

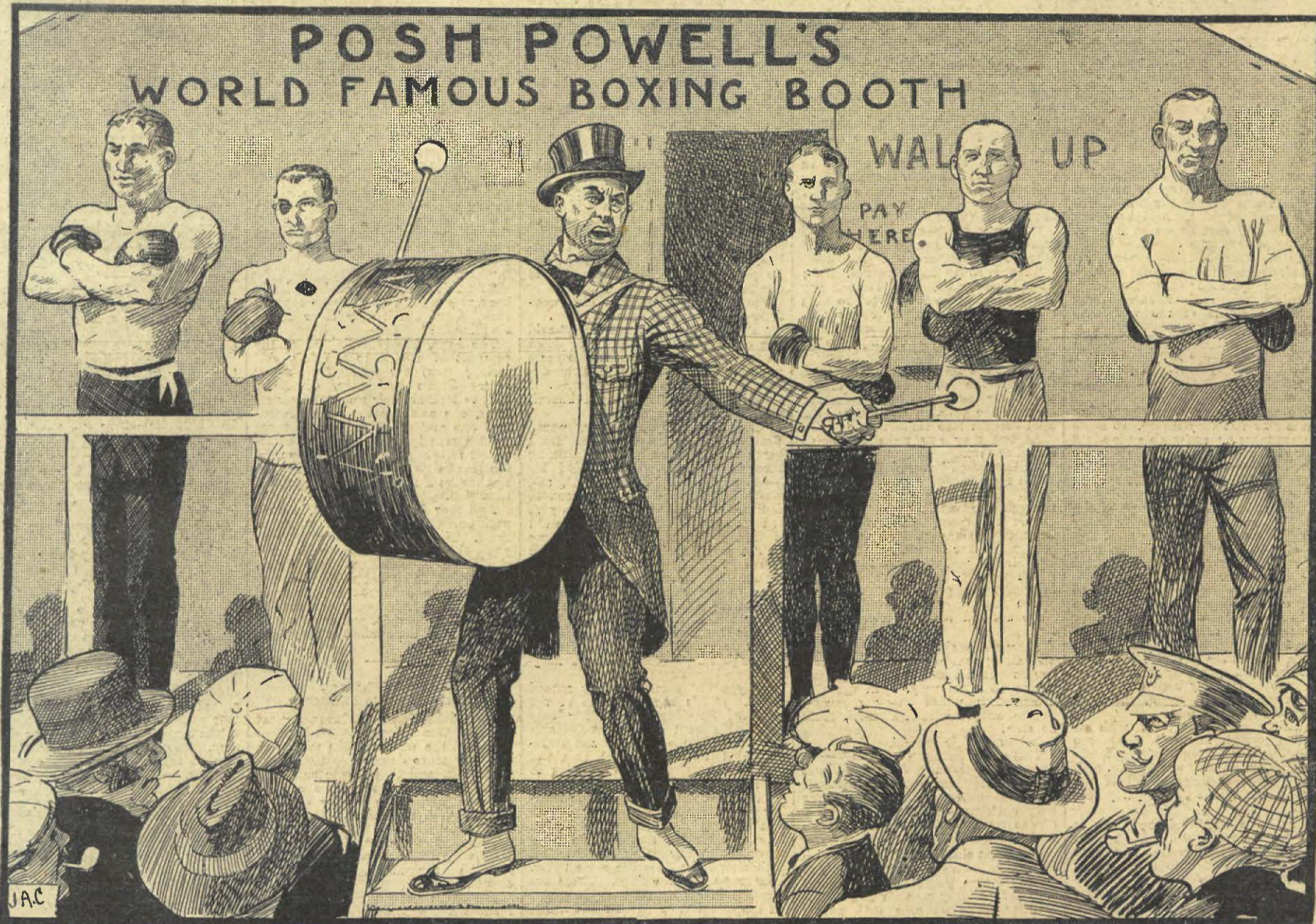
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The BOYS' FRIEND 1d.

No. 725, Vol. XIV. New Series.]

ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending May 1st, 1915.]



"I hoffer," exclaimed Posh Powell, brandishing the sticks of the big drum, "five pounds to any man in Banbrooke who will stand up to any lad I've got in my booth for six three-minute rounds. Cash down on the nail! Don't be frightened, gents! My boxers won't eat yer. Walk up! Walk up! Now's the time!"

CATCHING A TARTAR!

A Great New Long Complete Tale of Tom Belcher, the Boy Boxer.

BY ARTHUR S. HARDY.

The 1st Chapter.

On the Road.

"Harness up the old boss, Tom! Skip lively there, mates! It looks like being a dirty night; but we've got to get to Banbrooke, and have our tent pitched before the fair opens in the morning."

It was Ben Adams who spoke. Ben was an old boxer of some reputation, who, finding times a bit hard in London, had taken to the road with a boxing-booth, a couple of caravans,

and a troupe, or company of boxers, including young Tom Belcher.

The "company" were resting by the roadside. The caravans had been drawn on to a plot of grass, the lorry placed at the side of the road, and the horses had been cast adrift to rest and browse at their pleasure.

Boxers, manager, and Mrs. Adams, who acted as mother to them all, had eaten a hearty meal during the break in the journey, and now at Ben's command they leapt to their feet,

knocked the ashes out of their pipes, stretched themselves, and began to roud up the horses.

Tom Belcher, a little chap, with a small, boyish face, a mere morsel of a lad, made a dash for Chlee, a ten years' old mare, coaxed her into captivity, backed her between the shafts of one of the caravans, and harnessed her up in good time.

The others were equally as adept. Then the debris of the meal they had strewn about them on the grass was

swept together and thrown where it would not be an eyesore, and the journey resumed.

Up the rise of a steep hill the two caravans and the lorry went, the horses straining bravely at their task, the men walking alongside encouraging them by word of mouth, but never using the whip, for Ben did not believe in that.

Overhead swept dark, lowering clouds. From the North a bitter wind blew, and they were going right into the teeth of it.

Hands in pockets, mufflers round throats, heads bowed to the blast, the hardy troupe tramped onward glad to be on the move, yet longing to reach their journey's end and be at rest again.

It was a long and weary journey between pitches, and Banbrooke still seemed an unreachable distance away.

Past hedgerows just breaking into bright emerald, but the travellers went, and so on to the crest of a hill, from whence they were able to scan the surrounding country, which

stretched on and on for seemingly endless miles.

"It was a wonderful view, and they paused to admire it. Ben Adams, grasping a whip, presently pointed to a dark patch near the horizon to the west of them. From this patch one tall spire or chimney reared its length into the sky.

"There's Banbrooke, boys!" said he.

"Have we got to go as far as that?" gasped a burly boxer named Clouette.

"We have, my lad, and a rare up and down; winding road it is, too!" said the proprietor of the boxing-booth. "And never a moment's rest until we get there. Thank goodness I've reserved and paid for my pitch, so that there can be no fear of our not getting a place. But we must reach the town to-night, no matter what the weather. We shall have Posh Powell and his troupe against us, and if we want to do decent business, we must start on equal terms.

(Continued on the next page.)

BACKING UP BULKELEY!

A Magnificent New Long Complete School Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood.
BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Simply Awful!

"On the ball!" said Jimmy Silver. Morning lessons were over, and the boys of Rookwood had streamed out into the quadrangle, bright in the spring sunshine.

Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Fourth, the heroes of the Modern Side, were punting about an old football in the quad. And as soon as Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Classical Side spotted them their natural impulse, of course, was to "bag" the ball. Which they immediately proceeded to do.

