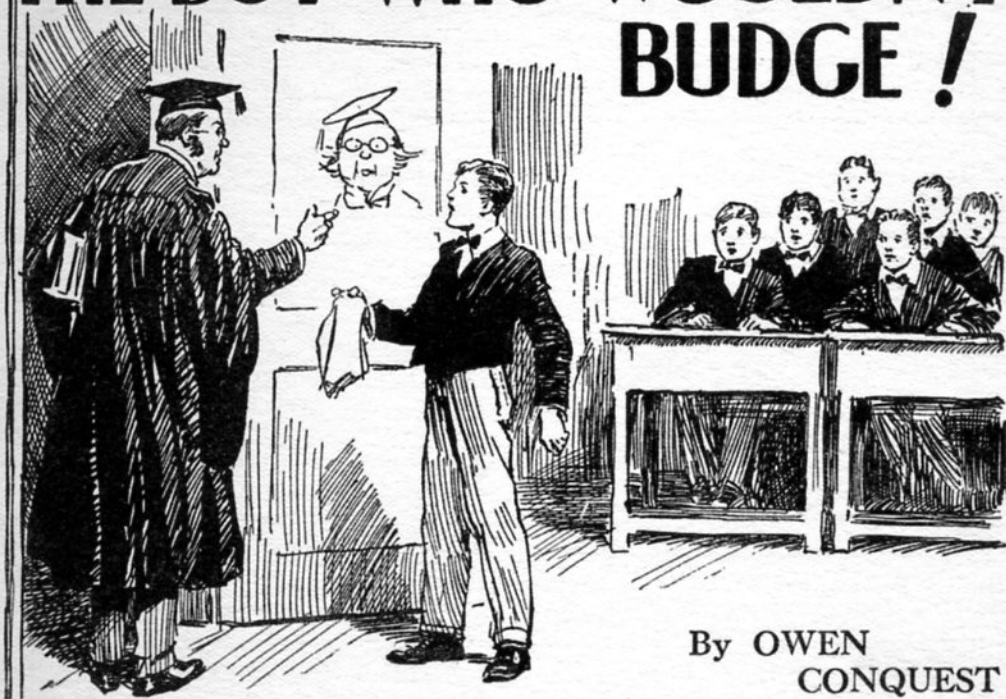


THE BOY WHO WOULDN'T BUDGE!



By OWEN
CONQUEST

THE FIRST CHAPTER

MR. BOOTLES IS WRATHY!

MORNY! It's rotten!" Kit Erroll, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, was speaking as Jimmy Silver & Co. came along the Form-room passage. It was close on time for afternoon classes, and the juniors were gathering round the doorway of the Fourth Form-room.

Mornington, with a stump of chalk in his hand, was scrawling on the big oak door, and some of the fellows were chuckling as they looked on. Only Erroll, Morny's best chum, was remonstrating, and Morny did

not heed what his chum was saying.

"What's Morny up to?" asked Jimmy Silver, as he joined the group.

"Playing the giddy goat!" said Erroll tartly. "Chuck it, Morny, you silly ass! Mr. Bootles will be coming in a few minutes."

A great yarn of the lively adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the popular chums of Rookwood School, starring Valentine Mornington in the role of "The Boy Who Wouldn't Budge"

"Let him come!" answered Mornington, without turning his head.

"There'll be a row!"

"Rats!"

"And it's rotten, anyway!"

"Rot!"

Jimmy Silver pushed through the crowd of Fourth-Formers, and looked over Mornington's shoulder. Then he frowned.

It was a caricature of Mr. Bootles, the respected master of the Fourth Form, that Morny was chalking on the oaken door.

Morny could draw well when he chose to take the trouble, and he was putting all his skill into this work of art. Lately, Mornington had been called rather severely to account by Mr. Bootles, owing to one of his periodical fits of slackness, and Morny resented being called to account for anything. He was now drawing the head and shoulders of Mr. Bootles, much to the entertainment of his Form-fellows. Probably nobody but Morny would have had the nerve to do it, when Mr. Bootles might have walked along the passage at any moment; but Morny was recklessness itself.

