake!" continued Tubby Muffin thoughtfully. "And I think I'll have some dough-nuts."

Sergeant Kettle smiled quite benignly upon Reginald Muffin of the Classical Fourth. Once upon a time, not so very long ago, the old sergeant had been in the habit of frowning when Tubby Muffin rolled into his little shop at Rookwood. For Tubby's object generally was to make one more effort to obtain tuck on "tick." But now the sergeant was geniality itself. Tubby had not only become his best customer—he was always willing to be that—but he had become a cash customer.

Quite a little pile of good things were accumulating before Tubby on the counter as he gave his orders. There was a ten-shilling note in Tubby's fat paw, and it was evident that his orders were going on until the limit of ten shillings was reached. Tubby Muffin was not a believer in putting anything by for a rainy day. When Tubby was in funds, his funds all went in the same direction; and in these days he was as

welcome in Sergeant Kettle's little shop as the flowers in May.

"And a tin of pineapple!" said Tubby Muffin, after due reflection. A matter of such importance required a certain amount of reflection.

"Yes, Master Muffin."

Four juniors were coming into the school shop while Tubby was giving his orders, but the fat Classical was too busy to heed Jimmy Silver & Co. The Fistical Four stopped and looked on with interest. Lovell and Raby and Newcome seemed amused, but Jimmy Silver eyed the fat Classical with something like uneasiness.

"And a ginger-pop," Tubby Muffin went on, heedless of the Fistical Four. "And— and make it up to ten bob, sergeant, with oranges."

"Yes, Master Muffin."

"I dare say you can lend me a bag to carry it in," remarked Tubby Muffin, surveying his pile with fat satisfaction.

"Certainly, Master Muffin."

"Are you going to leave anything in the shop for us, Muffin?" inquired Arthur Edward Lovell, in a tone of sarcasm.

Tubby Muffin blinked round at the Fistical Four.

"Hallo, you fellows! I was going to ask you to tea," said the fat Classical affably. "You can help me take the tuck to my study, if you like!"

"So you're in funds again!" said Jimmy Silver.

Tubby Muffin nodded.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" he remarked.

"It does!" said Jimmy drily.

"Lend me a hand with the stuff," said Tubby. "There's some Modern cads hanging about outside—just like them to raid it."

"We'll do that!" said Jimmy.

The Fistical Four soon made their own purchases, on a much more modest scale than Tubby's. Then they obligingly helped the fat Classical to convey his cargo to the School House.

The cargo was duly landed on the table in Study No. 2 in the Fourth. Tubby rubbed his fat hands.

"Looks nice, doesn't it?" he remarked.

"Very nice!" assented Jimmy Silver.

"Whose is it?"

"Eh?"

"Whose is it?"

"Mine, of course. Didn't you see me buying it, you ass?"

"And I saw you paying for it," said Jimmy Silver. "This is about the tenth time in a week that you've shelled out a ten-shilling note, Muffin."

"Is it?" said Tubby carelessly. "Blessed if I keep count. You see, ten-shilling notes ain't much to a wealthy fellow like me. Bit different with you chaps, of course!"

"We don't play banker with Smythe of the Shell!" remarked Raby.

"I don't, either—I—I mean, I do," stammered Tubby Muffin. "I—I mean that I do, of course."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"That won't wash, Muffin!" he said.

"I don't understand you, Silver," said Reginald Muffin, with dignity. "If you're going to doubt my word, I shall refuse to have you to tea."

"Never mind the tea," said Jimmy Silver. "We're not staying to tea, Muffin—not unless you explain where you are getting your tin from, anyhow."

"I've explained, haven't I?"

"You've told whoppers, as you usually do," answered Jimmy Silver. "I never quite swallowed your yarn of winning money from Smythe at banker. We wracked you for gambling, in case you were telling the truth by accident. But it's too steep, Muffin."

"Look here——"

"You're such a born idiot," continued Jimmy Silver quietly, "that you might be up to anything. All the Lower School has noticed how you've been rolling in money lately, and talked about it. The prefects will get to hear of it soon, at this rate, and then there'll be inquiries. You'll have to explain then."

"You—you see——" said Tubby feebly.

"Your allowance is five bob a week," said Jimmy. "I know that. Ten-shilling notes don't come out of that."

"I get a lot of remittances, you know——"

"You don't!" said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"I—I say, you know——"

"You get the money from Smythe of the Shell," said Jimmy. "Everybody's noticed how you hang about his study. But you don't win it at banker; that's all

rot! Why does Smythe give you money, Muffin?"

"I—I—— He—he doesn't, you know."

"He does! Why?"

"Look here, it's not your bizney, Jimmy Silver!" exclaimed Muffin defiantly. "If Smythe likes to make a loan to a pal, it's Smythe's affair, not yours!"

"You're not Smythe's pal. He looks as if he could bite you whenever you speak to him. And Smythe isn't the fellow to make loans to a pal, either, unless he was sure of seeing the money again. He won't see it again if he lends it to you, and he knows it. This is jolly mysterious, Muffin."

"Tain't your bizney," said Muffin.

"There's something on," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "It's not in reason for Smythe to shell out like this for nothing. He's got plenty of tin, but you must have squeezed him nearly dry the last week or two. You've got some hold over Smythe, and you're making him pay. Is that it?"

"Certainly not. I—I don't know anything about Smythe's secret——"

"What secret?"

"Oh, nothing! There isn't any secret!" said Tubby hastily.

"You just said there was."

"I—I didn't! I said I didn't know anything about it. I've never seen his cousin——"

"What cousin?"

"Eh? I—I mean, I don't believe he's got a cousin. I wasn't hidden in his study the day his pater came down here and told him—— I—I mean——"

"Told him what?"