There was quite a crowd of Modern juniors round the ball, but the Classical four never counted odds. Jimmy Silver led the charge, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome backed him up at once. Tommy Dodd was rushed off the ball, and Tommy Cook was shoved aside, and Tommy Doyle was floored, and Leggett went over with a roar, and the Classical youths rushed the ball away to their own side almost before the Moderns knew what was happening.

Tommy Dodd sat up and roared. "Yah! Classical cads! After them!"

"Ow!" gasped Doyle. "I'm kilt intirely! Aftther the bastes!"

The whole crowd of Moderns rushed in pursuit.

But Jimmy Silver was going in great style, dribbling the ball at top speed. He took it right round the gym, and then passed to Lovell as he was charged over, and Lovell passed to Raby as he fell in the clutches of the exasperated Tommy Dodd. Raby sent it to Newcome, and Newcome skied it as the three Tommies rushed him over. Jimmy Silver recaptured it as it came down, and dribbled it away towards the House.

"After the beast!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome were left sprawling on the ground, gasping for breath, and the Modern horde sped on the track of Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy was going strong, and it looked as if he would escape into the House with the ball, when two or three Moderns, coming from a different direction, cut him off. Jimmy Silver paused, and Tommy Dodd & Co. gave a yell of triumph. But Jimmy was not beaten yet. He was within shooting distance of the big doorway, and the brilliant idea occurred to him to kick the ball right into the House, where there were plenty of Classics to secure it.

No sooner had that idea flashed into Jimmy Silver's active brain than he acted upon it. There was no time to think it out, which was rather unfortunate, as it happened.

Jimmy delivered a tremendous kick, and the ball rose over the heads of the Moderns in front of him and sailed straight for the doorway. Never had Jimmy delivered a surer kick for goal.

It was sheer ill-luck that Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, chose that very moment for coming out of the House.

Jimmy Silver couldn't possibly have foreseen that, as he told his chums afterwards. Neither could Bulkeley have foreseen it, or he would certainly have dodged. As it was, the somewhat muddy footer caught the captain of Rookwood fairly under the chin.

Bulkeley staggered back with a yell, and the ball rolled at his feet.

The rush of the juniors stopped as if by magic. Bulkeley sat down in the doorway, blinking. Jimmy Silver stood petrified. Bulkeley—the great Bulkeley—old Bulkeley, the captain of the school, had been floored by the ball, and his face was splashed with mud, likewise his collar and his waistcoat. It was time for the skies to fall!

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Jimmy Silver, in utter dismay.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tommy Dodd. "You've done it now!"

"Serve the beast right!" muttered Leggett, who had his own reasons for

disliking Jimmy Silver. Jimmy was always down on the cad of the Fourth.

Bulkeley jumped up. He took out his handkerchief, and mopped his muddy face, and glared at the juniors.

Bulkeley could generally be depended upon to be good-tempered. That was one reason why he was so popular at Rookwood, not only on his own side, but with the Moderns as well.

On this occasion, however, his well-known good-temper had evidently failed him.

"Who kicked that ball at me?" he roared.

Dead silence.

Jimmy Silver did not feel inclined to impart any information. And Tommy Dodd & Co. would not have "sneaked" to save their lives.

"Do you hear me?" shouted Bulkeley. "Who kicked that ball? By Jove, I'll lick the lot of you all round!"

"Please, Bulkeley, it was Silver!"

It was Leggett of the Fourth, the cad of the Modern side, who squeaked out that piece of information.

"You cad!" roared Tommy Dodd.

"Shut up!"

"So it was you, Silver?" demanded Bulkeley.

"Yes, Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver meekly. "Awfully sorry! It was an accident—quite an accident! I didn't see you coming."

"You were kicking the ball into the doorway, anyhow."

"Ye-e-es!"

"You young idiot! The Head might have been coming out!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Jimmy, almost overcome by that awful possibility. It was bad enough to have floored Bulkeley of the Sixth. The mere idea of flooring the Head made him feel giddy.

"Come into my study!" said Bulkeley.

"Anything to oblige!" groaned Jimmy Silver.

Disconsolately he followed Bulkeley to his study. The prefect picked up a cane.

"You thundering young ass!" said Bulkeley. "Accidents like that can't be allowed to happen! Hold out your hand!"

Swish!

"Now the other!"

Swish!

"Oh dear!" groaned Jimmy Silver. "I say, Bulkeley, are you getting your muscle up for your bating this afternoon?"

Bulkeley grinned.

"You can clear off, you cheeky rascal!"

Jimmy Silver did not need telling twice. He cleared off promptly, and the great Bulkeley proceeded to take an extra wash.

The 2nd Chapter.

Leggett in Luck.

"Modern sneak!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome howled out the words together.

"Sneaking" was almost unknown among the cheery juniors of Rookwood, and Leggett's betrayal of Jimmy Silver made the Classical chums boil with rage. And Tommy Dodd & Co. were equally furious. The cad of the Fourth had brought disgrace on their side, and given the Classics a "handle" against them.

"What do you expect of these Modern worms?" hooted Raby.

"Yah! Modern cads!"

"Tain't our fault, is it?" howled Tommy Dodd. "We didn't sneak! It was that rotter Leggett! We don't own him! He ought to be a Classical!"

"Yah!"

"Scrag the beast!" yelled Cook.

"Make an example of him!"

"Collar him!"

Leggett was speeding away towards the Modern side. He did not like the looks of Tommy Dodd & Co.

But he was not allowed to escape. The three Tommies were keen to



Bulkeley dragged the goggles away from the chauffeur's face. "Jocj Hook!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean?"

show in the plainest possible manner that they were as much "down" on sneaking as any measly Classical at Rookwood.

They charged after Leggett, yelling to him to stop.

Under the circumstances Leggett was not likely to stop. Fear lent him wings, and he dashed on at a pace he had never displayed on the playing-fields.

He rushed into the House, with Tommy Dodd & Co. whooping after him.

"Collar the cad!"

"Scrag him!"

Leggett, in desperation, rushed for the Sixth Form passage. In those sacred precincts he felt that he would be safe from the avengers. As a rule the most reckless raggers would have kept clear of the quarters of the high and mighty Sixth.

But Tommy Dodd was too exasperated to think of that. The disgrace Leggett had brought on his side had to be wiped out. They scudded after the sneak of the Fourth, and Leggett panted with terror as he heard them still on his track.

They were close behind when Leggett whipped open the door of Knowles's study and dashed in, slamming the door behind him.

Then even the three Toms paused. Knowles was head prefect of the Modern side, and a fellow of uncertain temper, and it was manifestly impossible to perpetrate a ragging in his study.

"The thafe of the world!" gasped Doyle, coming to a sudden halt. "Niver mind; we'll scrag him when he comes out!"

The three juniors waited, breathing hard, in the passage. It was evident that Knowles was not in his study, or the fugitive would have been booted out already.

Leggett was palpitating with alarm in the study. He had rushed in blindly to escape the avengers, without stopping to think that the

sharp-tempered prefect might be there. Fortunately for him, Knowles was not there. Leggett squirmed under the bed in the corner, as the safest place, determined to stay there, and kick his hardest if the three Tommies ran him to earth.

"Ow, the rotters!" he mumbled. "The beasts! If Knowles comes and catches me here—oh, dear!"

He was almost inclined to face the angry juniors rather than Knowles. But not quite! He remained palpitating under the bed, waiting till the coast should be clear, and hoping that Knowles would not come.

Alas for his hopes! Tommy Dodd & Co. had not been on guard three minutes when Knowles and Catesby of the Sixth came along. Knowles frowned at the trio of Fourth-Formers.

"What are you fags doing here?" he snapped. "Clear off!"

The three Tommies had cleared off. Knowles and Catesby entered the study.