"Rather a likeness, what?" remarked Morny, with a grin at Jimmy Silver, as the captain of the Fourth looked over his shoulder.

But Jimmy Silver did not grin.

He liked and respected Mr. Bootles, and he was quite well aware that the Form-master's recent severity to Mornington was well deserved.

"Bosh!" said Jimmy. "Rub it out! What do you want to rag old Bootles for?"

"Because he's such a dashed old fossil!" grunted Mornington. "This will let him know what we think of him."

"We don't think anything of the kind of him."

"Well, I do!"

"You're an ass, then!"

"Thanks!"

Jimmy Silver pushed open the Form-room door, and Morny had to suspend his artistic work for a moment. But he resumed it, with the door open. The Fistical Four went into the Form-room, and most of the

juniors followed them. It was near time for Mr. Bootles to arrive, and they did not want to be on the spot when the Fourth Form-master discovered the caricature. Mild little gentleman as Mr. Bootles was, it was certain that he would be very angry.

Only Erroll remained with his wilful chum, watching him with great uneasiness.

There was no doubt that the caricature was comic, but it did not make Erroll smile. He was thinking of the wrath to come.

"There!" said Mornington, stepping back at last and surveying his handiwork with great satisfaction. "What do you think of that, old scout?"

"Rotten!"

"How complimentary you are!"

"You oughtn't to insult Mr. Bootles. He's a good sort."

"He caned me this morning."

"Well, you cheeked him."

"Erroll, old chap, you're a good boy, but you're too much given to preachin'!" yawned Mornington. "Let's go in before you get to seventhly."

"Let me rub that nonsense off the door first."

"Rot! Let it alone!"

Valentine Mornington took his chum's arm, and walked into the Form-room. The chalked caricature remained to greet Mr. Bootles' eyes when he arrived.

Mornington went to his place, but Erroll did not follow.

He took a duster from the black-board easel and turned back to the door.

Morny called out to him sharply.

"What are you goin' to do, you ass?"

"Save you from a flogging, fat-head!"



"Turn him out!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. In a moment half a dozen fellows rushed to Mornington's bed and rolled him out upon the floor. Bump! There was a loud howl from Morny as he landed.

"Look here——"

Mornington jumped up angrily as Erroll went towards the door. Jimmy Silver made a sign to his chums, and at the same moment he grasped Morny by the arm, and Lovell, Raby, and Newcome grasped him also. In the grip of the Fistical Four, Morny was held in his place.

He struggled angrily.

"Let me go, you fools!"

"No fear!"

Mornington sat helpless, gritting his teeth, while Erroll went to the door and began to rub at the chalked figure. But he was a little too late.

He had given one rub with the duster, when Mr. Bootles loomed up in the doorway.

Mr. Bootles blinked at the junior

over his spectacles, and then at the chalked caricature.

"Erroll!" he ejaculated.

"Oh! Yes, sir!" stammered Erroll.

"Stand back!"

The junior stood back, and Mr. Bootles approached the door more closely, peering at Morny's workmanship through his glasses.

His brow knitted.

Erroll had not had time with the duster, and Mr. Bootles had the pleasure—or otherwise—of surveying his own caricatured features. The likeness was quite near enough for recognition, though the features were comically exaggerated.

In the Form-room there was silence as of the tomb. Jimmy Silver & Co.

released Mornington, and sat down in their places. Morny shrugged his shoulders. Erroll's interference had come too late, and the storm was going to burst.

"So," said Mr. Bootles, in a very deep voice—"so, Erroll, this is how you show your respect for your Form-master!"

Erroll started.

Mr. Bootles, not unnaturally in the circumstances, had jumped to a wrong conclusion. All the other fellows being in their places, he took it for granted that Erroll was the author of the chalked caricature on the door.

