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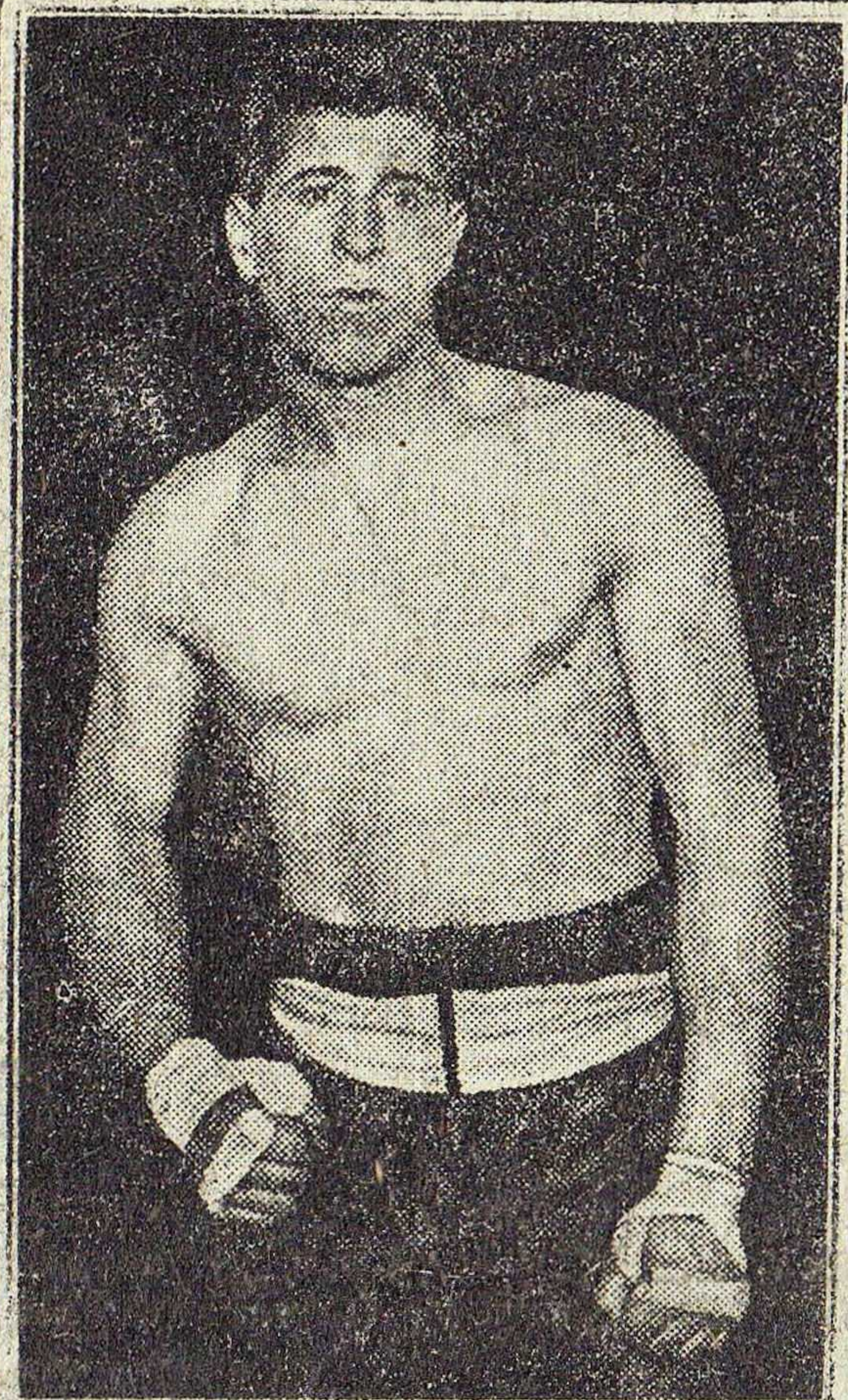
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THE BEST BOYS PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending July 1st, 1922.]