Leggett, under the bed, palpitated, thinking that the avengers had resolved to run the risk of cornering him in the prefect's study. But the sight of two pairs of legs that certainly did not belong to the Fourth reassured him. But his case was not much improved. He knew what to expect if Knowles found a junior hidden under his bed. Leggett subdued his hurried breathing, and lay very low. It was evidently advisable just then to understudy the celebrated Brer Fox.

"Shut the door!" said Knowles. "Help yourself to a fag, old man!"

Leggett grinned under the bed. Leggett had a way of knowing most things that went on, whether they concerned him or not, and he knew already that Knowles was a smoker.

"There's the match this afternoon, Knowles," said Catesby doubtfully. "Better not put on a smoke till afterwards, I think."

"Pooh! One won't hurt you! Besides, we shall win anyway."

Leggett grinned again. That afternoon the match was to take place of the Moderns versus Classics—the senior teams. It was a trial match, and from the best men on both sides the School eleven was to be selected. But it was common knowledge in the school that Knowles's eleven would never keep its end up against Bulkeley's team. The Classical seniors would win all along the line. Old Bulkeley was a tower of strength to his side, and his innings alone would decide the matter.

Yet Knowles spoke in a tone of certainty that puzzled Leggett. Surely Knowles should have known as well as anybody that he hadn't an earthly!

"Here's the list of our side," went on Knowles. "It's the best team we can get into the field. Without Bulkeley on the other side, I haven't the slightest doubt that we shall beat them hollow."

"They'll put a man in in Bulkeley's place—"

"Yes; one of the Fifth very likely—not much good! Mind, when Bulkeley's called away, there's to be no rot about postponing the trial match. Some of the Classics may suggest it. We're all to be down on it at once."

"You bet!" chuckled Catesby. "And Bulkeley will be held to his promise, too. If we win the match, we have six men in the School eleven."

Knowles chuckled, too.

"What-ho! Of course, the sublime Bulkeley did not foresee that he would be called away from the match. And, under the circumstances, he will very likely think that his promise ought to be called off. Of course, we shall not listen to any suggestion of the kind."

"Some of the fellows may—"

"The fellows will back us up,"



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previous
page.

BACKING UP BULKELEY!

The 3rd Chapter. "Let Him Rip!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. were adorning the steps of the School House when Bulkeley and Neville came out after dinner. Bulkeley was looking very cheerful and satisfied. It was one of Bulkeley's biggest troubles that he failed to pull with Knowles, the captain of the Modern side. Bulkeley was keenly desirous of seeing the Rookwood First do well at cricket that season, but without co-operation between the two sides it was not likely to come to pass. There were three men on the Modern side who could not be left out—Knowles, Catesby, and Frampton—if the team was to be the best that Rookwood could produce. And that was one reason why Bulkeley never listened to some hot-headed fellows who suggested playing a wholly Classical team as the School eleven. It would have been a lesson to Knowles, certainly; but it would have been bad business for Rookwood's cricket record.

But now the trouble seemed to have passed over.

Knowles had "grouned" at having only three Moderns considered good enough for the School team, and all the Moderns backed him up hotly. Bulkeley did not expect the trial match that afternoon to reveal any hitherto unsuspected geniuses in the ranks of the Moderns. But he had met Knowles half-way, and he had stated that if the Moderns beat the Classics in the trial match, Knowles should be considered to have proved his claim, and six Moderns should go into the first eleven. If Knowles's team won by fair play, certainly they would have proved their right.

As to their winning by foul play, Bulkeley never even thought of that. If anybody had warned him that a Rookwood fellow would be guilty of "nobbling" an opposing player to win a match by foul means, he would certainly have kicked his kind informant out of his study.

Yet that was exactly what Knowles had planned—as Leggett could have testified, and as Jimmy Silver & Co. could have testified, too, if they had cared to face the drastic consequences of making such an accusation against Knowles.

By chance, the previous day, the Fistical Four had "spotted" Knowles's little game, and they had taken their measure to defeat it with such deadly secrecy that nobody outside their own select circle suspected a word of it.

The Fistical Four could keep a secret when they liked; and they kept that one as carefully as if it had been a secret of hidden treasure.

They smiled genially as they saw Bulkeley's contented face as he came out chatting with Neville of the Sixth. They knew that he would not have felt so contented if he had known that the Modern captain was plotting, and that four juniors on his own side were plotting, too—or, rather, counterplotting.

"I say, Neville!" chirped Jimmy Silver, as the great men of the Sixth were passing on the steps.

The two prefects good-naturedly halted. They liked Jimmy Silver—nobody could quite help liking that somewhat cheeky, but always frank and cheery junior.

"Hallo!" said Neville. "What is it? Are you going to offer your services for the trial match, Silver?"

The four juniors grinned dutifully at the great man's little joke.

"Blessed if I don't think he'd have nerve enough, really," said Bulkeley, laughing.

"Well, Bulkeley might do worse than take a player or two from the Fourth," said Jimmy Silver modestly.

"But that isn't what I was going to say. It's about that letter, Neville."

"Eh? What letter?"

Jimmy Silver looked indignant.

"You don't mean to say you've forgotten!" he exclaimed. "You a prefect, too!"

"Blessed if I haven't," said Neville, puzzled. "What letter are you talking about?"

"Didn't I give you a letter to mind for me last night?" said Jimmy Silver. "An awfully valuable letter, you remember?"

"Oh, yes, I remember!" said Neville, feeling in his pocket. "It's here."

Jimmy waved his hand. "I don't want it yet, thanks," he said. "I was only mentioning it. You see, it's awfully valuable—awfully."

"Far above rubies," said Lovell solemnly.

"What the dickens—" said Bulkeley.

Neville laughed. The keenness of the fags about that precious letter amused him.

"I'm minding a letter for Silver," he explained. "Silver gave it to me last night to mind—"

"Just before we went to the dorm," said Jimmy.

"Yes, and it's crammed with banknotes, I suppose," said Neville.

"No, it isn't money," said Jimmy Silver. "It's more valuable than money."

"You bet," said Raby. "Bulkeley will know when it's opened."

"Yes, rather," said Newcome, "when Bulkeley sees it—Ow!"

Newcome broke off suddenly as Jimmy Silver kicked him.

The captain of Rookwood stared at the fags.

"Something to do with me?" he asked.

"Well, in a way," admitted Jimmy Silver cautiously. "Keep it in your pocket, Neville—if it were lost it would be all up."

"Oh, all serene!" said Neville.

The two prefects walked out into the quad.

"Something awfully mysterious—what!" said Bulkeley.

"Seems so," said Neville, "that young ass brought it to me in my study last night, sealed up with sealing-wax, and asked me to take charge of it. I concluded there was money in it, and he was afraid of losing it; but it appears not. What a ripping afternoon for the trial match. Do you think the Moderns have an earthly, Bulkeley?"

Bulkeley smiled.

"Knowles seems to think so, and I like to see him keen," he replied.

"But, of course, they won't have a look in."

"If they should beat us, Knowles will claim six places in the School eleven for his side as agreed."

"If they beat us, they'll be entitled to them," said Bulkeley.

"Well, yes, I suppose so."

"Knowles thinks I underrate the Modern players. Well, if they beat us, it will show that he's right and I'm wrong," said the captain of Rookwood, "and if that's so, I'll be glad to find out my mistake before we begin playing the School matches. But I fancy it won't turn out as Knowles thinks."

Bulkeley's opinion was shared by all the Classical side. But it was certain that the Modern seniors were very keen about the match, and would play up their hardest.

Jimmy Silver & Co. smiled at one another beautifully as the great swells of the Sixth walked away chatting. That valuable letter, which had been delivered so mysteriously into Neville's charge, was their counter-stroke to Knowles's plot. They felt elated that it had fallen to them to back up old Bulkeley and save the Classical side from a defeat.