"I—I was rubbing it out, sir!" stammered Erroll.

"No doubt. After amusing your Form-fellows in this disrespectful way, I have no doubt you wished to prevent me from seeing it. You may now rub it out, Erroll."

Erroll, with a crimson face, rubbed the chalk from the door. Mr. Bootles motioned him into the Form-room, and then followed him in.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

FOR ANOTHER'S FAULT!

THE Fourth Form looked on in silence.

Mr. Bootles, standing by his desk, fixed his eyes upon Erroll, who stood before him with downcast, crimson face.

Jimmy Silver glanced very expressively at Mornington.

It was for Morny to speak and remove the Form-master's misapprehension before punishment fell upon his chum. It was certain that Erroll would not explain.

But Mornington did not speak.

He looked on with a grim, sardonic smile. He shrugged his shoulders as he met Jimmy Silver's

glance, and that was all. Evidently he did not intend to own up.

Mr. Bootles broke the silence:

"Erroll!"

"Yes, sir?" faltered Erroll.

"I am very much surprised and shocked. I have always looked upon you, Erroll, as one of my best pupils, and I have certainly never suspected that you could be guilty of this utter want of proper respect. What reason have I given you, Erroll, for acting like this?"

Erroll did not speak. He did not even look at his chum.

He expected to hear Mornington's voice; but he did not hear it. He closed his lips a little. If Mornington chose to leave him to bear the blame, he would not speak.

"I am not surprised that you find nothing to say, Erroll," said Mr. Bootles, after a pause. "I trust you are properly ashamed of your action."

Erroll was still silent.

"I cannot allow this to pass," continued Mr. Bootles. "I do not wish to cane you, Erroll; but I cannot let this pass unpunished. You will be detained for your half-holiday tomorrow, and I shall set you a task in the Form-room. You may go to your place."

Without a word, Erroll went to his place.

He passed Mornington, and his eyes met his chum's for a moment. Morny smiled mockingly.

Erroll sat down quietly.

"Morny, you rotter!" breathed Lovell. "Get up on your hindlegs and own up, you cad!"

"Mind your own business!"

"Are you going to let Erroll——"

"Silence in the class!" rapped out Mr. Bootles.

And there was silence.

During lessons that afternoon there were a good many whispers in Mr. Bootles' class, and most of them reached Mornny's ears.

The Fourth Form did not leave him in any doubt as to their opinion of his conduct.

For a fellow to sit silent, while another fellow took his punishment, was quite against all the unwritten laws of Rookwood.

It was surprising, too, in Valentine Mornington. Mornny was too reckless to care much about punishment, and Erroll was his best chum. But the wilful and obstinate side of Mornny's rather peculiar nature was uppermost now. Erroll had chosen to interfere with him, and Erroll could take the consequences. That was how Mornny was looking at it; but it was a view with which nobody else in the Fourth was likely to sympathise.

After lessons, when Mr. Bootles dismissed the class, the juniors were surprised to see Erroll join his chum in the passage as usual. Perhaps Mornington was surprised, too, for he looked very curiously at Erroll's quiet face and compressed lips.

"You're in for it, old bird!" he remarked.

Erroll nodded.

"Latin conjugations to-morrow afternoon, instead of cricket," said Mornington.

"Yes."

"All your own fault, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"You don't mind?" grinned Mornington.

"No."

Mr. Bootles came along the passage, and passed the juniors, giving Erroll a rather grim glance as he passed. Poor Erroll was evidently in his Form-master's black books now.

When Mr. Bootles was gone, a good many of the juniors gathered round Mornington and Erroll. What had only been whispered in the Form-room could be said aloud in the passage, and it was said with emphasis.

"Mornny, you rotter——"

"Mornny, you sneak——"

"Mornny——"

"Hallo!" said Mornington agreeably. "What a rush for my society all at once! Dear boys, is anythin' the matter?"

