

"CRUSOE ISLAND!" MAURICE EVERARD'S GREAT NEW SERIES!

The BOYS' FRIEND 1d

OUR MOTTO IS: "PLAY THE GAME!"

No. 839, Vol. XVII, New Series.]

ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending July 7th, 1917.]



Dear Jimmy
I've got bad news for you. I've been turned out of my regiment
on a charge of cowardice in the field. Your miserable Cousin,
Bob.

"I just happened to see that on it," said Tubby hastily. "Silver's rather a beast. He kicked me for reading a postcard once. You needn't mention it to him, Lattrey. We're study-mates, ain't we?"

"Yes, worse luck!" said Lattrey. Tubby Muffin gave him an indignant glare. Tubby regarded it as an honour for any fellow to be his study-mate.

"Well, you needn't grumble," he said. "There isn't a fellow in the Fourth would have you in his study if he could help it."

"Shut up!" growled Lattrey. "You jolly well know it's true," said Tubby. "You ain't liked, Lattrey. You're too full of rotten tricks."

Lattrey scowled. "Lovell says you're the biggest cad that ever came to Rookwood," pursued Tubby Muffin victoriously. "I heard Rawson say he wouldn't touch you with a barge-pole. Conroy says—"

"Will you shut up, you fat fool?" "Conroy says you're a black-guard," grinned Tubby; "and as for Jimmy Silver, he gave you that nose you've got now, for getting Flynn to play cards with you!"

Lattrey rubbed his nose. It was very red. "You can be jolly glad I let you into my study," said Tubby. "I ain't proud of it, I can tell you. You're a rotter, Lattrey. Everybody says so. Jimmy Silver can't stand you, and I— Yarooooh!"

The fat Classical's agreeable remarks were suddenly cut short. Lattrey brought his boot into the conversation, and Tubby gave a yell as he staggered away.

"Yah!" roared Tubby. "You rotter! Oh, crumbs!"

He fairly fled, as Lattrey repeated the application of the boot. The fat Classical disappeared round the nearest corner, and the new junior turned to the letter-rack again, with a savage scowl upon his face.

Tubby Muffin's words had gone home, for Lattrey was well aware of the estimation in which he was held by the Rookwood Fourth.

He had been little more than a week at Rookwood, but that had been ample time for the Rookwood juniors to learn what he was like.

Mornington & Co., the "Giddy Goats" of the Fourth, associated with him, but in rather a lofty and patronising way. Jimmy Silver and his friends gave him a wide berth.

And Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, had bestowed two lickings upon him already—once for making Tubby Muffin smoke a cigarette, and once for inveigling Flynn of the Fourth into a game of cards.

Lattrey's blackguardism was his own business, perhaps; but as head of the Form, Jimmy considered it was his duty to keep the rascal of Rookwood from spreading his vicious tastes, so far as possible.

He had earned Lattrey's hatred; but but that did not disturb Jimmy's serenity in the slightest degree.

The new junior looked over the rack, and picked out the postcard addressed to Jimmy Silver, which Tubby Muffin had already read. Tubby was not very scrupulous upon such points.

Neither evidently was Lattrey, for he turned the card over, and read the few pencilled lines on the back.

It was a hasty message scrawled in pencil, by Jimmy Silver's cousin at the Front—Lieutenant Silver of the West Yorks.

It ran: "Dear Jimmy,—Good news! I've got my leave at last, I think, and may see you when I get my few days in Blighty.—Bob."

Lattrey looked at the pencilled (Continued on the next page.)

His Cousin in Disgrace! Terrible News for Jimmy Silver!

THE SHADOW OF SHAME!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

From the Front!

Tubby Muffin was regarding the letter-rack with disconsolate eyes when Lattrey, the new boy at Rookwood, came along.

Tubby had been looking for a letter for himself. He did not expect a letter, as a matter of fact. But he had nourished a hope that an unexpected remittance might have arrived.

But it hadn't! Hence the fat Classical's disconsolate expression.

He blinked at Lattrey as the new junior stopped before the rack. "Nothing for you, Lattrey!" he said.

"How do you know, Fatty?" "I've looked 'em all over, of course," said Tubby. "I thought there might be something for me. I'm short of money."

"A new experience for you?" asked Lattrey sarcastically. "It's rotten," said Tubby, unheed-

ing the question. "Blessed food regulations, and grub already at famine prices. A chap's people ought to send him something extra in war-time, you know. But my pater says he may have to cut down my allowance! Think of that!"