"Mind you kids are at the gate at half-past one," murmured Jimmy Silver. "I want to see Knowles's face when his little game goes bang."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And Knowles don't know we know," chuckled Lovell blissfully.

"Hasn't the faintest suspicion that we were in the barn when he jawed it over with Joey Hook. His face will be worth a guinea a box when he finds out."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hallo, here's that Modern sneak!" said Newcome.

Leggett of the Fourth was approaching. Leggett did not look happy. One of his ears looked swollen, and his nose was very red. There was a bluish tinge round one of his eyes. Tommy Dodd & Co. had interviewed him immediately after dinner, with painful results to the cad of the Fourth.

The Fistical Four glared at him.

"Just in time for a licking," said Jimmy Silver.

"Chuck it!" growled Leggett.

"I've come over here to speak to Smythe. You're jolly well going to see your rotten Classics licked this afternoon."

"Not much chance of that!" said Lovell disdainfully.

"What will you bet on it?" said Leggett. The amiable Leggett was much given to making bets on the school events.

"I won't bet anything, because I'm not a blackguard," said Lovell; "but if I did bet, I'd lay a hundred to one on the Classics."

"I'd take you," said Leggett. "I'll take you at two to one, if you like. In quids, too."

The Fistical Four stared at him. Leggett's unpleasant manners and customs got on their nerves, but so far as they had observed him, he generally did well out of his little transactions. That he should be willing to bet against the Classic side, when even the Moderns themselves had little hope of winning, was extraordinary. Leggett generally found a sure thing to put his money on, and now it looked as if he was deliberately betting against the chances. They were puzzled.

"Where's the quids?" said Lovell sceptically.

Leggett drew quiet a handful of money from his pocket.

"Money talks," he said.

"Where on earth did you get that?" exclaimed Raby, in astonishment. "You don't generally have much money."

"I've got some now, anyway," said Leggett, with a sneering smile. "As a matter of fact, I've been collecting some little debts for this special occasion."

Lending money among his Form-fellows was another of Leggett's delightful ways. He would lend a shilling for a week, to receive back fivepence on Saturday. There were always half a dozen fellows owing Leggett money.

"You think your rotten Classics are going to win?" added Leggett.

"We know they are!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Well, then, put your money on it."

"You know we don't bet, you worm!"

Leggett laughed sneeringly.

"Yes, I forgot you were a set of giddy Erics. Never mind—Smythe of the Shell will take me—so will Howard and Tracy, and as many as I like. They're sporting."

"Blessed if I make you out," said Lovell. "Even if you think your Modern cads have a chance, you can't think it's a cert, and you always doing your dirty betting on certs. You must be going off your rocker. Anyway, you're not coming here with your filthy racecourse tricks. Bump him!"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome colored Leggett before he could flee. But Jimmy Silver shouted at once:

"Hold on! Let him go!"

"What rot!" exclaimed Lovell. "Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Hands off the dear boy," said Jimmy Silver. "Let him go sporting—let him go betting—let him rip! He'll lose his money, and it'll be a lesson to him. Let him go, I tell you, or I'll whip you."

"Why, you ass—"

"You fathead, I'll—"

"You cheeky chump!"

Leggett bolted into the house, leaving Jimmy Silver's three chums, arguing wrathfully with Jimmy. Jimmy was grinning serenely.

"Don't jaw, my infants—"

"You silly fathead!" roared Lovell. "Come away with your Uncle Jimmy—come where that worm can't hear us—and I'll whisper in your silly ear," said Silver.

He led his comrades away across the quad. He did not want to risk letting Leggett hear what he had to say, and he knew Leggett's wonderful gift of hearing all sorts of things he was not intended to hear. Under the old beeches they paused.

"Don't you see?" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"No, I don't," growled Lovell, "and I think—"

"Oh, you don't think!" said Jimmy cheerfully. "Can't you see? Don't you tumble? All Rookwood knows that the Classics will beat Knowles's lot—and yet here comes the sportive Leggy offering to lay odds against the Classics? Don't you know that Leggett is the champion spy and eavesdropper and sneak generally? Can't you see he's got on to something?"

"What?"

"He's spotted Knowles, same as we did," chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"He's spied, or listened, or something, and got on to what Knowles has arranged for to-day."

"My hat!"

"And instead of trying to bottle him as—as we've done, Leggy is on to make a good thing out of it. He

thinks Knowles's little game is going to be a success, and so it's safe to book bets against the Classics. See?"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome burst into a roar. It was plain enough now that Jimmy Silver pointed it out. That was the only possible explanation of Leggett's apparently reckless conduct.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Lovell.

"The silly cad! Of course, he don't know we know—he don't suspect that Knowles's little game is going to be knocked sky-high—ha, ha, ha!"

"Let him rip!" said Jimmy Silver. "It will be a lesson to him about betting on dead certs—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And at the idea of the cunning Fourth-Former overreaching himself in that way the Fistical Four yelled with laughter. And they let Leggett rip!

The 4th Chapter. Good Business.

Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, was in his study. The august countenance of the great Adolphus was clouded. He was not contented.

It was, as he told his study-mates, Howard and Tracy, dashed rotten.

Adolphus was a sporting young gentleman, resembling Master Leggett in his tastes, though the lofty dandy of the Shell regarded the former as a rank outsider, and would not have touched him with a pair of tongs.

It was a custom of the great Adolphus to make up a little "book" on the principal events at Rookwood; and as he generally had plenty of money, he sometimes booked quite extensive bets. He was ready and willing to make up a book, as usual, on the trial cricket match, Modern versus Classical. But he found that for once, his sporting proclivities were nipped in the bud.

There were no takers.

Everybody on the Classic side knew that Bulkeley's team would win. Everybody on the Modern side felt pretty sure that they would.

There were some sports, of Smythe's variety, on the Modern side, but Adolphus had sought in vain to get them to back up their team with their money. Perhaps Knowles would have taken him on if Smythe had dared to approach a prefect on the matter, and if the prefect had dared to risk making bets with a junior. But that was out of the question.

Modern fellows declared that the trial match would be by no means a walk-over for Bulkeley's lot. But for reasons best known to themselves they declined to bet on their own men.

It was in vain that the well-lined Adolphus had offered odds of three to one on the Classics. There were simply no takers.

"I call it dashed rotten!" said Adolphus, lighting a cigarette, with a discontented frown. "Seems to be no sporting instinct left in Rookwood, by gad, since they started that measly Modern side in the school. I've offered young Leggett three to one on Bulkeley, and he wasn't on, by Jove!"

"Catch him!" said Howard. "That young cad bets on certs."

"Well, a fellow ought to back up his own team!" said Smythe. "If I was a dashed Modern, I'd put my money on 'em, I would, you know, by gad!"

There was a tap at the door, and Leggett of the Fourth came in. The three Shell fellows stared at him with far from welcoming looks. Unless it was to make a bet they had no use for Leggett, and he had already been tempted in vain.

"Oh, get out, do!" said Smythe. "I'm rather particular who I have in my study, bai Jove. I bar Modern cads. There's the door."

"Why the dickens don't you buy a new necktie, Leggett?" said Tracy. "Blessed if I ever saw such a dingy bouncer as you are, by George!"

"Oh, kick him out!" yawned Smythe.

"Hold on!" said Leggett suavely. "You were offering me bets last night, Smythe—three to one on Bulkeley's team."

"Yaas, and you were afraid to back your men," said Smythe disdainfully. "I've changed my mind," said Leggett.

Smythe's expression changed at once. Quite a cordial smile came over his face. Tracy, who had picked up a cricket-stump to help Leggett out of the study, dropped it behind him very quickly. The nuts of the Shell were all smiles now.