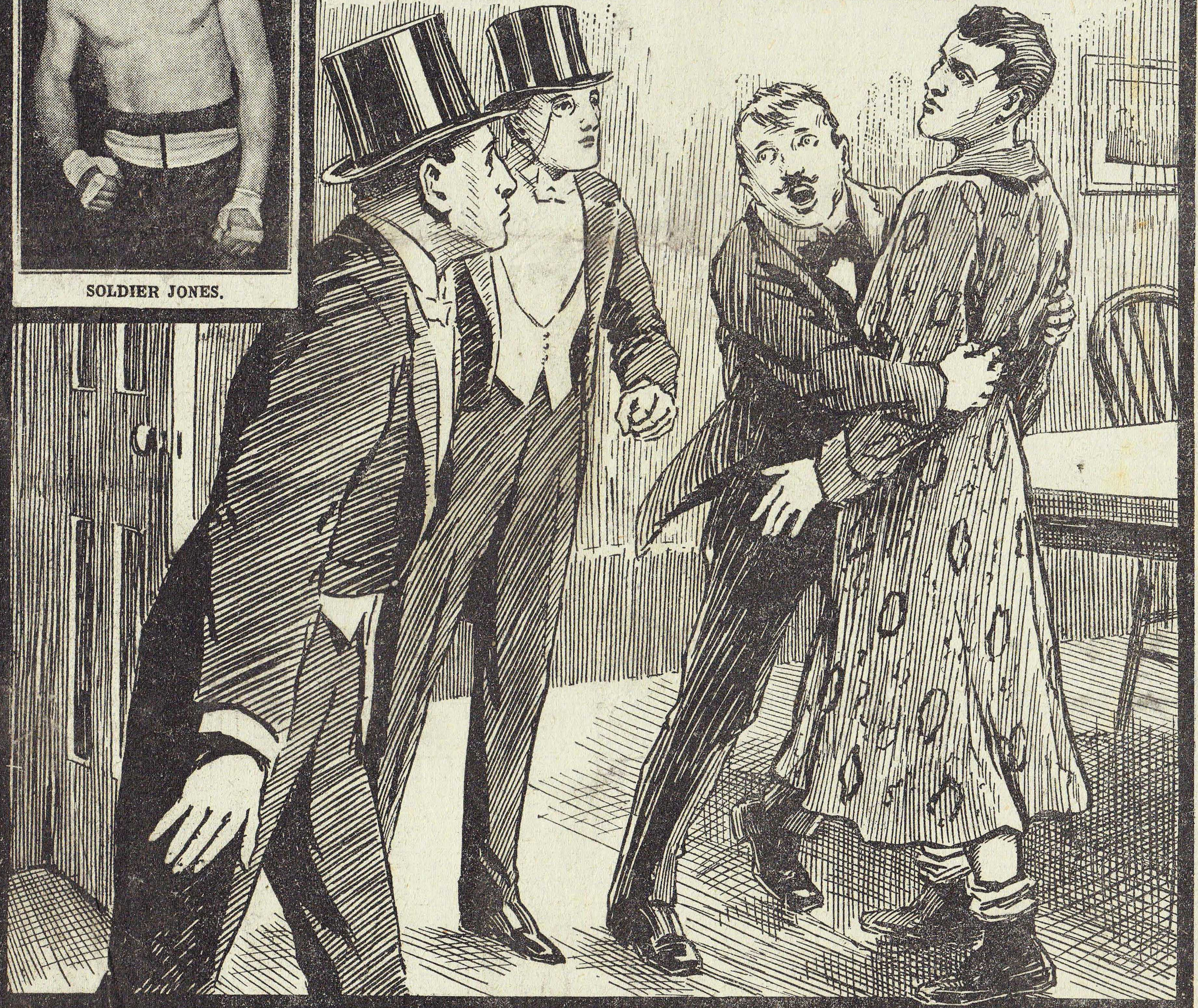


SOLDIER JONES.

THE DOPE PLOT!

A TALE OF THE
CLEAN-SPORT CRUSADERS

BY
WALTER
EDWARDS



An Attempt to Keep Georges Poirret from Entering the Ring!

(An incident in this week's splendid story of the Clean-Sport Crusaders!)

A Magnificent Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. and Valentine Mornington at Rookwood School.

At The Eleventh Hour!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")



The 1st Chapter.

The Search in the Study!

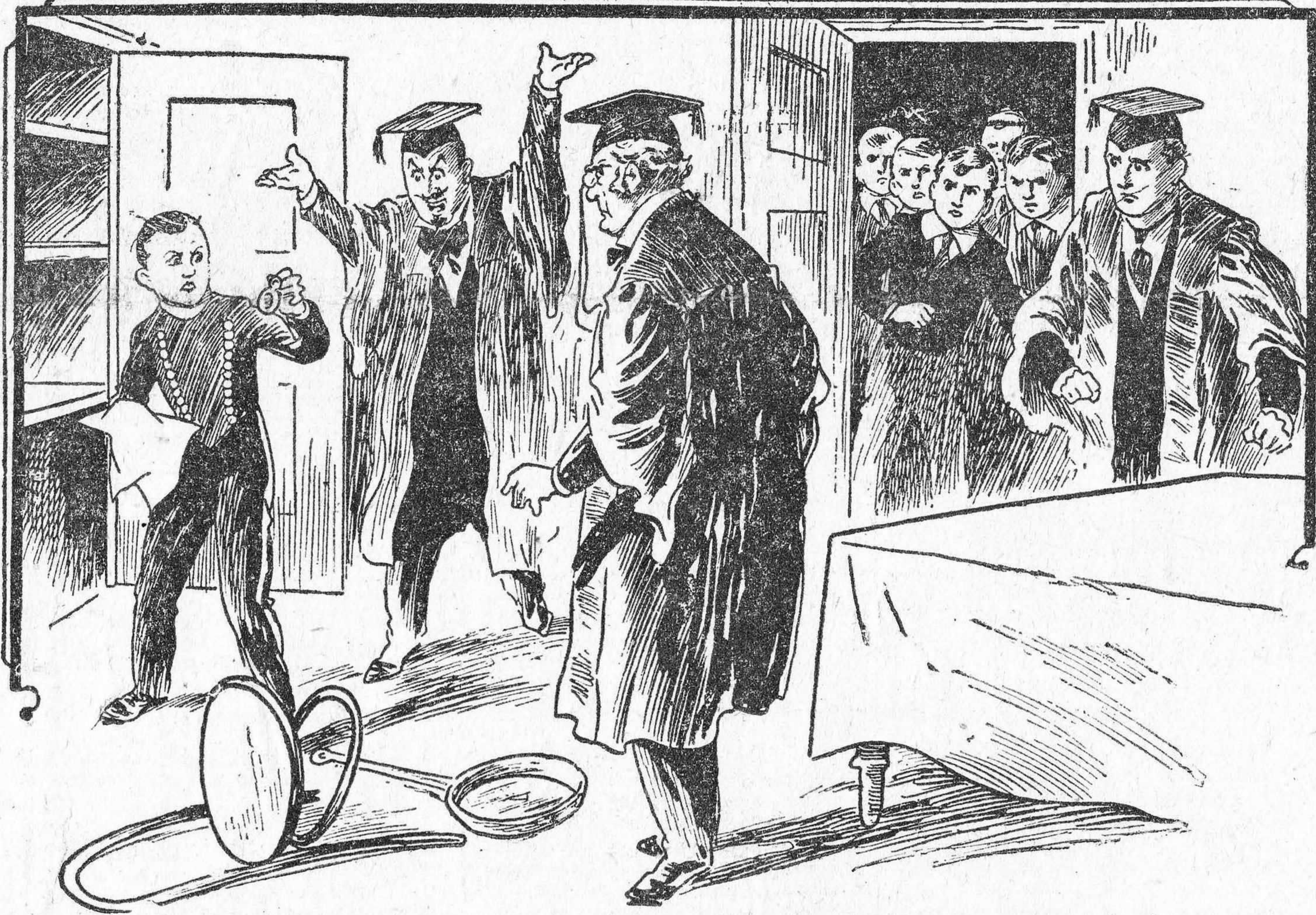
"Look out, Jimmy!" Tubby Muffin whispered the words mysteriously. His fat face was full of excitement. Tubby had opened the door of the end study in the Fourth about two inches, and he blinked in and whispered from the passage without entering the study. Jimmy Silver & Co. stared at him. The four chums did not seem duly impressed by Tubby's mysterious manner. Jimmy frowned, Raby grinned, Newcome stared, and Arthur Edward Lovell even picked up an inkpot, as if to throw it at the excited face in the doorway. "Look out!" repeated Muffin, in a thrilling whisper. "Don't you chuck that inkpot at me, Lovell, you rotter! I say, they're coming, Jimmy!" "You burbling jabberwock!" said Jimmy Silver crossly, "who are coming, and what does it matter, anyhow?" "The Head!" "What?" "And Mr. Dalton!" "What the thump do the Head and Mr. Dalton want in this study?" said Raby, startled. "And Monsieur Monceau!" "Mossoo?" exclaimed Lovell. "And Tupper!" "What a merry party!" grinned Lovell. "You silly ass, it's jolly serious!" gasped Tubby. "They're coming up the staircase now, and I cut ahead to warn Jimmy. They're after Mossoo's missing watch, of course!" "What?" roared Lovell. "Do you think they expect to find Mossoo's blessed old watch in this study?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "Chuck that inkpot at him, Lovell!" "Well, I like that!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin indignantly, "when I've come to put you on your guard. Of course, I don't think you really stole Mossoo's gold watch, Jimmy, though you were in his study alone when it went. But Mossoo thinks you did, and if they find it here—" "You fat idiot, how could they find it here?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, greatly exasperated. "Well, I've given you the tip!" said Tubby; and he jerked his head away and departed in a hurry. There were heavy footsteps sounding along the Fourth-Form passage, close at hand. The Fistical Four all rose to their feet. They were looking startled, and Jimmy Silver was looking angry. Tubby Muffin's warning had been meant good-naturedly; but it showed that Tubby did not consider it impossible that monsieur's missing watch was hidden in the end study. Certainly the watch was hidden somewhere, though most of the Rookwooders believed that it had been abstracted and hidden by a practical joker to worry the excitable French master. "Dash it all, they can't be coming to search the study!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "The Head wouldn't insult us like that." Jimmy compressed his lips. "It looks like it," he said. "You fellows needn't mind. It's I who am under suspicion." "We jolly well do mind!" exclaimed Lovell hotly. "What right has Mossoo to suspect you, just because you were in his study, and he missed the silly old watch about the same time. If Mossoo wasn't a silly old cackling goose he would know better." "Shurrup!" murmured Raby hastily. There was a tap at the door, and it