"You know what's the matter!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Why didn't you own up when Bootles was ragging Erroll?"

"Is that a conundrum?"

"Are you going to let him be detained to-morrow afternoon in your place?" demanded Lovell hotly.

"Why not?"

"Why not?" repeated Lovell. "Why, if you do, you're a rotter—that's why not! And a cad! And a worm——"

"Don't run through the whole list, old top! You're eloquent, but you're rather a bore."

"Why, you—you——" stammered Lovell.

"I suppose this is one of your queer jokes, Mornny," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "But you can't let it go on. Erroll can't be detained to-morrow afternoon."

"Better tell Bootles so."

"You've got to tell Bootles the truth——"

"Rats!"

"You've got to own up, Mornny," said Jimmy Silver. "Not only because it's decent, but Erroll's in the eleven for the Bagshot match to-morrow, and he's wanted to play."

"Dear me!" said Mornington nonchalantly. "I'm afraid I'd quite

forgotten about the Bagshot match."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Lovell.

"Besides, I'm in the eleven, ain't I?" pursued Mornington. "If I'm detained instead, you lose a good man from the team."

"That's awkward!" said Jimmy. "It can't be helped, though. I'd rather lose you than Erroll."

"Thanks!"

"There's such a thing as justice, too, and fair play."

"Is there?" asked Mornington.

"To cut it short, are you going to Bootles to own up about that silly caricature?"

"No!"

With that, Valentine Mornington turned on his heel and walked out into the quadrangle.

A hiss followed him from the juniors.

Erroll, after some hesitation, went up the staircase to his study. The juniors remained in an excited group, discussing the situation. Jimmy Silver's brows were knitted in anger.

"He will have to own up, Jimmy," said Lovell. "We can't have Erroll left out of the game to-morrow."

Jimmy nodded.

"I can't understand Morny," he said. "He's never acted in this cad-dish way before. He's got his faults, and plenty of them; but a thing like this—it's rotten, mean!"

"Beastly!"

"Anyhow, he's got to own up, and get Erroll off. I'm not going to lose a good man out of the eleven to please him."

THE THIRD CHAPTER

A PECULIAR PAL

JIMMY SILVER left the end study after prep that evening and came along the passage towards the stairs. He stopped at the door of Study No. 4.

The door was half-open, and Mornington and Erroll could be seen, working at the study table.

There was no sign of trouble in the study.

Mornington's face wore its usual careless, nonchalant expression, and Erroll, though perhaps a little quieter than usual, did not look in any way resentful. Probably there was no other study at Rookwood where such an incident as that of the afternoon would not have caused a rift in the lute.

Both the juniors glanced up as Jimmy looked in.

"Hallo, old top!" said Mornington, pleasantly. "Done your prep?"

"Yes."

"Lucky bargee! You always get through before I do."

"I don't slack at it," said Jimmy drily.

Mornington smiled.

"A hit—a very palpable hit!" he remarked. "I stand corrected! If I could only follow your shining example——"

"Oh, don't rot! I looked in to speak to you——"

"Go ahead; no charge for admission."

"I'm putting Putty Grace into the eleven to-morrow, in your place."

"In Erroll's place, do you mean?"

"I mean what I say."

Mornington's brow darkened for a moment.

"Then I'm not playing?" he asked.

"You can't, when you will be detained."

"I'm not detained."

"You will be, when Mr. Bootles knows the facts."

"Are you goin' to tell him?" sneered Mornington.

"You are going to tell him," answered Jimmy Silver quietly.

"You've got the rest of the evening to do it in."

"And if I don't?"

"I hope you will!"

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" grinned Mornington. "But supposin', for the sake of argument, that I don't?"

"Then we shall talk to you in the dorm to-night."

"I understand. Go and eat coke!" said Mornington, and he turned back to his work.

"You've filled my place, Jimmy?" asked Erroll, as the captain of the Fourth was turning away.