"Nothing."

The chums of the Fourth stared at Tubby Muffin. As for Tubby, he realised that he was saying a little too much, and he closed his fat lips and kept them closed.

"Look here, Tubby——"

Tubby pointed to the door with a fat forefinger. Not another word was to be extracted from him.

"Oh, come on!" said Lovell. "Charley's waiting for us in the end study; and I want my tea."

And the Fistical Four left No. 2, much to Tubby Muffin's relief, and went along to their own quarters, Jimmy Silver's brow deeply corrugated with thought.

CHAPTER 25.

Jimmy Silver Thinks It Out!

"R OBINSON, Roberts, Richards, Rickman, Rundell, Rippinghill, Roodle, Rinkle—"

Thus Arthur Edward Lovell.

The end study were at tea—the Fistical Four, and their new study-mate, who was variously known at Rookwood as "Charley," and "the Kid," and "Young Nobody."

Lovell was much encouraged by the fact that he had hit on the Christian name, after inflicting a list of some hundreds upon the long-enduring new junior.

Surnames were now his game.

His method was alphabetical, and he had now progressed as far as "R."

True, it was possible that Charley's surname began with an earlier letter in the alphabet, and that Arthur Edward had missed it. It was possible, but Lovell thought not probable.

He was very thorough. So thorough was he, in fact, that when he had reached "Z," he was prepared to begin again at the beginning.

George Raby hinted that Charley's funeral would probably take place before he got through the alphabet a second time. Raby affecting to believe that Charley was in the process of being bored to death.

But Lovell did not heed. Tea-time in the end study had its regular accompaniment now of the recitation of surnames by the resolute Arthur Edward.

The new junior listened, with a smile.

At first he had answered "No!" or shaken his head at each name, but lately he had given that up. He really was not equal to keeping his end up in this peculiar game.

It was understood that he was to answer in the affirmative if he recognised his own name at last, and Lovell was sure that it would turn up sooner or later.

Jimmy Silver & Co. fervently hoped that it would be sooner, and not later. Charlie made no statement on the subject, but Lovell's chums made no secret of the fact that Lovell's wonderful method was growing a dreadful bore.

"Rucker, Racker, Rackham, Rickshaw," chanted Lovell. He helped himself to an egg, sampled it, and began again:

"Rundle, Runcher, Rocks, Riddle, Rangle—"

"Thinking it out, Jimmy?" asked Lovell, interrupting himself, as he noted the thoughtful frown on the brow of the captain of the Fourth.

"I was thinking of Muffin," said Jimmy Silver.

Lovell shook his head.

"'Tain't Muffin. I've done the 'M's,'" he said. "'Tain't Muffin, is it, Charley?"

Charlie laughed.

"I'm sure my name isn't Muffin," he said.

"Might be Crumpet, though!" said Lovell suddenly. "I missed Crumpet when I was doing the 'C's.'"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's certainly not Crumpet. Is Crumpet a name?"

"Well, Muffin's a name, so I don't see why Crumpet shouldn't be. We'll get on with the 'R's.' Rookle, Runkle, Ronkle—"

"Dry up a minute, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I suppose you want Charlie to get his memory back, don't you?" demanded Arthur Edward warmly.

"Yes, but—"

"Didn't I find out his Christian name on this system?"

"You did, old fellow, but—"

"And I'm after the surname. As soon as Charlie's got that, he'll know who he is and get his whole blessed memory back," said Lovell. "You saw how he jumped to it when I hit on his Christian name last week. It'll be the same when I get the surname. Now then. Ruggles, Raggles, Roggles—"

"I was thinking—"

"It's no good thinking about Muffin. I've tried Muffin, I tell you, and Charley's name isn't Muffin."

"Fathead! I was thinking about Tubby!" said Jimmy.

"Tubby isn't a name; it's a nick-name!"

"Ass!" roared Jimmy Silver. "I'm speaking of Tubby Muffin of the Fourth—our Muffin."

"Oh, blow Tubby Muffin!" said Lovell crossly. "What on earth do you want to think about Tubby Muffin for?"

"I can't help thinking there's something wrong," said Jimmy Silver. "Tubby Muffin is getting money out of Smythe of the Shell."

"More fool Smythe!"

"I don't know whether it's because he's a fool or a rogue!" said Jimmy. "That's the point."

Lovell stared.

"I don't see that Smythe can be a rogue for lending Muffin money he'll never see again. He's a fool, if you like!"

"He's not lending it to him. He's giving it."

"Well, that makes him out a bigger fool than ever!"

"He's got his reasons," said Jimmy Silver. "There's only one reason he could have for shelling out money to Tubby—to keep him quiet. Tubby has bowled him out in something."

"Well, Smythe kicks over the traces often enough," remarked Lovell. "We all know that he smokes and plays cards, and goes to the Bird in Hand to play billiards with that cad Hook. But that's no secret. Tubby wouldn't sneak about him, and he couldn't prove anything if he did."

"It's something more serious than that, I think."

"Well, what is it, then?" yawned Lovell. "Get it off your chest. I want to begin on 'S.'"

"Let 'S' wait for a bit, for goodness' sake!"

"Rats! Charlie old chap, is your name Smith, Snooks, Snoodles, Skifkins—"

"I—I think not!"

"Snuggles, Snaggles, Snoggles, Sniggles—"

"Shut up!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Can't you let a chap speak?"

"I'm helping Charlie get his memory back."

"Give us a rest! I'll buzz the marmalade at you if you don't dry up!" hooted Jimmy Silver.

"Well, if Charley isn't to recover his memory because you want to chinwag, Jimmy Silver—" said Lovell, in a tone of resignation.