opened. Lovell's powerful voice had certainly been heard outside by the party that had now arrived. It was a very imposing party. Dr. Chisholm, the headmaster of Rookwood, was in the vanguard, as it were, lofty and stately. Mr. Dalton, the handsome young master of the Fourth, followed him, with Monsieur Monceau. Tupper, the page, brought up the rear. Farther on, half the Classical Fourth were following, greatly excited. In the crowd the face of Valentine Mornington could be seen, amused and mocking. The Fistical Four stood facing their visitors, Lovell dumb now, and a little dismayed. For the crimson wrath in Monsieur Monceau's face showed that he had heard Lovell's observation. "Mon Dieu! Suis-je seely cackling goose?" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau. "Vat is zat you say, isn't it, Lovell?" "I—I—" stammered Lovell. Dr. Chisholm raised his hand. The Head was not disposed to take note of what had been accidentally heard. Moreover, it was barely possible that

"I have not done so, sir!" "Suspicion rests upon you, Silver, because you were in Monsieur Monceau's study when the watch was left on the table. So far, the suspicion is merely of a disrespectful prank. If the watch is not immediately restored I shall be driven to the conclusion that actual theft is intended." Mr. Dalton looked at Jimmy with a troubled brow. "If you know anything, Silver!" he said. "I know nothing of it, sir!" "Zat is not true! You take zat vatch!" "Silence, please, monsieur!" said the Head. And the little French gentleman was once more driven to gesticulation as a last resource for expressing his feelings. "Silver, in the circumstances, I am forced to subject your room to a search. If the watch should be found, it will be too late for you to offer a foolish practical joke as an explanation. You will be adjudged a thief!" Jimmy's cheeks crimsoned. "I know nothing of the watch, sir!" he answered quietly.

were shared by most of the Fourth—for the thought of Jimmy Silver as a thief was an impossible one to entertain. Indeed, Conroy declared, in an audible whisper, that he did not believe the watch was missing at all—the absent-minded Mossoo had put it somewhere and forgotten, in the Cornstalk's opinion. If the Head overheard Conroy's remark, he paid no heed to it. His eyes were upon the page, who was going through the end study like a skilled searcher. Nobody believed for a moment that the missing gold watch was there; but if it was there, it was pretty certain that the industrious Tupper would unearth it. Only on Valentine Mornington's face there lingered a curious, faint smile of mockery. "What is that, Tupper?" "The Head's deep voice was heard. The juniors in the passage crowded as near as they dared, craning their necks to get a partial view of the interior of the end study. Tupper was turning out the study cupboard—in the lower part of which there was a rather old collection of lumber. A chair with one leg, a clock that had ceased to "go," a bicycle pump, a superannuated punchball, a frying-pan with a hole in it, and several other articles were turned out. Then from the dusky recesses Tupper turned out a small paper parcel. It looked like a sheet of old brown paper carelessly twisted up and thrown into a corner. "Only some old paper, sir!" said Tupper. "Does it contain anything?" "I'll jest see, sir." Tupper unrolled the twisted sheet of thick paper. He gave a sudden startled gasp.

They could scarcely believe what had happened; but there was the stolen gold watch—it had been rolled in paper, and hidden behind the lumber in the lower part of the cupboard—a place where it certainly never would have been discovered without a strict search. But for the search, the cupboard would not have been turned out till the end of the term. "Silver!" repeated the Head. Lovell nudged his chum. Jimmy started, and moved, and went into the study with faltering steps, looking like a fellow in a dream. Dr. Chisholm held up the watch. "Do you claim this as your property, Silver?" Jimmy gasped. "N-no, sir." "Do you admit that it is the property of Monsieur Monceau?" "Of—of course, sir! We all know Mossoo's watch," said the captain of the Fourth dazedly. "Take your property, monsieur." Monsieur Monceau fairly clutched at the watch. His little black eyes were twinkling with delight at the recovery of his property. The Head fixed his stern glance on Jimmy Silver. "I am surprised," he said. "I did not believe for one moment that the stolen property would be found in your possession, Silver. Your Form-master deemed you incapable of theft; I shared his opinion. You have deceived both of us!" "I—I—" stammered Jimmy, helplessly. "No doubt you believed that the stolen property was safe from a search in that recess," said the Head, "or perhaps you were so foolish as not to foresee a search. Silver, I am shocked and grieved at this. You are not only a thief, but you have lied in the most brazen way to cover up your act. Such unscrupulous duplicity is almost incredible." Jimmy panted for breath. "I—I—I never did! I—I—" "What?" "I never touched the rotten watch!" broke out Jimmy Silver. "Some rotter has done this for a rotten joke on me!" "Do not add to your guilt by fabricating further falsehoods," said the Head coldly. "Your study-mates are quite clear of suspicion. They did not have access to Monsieur Monceau's study, whence the watch was taken. You alone are guilty. Without the strongest evidence I shall not believe that your study-mates knew anything of this." "Of course they didn't!" panted Jimmy. "And I knew no more than they did! I never touched the watch—" "That will do! You will follow me to my study, Silver." "But, sir—" "Bring him with you, Mr. Dalton." The Head swept majestically away, and Mr. Dalton, dropping his hand on Jimmy's shoulder, led the junior after the headmaster. They passed through a silent, horror-stricken crowd in the corridor. Not a word was heard till they had disappeared down the staircase. "Who'd have thought it?" exclaimed Gunner, who was the first to speak. "I say, I really suspected it all along, you know," said Tubby Muffin, with a sage shake of the head. "Very suspicious, you know, I thought." "What a surprise!" murmured Valentine Mornington, with a mocking glint in his eyes. "Fancy—Silver!" Arthur Edward Lovell, with a crimson face, strode towards the dandy of the Fourth. His eyes were blazing with rage. He forgot that Mornington was in Coventry. His eyes blazed into the mocking face of the Rookwood out-cast. "You rotter!" panted Lovell. "Are you calling Jimmy a thief?" Mornington shrugged his shoulders. "What do you call him?" he asked. "Mossoo's watch was stolen, and you know where it was found!" "It's a trick—a vile trick of some kind!" said Lovell, choking. "Only a fool would think Jimmy did it." "Your pals don't agree with you," said Mornington mockingly. Lovell cast a hasty look at Raby and Newcome. They coloured. "Rot!" said Raby. "It—it—it looks horribly bad, but—but there's a mistake somewhere—somehow—" "There must be," said Newcome miserably. "Jimmy couldn't do it—he couldn't." "Rot!" snorted Higgs. "The Head's goin' to kick him out of Rookwood, anyhow," smiled Mornington. "The Head's satisfied. And if you stand up for a thief, Lovell—"