"Goin' to bet, what?" asked Howard.

"I'll take you on," said Leggett. "I've been thinking it over. It's

only patriotic to back up one's own team, isn't it?"

"Quite so," said Smythe heartily. "You're a sport after all, Leggett."

"Besides, I think the Moderns will win," said Leggett.

The Shell fellows suppressed their merriment at the idea. They were quite willing to let Leggett think so, if he was willing to back up his opinion with hard cash.

"Well, there's no game so uncertain as cricket," said Adolphus. "A game isn't lost till it's beaten. A game isn't lost till it's chucked away. You're a real sporting fellow, and no mistake, Leggett."

"Three to one on the Classics?" asked Leggett.

"Yaas!"

"What are you going to put up?"

"Quids, if you like," said Smythe negligently.

"Same here!" chorused Tracy and Howard. "Don't leave us out! Take us all in, Leggett, old man!"

"Money talks!" said Leggett. "I'm ready to put up hard cash, if you fellows do the same. I don't believe in betting on the nod."

"Go easy, though," said Smythe suspiciously. "Let's see the colour of your money, Leggett. You're a jolly bad payer."

"Three quids!" said Leggett, producing his money. "I've been screwing it together to put on this match. There's my tin, if you fellows can cover it."

The young rascals of the Shell looked greedily at the handful of silver with two or three sovereigns glistening in it. Smythe produced three currency notes for a pound each.

"There's my little bit, by gad!" he remarked.

Leggett looked inquiringly at Howard and Tracy. Those two young gentlemen hesitated. They were eager to book bets with Leggett, but they were not rolling in money like Adolphus.

"Among gentlemen—" began Howard.

Leggett laughed.

"Money talks," he said. "I'll put up the stakes if you do, and Selwyn will hold them for us. Selwyn can be depended on."

"Why, you cheeky rotter, do you think we wouldn't pay up?" Leggett shrugged his shoulders.

"Cash or no bet," he said.

"Hold on," said Tracy. "This is too good to be let slide. I'll get some of the fellows in, and we'll whack it out."

"Right-ho!"

Tracy rushed from the study. He came back in five minutes with half a dozen fellows, all excited and eager. Townsend and Topham of the Fourth, and Selwyn and Chesney and a couple of Shell fellows followed him in.

They were all "nuts" of Smythe's secret circle, and they were all looking excited. Like Adolphus, they had hitherto sought in vain for "takers."

Leggett greeted them with a grin.

"All on?" he asked.

"By gad, you can bet we're all on," said Chesney. "Tain't often we get a chance like this. We'll take all the tin you like to offer."

"I've only got three quid, but I'll put it all up," said Leggett. "I want nine pounds to cover it. Smythe's put up three."

"We'll jolly soon make up the rest," said Selwyn.

The nuts of Rookwood almost tumbled over one another to take Leggett's bet. Never had so easy and gorgeous a chance come the way of the "Giddy Goats," as the sporting young rascals styled themselves.

"Selwyn holds the stakes," said Leggett. "He's square."

"If you mean that we're not square—" began Smythe.

"I don't mean anything, only Selwyn holds the stakes."

"That's all right," said Selwyn. "You can trust me, I suppose, Smythe."

"Oh, yaas, absolutely!"

And the Giddy Goats booked the bet with great care, and the cash was handed over to Selwyn for safekeeping. Leggett looked very satisfied.

"If the Classics win, you pay out these chaps, Selwyn," he remarked.

"If the Moderns win I'll call on you after the match, and you hand it over to me."

"That's it," said Selwyn.

Leggett nodded and left the study. The Giddy Goats burst into a joyous chuckle when he was gone.

"It's as easy as pickin' up quids, by gad," said Smythe. "The young ass must be absolutely off his rocker, don't you know?"

"Balm, I should think!" said Selwyn. "If the Moderns win—ha, ha!—I'll hand him the money right enough. If!"

"He's generally so jolly cute," said Tracy thoughtfully. "There can't be anything the matter with the team that he's heard of and we haven't, I suppose."

"Oh, rot!" said Smythe. "It's a dead sure thing for us!"

And the Giddy Goats agreed that it was, and chuckled gleefully over the prospect. Leggett was chuckling, too, as he walked away. He also regarded it as a "dead sure thing."

The 5th Chapter.
Jimmy Silver Chips In.

"Time!" said Jimmy Silver. It wanted a few minutes to half-past one. The Fistical Four came out of the tuckshop, where they had been refreshing themselves with ginger-beer, and sauntered down to the school gates. They had smiling faces. The denouement was at hand.

Jimmy Silver leaned on one of the old stone pillars, and surveyed the road. Never had Jimmy Silver felt quite so satisfied with himself.

"Sister Anno! Sister Anne, do you see a motor-car coming?" chirruped Raby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was a hoot of a motor-horn down the road a few minutes later, and a small grey car came in sight. It dashed up to the gates of Rookwood

and stopped. A very respectable chauffeur stepped down. His face was almost hidden by his motor-goggles. He glanced at the juniors in the gateway, but passed them without speaking, and went up to the porter's lodge. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged ecstatic glances. If they had not known of the plot, they would never have dreamed of recognising Joey Hook, the sporting tout, in that extremely respectable get-up. He looked like a very sedate old family servant.

Old Mack, the porter, looked out of his lodge.

"Is Master Bulkeley about?" asked the chauffeur.

"Yes," said old Mack. "Wot is it?"

"I have a message for him from his uncle. Will you call him at once, please. Tell him his uncle, Mr. Bulkeley at the Elms, has had a sudden attack, and is sinking fast, and I have been sent over to fetch him. There is not a moment to lose."

"Bless my 'eart," said old Mack. The old porter hurried away for Bulkeley. The chauffeur stepped out into the road again, and busied himself with his car, turning it for the return journey. Jimmy Silver & Co. waited patiently.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, his face very pale, came striding down to the gates with old Mack following him. Bulkeley was in his flannels, he had already changed for the match, and he was bareheaded. He had come out with a

rush immediately he received the porter's message.

"What's this?" he exclaimed, as the chauffeur touched his cap. "Mack tells me you've been sent from my uncle's to fetch me?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's serious."

"I gave the porter my message, sir. Mr. Bulkeley is sinking fast, and if any time is lost, you may not see him alive."

"Good heavens!" muttered Bulkeley, his lips trembling. "Poor old Uncle George! I hadn't the faintest idea he was like that! I'm coming, of course."

"What on earth's the matter, Bulkeley?" exclaimed Neville. The Classical cricketers, in a state of great dismay, had followed Bulkeley down to the gates. They had heard old Mack's message.

"I say, I'm sorry," said Bulkeley, his lips twitching. "You'll have to play without me this afternoon, Neville. Do the best you can."

"But—" began Raikes of the Sixth.

"My uncle's dying," said Bulkeley, with a catch in his voice. "I'm sorry to leave you fellows in the lurch like this, but it can't be helped. Lend me a cap, one of you—I've forgotten mine. I sha'n't stay to change."

"What!" yelled all the Classical seniors together.

Knowles's face was a study.

"Make him take off his goggles, and you'll see," panted Jimmy Silver. "I tell you he is Joey Hook, and he's fooling you, and I can prove it."

Bulkeley almost staggered. He could not believe that anyone would play so heartless a trick, but Jimmy Silver's earnest face impressed him in spite of himself. He swung towards the chauffeur.

"Let me see your face, quick! If this is one of your jokes, Silver, I'll flay you."

"If that man isn't Joey Hook, flay me and welcome," said Jimmy Silver. The chauffeur stood motionless. He was taken as much by surprise as Knowles.