"Ass! Now, look here," said Jimmy Silver. "you remember that when we first saw Charley we were struck with his likeness to Smythe of the Shell. We thought he must be a relation of Smythe's, from the likeness."

"That's an old story. Smythe said he wasn't, and that settles it."

"It doesn't settle it. Smythe isn't descended from George Washington. Poor

old Charlie was a bit tattered when we found him on the heath, and Smythe, I suspect, thought he might be some poor relation, and was in a hurry to deny it. Now, whether Charley's poor or rich doesn't matter twopence to Charley's pals—that's us. It may matter to Smythe, but not to us."

"Thank you!" said Charley, with a smile.

"That's so," said Newcome. "But Smythe ought to know, Jimmy."

The boy from nowhere started, and turned a rather eager look upon Jimmy Silver.

"Tubby has let out a little, anyhow," went on Jimmy, following out his own train of thought. "He mentioned being hidden in Smythe's study when Smythe's father came down here a week or two ago. He said something about Smythe's cousin."

"I dare say Smythe's got lots of cousins."

"We asked Smythe to tell us the names of all his relations, so that we could try them on Charley, and he refused."

"That was only Smythe's swank."

"Well, was it?" said Jimmy. "There might be something else in it. Anyhow, it's plain enough that Muffin knows something about Smythe, and he's getting money out of the cad to keep it dark. There can't be any doubt about that."

"Well, it looks like it!" admitted Lovell.

"Snoodles — Snuffson — Snaggs — Sninker —"

"What do you mean, you ass?"

"Eh! I'm doing names. Snapsn—Snarker—Sniggles—"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

"I'm going to see Smythe!" he said.

"Good!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

And as Jimmy Silver, rather crossly, quitted the end study, the last thing he heard was:

"Snark—Sampson—Slumpton—Salisbury—Snorker—"

Lovell was still "going it!"

CHAPTER 26.

Adolphus Loses His Temper!

"I DON'T call it pally!" said Tracy. "Quite the reverse!" said Howard. Adolphus Smythe, the ornament of the Shell, made no reply.

The elegant Adolphus was seated in his armchair in his study, toying with a cigar-

ette after tea. His expression was not happy. It was, in fact, considerably sullen and sulky.

For more than a week, Adolphus Smythe had been rather a puzzle to his chums. He was thoughtful, he was worried, he was morose. He was even a little neglectful of his appearance. His necktie was no longer a model to all Rookwood, his trousers were not always creased as of old, on more than one occasion Adolphus had actually forgotten to put them in the press. Adolphus was no longer the glass of fashion and the mould of form to the Lower School of Rookwood.

That proved, if anything could, that the great Adolphus had something on his mind.

When Adolphus omitted to take care that his trousers were properly creased, it was palpable that there was something wrong with Adolphus.

Even more remarkable to relate, Smythe of the Shell seemed to have lost his taste for the risky, shady adventures he had been used to indulge in for the noble purpose of "killin' time!"

Banker and nap in the study had lost their attractions, sporting papers had no interest for him, the Bird in Hand knew him no more, and he did not seem to care whether Snooker II. or Jolly Boy won the Swindle-ton race.

Naturally, his chums were dissatisfied.

This was not at all the Smythe they knew of old, and they did not like the change.

"It's not pally!" Tracy repeated. "Here we're planning an excursion that you ought to jump at—a regular plunge! And you sit there like a mummy and don't say a word."

"Like an Egyptian mummy!" said Howard.

"You don't want to come!" pursued Tracy. "You don't seem to want anything lately! You chum up with a fat boulder in the Fourth Form, and give your old pals the marble eye."

"If you're goin' to chuck up your old pals," said Howard more in sorrow than in anger. "You might chuck 'em up for somebody better than Tubby Muffin of the Fourth! If it was Morny or Townsend, but to throw over your old pals for Tubby Muffin! It beats me."

Smythe bit his lip.

"It isn't that!" he said. "Hang Tubby

Muffin! I'd give a fiver to anybody who would wring his fat neck."

"You're pally with him!"

"I'm not! I—well, I can't quite explain," said Smythe desperately. "I hate the sight of his greedy face."

"You lend him money," said Tracy; "that's why you've never got any tin for a little game in the study. I tell you every chap in the Fourth and the Shell knows that Muffin gets money from you."

"We—we play banker, you know and—"

"You don't!" said Tracy grimly. "I don't believe you've ever played cards with Muffin. You give him the money! What for?"

Smythe made a restless movement.

"You—you see—" he said feebly.

"The trouble is, that we don't see," answered Howard tartly. "You've been like this ever since your pater came down here. I can tell you we're getting jolly fed, Smythe!"

There was silence in the study. Adolphus Smythe threw his unsmoked cigarette into the fire. Howard and Tracy exchanged an angry look, and moved to the door.

"D-d-don't go for a minute!" stammered Adolphus.

"Well?"

"I—I want you to lend me some tin!"

"Hard up?" asked Tracy sarcastically.

"Ye-es!"

"You had a fiver not so long ago, and you haven't spent any that I've noticed. Has Muffin cleared you out?" sneered Tracy.

"Look here, I suppose you can lend me a couple of quid!" exclaimed Smythe angrily.

"Not for Muffin!"

"I—I want it badly—"

"Ask Muffin!"

And with that Smythe's pals quitted the study, Tracy slamming the door as he went. As Howard had remarked, Smythe's pals were "fed!"

Adolphus was left alone with a frown upon his somewhat vacant face. He drew another cigarette from his case, but did not light it. He sat picking it to pieces with nervous, restless fingers.

The door opened suddenly.

A fat and shiny face looked in, and Adolphus' frown grew blacker. Tubby Muffin gave him a cheery nod and a grin, and rolled into the study, closing the door after him.