THE DISCOVERY! Tupper gave a sudden startled gasp. "My heye!" "What is it, Tupper?" asked the Head, in a grinding voice. "A—a—a—watch, sir!" stammered Tupper.

he shared Lovell's opinion to some extent. Since the loss of his famous gold watch, Mossoo had shown a striking resemblance to a startled fowl. "Silence, Lovell!" said the Head. "Monsieur Monceau, kindly leave this matter to me." "Mais, monsieur!" "Silver," said the Head, ruthlessly disregarding Mossoo. Mossoo had to content himself with gesticulating, which he did with great energy. "Yes, sir!" said Jimmy. "The missing property of Monsieur Monceau has not yet been restored, Silver. I have allowed an interval to elapse, to enable the person who abstracted it to return the watch to the owner. It has not been done. I now ask you, Silver, whether you know anything of this?" "Nothing, sir!" "He vas in ze study!" recommenced Mossoo, again to be ruthlessly disregarded. "I hope," said the Head, in a deep voice, "I hope and trust that this act will prove to be nothing but a foolish, reprehensible practical joke. Yet the retention of the abstracted property by the—the purloiner, gives the incident the appearance of theft. Silver if you have hidden Monsieur Monceau's watch, I ask you, for the last time, to restore it, and take your punishment for playing a foolish prank."

"Very well! Tupper!" "Yessir!" said Tupper. "You will make a thorough search of this room, Tupper, in my presence. Kindly lose no time." "Yessir!" Dr. Chisholm signed to the Fistical Four to step into the passage. Mr. Dalton and Mossoo remained in the study with the Head, looking on while the page began the search. And in the corridor there gathered more and more of the Fourth, and some of the Third and Shell, buzzing with excitement.

The 2nd Chapter. Guilty!

Jimmy Silver stood quietly, with a set, calm face. The Co. were looking wrathful—even in the Head's presence they did not take the trouble to conceal their indignation. Their feelings

"My heye!" "What is it, Tupper?" asked the Head, in a grinding voice. "A—a—a watch, sir!" "It is ze montre—it is ze vatch!" shrieked Monsieur Monceau. The low buzz of whispering in the passage died away. A chill silence succeeded. Jimmy Silver stood as if turned to stone. In full view of a score of pairs of eyes, Tupper held up the watch he had taken from the twisted brown paper. It was recognisable at a glance—everybody had seen Mossoo's big old-fashioned timekeeper. Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes upon it. He stretched out his hand, and Tupper placed the watch in his palm. "Monsieur Monceau! Is this your property?" "Mais oui! It is my watch!" "Good heavens!" muttered Mr. Dalton. "You have been deceived in that boy, Mr. Dalton!" said Dr. Chisholm. "Silver! You may come in, Silver." Jimmy did not move. He was so utterly thunderstruck by the discovery of the watch, that he seemed deprived of the power of motion. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were staring at him with horrified eyes.

**NEXT MONDAY'S
FREE BOXING PHOTO
IS OF
ARTHUR WYNS
(The Belgian Feather-
weight Champion.)**

Crash!
Mornington went spinning backwards as Lovell hit out. He rolled on the passage floor.

Lovell glared round furiously. "Anybody else say the same?" he roared.

Mornington sprang to his feet and rushed at Lovell. In a second they were fighting furiously.

"Cave!" yelled Rawson, along the passage.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came striding on the scene. He grasped the two fighting juniors, and dragged them apart by main force.

"Stop this!" he snapped. "What's this rowing about, bother you?"

"Better ask Lovell!" sneered Mornington.

"He called Jimmy a thief!" panted Lovell. "I'll smash him! I'll—I'll—" Lovell choked.

"Don't be a young fool!" said Bulkeley sharply. "Silver is proved a thief, and I've already been told by the Head that I'm to take him home. Keep your temper!"

Lovell staggered against the passage wall.

"Take Jimmy home!" he repeated. "Yes! First train in the morning!"

"You—you mean he's sacked?"

"Do you think the Head would let a thief stay at Rookwood?" snapped the prefect.

"It's a lie! He's not a thief! It's a lie!" roared Lovell, utterly forgetful that it was the captain of the school he was addressing. "I'd say so to the Head, too!"

Bulkeley raised his hand—and dropped it again.

"Calm yourself, kid!" he said, gently enough. "I know it's a shock to you. But you mustn't talk rot like that. Go into your study and stay there!"

He pushed Lovell into the end study. Raby and Newcome followed Lovell in, and the door closed. In the crowded passage there was a ceaseless buzz of excited voices—in the end study three juniors sat in grim silence, staring at one another; dismayed, dumbfounded, in such utter misery as they had never experienced before in their young lives.

The 3rd Chapter. Mornington's Triumph!

Valentine Mornington lounged into his study. It was nearly bed-time—and hardly any of the Fourth had given a thought to prep that evening. Even Kit Erroll had forgotten his work in the excitement of the discovery and the condemnation of Jimmy Silver.