"No; that's not necessary!"

"But I'm detained——"

"Mr. Bootles will let you off when he knows the facts of the case."

"But—but——"

"Morny's going to tell him," said Jimmy Silver.

And with that Jimmy walked away.

Erroll glanced at his chum for a moment, but Morny's eyes were bent on his books. He resumed his work, and for some time there was silence in Study No. 4.

Prep was over at last, however, and Mornington rose to his feet. He stood for some minutes leaning on the mantelpiece, regarding his chum with a curious glance.

A fat face grinned in at the doorway. It belonged to Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth.

"I say, Morn——"

"Cut!" snapped Mornington.

"You're going through it!" said



"For the last time, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver. "Will you own up to Mr. Bootles?" "Go and eat coke!" gasped Mornington, spread-eagled upon the bed. "Very well. Go it, Newcome!" Whack! Whack! Whack! The slipper rose and fell with resounding thwacks upon Mornington.

Tubby Muffin, impressively, wagging a podgy forefinger at the dandy of the Fourth. "If you don't own up, we're going to give you a high old time in the dorm to-night. We've been holding a meeting on the subject in the common-room, I can tell you, and——"

Mornington made an angry stride towards the door, and Tubby Muffin promptly backed into the passage.

"You wait for dorm, Morny!" he hooted. "You're going to be put through it. Yah! You beast!"

Tubby Muffin fled, just in time to escape a lunging boot. Mornington slammed the door of the study.

Erroll had risen from the table.

"Goin' down?" asked Mornington.

"May as well."

"Shall I come?"

"Of course!"

Mornington burst into a laugh.

"You're a queer fish, Erroll. Most fellows would be scrapping with me now, for what happened this afternoon."

"Perhaps I'm not like most fellows, then," said Erroll, with a faint smile. "I'm certainly not going to scrap with you, Morny!"

"You don't feel ratty?"

"No."

"You're missing a cricket match to-morrow."

"I suppose it can't be helped."

"Everybody else in the Fourth has been calling me some pretty names," grinned Mornington. "Haven't you any to add to the list?"

Erroll shook his head.

"I know you're only playing the goat," he said. "The fellows think you've acted meanly——"

"And you don't?"

"I think you're playing the goat, as I said. It's only your silly obstinacy. You're not afraid of a licking or detention. You'd have gone to Bootles

before this, but you've got your back up."

"They're goin' to rag me in the dorm to-night, if I don't go," remarked Mornington.

"Well, you can't blame them; they don't understand you as I do, and don't make allowances."

Mornington laughed and left the study. Erroll followed him, and they came into the junior common-room together.

It was a surprise to the juniors to see them still together, and on evidently friendly terms. Dark looks were cast at Valentine Mornington on all sides. He did not seem to observe them. He strolled carelessly into the room, and chatted with Erroll, apparently regardless of the fact that no one else spoke a word to him.

Bulkeley of the Sixth looked in at half-past nine, and there was a general move.

Then Jimmy Silver came over to Mornington.

"Have you been to Mr. Bootles?" he asked.

"Oh, no!"

"Then there's just time to cut in before dorm."

"Go hon!"

"Are you going?"

"Not at all!"

"Very well!" Jimmy Silver compressed his lips and turned away.

Mornington glanced at Erroll with a smile as the juniors crowded out of the common-room. Erroll's face was clouded. He knew what was going to happen in the dormitory, and he was deeply troubled, and Valentine Mornington sauntered into the Fourth Form dormitory with perfect coolness. Whatever was in store for him, there was no doubt that the dandy of the Fourth had nerve enough to go through with it.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER

BROUGHT TO BOOK

BULKELEY put out the light, and the door closed.

In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth all the juniors were in bed, and were supposed to be settled for the night.

But, though Bulkeley was not aware of the fact, they were very far from settled.

The prefect's footsteps had hardly died away down the passage, when Jimmy Silver sat up in bed.