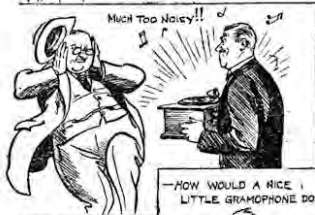
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"Hallo, old sport!" said Tubby familiarly.

"What do you want now?" asked Smythe, between his teeth. "You've had ten bob out of me to-day, you fat rascal!"

"I sold you something for ten shillings, you mean, Smythe," said Reginald Muffin calmly. "Do you think I've come here to ask you for money?"

Smythe gritted his teeth.

"If you have, it won't be any good; I'm stony," he answered.

Tubby gave him a fat wink.

"It's the truth, you rotter!" muttered Smythe.

"Well, the fact is, old chap, I'm in rather a fix," said Muffin, with an air of candour. "The fellows in my study are rather rusty. Jones minor is standing a supper—"

"Hang Jones minor!"

"And they won't let me come!" said Tubby Muffin. "Jones minor says I never stand my whack, and he won't let me come to supper. Of course, I can't stand an imputation like that. A fellow has his dignity to consider. I'm going to take in something decent for supper, and we'll jolly well see what young Jones says then. I could do with five bob."

"You won't get it out of me."

"I'm not asking you to lend me money, Smythe. I've got something to sell you."

Tubby Muffin drew a crumpled paper from his pocket and tossed it to Smythe. The Shell fellow glanced at it with a savage look. It was not the first document of the kind the unscrupulous Tubby had brought to Adolphus' study "for sale." It ran:

"Young Nobody is Smythe's cousin Charles Clare who is missing from Lynthorpe School."

That was all! But, little as it was, it had cost Smythe of the Shell a considerable proportion of his ample pocket-money of late.

"Like to give me five bob for that?" asked Tubby Muffin affably.

"No!" said Smythe, breathing hard.

"Be reasonable, old chap!" urged Tubby. "I'm really speaking in your own interest, you know. Your pater doesn't know anything about young Nobody—never heard of him. But you do, and you know young Nobody is your cousin, and you're trying to diddle him!" Tubby shook a fat forefinger accusingly at Smythe of the Shell. "You're taking advantage of the poor chap having lost his memory to diddle him. You hope he'll

never get his memory back—you know you do! Mean, I call it!"

Smythe breathed hard.

"I've been thinking," continued Tubby, with an air of conscious virtue, "whether it isn't my duty to tell young Nobody the facts. I don't want to chip in in your family affairs, but really— Especially since you accused me of getting money out of you to keep it dark. As if I'd do such a thing!"

Smythe did not speak, but his eyes burned at the virtuous Tubby.

"Out of friendship," continued the virtuous youth, "I'm doing the best I can for you. It's not my business if the Smythe family rob one another. You're a bad lot, I must say! A rotten lot, if you don't mind my putting it plainly, Smythe! Not up to my standard. My intention is to act in a perfectly honourable way. I'm not going to follow your example, I can tell you. There's that paper! Young Nobody would give pounds for it! I'm offering it to you for five shillings! Generous, I call it!"

"I tell you I'm cleared out!"

"Then I'll take that paper where I can sell it!" said Tubby Muffin. "Here, I say, hold on! Don't be a beast! Yaroooooh!"

Smythe's temper had failed him, and he made a sudden spring, a good deal like a tiger, at Reginald Muffin.

It was rather reckless of Adolphus, considering how completely he was under Tubby's fat thumb. But he forgot that for the moment, and only remembered that the fat Classical had been haunting him, and making his life hardly worth living, for weeks. He grasped the yelling Tubby and thumped him, and, finding solace in it, thumped him again and again harder and harder.

Thump, thump, thump, thump!

"Oh crikey! Leggo! I—I was only joking, Smythe. Yaroooooh!" roared Tubby Muffin. "I won't say a—yoop!—word! Not a—yow-ow!—syllable! Oh, my hat! Help!"

Thump, thump, thump!

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Help! Rescue! Yoop!" yelled Tubby Muffin.

The door flew open, and Jimmy Silver of the Fourth strode into the study. Smythe suddenly relaxed his grasp upon his victim, and Tubby Muffin promptly dodged behind the captain of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 27.

Still in Clover!

JIMMY SILVER stared at Tubby Muffin, and stared at Adolphus Smythe. He had arrived at a rather exciting moment.

"Well, what's the name of this game?" inquired Jimmy.

Smythe stood panting.

His fury had passed. At the sight of Jimmy Silver he was recalled to himself. One sentence from Tubby Muffin was enough to enlighten the captain of the Fourth, and the truth would be known.

Smythe's heart sank within him.

"It—it's nothing!" he stammered. "Muffin was—was—I say, Muffin, old chap, I'm sorry I hit you!"

"Grooogh!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "Ger-roooooogh!"

At present Tubby Muffin was struggling to get his second wind, and had no breath for words.

But when he should speak—

"I—I'm sorry, Muffin! I—I say, there's no need for us to rag!" panted Adolphus, in a great hurry to conciliate Tubby before he could gasp out the facts of the case. "I—I say, old chap—"

"Yurrrrgghh!"

"So you two have been rowing?" said Jimmy Silver sarcastically. "You've got tired of shelling out cash, is that it, Smythe?"

Smythe licked his dry lips.

"No business of yours, Silver!" he said. "We may have had a row. I don't see that you're called on to chip in."

"I don't want to," said Jimmy, with a shrug of the shoulders. "You can thump the fat bouncer if you like. The harder the better, I think. I came here to speak to you, Smythe."

"You needn't trouble. I don't want to speak to you."