Tubby snorted. Cutting down his allowance, just when he needed extra remittances, was an enormity in Tubby's eyes. Tubby's idea was that peace couldn't come too soon, if this kind of thing was going on.

"You needn't look 'em over,

Lattrey," he went on. "There's nothing for you. There's a letter for Lovell, and one for Mornington, and a card for Smythe of the Shell, and a letter for Rawson, and a postcard for Jimmy Silver, from the Front!"

"Oh, dry up!" "Jimmy Silver's cousin's written to him," rattled on Tubby. "He's expecting his leave soon. I wonder if he'll come to Rookwood?"

"Jimmy Silver would like you reading his correspondence, I suppose?" said Lattrey.

what was on it, I mean—he would have shown some sign of it. He would have been simply bursting with it."

Jimmy looked more hopeful. "That's so," he assented. "Tubby may have been telling the truth. But—but other fellows—"

"There's not many fellows here who'd read another chap's correspondence, Jimmy."

"There are some, though, Leggett—"

"Leggett's a Modern chap, and he wouldn't be nosing among the letters on this side," said Newcome.

"Look here," said Lovell. "We'll soon see. You stay here a bit, Jimmy, and I'll scout round and see whether anything's known. If there's any talk among the fellows, I shall spot it at once."

Jimmy Silver nodded. "Right—ho, old chap!"

Arthur Edward Lovell left the end study on his mission. He had his own doubts, but he would have been glad to take back to Jimmy Silver the information that nothing was known in the school of the terrible message on the postcard.

Oswald and Rawson were in the passage, and they left off talking as Lovell came by.

Lovell could not help noticing the constraint in their manner, and his heart sank.

Oswald coloured, and Rawson made a movement to go into his study; but he turned back, and came up to Lovell.

"I've got something to say to you," he said. "You'd better tell Jimmy Silver. Some measly cad has started a yarn about his cousin."

"About—about his cousin?" faltered Lovell.

His hopes that the story was not known were dashed now.

"Yes; it's going round the school," said Tom Rawson. "It's a blackguardly lie, and Jimmy ought to inquire who started it, and hammer him. It's a yarn that Bob Silver's run away from the Germans!"

"Oh!"

"We know it's a lie," said Dick Oswald. "I don't know who could have started it. But the place seems buzzing with it. Might be Morny; but even Morny isn't mean enough to do a thing like that."

"Some sneaking cad!" said Rawson. "Will you tell Jimmy, Lovell? He ought to be told, so that he can scotch it at once."

Before Lovell could reply, Conroy, the Australian, came striding along the passage, with an angry brow. He was heading for the end study; but he stopped as he saw Lovell.

"Jimmy Silver indoors?" he asked. "Yes," muttered Lovell. "Have you heard—"

"I've got something to tell him," said Conroy.

He strode on to the end study, and Lovell followed him. Jimmy Silver looked up hopefully as his chum came in, but his hopeful expression died away as he caught sight of Lovell's face.

"Jimmy!" exclaimed Conroy, plunging into the subject at once. "You've had a card from your cousin at the Front this afternoon."

"Yes," muttered Jimmy.

"There's an infamous yarn spreading about him. I've come to tell you, so that you can deal with it. If you want any help in finding out who started it, I'm your man."

Jimmy was silent. He understood the generous motives of the Cornstalk in coming to put him on his guard about the supposed slander. Conroy never dreamed for a moment that it was not a slander.

"They're saying that your cousin showed the white feather," said Conroy. "If you'll let me advise you, Jimmy, you'll show that postcard in public, to knock the yarn on the head at the start, and then find out who started the lie, and hammer him black and blue."

There was an uncomfortable silence in the end study.

Conroy looked round, not understanding.

"Doesn't that strike you as a good idea?" he asked. "Of course, you might think it beneath you to take notice of such a yarn, Jimmy; but there's your cousin's good name to be considered. And you can't think of letting off the rotter who invented the story."

Still Jimmy Silver was silent. Conroy's face changed a little as he looked at him. The dumb misery in Jimmy's face could not fail to enlighten him.

"Jimmy!" he muttered, in a startled tone.

"Jimmy can't show the card, as it happens," said Lovell, in a halting voice. "There are—there are reasons why he can't, Conroy."

"Oh!"

"But—but we'd like to know who nosed it out in the letter-rack," said Raby savagely.