"Do you hear me?" roared Bulkeley. "Let me see your face! Hang you, man, what are you wasting time for?"

Without waiting for the man to answer or move, Bulkeley dragged the motor-goggles away with his own hand.

"Joey Hook!" yelled Neville. Bulkeley stared furiously at the pretended chauffeur.

"What does this mean, Hook, you rascal?"

Joey Hook pulled himself together. Knowles had already warned him

"Oh, nonsense!" said Bulkeley. "What can Hook know about our matches, Silver? I suppose you mean well, but you're a little fool. Get aside!"

"He was put up to it!" shouted Jimmy.

"Who by, then?"

"The Moderns."

"You young rascal!" roared Bulkeley. "How dare you say such a thing!"

"Oh, I say—" gasped Jimmy Silver, as the angry captain of Rookwood grasped his collar and shook him furiously. "Bulkeley—I say—"

"The young cad!" exclaimed Knowles curiously. "Bulkeley, you can't believe—"

"Do I look as if I believed it?" panted Bulkeley. "When I get back, I'll lick him within an inch of his life for saying such a caddish thing."

"It's true!" bawled Lovell. "We can prove it."

"We can prove it!" shrieked Raby and Newcome.

They had expected that Bulkeley would be hard to convince, but they had hardly expected this.

"Don't talk rot," said Neville. "As for that young cad—"

"It's true!" howled Lovell desperately. "It's true! We've got proof—proof! Bulkeley, don't be a beast! We can prove it if you listen just a single minute."

Bulkeley gritted his teeth.

"Well, then, you young rascals, I'll give you a single minute," he exclaimed, "and if you don't prove it, I'll report this to the Head, and ask him to flog you!"

"Right-ho!" panted Jimmy Silver, as the Rookwood captain released him. "A minute's enough. Neville, you've got the proof! Give me my letter!"

"Your letter! What—"

"Give it me! No, open it and show it to Bulkeley! It's all written down in that letter."

"What is?" shouted Bulkeley.

"It's written down there that Joey Hook was coming for you to-day in a car, with a lie about your uncle being ill," stammered Jimmy Silver. "Now, if what he says is true, how could I have known it last night?"

"You couldn't, you young imbecile. You—"

"It's in the letter."

"Nonsense! You—"

"Open the letter, Neville, and show him!" shrieked Jimmy in desperation. Neville, amazed, drew the letter from his pocket.

The 6th Chapter.
Proof Positive.

Half Rookwood seemed to be gathered round the gates now. The strange scene had drawn the fellows from all quarters.

Knowles was pale as death. His scheme was crumbling about his ears; but it was not only the failure of his scheme that he dreaded. He dreaded exposure more than that! Yet, how could it be proved? His word was as good as anybody's—better than that of a fag in the Fourth—a fag who was known to be on the best of terms with him. Knowles did not want for nerve. He pulled himself together. But Catesby had already hurried away. He could not face it out.

Neville broke the seal of the letter. In the midst of a deadly silence, he drew the letter out of the envelope. He unfolded it, and handed it to Bulkeley.

The captain of Rookwood read it, with his eyes almost starting from his head. The letter bore the previous day's date, and it ran, in Jimmy Silver's sprawling hand:

"Dear Bulkeley,—Joey Hook will call for you to-morrow in a car, with a whopping cram about your uncle being seedy, to take you away from the match. It's all spoof, your uncle is all right. Don't you be taken in. We heard him jawing it over with another villain. It's a jape.

"Yours affectionately,
"A FRIEND."

Bulkeley read the letter aloud, and every word was heard by everybody present.

Jimmy Silver smoothed his rumpled hair and collar, while Bulkeley read. He did not bear any malice for that rough shaking. It was just like old Bulkeley to refuse to believe harm of anybody, though he might have been a bit more gentle about it, perhaps.

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Neville, when Bulkeley had finished.

"What on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Raikes. "When was that letter given to you, Neville?"

Bulkeley read the letter aloud, and every word was heard by everybody present.

Jimmy Silver smoothed his rumpled hair and collar, while Bulkeley read. He did not bear any malice for that rough shaking. It was just like old Bulkeley to refuse to believe harm of anybody, though he might have been a bit more gentle about it, perhaps.

"My only aunt!" exclaimed Neville, when Bulkeley had finished.

"What on earth does it mean?" exclaimed Raikes. "When was that letter given to you, Neville?"



The car containing Joey Hook whipped down the road, leaving nothing but a cloud of dust and a smell of petrol for the enraged and disappointed Rookwood fellows.

"It's rotten," said Neville, concerned for his friend, and concerned too for the Classical prospects in the trial match. "Of course, you can't think of cricket now. I hope you'll find it's not so bad, old chap. Here's a cap."

"I'm sorry, too," said Knowles. "Keep your pecker up, Bulkeley." The look on Bulkeley's face sent, for a moment, a pang of remorse to the heart of the cad of the Sixth. Knowles would have heard of the illness of any of his uncles with great equanimity; but Bulkeley seemed to be made of different stuff. "Don't be downhearted; you may find him better, old fellow."

"Thank you," said Bulkeley. "I hope so. Do the best you can, Neville. Good-bye!"

"Hold on!"

It was Jimmy Silver's voice as he sprang into Bulkeley's way. The captain of Rookwood, who was springing for the car, almost fell over him.

"Get out of the way, you young idiot."

"Hold on, I say! Bulkeley, listen to me. Your uncle's not ill—"

"What!"

"It's a rotten jape!"

"You young fool, get aside!" roared Bulkeley.

"I tell you it is!" shrieked Jimmy Silver. "I'll prove it! That man isn't a chauffeur; he's Joey Hook, the tout."

what to do in the improbable event of being recognised; Knowles left nothing to chance. The improbable event had happened.

"Wot does wot mean?" said Hook, in his turn. "I come over to fetch you, sir, and if you don't choose to come, that's your look out. Mr. Bulkeley's doctor sent me, because there ain't time for you to get to Shoremouth by train. And I warn you that there ain't a minute to lose, from what the medical gentleman said."

Bulkeley hesitated a moment. It was plausible enough. It was one of Joey Hook's many lines of business to hire out motor-cars, which he often drove himself. It seemed absurd to suppose that he would waste time, trouble, and money in taking the captain of Rookwood on a run of thirty miles for nothing. That Joey Hook knew, or cared, anything about the trial match that afternoon, never even entered Bulkeley's head.

"I must go," he said. "I can't chance it. It must be all right."

"You sha'n't go!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "It's a trick to get you away from the match, so that the Moderns will win."

"You young idiot—" stammered Knowles. "How dare you—" He broke off hurriedly. Jimmy Silver had not accused the Moderns yet, and a too hurried defence would have been a proof of guilt.



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previous
page.

BACKING UP BULKELEY!

"Last night," said Neville.
"Last night!" muttered Bulkeley.
"And you've had it in your pocket ever since, haven't you, Neville?" said Jimmy Silver.
"Ever since," agreed Neville.
"But—but—" stammered Bulkeley.

"If what that rotter says is true about your uncle having a sudden attack, and the doctor sending him over for you, how could I have known it last night?" demanded Jimmy Silver triumphantly.

"You—you couldn't—"
"But I did, you see, because we wrote it down in that letter, and gave it to Neville to mind!"

"I've certainly had this letter in my pocket ever since half-past nine last night," said Neville. "There's no doubt at all about that. Silver knew last night that Joey Hook was coming here in a car for you to-day, Bulkeley. He must have!"

"And we knew it, too," said Lovell. "We all wrote that letter together, in the end study last night."

"It was a trick to get Bulkeley away from the match," said Raby, taking up the tale. "We heard them talking it over in the old barn!"