"You're going to, all the same," answered Jimmy Silver coolly. "It's rather important, Smythe. You're under suspicion, you see."

Smythe started.

"Wha-a-a-t do you mean?" he gasped.

"You've been squaring Muffin—for some reason. I suspect the reason is that he knows a secret you've been keeping."

Adolphus changed colour.

"You denied that the new kid was a relation of yours," continued Jimmy Silver.

"He's as like you as two peas, except that he doesn't look a lackadaisical noodle! I've got a strong suspicion that you could tell us his name if you liked."

"Why shouldn't I, if I could?" muttered Smythe.

"I don't know. Snobbishness, I suppose, because poor old Charley came here in rags and tatters, and you don't want to show a poor relation to Rookwood. And I suspect that Muffin had nosed it all out somehow, and that you've been squaring him to keep it dark!" said Jimmy Silver sternly.

Adolphus seemed scarcely to breathe. Tubby Muffin's peculiar way of keeping a secret had been pretty certain to lead to suspicion. Adolphus had realised that, but he had not dreamed that Jimmy Silver would get so close to the truth. But, close as he was, he could not know if only Tubby Muffin kept silent! Smythe's glance was almost anguished, as it rested on Tubby's fat face.

The fat Classical had recovered his breath now. He was looking at Smythe with a significant grin. He had the upper hand again; but Adolphus was brought so abjectly to heel that Reginald Muffin decided to hold his hand. So long as the secret was kept it was valuable to Tubby. Once told, the horn of plenty would dry up on the spot. Tubby was not a very bright youth, but he understood that.

"I want to know the facts, Smythe," added Jimmy Silver. "Charley may never recover his memory, for all I know; and I more than suspect that you could help him, if you chose. It's up to you to do it, if you've got a rag of decency anywhere about you!"

"I don't know his name," muttered Smythe huskily. "I don't know anything about the fellow."

"What do you know about him, Muffin?" snapped Jimmy Silver, fixing his eyes upon the fat Classical.

"Nothing at all, old chap!" said Tubby, in a great hurry. "Of course, I'd tell you if I knew."

"What were you quarrelling with Smythe about?"

"I—I—I—"

"Because he's got fed with squaring you?"

"Nunno. I—I—"

"Muffin was asking me to pay up some

—some money I owe him," panted Smythe.
 "I—I cut up rusty."

"That's it!" said Tubby eagerly.
 "Smythe owes me a pound. He was just going to settle. Weren't you, Smythe, old fellow?"

Tubby's price had risen. The thumping had to be paid for. Tubby's tell-tale paper was still on the table. Adolphus, as he stood, was covering it with his hand. If Jimmy Silver could see that paper—

"Yes," gasped Adolphus; "I—I'm going to settle, Muffin. Certainly! I—I'm rather short of tin now, but I can borrow a quid from Lattrey."

"I'll give you ten minutes!" said Tubby Muffin significantly, and he rolled out of the study.

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips.
 "You're bribing Muffin, Smythe!" he said quietly.

"Nothin' of the kind," said Adolphus, recovering his nerve a little, now that Reginald Muffin was gone. "I owe him money, as it happens."

"You don't owe him money!"
 Adolphus shrugged his shoulders.

"You won't tell me anything about the new kid?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I've got nothin' to tell you!"

"Very well. I've given you a chance to own up," said Jimmy. "The matter doesn't end here. It will be looked into, and we'll get at the facts somehow. You haven't heard the last of it, Smythe!"

And Jimmy Silver left the Shell fellow's study with a grim brow. What had been only suspicion before was certainty now. He could not mistake the meaning of the scene he had witnessed. But how to extract the truth from the two young rascals was rather a puzzle.

A little later Jimmy, as he went up to the Fourth Form passage, was not surprised to see Adolphus emerge from No. 2. The dandy of the Shell had evidently succeeded in raising the required pound, and had called on Reginald Muffin with it. Smythe passed Jimmy in the passage with a scowling brow, and went downstairs, and the captain of the Fourth looked into Study No. 2. Tubby Muffin was there, with a grin on his face and a pound note in his fat paw, and his study-mates were regarding him with surprise and curiosity.

"So you've landed your quid, Tubby?" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"You mind your own bizney!" retorted Tubby Muffin independently.

"What does it mean?" asked Putty Grace. "What is Smythe giving Tubby quids for?"

"He owes me money!" said Muffin. "In fact, he owes me quite a lot of money! He will be settling up some more to-morrow."

"Gammon!"

"Won't you tell us the truth, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"If you doubt my word, Silver, I—"

"Oh, rats!" grunted the captain of the Fourth. And he walked away with a frowning brow.

There was a plentiful supper in Study No. 2 that night. Tubby Muffin was still a pig in clover. And the next day Tubby Muffin was in funds again—and again on the following day; but quite the reverse was the case with Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

Smythe of the Shell was accumulating little debts on all sides, and he was finding the way of the transgressor very hard indeed.

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CHAPTER 28.

Charley Finds His Memory!

"**H** EARD the news, you chaps?" Tubby Muffin asked that question a few days later, with an excited expression on his fat face. Jimmy Silver & Co. were coming off the football-ground after practice, with Charley in their company, when the fat classical rolled up with the news.

Tubby Muffin prided himself on being the first fellow to hear anything that was "on." And he generally was; he had his own peculiar methods.

"Buzz!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

Reginald Muffin was not in the good graces of the captain of the Fourth just then. The affair of Smythe and the hush-money was still in Jimmy's mind.

"But, I say, it's jolly exciting!" said Tubby. "That man with the broken boko

"What?"

"You remember when you found young Nobody on the heath, there was a broken-nosed chap after him?" said Tubby. "Well, I think it's the same man—stands to reason, you know. There ain't a lot of chaps with broken noses."