Mornington was smiling evilly. The sentence of "Coventry"—rigidly enforced as it had been till now—had broken down under the stress of the excitement. Mornny had joined in the discussion, and the juniors seemed to have forgotten that he was an outcast. Jimmy Silver had been the prime mover in the sentence on Mornington, and now Jimmy was down—so low that even Mornington might have pitied him.

He was judged a thief on evidence that scarcely any reasonable fellow could doubt. Even his own chums were staggered, though they clung to their faith in him in spite of evidence.

Mornington threw himself into the armchair in Study No. 4, with his hands driven deep into his pockets, and smiled genially. The fall of Jimmy Silver, the black disgrace that had overwhelmed the captain of the Fourth, clothing him with shame as a garment, seemed to afford Mornington solace. He had been through it—now Jimmy Silver was going through it—and worse. How did he like it? Mornington wondered cynically.

He laughed aloud.

The study door opened and Kit Erroll came in. He heard Mornny's laugh, and knitted his brows. He closed the study door and came over towards Mornny, who smiled and nodded.

"Just remembered your prep?" he asked.

Erroll did not answer that. He stood with his eyes fixed on Mornny's face—searching it as he would search his very soul.

"Oh, I forgot! I'm in Coventry!" smiled Mornington. "You're in with the rest! Don't trouble to speak!"

"Never mind Coventry now, Mornington," said Erroll. "I'm going to speak—I must speak!"

"Please yourself!" said Mornington, shrugging his shoulders.

"What do you know about what has happened, Mornington?"

The dandy of the Fourth stared. "Just what all the fellows know," he answered. "Mossoo made Silver write out an impot in his study, and Silver bagged his watch, which was left on the table."

"You believe that?"

"Don't you?" smiled Mornington. "I can't!"

"The Head seems to be satisfied. Of course, even a headmaster is liable to make mistakes."

Erroll's eyes still searched his face. "You know no more than that?" he asked.

"What could I know?"

"I'm going to speak plainly, Mornington. You were sent to Coventry for sending Jimmy Silver a false telegram and tricking him away from the St. Jim's match. You played that dirty trick, and deserved what you got. I stood in with the rest of the Form, though you'd been my pal. We're pals no longer, Mornington. But I think I know you better than the other fellows do, and I ask you again, what do you know about what has happened in Jimmy Silver's study?"

Mornington yawned.

"We're pals no longer," he repeated. "Exactly! Quite so! May I take the liberty of mentionin' that your conversation bores me, Erroll?"

"Someone took that watch from Monsieur Monceau's study," resumed Erroll, unheeding. "I've believed—up to now—that it was a silly practical joke on Mossoo. It's clear now that it's worse than that!"

"Quite clear, I should say!"

"Did you take the watch, Mornington?"

"Bogad! Little me?"

"And plant it in Jimmy Silver's study cupboard?"

"What an idea!"

"For revenge on him for getting you sent to Coventry for your dirty trick over the St. Jim's match?"

Mornington laughed lightly.

"First train in the morning!" said Tubby. "I say, I saw the Head—he was looking in a frightful wax. Never seen him with such a chivvy on! Dicky Dalton looked quite sick! He feels it, you know! So do I—I'm awfully shocked at Silver! You never know a fellow till you find him out, do you, you know!"

"Oh, dry up!" grunted Conroy. "I don't believe it yet!"

"That's rot!" said Tubby. "I suppose the Head knows! Besides, who could have bagged the watch if Silver didn't? Nobody else knew that Mossoo had left it on his table—Silver only knew because he was sent to the study. The fact is, I suspected all along—"

"Rot!" grunted Conroy. "You fellows will remember that I've told you lots of times that Silver was rather fishy—"

"I don't remember!"

"You remember, don't you, Mornny?"

"No, you fat idiot!" said Mornington. "For goodness sake, shut up, Muffin!"

"Yah!" was Tubby's defiant reply. Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in. His face was grave; the affair had been a shock to him, as well as to the juniors.

"Bed-time!" he said curtly. The Classical Fourth were still in a state of excitement when they marched into their dormitory. Lovell and Raby and Newcome came in rather late, and they turned in without a word to the rest of the Form. Some of the juniors stared at them curiously. They had wondered how Jimmy Silver's best chums would take it; and it was clear that Jimmy's chums were taking it badly. Lovell's

"I understand, my boy," said Mr. Dalton. "But you cannot see him. Silver has already left Rookwood."

"Left!" stammered Lovell.

"Dr. Chisholm judged it better for him to go without seeing any of his schoolfellows, in order to avoid any possibility of a scene," said Mr. Dalton. "Bulkeley is now on his way to the station with him. You may sit down, Lovell."

Arthur Edward Lovell fell, rather than sat, in his seat. He looked overwhelmed. It was the last blow.

Erroll turned his eyes on Valentine Mornington mutely, accusingly. The dandy of the Fourth did not meet his glance.

Mornington's face was not happy that morning. He had some causes for satisfaction—the sentence of Coventry was at an end. It had been forgotten in the stress of excitement the previous evening—and no one seemed disposed to resume it. Mornington and his offence, in fact, were completely overshadowed by what had happened to Jimmy Silver.

If that was any satisfaction to Mornny, he had it. But he was not looking satisfied. His face was a little pale, there was a wrinkle in his brows, and his lips twitched at times. Mornington had tasted revenge—and he found the taste of it like Dead Sea fruit, bitter in the mouth. He hardly touched his breakfast; his thoughts were with the hapless junior tramping along the sunny road that morning, in charge of a prefect—sent home under a load of shame that was heavy enough to break the proudest spirit. In his mind's eye Mornny could see his victim—tramping along, with despair in his heart; he could picture the arrival home, the misery that would

"I know it."

"And you persist in it?"

"Yes."

"And why, Mornington," said Mr. Dalton, his voice softening a little—"why did you do this wicked thing, and why have you come to tell me so?"

"I suppose because one rotten thing leads to another," said Mornington. "You know I was sent to Coventry by the Fourth—"

"I know it, and by accident I learned the cause. Is it true that you sent a false telegram to Silver, calling him home on the pretence that his father was ill, to keep him away from a cricket-match?"

"It's true."

"And why—"

"I was wild at being dropped out of the team," said Mornington. "That's why I did it. I—I was sorry afterwards; but it was too late then. And they found me out and sent me to Coventry. I don't say I didn't deserve it. I know I did. But—but it came hard. My best chum joined against me with the rest. And—and yesterday I—I—" He broke off.