"Ready, you fellows?" he called out softly.

"You bet!" came an emphatic grunt from the bed of Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Turn out!"

"What-ho!"

"Not too much row!" remarked Putty Grace. "We don't want Bulkeley coming back."

"Anybody got a candle?"

"Here you are!"

Four or five candle-ends were lighted, and they shed a glimmering light in the long, lofty dormitory.

The Fourth-Formers were quickly out of bed, with the exceptions of Valentine Mornington and Tubby Muffin. Tubby preferred to watch the proceedings from his bed, and Mornington appeared to be quite unconscious that anything unusual was going on. Jimmy Silver glanced at Erroll.

"You needn't take a hand in this, Erroll, if you don't like," he said.

"It's a Form ragging!" exclaimed Higgs. "Erroll ought to take a hand along with everybody else!"

"Rats! You can turn in now, Erroll."

Erroll shook his head, and sat on the edge of his bed. Certainly he was not likely to take a hand in

ragging his chum; and still more certainly he could not hope to be able to help him. Mornington had brought down his punishment upon himself, and there was no averting it.

Erroll's quiet face expressed only distress.

"Mornington!"

Morny did not move or speak.

"Get up, Morny!" rapped out Conroy.

No answer.

"Turn him out!" said Jimmy Silver.

Morny's lofty indifference to their proceedings had a rather exasperating effect upon the juniors. They were not prepared to stand any of Morny's superb loftiness just then.

Half a dozen fellows rushed to his bed and rolled him out, bed-clothes and all, upon the floor.

Bump!

There was a howl from Valentine Mornington as he landed. It was rather a concussion upon the hard floor.

"He, he, he!" chortled Tubby Muffin. "Give him beans!"

"Stand up, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver.

Mornington struggled in the bed-clothes. For a moment his face was like that of a demon. All the evil in his nature—and there was a good deal of it—was aroused just then.

He scrambled to his feet, and looked for a moment as if he would rush at the juniors, hitting out right and left.

But he controlled himself.

His indifferent manner returned, and he stood with his hands folded across his chest, an insolent smile on his face.

"Well, what's this kid's game?" he inquired, with a sneer.

"Kid's game! I'll give you kid's game!" howled Lovell. "I'll——"

"Order!" rapped out Jimmy Silver. "This isn't a dog fight, old chap. Mornington, you know what the Form expects you to do."

"Blessed if I care."

"You chalked a silly picture of Mr. Bootles to-day, and he thought it was Erroll's work, and detained him for it," said Jimmy. "It was up to you to speak up at the time."

"Any decent fellow would have done it!" growled Lovell.

"You didn't do it, Morny," continued Jimmy Silver. "You've been given all the evening, and you haven't done it. If you choose to act rot-tenly towards your own chum it's your business; but, as it happens, Erroll's wanted in the cricket eleven to-morrow. That makes a difference. Erroll's got to be let off."

"I—I say, you could fill my place, Jimmy!" interrupted Erroll.

"I dare say I could, but I'm not going to," answered the captain of the Fourth. "I'm not going to leave one of the best bats out of the game because Mornington doesn't choose to do the right thing. I'm skipper of the eleven—not Morny, and Morny can't run the show at his own sweet will. Now, Morny, we don't want to take rough measures——"

"Oh, don't mind me!" yawned Mornington.

"Will you promise to go to Mr. Bootles in the morning and tell him the facts, and see Erroll clear?"

"No."

Morny's answer came short and sharp, and there was an angry buzz from the Fourth-Formers.

Several of the juniors made a movement towards Mornington, who stared at them with angry defiance. But Jimmy waved them back.

"Hold on! Give him a chance!" he said. "Morny, will you do the sensible thing? You don't want the whole Form to despise you as a sneaking cad——"

"Oh, I don't mind!"

"If you don't care what Rookwood thinks of you——"

"Not a bit!"