"Who's the same man?" demanded Lovell.

"The man they've got!"

"Who've got, ass?"

"I'm trying to tell you, ain't I?" said Muffin. "You keep on interrupting me. They've collared him at Rookham—man with a broken nose and another chap with him—passing counterfeit currency notes."

"My hat!"

"I just heard Mr. Bootles speaking to the Head about it," said Tubby. "Mr. Bootles thinks it may be the same man, and he's going over to Rookham, and he's going to take you, Silver, to identify the chap, if it's the same man. He thinks it may lead to a discovery, he said. I don't know what he means by that."

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver, his eyes gleaming. "That's real luck! If that rotter is arrested, we may find out all about Charley. That's what Mr. Bootles was thinking, of course."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tubby, his jaw dropping.

"Real luck!" said Raby. "Why, what's the matter with you, Kid?"

Charley's face was deadly pale.

"What is it, old chap?" he asked.

"I—I remember—"

"Hurrah! You remember! You've got your memory back!" exclaimed Lovell, in great delight.

"I remember— Oh!" Charley shuddered. "I—I remember now! It was the counterfeiters!"

"The counterfeiters!" repeated Newcome.

"Yes—yes! As soon as Muffin mentioned that, it came to me like a flash!" posted Charley. "It was the counterfeiters that took me away from school. I can see it all now!"

"Tell me about it, Kid," said Jimmy Silver softly.

"It—it's all clear now. I was going through the wood near the school—going to the town," he said. "I came on them in the wood. There were two of them—that rotten fellow with the broken nose and another, a man dressed in a flashy way. I came on them suddenly—"

"Yes?" said Lovell eagerly.

"There was an old cottage there—a deserted building nearly grown over by creepers," went on Charley. "They were there—the two of them! They had some kind of a machine, I don't know what; and when I saw them they were making up bundles—little bundles—of currency-notes. They had stacks of them. I knew at once what they must be doing. I could see there was a thousand pounds, at least."

"By gad!" said Mornington, who had joined the growing crowd. "Go on, Kid! What did you do?"

"I—I would have run for it," he said; "but they'd seen me. They ran out, and one of them—I don't know which—struck me on the head as I turned. Then it's all blank. I suppose I was stunned. I don't know any more of what happened."

"But afterwards?" said Jimmy Silver.

"There's nothing more, till I came to myself, and I was in a deep quarry cave," said Charley. "The broken-nosed man was there. He was keeping guard over me. I—I couldn't remember anything; I didn't know why I was there. I couldn't remember anything, not even my name. It was the knock on the head that did it, I suppose. I don't know how long I was there—weeks, at least. Now I remember. I know why they must have taken me; they knew I could

identify them, and they meant to keep me a prisoner. I was kept in the cave. I had a chain on my arm, fastened to a staple, and the broken-nosed man used to bring me food. He was away sometimes for days at a time, and I was alone—"

He broke off with a shudder.

"I remember now how I got away. I found that the chain would slip off my arm, I'd grown so thin. One day I squeezed it off and got out of the quarry, and ran for it. He was away then, the broken-nosed man, but must have been just coming back, for he was after me. You remember, Jimmy, how he ran me down on the heath, and you fellows were there, and you helped me!"

"Thank goodness we were there!" said Jimmy Silver.

"I think you saved my life!" said Charley. "I couldn't have lived under it much longer! I'd told the man that my memory was gone, but he didn't believe me. And—and now it's come back. I remember it all now!"

"And your name?" asked Lovell breathlessly.

"Clare!" said Charley. "I remember it—I remember it now! It's come back—along with the rest! Charles Clare, of Lynthorpe School. I was in the Fourth Form at Lynthorpe. I lived there in the headmaster's charge. I've no near relations, excepting an uncle in South Africa. Clare—my name is Clare."

"Hurrah!"

"Well, my hat!" exclaimed Lovell, in great disgust. "I did all the C's I could think of, and I never thought of Clare! I say, Charley, old top, are you sure your name is Clare?"

"Quite sure—now!" he said.

"And have you got a relation named Smythe?" asked Jimmy Silver, very quietly.

"I've got a cousin—Adolphus Smythe—at Rookwood School!" answered Charley at once.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tubby Muffin,

Charles Clare, of the Lynthorpe Fourth, in their midst.

They halted at Smythe's study.

Adolphus was at home, and Tubby Muffin was with him. Tubby Muffin was speaking in excited haste.

"Make it a couple of quids, Smythe, and I'll let you off for good! I will really, honour bright! You shell out a couple of quids and I'll promise never to say a word—really! You know you can rely on me. You know what an honourable chap I am! Two quids, and I'll let you off for good! Yaroooh!"

"Now, you fat rascal!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Ow! Leggo! I—I wasn't asking Smythe for anything!" yelled Tubby Muffin. "I—I was only saying that I wouldn't keep his rotten secrets any longer! I'm not going to help him swindle his cousin! I'm an honourable chap, I hope!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You leggo, Jimmy Silver! Ow!"

"Allow me!" said Lovell, with great politeness. "Smythe, old bean, I'm sure you'll be delighted to meet a relation. Allow me to introduce you to your cousin—"

"He's no relation of mine!" muttered Smythe, huskily.

"Well, if you've forgotten your cousin, I'll remind you, Smythe," said Jimmy Silver. "Here he is—Charley Clare of the Fourth Form, at Lynthorpe. Know him now?"

Smythe scarcely breathed.

"I know you now, Smythe," said Clare quietly. "Not by sight, but your name and school. You knew me, and you let me remain in the dark and—"

"I—I didn't know you at first," muttered Smythe. "I—I hadn't any idea you were my cousin. How should I? I'd never seen you, not that I remember. How should I know that a ragged nobody from nowhere was my cousin?"