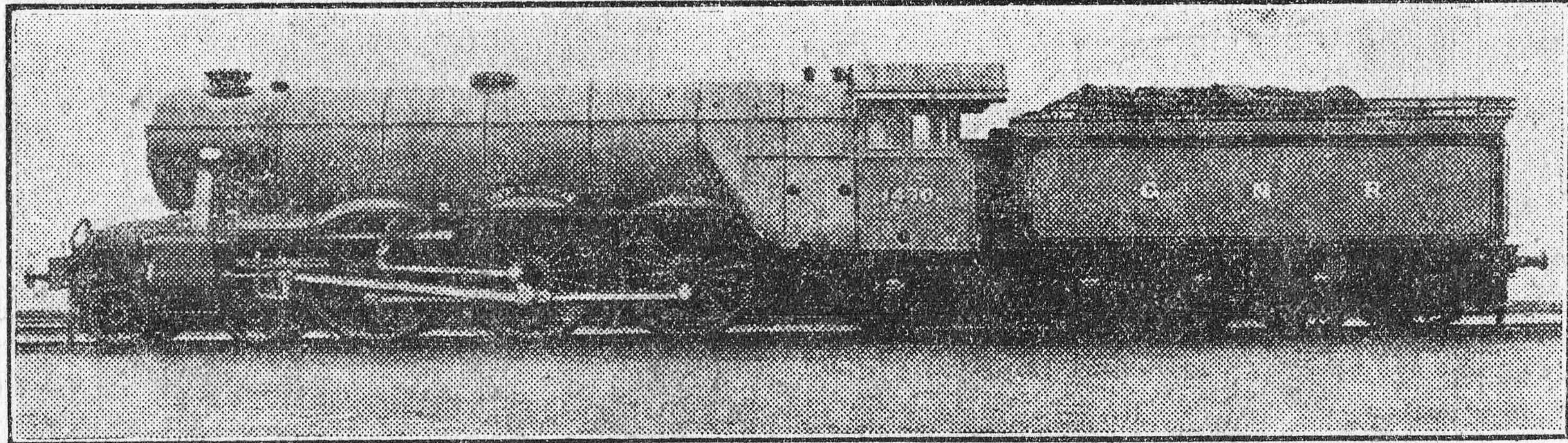
"I've told you enough, sir."

"Tell me all, Mornington."

"I took the watch out of Mossoo's study to give Silver a taste of what I'd had," muttered Mornington. "I thought he'd be suspected and avoided and cut, as I'd been. Then—they they ragged me, and—and I went to the box-room and got it, and put it where it was found. I never meant Silver to be expelled. I didn't think so far as that. I only wanted him to go through what I'd been through."

"On your own showing," said Mr. Dalton sternly, "you deserved all

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"And this is the chap who used to be my pal!" he remarked. "Are you askin' me all that seriously, Erroll?"

"Quite seriously!"

"Then you can go and eat coke! Go and tell the Head what you suspect—an offer him what evidence you can find!" sneered Mornington.

"I have no evidence!"

"Gad! Then it would be rather wiser to shut up, and take care not to slander a fellow—what?"

"The suspicion came into my mind—I could not help it," said Erroll.

"If Jimmy Silver is a thief, I can never trust anyone again! I would as soon believe myself a thief! It's impossible! Somebody's played a horrible trick. Mornington!"—Erroll's voice softened, it became almost pleading—"Mornny, if you've done this, think—think, before it's too late! You're not a villain, though now you're so bitter you may think that you can act like one and be glad of it! If Silver goes—if he's disgraced, and it's all false—do you think you'll get any satisfaction out of it? I tell you, Mornington, you'll suffer more than Silver! If you've done this—if it's another dirty trick of yours—think, before it's too late—"

Erroll broke off abruptly, as Mornington rose to his feet.

The dandy of the Fourth was laughing.

"Have you finished?" he asked easily. Erroll looked at him—dumb.

"Good! I've mentioned that you bore me, old bean! Ta-ta!"

Valentine Mornington strolled out of the study.

He went down to the Common-room. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were keeping to their study; Jimmy Silver was not to be seen. From the talk of the juniors, Mornny learned that the captain of the Fourth had been taken to the punishment-room for the night. The Head had resolved that he should exchange no word with the other Rookwooders before he left—the wretched thief, as Dr. Chisholm regarded him, was to be separated immediately from the rest of the school. Tubby Muffin had seen Jimmy conducted to his new quarters by Bulkeley and Carthew, and he was giving a description of it when Mornny lounged into the Common-room.

face was white, and Raby and Newcome looked utterly wretched and troubled. It seemed like a horrid dream to them—that their chum was, in those very moments, confined to the punishment-room, segregated like a leper from his schoolfellows, as if his touch were contamination, under sentence of leaving the school in ignominy. Yet they felt that the Head could not have decided differently. They did not even suspect, as Erroll had done, that there was a wicked plot against their chum; their stunned minds did not even seize on that theory. They did not know what to think—what to believe; only, with almost pathetic loyalty, they clung to their faith in Jimmy Silver, and refused to believe that he was a thief.

Jimmy a thief! Jimmy expelled from Rookwood! It was like the bottom being knocked out of their little world. It gave them a dazed feeling—they knew it was true, yet the realisation of it would not come home to their minds.

They were very silent after lights out, taking no part in the excited buzz of talk in the dormitory. But they did not sleep. When the summer morning dawned upon Rookwood School it dawned upon three juniors who had hardly closed their eyes during the long hours of the night.

The 4th Chapter. His Better Self!

"Mr. Dalton!"

Lovell stood up at the breakfast-table. The Fourth Form master, at the head of the table, glanced at him kindly. It would have been difficult to be stern with the junior just then, after a glance at his haggard face, his eyes red with trouble and want of sleep.

"Yes, Lovell?" said Mr. Dalton kindly.

"I want to see Jimmy—I mean Silver, sir, before he goes."

Mr. Dalton shook his head.

"I want to see him, sir—just a word! He's not a thief, sir—"

Lovell's voice broke, and there came a rush of tears to his eyes in spite of himself. "I know he isn't, sir—I know he isn't! He couldn't do it! I want to see him, sir—just a minute, to tell him I—I—" Poor Lovell's voice died away chokingly.

be caused there, the shame of old Mr. Silver, the tears of Cousin Phyllis. Mornington turned from his untasted food, and he was glad when the Fourth left the dining-room. He had tasted revenge—and, as it was written of old, what had tasted as sweet as honey had turned as bitter as gall.

Mr. Dalton was turning away in the hall when he felt a touch on his sleeve. He glanced down at Valentine Mornington.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Can I speak to you, sir? It's rather important," said Mornny, in a low voice. "It—it's about Silver, sir."

"That matter is closed, Mornington."

"I have something to tell you about it, sir," said Mornny.