Conroy looked fixedly at Jimmy Silver; but the captain of the Fourth did not speak. With a clouded brow, the Australian junior quitted the study. There was nothing for him to say.

Jimmy Silver's face dropped into his hands.

The 5th Chapter. Under the Shadow!

Silence fell in the junior Common-room at Rookwood when Jimmy Silver entered it that evening.

Jimmy had remained a long time in his study.

Knowing now that his cousin's disgrace was known to all Rookwood, the captain of the Fourth had shrunk from showing himself in public.

But his pride came to his rescue at last.

He would not hide away from the eyes of his schoolfellows; and, after all, he had to meet them sooner or later.

And at last Jimmy Silver came down, with a pale, set face, and joined his friends in the Common-room.

The silence was general at once; and Jimmy realised bitterly that the chief topic in the room had been Cousin Bob and his disgrace.

said Mornington. "I'm speakin' as a friend. You can't have failed to hear what's bein' said about your cousin. No decent chap believes a word of it. Why don't you knock it on the head?"

Jimmy was silent.

"You had a postcard from him this afternoon, and the yarn is that he told you, on that postcard, that he's found guilty of funk," said Mornington. "Well, there can't be anythin' private on a card, so why not stick it up on the wall for all the fellows to see?"

Jimmy crimsoned. "That would settle the rotten yarn, you know," urged Mornington. All eyes were upon Jimmy Silver.

Every ear was bent to hear his reply. If he did not adopt Mornington's suggestion, there was only one conclusion the fellows could come to. And Jimmy was silent.

There was an unpleasant cackle from Smythe of the Shell. "Silver daren't show the card!" he said.

"Shut up, you cad!" muttered Erroll.

Adolphus Smythe sneered. "If the yarn's a lie, why can't he deny it?" he said.

"I don't choose to talk about it," said Jimmy Silver, with an effort, speaking at last. "Thank you for your advice, Morny; but I don't intend to take it. That's all!"

"By gad!" muttered Mornington. Jimmy expected to see a sneer upon

Higgs of the Fourth. "Where's Tubby Muffin?"

"It wasn't Muffin this time," said Jimmy Silver. "I feel pretty sure of that. He told me he hadn't read my card, anyway, this afternoon. I should like to know who it was, though."

"Easy enough to nose him out," said Mornington. "Who first knew the yarn? That's the chap!"

"Echo answers who!" said Townsend. "The whole school knew it this afternoon. You needn't glare at me, Lovell. I never heard of it till Lattrey mentioned it."

"Lattrey!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Just the kind of cad who'd read a fellow's correspondence and talk about it!" exclaimed Lovell.

"Was it you, Lattrey?"

Lattrey sneered. "I knew nothing about it till I heard it mentioned," he said. "I don't bother my head about other fellow's postcards."

Jimmy gave the cad of the Fourth a very keen look. Lattrey was the fellow he distrusted most. They had been on the worst of terms since Lattrey had come to Rookwood.

"It was Lattrey mentioned it to me," said Mornington. "You remember, Lattrey. Erroll punched your nose at the time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Who told you, Lattrey?" asked

started a yarn about what was written on it."

"I did not!" muttered Lattrey. Jimmy's lip curled.

"If you haven't the courage to own up, you can go and eat coke!" he said. "If you own up to it, I'll hammer you!"

"Too rotten funky!" growled Lovell.

"Well, you chaps in the end study ought to know about funk!" sneered Lattrey. "One of you has funks in the family."

And with that Lattrey walked out of the Common-room. Lovell made a furious movement to stride after him, but Jimmy Silver stopped him. He was pretty certain that he owed it all to the new junior, but without absolute proof he did not want the "hammering" to ensue.

Jimmy Silver did not remain long in the Common-room. Sympathy was almost as hard to endure as sneers under the miserable circumstances.

As he went to the stairs, Tubby Muffin joined him. There was a very odd expression on Tubby's fat face.

"I—I say, Silver—" he stammered.

Jimmy paused. "Well, Tubby?"

"About—about that postcard!"

"It's all right," said Jimmy kindly. "I believe you, Tubby. It wasn't you that read it. It was Lattrey, right enough!"

"I—I don't mean that. But—but about what was written on it—" stammered Tubby. "I—I've heard what the fellows say, and—and it's extraordinary."

Jimmy glanced at him. Tubby was red and confused.