"If you didn't know at first, you knew afterwards!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver sternly. "And Muffin knew, and you've been giving him money to keep it dark."

"I—I—"

"Isn't that so, you fat rotter?" demanded Jimmy Silver, administering a powerful shake to the fat Classical. "Now, what have you got to say?"

"Yow-ow-woooop!"

"Take him to the Head!" said Mornington.

CHAPTER 29.

Adolphus Owns Up!

TRAMP!

There was a tramping of many feet in the Shell passage. Up the passage came a crowd of Classical juniors, the Fistical Four in the lead, with

"I—I don't want to go to the Head!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I—I was just going to tell you all about it. I—I wouldn't think of keeping secrets from an old pal like you, Jimmy."

"You fat fraud!"

"And—and Charley, too! You know what a lot I think of Charley!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I—I was under the table when Smythe's pater came, and I heard him tell the rotter about his cousin being missing from Lynthorpe, wherever that is, and about Uncle Richard having left ten thousand pounds between them, and it was all going to Smythe if Charley was dead——"

"Oh!"

"And old Smythe said that Clare's death would be presumed, because he could not be found, and his cap was picked up near the sea, and—and then I guessed it was the kid you knew, because he was so like Smythe. And Smythe guessed it, too, and he didn't tell his father——"

"So there was money in it?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "You've been trying to work a swindle, Smythe."

"I—I thought—I wasn't sure—I—it wasn't my business to find a silly fool who got lost! I——"

"He wanted the money," said Tubby Muffin. "He knew, and he didn't breathe a word to his father about it. Old Smythe don't know. I was shocked, of course."

"You fat rascal!" hissed Smythe.

"Now he's calling me names!" said Tubby Muffin, in an injured tone. "And he actually accused me once of getting money out of him to keep his secrets! You'd hardly believe it, but he did! That's the kind of rotter Smythe is!"

"My only hat!" said Jimmy Silver, staring blankly at the injured Tubby. "I think

a lunatic asylum is about the proper place for you, Muffin."

"And chokcy for Smythe!" said Lovell. "We'll jolly well take Smythe to the Head, and he can explain why he wouldn't help Charley find out who he was, and about the legacy, too!"

"Come on, Smythe!"

"Hold on!" said Charley quietly.

"Bring him along——"

"Hold on! Let Smythe alone!" said Charley. "I—I don't want my cousin to get into trouble. Let him alone! It's all turned out right. Smythe hasn't done me any harm as it turns out. There's no need to tell the Head that he knew!"

"You're a soft ass, Charlie!" he said.

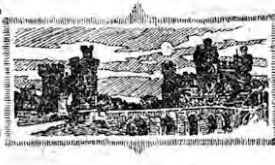
"Let me have my way, old chap, ass or not!"

"For goodness' sake——" breathed Smythe.

"Let Charley have his way!" said Jimmy Silver. "The fellows will know what to think of Smythe, anyway. Let's get out of this! The rotter makes me sick!"

Charley of Rookwood was marched to the Head's study, where the tale was told, without any reference to the parts played by Smythe of the Shell and Tubby Muffin. It was pleasant news to the good old Head and to Mr. Bootles.

For some days longer Charley remained at Rookwood. Then he was wanted to give evidence against the two counterfeiters, and while those gentlemen were sent to their just deserts Charley returned to his old school. And Jimmy Silver & Co. turned out in great force to give a great send-off to their new chum, and they retained very friendly memories of "The Boy from Nowhere!"



OUR MAGAZINE CORNER.

CHRISTMAS IN OTHER LANDS

Without plum pudding, roast beef or turkey, mince pies, crackers, and a Christmas tree, we in Britain would feel that it was a very makeshift sort of Christmas indeed. Yet the Britishers who are exiled from home manage to make merry and celebrate the day of "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Mankind" without any of the adjuncts to Christmas jollification which we think so necessary.

A coconut tree does duty as a Christmas tree among the white men in Africa, and that is about the only Christmas "touch" there is to the great occasion. For there it is everyone's desire at Christmas to get far from fires and houses—especially in the region of the Gold Coast, where the thermometer plays pranks round about 100 degrees. And that is shade temperature, too!

The Christmas dinner is naturally on the cool side, the whites in the less accessible parts dining royally on tinned meat, tinned fish, and probably tinned soup!

The "Niggers' " Christmas.

Though Christmas has little meaning for them other than an occasion to copy the white "boss" and make the day merry with feasting, the African natives join in the celebrations. Where the native chiefs are generous, cattle are roasted whole, before enormous camp fires, and the head-men are invited to join in.

The would-be feasters whom the invitation has missed may hang about the laden table—which, by the way, is the ground, with the guests squatting around on their haunches—in the hope of seizing on some eatable chunk tossed to them from time to time.

But it is very different fare where the less civilised natives are concerned. Some of them think there is nothing daintier to eat in the world than great, fat, repulsive-looking grubs of enormous beetles.

Others gorge themselves and wax fat on honey-ants and stewed locusts! A great advantage attached to this article of diet is, that no exertion is called for in obtaining it. The honey-ants can be collected in handfuls, and locusts are simply swept up in heaps.

In Full Regalia.

The white man's Christmas is regarded as an occasion when the blacks should do honour to

their masters by dressing up. A cast-off military tunic, fiery scarlet against the dusky flesh, with an old khaki cap to top the lot, has a pretty startling effect. But the native who can sport this scratch garb considers himself no end of a knut on Christmas morning.

An old striped blazer sometimes performs a similar service, whilst one old chief turned up at a white man's Christmas dinner last year wearing the very much tattered full-dress frock coat of an admiral! From what rubbish heap he had plucked it only he knew!