"I do not see—"

"The Head's sent Silver away early to keep him out of the way of the fellows," said Mornington. "But the train's not till nine—they'll have to wait at the station. There's still time to send for him."

"Send for him! What do you mean? There is no question of Silver returning to the school."

"There will be when I've told you what I have to say!" answered Mornington in a low, even voice.

Mr. Dalton looked at him steadily, searchingly, for a long moment. Then he signed to the junior to follow him to his study. Mornington followed him with an unflinching step.

"Now kindly explain your words!" said the Fourth Form master, when the door was closed.

"Silver is innocent, sir."

"And how do you know?"

"Because I put Monsieur Monceau's watch in his study last evening."

"What?"

"Only about an hour before it was found there, sir!" said Mornington. There was a long pause.

"Is it possible, Mornington, that you have acted with such incredible baseness?" said Mr. Dalton at last, and the contempt and horror in his voice brought the blood in a rush to Mornington's pale face. But his voice was steady as he answered:

"Yes, sir."

"You know, I suppose, that if this confession is taken as true, you will be expelled from the school, Mornington?"

that you went through, Mornington."

The wretched junior hung his head.

"I know it, sir."

"You have, at least, made what reparation was in your power, by making this confession before it was too late, Mornington. You are prepared to repeat it in the presence of the Head?"

"If you like, sir."

"That is necessary. But I cannot hold out any hope to you, Mornington, that Dr. Chisholm will take a lenient view of the matter. He is quite certain to send you away from Rookwood."

Mornington nodded without speaking. He had known what he had to expect. He did not hope for mercy. He hardly cared so long as he relieved his mind from the burden of guilt that had grown too heavy for him to bear.

Mr. Dalton rose.

"Follow me!" he said quietly.

Some of the Fourth saw Mornington going to the Head's study with his Form-master, and they wondered what was "on." They little dreamed what it was. In a few minutes the Fourth Form master came back from Dr. Chisholm's study, but Mornington did not come with him. He remained with the Head.

"Neville!" Mr. Dalton called to the Sixth Form prefect. "Will you take your bicycle and ride to Coombe, and overtake Bulkeley if possible. You will find him at the station, at least, and you will tell him that the Head desires him to return at once with Silver."

"With Silver, sir?" ejaculated Neville.

"Yes."

A dozen fellows were looking on breathlessly. Arthur Edward Lovell fixed his eyes on Mr. Dalton, scarcely daring to understand his words aright. Mr. Dalton glanced round.

"The truth has now come to light," he said quietly. "Monsieur Monceau's watch was not stolen at all. A junior of the Fourth Form has confessed that he hid it in Silver's study for a cruel trick. Neville, will you make all the haste you can?"

The Sixth-Former fairly ran for his bicycle.

Arthur Edward Lovell ran towards Mr. Dalton.

(Continued on page 612.)

POLRUAN'S QUEST! By MAURICE EVERARD.

(Continued from page 605.)

by dago Chinamen. So fill up, lads, as Pie has said, and may good luck follow the soup all the way!

Never was steaming liquid more briskly ladled up than as fifteen pairs of hands went to work with a will, and very soon the party were all lined along the floor, each with his separate tin poised above a small hole.

"Go!" said Pie, in a whisper; and at the signal the tins were tilted, and through the tiny orifices ran a trickle of thick, boiling-hot liquid. Flesh and blood that could stand such treatment has not yet been made, either north of the Equator or south of it, and on the still night there rose such howls of anguish that they could almost repent the severity of the punishment they had inflicted on their enemies.

"Now's our chance!" cried Joe, slipping down the ladder hand under hand. "Ten volunteers wanted. No time to pick and choose. Good-bye, Pie! I knew you'd be first!"

"Doan yo' worry, massa; I goan outside to pick up some o' dat soup!" grinned the black. "It am a pity to waste such good stuff when I boil dat dead Chink wid de stock to giveum flavour."

They laughed at Pie's sally as they went out in a mass, and inside five minutes, before the attackers could recover from the effects of their punishment, all the brushwood had been thrown to a safe distance. Joe shepherded his force back to the pagoda, and for the rest of the night complete stillness reigned.

When the day broke and the sun came up like a ball of molten fire about the grim, forbidding peaks of the distant mountains, the same unnatural quiet reigned over the sleeping forest. For some hours Joe endured it, but at length became impatient.

"We've heered nothing of Mr. Grantley, so I guess he's got through all right. And if he can cheat 'em, I reckon I can, seeing, in my time, when I was doin' scout work under Clive in South America, I onst crawled through the enemy's lines right away from Moscow to Honolulu. So long, you chaps, I'm off

to take my early morning constitutional!"

"Don't be a fool, Joe!" warned Frank. "If they catch you they'll cut your ears off and stick them on the window panes for ornaments!"

"Not they!" laughed Tremorne cheerfully, slipping a revolver into his pocket and taking his terrible lamp from the nail on the wall. "If I see any of 'em I'll jus' pass the time o' morning while they pass away from this life to the next!"

They knew it was no use trying to restrain him, and an instant later, after cautiously opening the door, Joe slipped quietly out and crawled for the shelter of the trees. Half an hour passed before there came a light tapping at the door, and Joe entered, grinning broadly from ear to ear.

"All gorn!" he said. "Not a sign of 'em anywhere! They've packed up and I reckon left the road clear to Haiphong!"

Frank dropped wearily on to the edge of a packing case and set his rifle against the wall.

"We'll hope so, at any rate, in case not," he said, yawning behind his hand. "It's been a pretty rotten show altogether, fighting scum that won't give you a sporting chance to get to grips with them. All the same, Joe, I shouldn't be too sure. What do you say to posting look-outs while we call a general clean-up and pay a little attention to the inner man?"

"You lebe de innards man to dis chile ob darkness!" announced Pie-face, poking his head round the door. "I doan like dese plisoners, so I gwine to cut 'em up and fly 'em as bif steak."

"No, I don't think you'd better—not to-day, at any rate!" interposed the sailor, as the wretched bandits shrank back appalled when the little black boy approached them brandishing a terrible looking carving knife. "I want to put them through their catechism and three-times table before they depart for a better world. Pengelley, you haven't done much more than had your shoulder nearly chopped off, so you can take on a sit-down job at one of the loopholes—in case anything should happen—while I open up a court of inquiry on the captives."

A general rush followed, in which Dick and Harry Rawson cleaned the rifles and revolvers and set out fresh supplies of cartridges in case of necessity; Frank produced the expedition's medicine chest and rendered admirable first-aid; while Joe, by summoning what little Chinese he knew, extracted in his inimitable manner some very enlightening information from the prisoners.