"About your cousin," mumbled Tubby. "It—it isn't true, you know—it's all rot! I can't understand it, Jimmy!"

"All serene, Tubby," said Jimmy, smiling a little. He supposed that this was a clumsy attempt at expressing sympathy.

"But—but it beats me, Jimmy," stammered Tubby Muffin. "For how could that be on the card, you know?"

"My cousin wrote it to me," said Jimmy.

"He—he couldn't have—"

"I—I say, Jimmy, let me see the card, will you?" asked Tubby. Jimmy frowned.

"Don't be an inquisitive little beast, Tubby!" he said. And he went upstairs, leaving Tubby Muffin staring after him blankly.

The 6th Chapter.

The Mystery of Tubby Muffin.

The next day, Jimmy Silver was in a very subdued mood.

The affair of his cousin Bob was hardly mentioned.

Most of the fellows felt for Jimmy in this sore trial, and would not for worlds have added to the bitterness of the blow.

And ill-natured fellows who would have liked to utter taunts, forbore to do so, for Jimmy's chums were ready to "mop up" Rookwood with them at the first syllable.

Lattrey ventured to wear a white feather in his coat, as a hint to the Fistical Four, apparently thinking that they could not very well intervene, if he chose to wear a white feather.

But Lattrey was mistaken.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome spotted it in the passage, and they hurled themselves upon Lattrey, and bumped him up and down the passage till he roared for mercy.

Lattrey did not bring any white feathers into prominence after that.

Jimmy's chums were prepared to take the law into their own hands at the slightest hint of a taunt to their leader, and Lattrey and his friends decided that it was not good enough.

One fellow who seemed to be giving the matter a great deal of thought was Tubby Muffin. The fat Classical seemed, in fact, quite distressed about it. After morning lessons he approached the Fistical Four on the subject.

"About that postcard, Jimmy—" he began.

He proceeded no further.

Lovell grasped him, and sat him down in the quadrangle, and the chums of the Fourth walked away and left him there.

Tubby sat and gasped.

"Groogh! Yow-ow! Oh!"

"Hallo! Taking a rest?" asked Lattrey, stopping as he passed to look at the fat junior, with a grin.

"Yow-ow! I've been bumped over!" gasped Tubby indignantly. "Those rotters, you know— Yow-ow."

"Bullying you—what?" asked Lattrey.

"Well, I suppose they misunder-



The microscope was laid on the card, and then it was easy to see faint traces of the writing that had been rubbed out before the second inscription had been written in its place.

It was natural enough. Jimmy Silver filled a prominent place in the public eye, in the little world of the Lower School. Everybody had heard of his cousin at the Front; some had seen him. The mere rumour that Jimmy's cousin had been "broke" for cowardice was enough to make the Fourth Form buzz with excitement. Nobody believed it—till it was seen that no denial was forthcoming from Jimmy Silver, and that he made no effort to track out the supposed slanderer who had started the story. Then the fellows did not know what to think. And most of those who were in opposition to the Fistical Four gave it their belief, and Jimmy's own friends did not know what to say.

Mornington, to do him justice, pooh-poohed the story from the start. With all his faults, the black sheep of Rookwood had none of the little meanness of a nature like Lattrey's. Many of the juniors expected Jimmy's old rival to make capital out of the story; and they were disappointed. But Morny, though he announced his disbelief in the story, was staggered by Jimmy's silence. He came over to Jimmy in the Common-room.

Jimmy's eyes glittered as he approached.

He fully expected a taunt from his old enemy; and Jimmy was not in a mood to endure it.

But Mornington's manner, to his surprise, was quite friendly.

"Just a word with you, Silver,"

the face of the dandy of the Fourth; but it did not come. Morny, evidently at a loss for words, turned away. But he looked only surprised and concerned.

"It's true, then?" said Smythe. "It's no business of yours, anyway!" growled Rawson. "Hold your silly tongue!"

"Buck up, Jimmy!" said Van Ryn. "Even if it's true, nobody here will think any the worse of you for it. And very likely there's some mistake."

"That's what I think," said Jimmy Silver, with a grateful glance at the South African junior. "It was on the card, but—but I hope there's some mistake, and it will be set right. Because—because it's impossible, you know!"

Smythe and his friends grinned, but most of the juniors were sympathetic.

There were very few like Lattrey and Adolphus Smythe, inclined to make capital out of the wretched story.