The now peaceful natives of former war-like tribes are fond of decking themselves out in full war-paint, and see nothing comical in completing their Christmas dress with the aid of such cast-off effects of the white man as spats and "boiled" shirts!

It all adds to the merriness—such as it is. For the exiled Englishman, broiling in the African sun when the folks at home are perhaps making merry in the snow, has much ado to prevent his thoughts wandering sadly to what might have been on this day had not Fate hung him to the steaming tropics.

The Great White West.

Christmas weather affects the Canadians in the very opposite way. There snow and ice and Christmas trees are more than plentiful, and the merry-makers in the towns have high old times. It is the trappers in the lonely northlands, and the pioneers at the trading-posts of the big companies, on whom the great burden of Christmas loneliness falls heavily.

But they believe that it is a poor heart that never rejoices—and what man worth his salt would not make superhuman efforts to foregather with pals at Christmas, no matter how long and dangerous the trail?

So the trapper hitches up his team of huskies to his sledge and makes a trip to civilisation—a trip that would make the home-staying Englishman, with his tubes and 'buses and taxis, gasp with amazement simply to contemplate.

Through the whirling, blinding snowstorm the tough dog team flies. For they know, bless you, as well as their driver, what awaits them at the far end of the journey—jolly company, civilised food, big fires and bright lights, and all

that makes Christmas Day a time of great remembrance.

Christmas Day in Darkness.

No Christmas Day dawns in Greenland, for at this time of year complete darkness lasts twenty-four hours each day. It is one long, dreary, frozen night, to which there will now be no dawn until well into next March. The land of the midnight sun has become the land of endless night.

But where the white settlements are there will be mission stations. The handful of whites keep Christmas as near the old-fashioned way as their outlandish circumstances allow. Of course, there must be a youngsters' party, and so the Eskimo kiddies are collected from the neighbourhood and made acquainted with the English Christmas pudding and all the other jolly fare.

For them it is the one day of the whole year. And their parents? Well, Christmas doesn't mean much to them. There is no holly or mistletoe to deck the snow-houses in which many of them live—houses made of blocks of compressed snow, smooth as glass inside and with skins of animals to make it as comfy as may be.

The Christmas larder may be bulging with salted and smoked fish, or seal flesh, collected during the months of daylight. Heaven help the Eskimo family whose larder is bare at Christmas, for then the men-folk must sally out and lie or crouch on the ice, with a spear held in readiness to spike the first fish or seal that shows in the hole smashed in the ice for that purpose.

Even the sea is frozen, and if one of the frequent wind tempests is raging—winds that slash like a razor and make it excessively painful even to breathe—dinner on Christmas Day may be only a dream to the Eskimos whose larders have become bare before their time.

Mid-Summer Christmas.

Another turn of the wheel, and we are back to mid-summer—Christmas Day in broiling India! To all but the whites and the natives whom the missionaries have persuaded to a similar way of thinking and living, the Christmas festivities are just pagan rites.

But Christmas decorations go up all the same in the camps and houses and barracks of the Christmas-keeping civilians and troops. Palm leaves take the place of holly, and cooling fans, manipulated by natives, take the place of the home fires!

The "unbelievers" among the natives look on at the "heathen" celebrations, then go home to their own curried rice or fowl; and if they feel inclined to honour anyone or anything on Christmas Day they offer sacrifices to their own particular gods—some of them chiefly notable

for their hideous appearance as carved in stone or rock.

In that outlandish part of the great Indian Empire known as Bokhara, where the world's most wonderful carpets come from, Christmas may or may not be celebrated. When it is, the dish that will surely take the place of honour on the festive board is the one usual among the natives who can afford it.

This is a big sheep, roasted whole, and served up on a sumptuous and colossal salver. When the guests are seated, the feast starts, substantial portions being hewn from the sheep by means of a scimitar used as a carving-knife!

Oceans of Soup!

In the mysterious land of Thibet, where Buddhist monasteries nestle secure in threatening mountain fastnesses, that which takes the place of our Christmas is celebrated once every seven years. The pilgrims who flock to the monasteries are regaled by the monks with steaming soup—made in giant cauldrons eight feet wide and as much deep!

Soup is also a favourite Christmas dish among the Chinese—the few who keep Christmas Day. Its chief constituent is birds' nests. At the banquets of the Chinese who have their own variety of Christmas, other weird items that load the festive table are stewed cats, white mice dipped in treacle, and dried rats!

Shuddery fare, this. But then the Chinese who delight in it think our fare as shuddery, and would not for worlds change their diet for the Christmas fare of the British Tommy, who, year in and year out, by day and by night, does sentry go before the altar in the church built over the spot where many centuries ago "Christ was born in Bethlehem."

Christmas Gone Astray!

Though countless thousands of those who would keep Christmas if they could, but are debarred from doing so, either because of the outlandish situation in which they find themselves on that day, or on account of dire hardship, yearly mourn their ill-luck, few, indeed, could ever experience being where Christmas Day simply was not!

This unusual experience befalls seamen whose vessel crosses from west longitude to east longitude at midnight on Christmas Eve, as the wind-jammer *Garth* did last Christmas as she crossed the 180th meridian. In order for such a ship to keep her date right with Greenwich time she must miss a day, as it were, and December 25th simply does not occur. It is wiped out by Father Time!

But we can be sure the vessel's crew makes up for the lost day by celebrating Boxing Day and Christmas Day together on the 26th!

IF YOU WANT A GOOD LAUGH, READ
THIS RIPPING COMPANION VOLUME!

*Billy Bunter's
Christmas Pudding!*
By
FRANK RICHARDS



4^D

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