It appeared that the country gener-

ally was in a most unsettled state, brigandage and tribal wars being the order of the day, with everybody generally opposed to French Government, and doing their best to exterminate the companies of Foreign Legionaries scattered between the Gulf of Tonquin and the Chinese frontier.

For several weeks past a band of mercenaries, to which the prisoners belonged, had been in possession of the fort locally known as the Boh Tan, from which central point little groups had been sent out to scout along the coastline. They had not seen the Enchantress wrecked, arriving in the neighbourhood some five days later, in time, however, to watch the white men engaged in burying the chests and cases near the mangrove swamp.

"Then that's properly torn it!" growled Tremorne, turning to Frank. "Looks to me as though we can say good-bye to Rawson's treasure."

Frank nodded disconsolately. "Guess we've touched unlucky this time, Joe! Ask them whether their pals have bunked off to go back to the coast."

Joe held another long colloquy with the captives, and succeeded in extracting the following highly interesting information.

"They say that the swamp is haunted and is known locally as the Place of the Ten-Footed Devils, and that nothing would induce a native to go near. As to what has happened to the band who attacked us, he thinks they are so scared by the thrashing they received that they have retired into the interior, and won't trouble us again."

"I see!" Frank became practical. "Then you propose that at daylight we move on?"

"I do!" said Joe. "We can't do any good by squatting down here with all these dead bodies lying round, or there'll be some nice fever about; and as we can't get away by sea, there's nothing for it but to cut across country in the track of Grantley."

"They think Grantley has got through?"

"The little chap says he never saw him, and that, as his mob took no prisoners, he must have gone clean through their lines, in which case he will have little difficulty in making Haiphong, the present headquarters of the Foreign Legion."

"Then to Haiphong it is!" said Frank. "And to make quite sure"—pointing to the two cowering wretches—"we'll take those fellows with us!"

(There will be another splendid instalment of this adventure story next Monday.)

THE GHOST OF THE GASOMETER!

(Continued from previous page.)

that surrounding him was a great circular sheet of water, in the middle of which floated a raft such as that described by his gas-engineer friend.

Tugging and struggling, he managed to get out his automatic and manoeuvre it into a position for use. Then he shouted: "It's all up! You're surrounded!"

There was a shout of warning from away up in the girder-work. Holdfast switched on his powerful electric torch, and the light revealed the dark form of a man, who sprang on to the raft.

The next second a bullet whizzed by the orifice of the pipe, missing Holdfast's face by an inch.

Taking careful aim, Holdfast let drive, and then switched off his light. Amid the tearing, shrieking echoes awakened by the two shots Harry could hear muffled sounds of shouting, and the rattle of iron as the trapped men climbed feverishly up the supporting girder-work.

Then suddenly a circular beam of pale moonlight streamed down through the domed roof. Dempster had opened the manhole!

The Red-Maskers on the grids put up a feeble show of a fight, and a few shots were fired; but they were quickly overcome and made prisoners.

"You all right, Holdfast?" shouted Dempster, as he fixed the mouth of the main pipe with his powerful torchlight. "Right as a trivet!" cried Holdfast.

When Dempster's men, with their prisoners had departed, he and "Bulldog" made a search of the gasometer. Built into one of the grids was a small wooden room, and here they found Baynton, the missing inventor, as well as the secret board—including the helicopter plans—of the Red-Maskers.

"Biggest haul of the last twenty-five years!" chuckled Dempster.

"Pretty clever frame-up altogether!" said the "Bulldog." "The under-gardener at Ditchingham Manor must have got into the colonel's bed-room and doped him, and then obtained an impression of the safe keys. The Red Mask gang evidently had a confederate in the War Office. By the way, you had better come along to early breakfast at the colonel's place, Dempster, and collect the under-gardener," he added.

Colonel Jesper was an early riser, and, at the sound of car wheels, came out to meet them. At the sight of Baynton his face beamed.

"Believe in ghosts, colonel?" asked Holdfast sweetly.

"Of course not! Pack of stupid nonsense!" replied the bewildered soldier.

Harry Holdfast handed the colonel his papers.

"Well, anyway, a ghost had your plans," he said, "whether you believe it or not! The ghost of the gasometer!"

THE END.

(A specially written story, entitled, "A Scoop For Tony!" will appear next week. A free boxing photo of Arthur Wymms will also be given.)

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from page 608.)

"Jimmy, sir," he panted—"Jimmy's coming back?"

"Yes, Lovell."

"I knew—I knew he wasn't a thief, sir. I told you so."

"You were right, Lovell, as it proves," said Mr. Dalton quickly. "None can be blamed for the injustice done. The evidence was clear enough. Fortunately, the wretched boy who played this cruel, wicked trick confessed in time."

"Who was it, sir?" asked several voices.

"Mornington!"

And the name was repeated in a buzz.

"Jimmy—Jimmy, old chap!"

Lovell rushed at his chum. Jimmy Silver walked in at the gates of Roldwood between Bulkeley and Neill, the latter wheeling his bike. Jimmy had a dazed expression on his face. But he brightened, and looked out the old Jimmy again as Lovell rushed up and fairly hugged him.

"Jimmy, old infant," gasped Lovell. "I knew it was all lies Mornington's confessed, the rotten Oh, Jimmy—"

"Right as rain now, Jimmy!" said Raby, grabbing Jimmy's right hand while Newcome grabbed his left.

"Good old Jimmy!" roared the Classical Fourth. The whole Form had turned out to welcome their captain, and cheer him in his triumph progress across the quadrangle.

Jimmy Silver, feeling like a fellow in a dream, marched to the School House in the midst of a cheering crowd, and Mr. Dalton met him at the door with extended hand. The captain of the Fourth's eyes danced when he went into the Form-room with his comrades, the familiar of Form-room he had never expected enter again. It was like light after darkness, triumph and happiness after the bitterness of despair.

There was one place vacant in the Fourth Form room, the place of Valentine Mornington. And in his happiness Jimmy Silver could spare a thought of compassion to the wretched junior who had wronged him, but who had repented at its eleventh hour.

THE END.

(Next Monday's magnificent story is entitled, "The Rookwood Exit!" A real boxing photo of Arthur Wymms will be given FREE!)

Advertisement for a bicycle with a 400 Model, \$5.15 cash, 12 1/2 months payment, and 15 days free trial.

Advertisement for Sharp's Super-Kreem Toffee, featuring a letter from Sir Kreemy Knut's postbag and a parrot illustration.

Advertisement for 'The Triumph' telescope and watches, including 'Don't be Bullied' and 'Yours for 1/- only' offers.

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