"Well, Silver owns up that it's true!" sneered Smythe.

"I said it was on the postcard," said Jimmy Silver. "But nobody had a right to know what was on that card excepting myself. Some sneaking cad read it and spread the yarn. I should like to know his name. Unless he's a coward as well as a sneak, he will own up, and put up his hands to me."

"Chance for Tubby," grinned

Jimmy Silver, with a dangerous gleam in his eyes.

"I forget."

"Can't you remember?"

"I heard some fellow mention it," said Lattrey carelessly. "Blessed if I remember his name!"

"That's a bit too thick," said Lovell. "You could remember easily enough if a fellow told you. Morny and Torny remember who told them. Nobody told you, you cad—you read the postcard!"

"I've never even seen the postcard," said Lattrey coolly. "I heard it from some chap who was talking over it with another chap. Might have been Oswald."

"I heard it from Rawson," said Oswald.

"And I from Jones minor," said Rawson.

"And Flynn told me," said Jones minor.

"Thru for you, and sure I had it from Lattrey," said Flynn.

"Lattrey again!" said Jimmy Silver. "It comes back to Lattrey every time!"

"It might have been Conroy I heard speaking of it," said Lattrey, breathing a little hard.

"I never spoke of it to a soul, excepting Jimmy Silver!" said the Cornstalk directly. "I heard it from Higgs, who told me he'd had it from you, Lattrey."

"Again, Lattrey!" Jimmy Silver set his teeth. "It's clear enough! you read my postcard, Lattrey, and



THE SHADOW OF SHAME!

(Continued from the previous page.)

stood," said Tubby, gaining his feet. "I wasn't going to say anything rotten about Silver's cousin. I wouldn't! I was only going to ask to see that blessed postcard! I can't understand it, you know!"

Lattrey started a little, and his eyes narrowed as they fastened upon Tubby's fat face. "What do you mean?" he asked quietly.

"About what was on the postcard," said Tubby. "Silver must be off his rocker, you know! There was nothing of the sort on the card!"

"How do you know?" "Of course, I didn't read it," said Tubby hastily. "I wouldn't, you know!"

"Then you can't know what was on it." "Nunno; of course not!" "You'd better not tell Silver you read his card, anyway," said Lattrey. "He would put the yarn down to you then."

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tubby, in dismay. "I suppose you looked at the card and read it wrong," said Lattrey, eyeing Tubby with rat-like eyes. "Silver must know what was written on it, as he's got it."

"Yes. But—but it's extraordinary." "One thing's jolly certain—you'd better keep mum about it. If you own up to having looked at it you'll be held to have started the yarn in the Fourth about Silver's cousin. That means a ragging."

"I—I shall keep mum, of course," said Tubby. "But I don't understand it, all the same. It beats me." "Forget all about it," advised Lattrey, and he walked away whistling, but with a shade of anxiety upon his sharp face.

Tubby rolled away disconsolately. Jimmy Silver's postcard from the Front was evidently weighing upon Tubby's fat mind.

Lattrey's advice seemed good to the fat Classical, and he tried to take it. But, in spite of himself, the subject would not be dismissed from his thoughts. After lessons that day he rolled into No. 3 study in the Fourth, where the Colonial Co. were having tea. Van Ryn picked up a cricket-stump at once.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Dutchy!" said Tubby Muffin. "I haven't come to tea. It's about Jimmy Silver—"

"What about Jimmy?" asked Pons. "About that postcard!" said Tubby distressfully. "I—I don't believe it, you know. Jimmy Silver's gone potty!"

"What!" exclaimed the three Colonials together. "I can't understand it, you know!" stammered Tubby. "I've been thinking it over, and it beats me. It's all rot, you know!"

"You can't know anything about it," said Conroy. "Nunno, of course not. I—I wouldn't read a chap's postcard!" groaned Tubby Muffin. "Jimmy will be ratty if I tell him I read it, won't he?"

"Very likely, you fat boulder! I hope he'll kick you along the passage!" said the Cornstalk. "Well, a chap can't be expected to

The 7th Chapter. Light at Last!

Jimmy Silver looked up from his work with a clouded brow as Erroll came in with Tubby. Jimmy's cheery face seemed to have become years older in two days.

"Hallo!" said Lovell, rather gruffly. Visitors were not very welcome in the end study just then. "Tubby's got something to tell you, Silver!" said Erroll quietly.