Knowles's teeth came together with a click. He understood now.

"Hook was paid to do this," chimed in Newcome. "He had a pound down for the car, and he was going to have another quid afterwards."

"I—I—I suppose the yarn can't be true, if these young beggars knew this last night," stammered Bulkeley at last. "Hook's message is that my uncle had a sudden attack, and the doctor sent him here. If it's true, he couldn't have known it himself last night, let alone these kids. It's a trick!"

"Collar the cad, and make him explain—" began somebody.

"Stop him!" yelled Jimmy Silver, as the car buzzed. "He's muzzling!"

There was a rush towards the car, but it was too late.

Joey Hook was in the driving-seat, and he had started the engine the instant Bulkeley had read out that letter. Hook understood that the game was up, and he did not intend to remain to be handled by Bulkeley. The car whipped away down the road, leaving nothing but a cloud of dust and a smell of petrol for the enraged and disappointed Rookwood fellows.

Two or three of them broke into a run in pursuit, but it was in vain. The car vanished round a bend in the lane, and Joey Hook was gone. Knowles was left to get out of the scrape the best way he could.

If the astonished Bulkeley had needed any further proof, the flight of Joey Hook would have furnished it.

The captain of Rookwood stood dumbfounded.

It was evidently a heartless trick that had been played upon him. No message had come from his uncle; his uncle was not ill. That was clear enough now. It was equally clear that only Jimmy Silver had saved him from being taken away on a fool's errand, and leaving his team to be beaten in his absence.

"It's plain enough," said Raikes. "We'll jolly well go into this."

"Yes, rather," said Neville. "Silver says it was a Modern chap fixed it up with Hook. Who was it, Silver?"

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Knowles furiously. "And I tell you plainly, Bulkeley, if that young cad dares to accuse anybody on my side, I'll take the matter to the Head!"

"Hold on, Silver!" said Bulkeley quickly. "You can come into my study and tell me, and I'll see whether there's anything in it!"

"But, I say—" began Neville.

"Leave it to me," said Bulkeley.

"Come, Silver—and you other fags, too!"

The Fistical Four followed Bulkeley to the School House. They were not feeling very pleased. They had backed up old Bulkeley, and dished Knowles, and the Classics were going to win the trial match. That was all to the good. But the triumphant exposure of Knowles's villainy did not look so assured.

The 6th Chapter. The Reward!

Bulkeley marched the Fistical Four into his study, and closed the door.

Bulkeley's rugged face was very grim in its expression, and Jimmy Silver & Co. felt uneasy. Bulkeley had cut up rusty before they proved their statements, and they had forgiven him for that. They really liked him all the better for his faith in others, which made him so slow to believe evil; but surely he wasn't going to cut up rusty now? That would be a little too thick.

"Now tell me about it," said Bulkeley. "You, Silver! Don't all jaw at once. You say a Modern fellow put Hook up to playing this trick on me?"

"Yes. It was—"
"Don't tell me his name."
"Oh, all right!"

"If it's true, I don't want to know his name."
Jimmy Silver trembled with indignation.

"If it's true!" he gasped. "You—you don't believe me! You—you think I'm telling crams! I won't say a word, then! You can lick me if you like! I think—"

"I hope you've made a mistake, Silver," said Bulkeley quietly. "I can't doubt your word after the proof you've given me. I admit that if you'd come with this story to me before Hook got here with the car, I shouldn't have believed a word of it—couldn't! It's too utterly rotten to believe it of any fellow! Where did you hear this man Hook getting his instructions?"

"In the old barn yesterday."
"What were you doing there, out of bounds?"

"It's because it was out of bounds. We spotted—ahem!—if I'm not to mention his name, I won't—we spotted a certain party coming—a party who had no right to report us out of bounds because he's only a rotten Modern prefect; but he would have done it, all the same, so we took cover in the loft. Then they—there were two of them—came in, and then Hook. We couldn't help seeing them, and hearing what they said. We didn't dare show ourselves. And what they said was what I put in that letter I gave to Neville."

"You saw them, as well as heard them?"

"Yes."

"You're sure you couldn't have been mistaken?"

"How could I, when I saw them—we all saw them?"

Bulkeley looked deeply worried.

"I'm going to ask you to keep this dark," he said.

"Oughtn't they to be shown up?" demanded Lovell hotly.

"Perhaps they ought," said Bulkeley. "But it's a frightful disgrace for Rookwood. If it came out they would be expelled, and—and think of the disgrace to the school! We don't want the good name of Rookwood dragged in the mud!"

"Well, no; but—"

"And the bitterness it would cause between the two sides," added Bulkeley; "it might take years to heal."

"Well, those rotten Moderns ought to be put down!" said Lovell.

"Yes, rather!" chorused the Co.

"You must see that, Bulkeley. Put the cheeky cads in their place, you know!"

Bulkeley smiled faintly. It was not much use trying to get the fags to look at that matter as he looked at it.

"There's another point," he said. "You've got no proof. A fellow who is villain enough to do a thing like this is villain enough to deny it. Suppose he—or they—denied it point-blank. Your word against theirs; and they could warn Hook that if he was sent for, he was to deny all knowledge of them!"

The Fistical Four were silent. They realised that they were not out of the wood yet.

The proofs they had produced were indeed conclusive against Joey Hook, and had baffled the rascally plot. But they were as far as ever from possessing any kind of proof against Joey Hook's employer. They realised that.

"But what I'm thinking of chiefly is the disgrace to the school," said Bulkeley. "Least said soonest mended. Now, I don't want to order you like a prefect—I ask you to do as I wish. Let the matter drop!"

"I suppose we shall have to," said Jimmy Silver. "That's why we didn't come to you last night because we'd got no proof against the rotter. That's why we fixed up that letter with Neville, because you wouldn't believe a word of it till Joey Hook came with the car. You'd have told K—ahem!—told the chap we accused, and he'd have warned Hook to keep away, and we should have been dished and held up as liars."

"I understand," said Bulkeley. "You've proved it against Hook, but you can't prove it against the other chap. If the tale's told, all the Classics will believe you, and all the Moderns will say it's a falsehood, and it can't lead to anything but rows and bad blood."

"I—I suppose so."
"But will the Moderns let it drop?" said Lovell. "They're awfully wild about it."

"They may demand inquiry," grinned Raby. "If they do, they'll get it."

"They will follow Knowles's lead in that matter," said Bulkeley.

"Oh, Knowles won't demand an inquiry," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Knowles will be glad to let it drop. That—that certain party whose name I mustn't mention is a very close friend of Knowles—very close."

"That's enough," said Bulkeley, as the four juniors chuckled. "You're talking too much, Silver. If Knowles is satisfied, the Moderns will let the matter drop, and the sooner the better. You fellows say nothing."

"All right, Bulkeley," said Lovell. "All right, if you don't believe us," said Jimmy Silver. "But if you don't say plainly that you believe every word we've said, Bulkeley, we're going to have the thing right out. We're not going to have our word doubted."

"Hear, hear!" said the Co. "I do believe you, every word," said Bulkeley. "I wish I didn't! Now, least said soonest mended; we don't want recriminations and accusations that can't be proved, and a Rookwood prefect lying himself black in the face to get out of the scrape, and all that."

"Mum's the word!" agreed the juniors. Bulkeley opened the study door.

"I rely on that!" he said. "You can clear!"

The Fistical Four cleared. They were only half satisfied.

"Bulkeley don't seem so jolly grateful," grumbled Lovell. "Of course, he's a bit cut up to find a Rookwood fellow such a cad. But it's only a Modern, and they're cads any way."