"Very well," said Jimmy, as there was another angry growl. "If that's so, we may as well get to business. You're going to be ragged till you promise to own up to Bootles in the morning."

"Rats!"

"'Nuff jaw!" howled Arthur Edward Lovell angrily. "Collar the cad, and put him through it!"

"Collar him!" said Jimmy Silver.

And there was a rush.

Mornington's hands went up like lightning, and he hit out furiously as the juniors closed round him.

Arthur Edward Lovell was the first to reach him, and he was met with a drive on the point of the jaw that sent him spinning. Lovell crashed into Jimmy Silver, and bowled him over, and they went to the floor together.

Raby was down, and Newcome staggered—but then a drive from Conroy flung Mornington across his bed.

The next moment five or six pairs of hands were upon him, and he was secured.

Jimmy Silver scrambled up.

"Ow! Ow! Ow!" came from Arthur Edward Lovell. He sat on the floor, nursing his chin. "Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Mornington was struggling furiously. Jimmy Silver ran to grasp him; but the dandy of the Fourth had no chance. Lovell staggered up, and, holding his chin with one hand,

held Morny's neck with the other. The dandy of the Fourth gasped helplessly.

"Hang you! Let me go! Hang you!"

"Keep the cad pinned!" said Jimmy Silver. "Hallo! Keep off, Erroll, you ass! What do you want?"

Erroll, with pale, set face, shoved into the group.

breathless. Then they gathered round Valentine Mornington again.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER

A FORM RAGGING!

MORNINGTON stood in the midst of his captors, his face flushed crimson, and his eyes glittering. He was still feebly resisting, and the juniors had to keep a firm grasp on him. But no cry had left Morny's



With socks, towels and slippers raining on him from both sides, the hapless Mornington had to run. Panting savagely he staggered through the juniors, dazed by the many swipes. His caddish action was costing him dear.

"Let Morny alone!" he said. "He's my pal, and I'm standing by him. Let him go!"

"You silly ass! Stand back!"

"Sheer off!"

Erroll shoved on, and four or five fellows collared him, rushed him back to his bed, and hurled him upon it,

lips. One shout would have brought a prefect to the dormitory; but Morny did not think of uttering it. Wilful and wrong-headed as he was, he was "game" all through.

"Now, you silly, cheeky ass!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Now you're going to get your ragging! You'll

get it till you give your word to own up to Bootles in the morning. Lay him across his bed, you fellows! Did you bring the slipper, Newcome?"

"Here it is!"

"Good! Lay it on while I count!"

"You bet!"

Mornington struggled desperately as he was laid face down on his bed. But resistance was vain with each arm and leg held in three or four hands. He was spread-eagled on the bed, and Newcome stood over him with the slipper.

"For the last time, Morny!" said Jimmy Silver.

Mornington gasped.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Very well. Go it, Newcome!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack!

Newcome "went it" with a vim. The slipper rose and fell with sounding thwacks upon Mornington.

Whack! Whack! Whack!

Mornington set his teeth hard.

His pride would not allow him to utter a cry. But the castigation was not easy to endure in silence. "Slippering" was a severe form of punishment, very nearly as severe as a flogging from the Head.

With his teeth shut hard, Morny bore it in savage silence.

"Fifty!" counted Jimmy Silver. "Chuck it, Newcome. Now, will you do as the Form wants, Morny?"

"No!" choked Mornington.

"Give him another fifty!" said Higgs.

"He, he, he! Give him five hundred!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "The cheeky rotter hasn't yelled yet. It's like his cheek not to yell!"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

Fifty "whacks" with a slipper was a severe punishment, and he would have given a good deal for Morny to abandon his attitude of wrong-headed,

obstinate defiance. But nothing, evidently, was further from Mornington's thoughts.

"Am I to go on?" asked Newcome.

"A dozen more," said Jimmy Silver at last.

The slipper rose and fell.