"If he promises not to be ratty!" put in the fat Classical anxiously. Jimmy smiled. "I won't be ratty, Tubby. What is it, kid?"

"I—I—I—" "Yes?" "I—I—" "Get it off your chest!" "I—I read your postcard yesterday in the rack!" stuttered Tubby Muffin, getting it out at last.

"You fat rotter!" growled Raby. Jimmy Silver frowned. "You told me you hadn't, Tubby!" he said. "I—I thought you'd rag me, you know!" stammered Tubby. "I—I didn't exactly mean it. It—it was really a figure of speech, you know."

"Well, never mind," said Jimmy. "I suppose you didn't go about starting the yarn concerning my cousin, did you?" "No! Nunno! Certainly not!"

"Then somebody else read it, too, and I think I know who it was. Never mind, Tubby. Don't do such beastly mean things any more, that's all!" "But that isn't all!" said Kit Erroll. "Tubby says there was nothing on the card against your cousin, Jimmy."

"What!" "He thinks you've read it wrong, or something. I suppose you can't be making a mistake about it, can you?" Jimmy stared. "Hardly!" he said.

"But—but you are!" stuttered Tubby. "I—I've been feeling rotten about it, Jimmy; but you wouldn't let me see the card, and—and I was afraid of your being ratty at my read—it—quite an accident, too. There—there was nothing on that card to worry about, Jimmy. You're dreaming, old chap!"

"I know what was on it!" said Jimmy drily. "So do I!" said Tubby. "There was only one line, and I remember it, and—and anybody might have seen it. You've simply dreamed that there was something else on it, and you ought to show it to the fellows, and show them there's nothing in the yarn about your cousin."

"He's potty!" said Newcome, in wonder. "You're potty!" exclaimed Tubby, exasperated. "I'll tell you what was on the card if you like. I don't see anything to make a fuss about. Why can't Jimmy Silver let all the chaps see it? What does it matter if they know that Bob Silver's got his leave, I'd like to know?"

"His leave!" repeated Jimmy. "Yes, that's what was on the card," said Tubby. "You must be out of your senses!" said Jimmy. "There was nothing about Bob having leave."

"Didn't I tell you so, Erroll?" exclaimed Tubby triumphantly. "He's dreamed it. The card was about Bob Silver coming home on leave." "It wasn't!" shouted Lovell. "I've seen it."

"Then you're potty, too! It was." "Hold on!" said Erroll, very quietly. "Was the card written in pencil, Jimmy?" "Yes—cards from the Front always are."

cleared up. Come with me, Tubby. Jimmy won't eat you." "You'll see me through?" asked Tubby anxiously. "Yes." "All right; I'll come." And Tubby Muffin rolled after Kit Erroll to the end study.

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"It was in the rack a long time before you came in?" "A couple of hours, I think." "Ah! Tubby, can you repeat word for word what you read on Jimmy's card?"

"Of course I can—only a line," said Tubby. "Tell us, then." "Dear Jimmy,—Good news! I've got my leave at last, I think, and may see you when I get my few days in Blighty.—Bob!" quoted Tubby, triumphantly.

"That wasn't on the card!" said Raby. "It was, word for word!" howled Tubby. "It wasn't," said Jimmy. "I think it was," said Erroll, "when Tubby read it. It was some time later that you read it, Jimmy. It's written in pencil, you say."

"Well?" "It must have been altered." Jimmy Silver jumped to his feet. "Altered!" he shouted. "That's the only explanation," said Erroll quietly. "Tubby can't be mistaken like that, Jimmy. He read what he says he read. And before you got hold of the card, some frightful cad had taken it away and altered it."

"But—but it's my cousin's hand!" stuttered Jimmy Silver, groping in his pocket for the card. "Let's see it again," said Lovell. Jimmy Silver laid the postcard on the table. Tubby Muffin stared at it. "That wasn't written on it when I saw it!" he exclaimed, as he read the message which had brought such shame and misery to the captain of the Fourth. "Is this another card, Silver?"

"I've only had one," said Jimmy. "Then it's been altered, as Erroll says." Jimmy's lips trembled. He bent and scanned the card closely. The words were written in pencil, in a hand that was closely like his cousin's, if it was not the same. But now that he examined it with minute care there was something he had never thought of noting before that caught his eye.

The surface of the card was abraded in a way that could only have been caused by the use of an indiarubber. "Hold on!" exclaimed Newcome excitedly. "Let me get my microscope." The microscope was laid on the card.