"Never mind; we'll give him his head," said Jimmy Silver generously. "After all, it would make Tommy Dodd rather sick, and he's a decent chap, for a Modern, you know."

The Classical Four had agreed that mum was the word. But there were difficulties. The moment they came out into the quadrangle, they were surrounded by an army of Classics, all demanding information.

"Who was it, Silver?"

"What Modern cad was trying to noble old Bulkeley?"

"Tell us all about it."

"Why don't you speak, you ass?" Jimmy Silver looked helplessly at his chums. It wasn't easy to refuse information to the Classics; but their promise was given to Bulkeley now.

"Why don't you tell us?" bawled Smythe of the Shell.

"It's in Bulkeley's hands now," said Jimmy Silver at last. "He's rather waxy about my saying so much already. We've left it entirely in his hands."

"But you can tell us!" shouted Jones minor.

"Bulkeley's told us not to jaw."

"My sainted aunt!" said Town-

send. "He's going to screen the Modern cad who did it! That's just like Bulkeley! He's an ass! But we won't have it! You'll just tell us about it, Jimmy Silver, or we'll scrag you!"

"Get it off your chest, you cheeky young villain."

"Now then, out with it!"

"Look here—" said Silver.

"Bump him! Scrag the cheeky rotter if he won't tell!"

"Hands off, you duffers! Oh, my hat! Oh, crickey! Yow!"

The exasperated Classics, their thirst for information unslaked, swarmed over the Fistical Four, and bumped them down in the quad. They left them in a breathless condition. Even then they would probably not have left them, but somebody shouted that the places were filling for the match, and the Modern cads were bagging all the front places. The Classical crowd rushed off to the cricket-field, and the Fistical Four sat up, and blinked at one another and gasped.

"Oh, my word!" groaned Silver. "Oh, crumbs! This is what we get for backing up old Bulkeley, and saving the match for our side, and frustrating Knowles's knavish tricks. Blessed if I'll bother about his knavish tricks any more. Oh, my hat!"

And the Co. groaned assent.

The 7th Chapter. Well Won!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather late on Big Side for the match. They found the Rookwood fellows swarming round the field of play, and there was no room for them anywhere near the pavilion. The match had already started, and Bulkeley and Neville had opened for the Classics, and the Moderns were in the field, Knowles bowling the first over.

Knowles was not looking quite so fit as usual.

His scheme had been shattered like a house of cards—the certain win he had been counting on was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream, and he felt that Bulkeley knew, or, at least, suspected his treachery. Bulkeley had spoken a few words to him before the match. The Rookwood captain said simply that he had told the four juniors to hold their tongues, and that the matter had better be allowed to drop, for everybody's sake.

Knowles, only too glad to let it drop, had assented at once—greatly relieved in his mind, but feeling that his ready assent was as good as an admission that he was concerned in the plot with Joey Hook. However, that could not be helped. He had been prepared to pile up a mountain of falsehoods in self-defence, but he was immensely relieved not to have to do it. Lies come home to roost sometimes, and he might make a slip—he knew that! Bulkeley's view of the matter lifted a weight from his mind.

But he did not feel quite himself. Bulkeley, saved from that fool's errand to Shoremouth, was playing in the Classical team. On its merits, the Modern team could not win. The great object Knowles had had before him was slipping from his grasp. He was down-hearted, dismayed, irritable, uneasy—in anything but a mood to put up a good game.

That was soon evident from his bowling. He was the best bowler at Rookwood; but now that he needed all his skill, he was bowling like a fag. The wretched schemer was completely off his form.

Loud cheers from the Classic crowd greeted Bulkeley's mighty hitting. The captain of Rookwood was piling up runs. The score was at fifty before a single Classic wicket fell.

The Moderns, with the exception of Knowles and Catesby, played hard. There were some good catches in the field, and Frampton did some good bowling. But Catesby was like a limp rag, and Knowles was off-colour. The Classic first innings was a tremendous success.

"Only to think," said Jimmy Silver, "that if we hadn't spotted the little game, the Classics would have been licked, and the first eleven would have been fairly in the hands of those Modern cads! Only think of it! Gentlemen and chaps, we've saved old Rookwood from going to the giddy bow-wows! Here's to us, and may our shadow never grow less! We are it—absolutely it!"

And the Co. agreed heartily that, beyond the shadow of a doubt, they were IT!

THE END.

for the Spring Handicap, and Blue Bird for the Swindleum Stakes. For once the trickster of the Fourth had burned his fingers badly in his little speculations, and Jimmy Silver & Co. charitably hoped that it would be a lesson to him.

When the last Classic wicket went down for a total of 110, the Classics roared. Smythe gave Leggett a dig in the ribs.

"Feeling chippy—what!" chortled Smythe.

Leggett groaned.

"Now watch the Modern duffers playing the giddy ox!" said Jimmy Silver, as Knowles and Frampton came in to open the innings. "Knowles looks a bit off colour, don't he? I wonder if Knowles can have anything on his mind, you chaps?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Co. "A little bird may have whispered to him that old Bulkeley would be missing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And old Bulkeley's here as large as life. Hard cheese for poor old Knowles! These Modern cads are always getting left!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Modern innings made their supporters groan; they were all down for forty. The Moderns followed their innings, and the Classical crowd chortled. It looked as if the Classic team would win with an innings to spare. Jimmy Silver turned a beaming face on his chums when the Moderns began to bat a second time.

"If Knowles wins this match, he's going to have six men in the School team, my infants! Do you think Knowles is likely to get his six men in?"

And Lovell and Raby and Newcome almost howled with glee. They were not so very sorry now that Knowles had been let off. He was getting it fairly "in the neck" now; there was no mistake about that!

Wicket after wicket went down, and it soon became clear to the most obstinate and enthusiastic Modern that the second innings would not pull the team level with their opponents. Last man in was greeted with a chuckle of derision from the Classic juniors.

He did not stay in long. The last batsmen did their best to force the Classics to bat again, at least, but they could not do it. Fifty-five was the score for the second innings when the last wicket fell to Neville's bowling.

"Total for two innings, ninety-five!" gurgled Jimmy Silver. "Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, the Modern mugs are licked by an innings and fifteen runs! Where will Knowles get those six places from—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the field rang with Classical cheering.

Knowles strode away from the field of his defeat, his brow black, his teeth set, his eyes glinting green. The way of the transgressor is hard, and Knowles was finding it so.

Leggett shared his feelings to the full. The wretched "sport" of the Fourth thought of his three sovereigns, and fairly wept.

But Adolphus Smythe and the Giddy Goats were in high feather. They claimed their winnings from Selwyn, who handed them out in the study; and there was a great celebration among the Giddy Goats that evening, to which they did not even ask Leggett. Leggett, in his own study on the Modern side, was bemoaning his loss.

In the end study the Fistical Four went carefully through all their pockets in search for forgotten sixpences and coppers, and pooled the result, and paid a visit to the tuck-shop. They felt that that great occasion had to be celebrated. It did not often fall to fellows in the Fourth Form to save a first eleven match—especially a trial match, upon which so much depended!

"Only to think," said Jimmy Silver, "that if we hadn't spotted the little game, the Classics would have been licked, and the first eleven would have been fairly in the hands of those Modern cads! Only think of it! Gentlemen and chaps, we've saved old Rookwood from going to the giddy bow-wows! Here's to us, and may our shadow never grow less! We are it—absolutely it!"

And the Co. agreed heartily that, beyond the shadow of a doubt, they were IT!

THE END.

(Jimmy Silver's Fix is the title of next Monday's long complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. Don't miss it!)

Will you do Your Editor a good turn by asking a non-reader of THE BOYS' FRIEND to read Owen Conquest's magnificent school story—

"Backing Up Bulkeley!"