Then it was easy to see faint traces of the writing that had been rubbed out, before the second inscription had been written in its place. The juniors gazed at it silently. There was no further doubt now. Jimmy Silver sank back into his chair, pale as death, almost overcome with the shock of the relief.

It was a foul falsehood that was written on the card. After it had been delivered at Rookwood some rascal had taken it, rubbed out Bob Silver's cheery message, and written over it the cruel words that had caused Jimmy so much suffering—carefully imitating the handwriting of the lieutenant—not a difficult task, for Bob Silver wrote a big schoolboy hand.

"By gad!" said Lovell, between his teeth. "Who could have done it—who could have been beast enough to play such a trick?" "Jolly lucky Tubby read the card, as it turns out!" said Raby, with a deep breath.

Tubby Muffin beamed. "Yes, isn't it?" he chirruped. "It was quite by chance, of course. I'm glad I didn't keep mum after all, as Lattrey advised me—"

"Oh, Lattrey advised you to keep mum, did he?" said Erroll. "Yes—he said Jimmy would be down on me for having read the card, you know," said Tubby unsuspectingly. "Lattrey meant well—but I'm glad I didn't take his advice."

"Lattrey knew the card was there, no doubt, while we were out on the river yesterday," said Raby. "Of course he did," said Tubby. Jimmy Silver rose to his feet, his eyes glittering.

"I should have found out the truth in a few days," he said. "I shall see Bob when he comes home on leave, and, of course, I should find out then that this was a lie. The cad who did this only meant to make me suffer, until then—and, goodness knows, I've felt pretty bad since I read that card. I know who it was—Lattrey. It couldn't have been anybody else."

Jimmy Silver caught up the card and left the study. He kicked open the door of Lattrey's study, and the latter jumped up from his table. Jimmy Silver held out the card. "There's your handiwork, Lattrey," he said. "I didn't know you were a forger, or I might have guessed."

Lattrey's teeth came together hard. For a moment he shrank from Jimmy Silver's glance, but he recovered his nerve quickly. "I don't quite see what you're driving at," he began coolly. "That card was taken from the rack, the message on it rubbed out, and a new lying message written on it."

"What a yarn!" said Lattrey. "Is that the best one you can think of, Silver?" "And you did it!" said Jimmy Silver. "Got any proof of that?" drawled Lattrey.

"Enough for me!" said Jimmy quietly. "I've come to hear you own up, and to make you answer for it." "I don't think you'll hear me own up to anything of the sort," smiled Lattrey.

"Then I shall take this card to the Head! Somebody has forged my cousin's hand on this card, and that's serious. If you did not do it, you have nothing to fear. But the forger will be expelled from Rookwood, even if he can't be sent to prison, which is quite possible. Do you want me to take this to the Head?"

Lattrey drew a quick, panting breath. His eyes glittered like a rat's. There was no actual proof, though suspicion was strong—but he knew how stern and strict an inquiry the Head would hold, if the matter was brought to his notice. The plotter dared not risk it. There was too much at stake for that. Jimmy Silver was already turning to the door when Lattrey spoke—in a husky voice.

"Hold on! I—I may as well own up—it was a joke, of course. I knew you'd find it out when your cousin comes home. It was a joke." Jimmy turned back.

"It's not the kind of joke that can be played at Rookwood," he said. He tore the card in pieces, and threw them into the grate. "There goes the proof of what you've done, you plotting, forging cad. Now put up your hands."

The next five minutes was very busily occupied. Lattrey put up a good fight—he had to. But Jimmy Silver, burning with indignation and scorn, could have thrashed two or three Lattreys at that moment. The cad of Rookwood was knocked right and left, under a rain of blows, and when Jimmy left the study at last the rascal laid on the floor breathless and groaning. He had made Jimmy suffer—but he had paid for it, and as he lay groaning after the captain of the Fourth had left him, it was probably borne in upon his mind that the game of rascality was not worth the candle.

Lattrey had suffered for his sins—and he had yet more to endure in the contempt he met on all sides among the Rookwood fellows when they knew the truth. Even Townsend & Co. scorned him openly. And when, a week or so later, a handsome young officer in khaki came to Rookwood to see Jimmy Silver, the cad of the Fourth was very careful indeed to keep out of sight.

THE END.

(Another magnificent long, complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND, entitled: "Saving a Scap-Grace!" Don't miss it!)

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