Still no sign from Mornington—no sign and no sound. Newcome gave the last strokes lightly, in spite of himself. He was as exasperated as anyone by the obstinacy of a fellow who was utterly in the wrong; but he could not help admiring Morny's grim pluck and endurance.

"That will do," said Jimmy uneasily. "Let the silly ass go!"

"But he hasn't promised——" began Lovell.

"If he doesn't, he shall run the gauntlet."

"Good!"

Mornington was released, and he rolled, panting, off the bed, and stood rather unsteadily. Erroll came quickly towards him.

"Morny——"

"Leave me alone!" muttered Mornington. "I won't promise, and I won't do anythin' I don't choose—not if I'm cut in pieces! So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Jimmy Silver!"

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"You'll run the gauntlet next, then," he said.

"I won't stir!"

"We'll see about that," said the captain of the Fourth curtly. "Form up, you fellows!"

"Jimmy——" began Erroll appealingly.

"Shut up! Stand back, Erroll!"

Erroll was pushed back, and the juniors formed up in a double row for the "run." Even Tubby Muffin turned out of bed, and stuffed a sock

to have his "whack" at the victim. Mornington did not move as he was called upon to run.

"You hear, Morny?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Go and eat coke!"

"Start him!" said Jimmy.

Conroy and Pons collared the obstinate junior without ceremony, and flung him between the waiting rows.

The fellows nearest to Morny started lashing out with socks and towels and slippers, and the hapless dandy of the Fourth had to run. He panted along savagely, with swipes raining on him from both sides. Tubby Muffin, in his eagerness, overshot the mark, and missed Mornington, and caught Higgs of the Fourth upon the nose with his stuffed sock. There was a bellow from Higgs, and he rushed upon the fat Classical, who fled frantically among the beds.

Mornington staggered on, with raining blows descending on him, and as he reached the end of the lines he staggered and fell.

Erroll ran to his aid.

"Now——" began Lovell.

Arthur Edward was interrupted. The door of the dormitory opened, and Bulkeley of the Sixth appeared in the doorway. "Running the gauntlet" was rather a noisy form of ragging, and the commotion in the dormitory had reached other ears.

"What the thump——" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily, as he surveyed the startling scene in the glimmering candle-light.

"Cave!" howled Putty.

The juniors bolted to their beds, like rabbits to their burrows.

Tubby Muffin, thus providentially rescued from the vengeance of Alfred Higgs, plunged into bed, and drew the blankets over him, bursting into

a snore as he did so. Tubby thought that that snore showed great presence of mind.

Bulkeley strode into the dormitory.

Only Erroll and Mornington remained out of bed. Erroll was helping his chum to his feet.

"Well, what do you mean by this row after lights out?" demanded the captain of Rookwood.

"Ahem! Only a—a—a little rag, Bulkeley," murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Do you know it's nearly ten o'clock?" snapped Bulkeley.

"Ahem!"

"Get into bed, Mornington, and Erroll."

"Certainly, old top!" answered Mornington, with all his old coolness, and he limped to his bed.

"Now, what is all this about?" demanded Bulkeley.

No reply.

Some of the fellows expected Morny to speak, but he did not. As in the Form-room that afternoon, he disappointed expectation, though in a different way.

"Well, turn in!" growled Bulkeley. "Every kid in this dormitory will take two hundred lines!"

"Oh!"

"And if there's another sound from this room to-night, I shall come back with a cane, and then——"

Bulkeley did not complete the sentence; he left the rest to the imagination of the juniors.

He collected up the candle-ends, blew them out, and quitted the dormitory.

Tubby Muffin ceased to snore.

"I say, who's going to do my lines?" Muffin inquired. "Are you going to do them, Jimmy? I was only backing you up, you know."

"B-r-r-r-r!"

"I say, let's make Morny do the

lot," said Tubby. "It's all Morny's fault, you know!"

"Are we going on, Jimmy?" asked Lovell.

"No. Bulkeley will be keeping his ears open after this," answered Jimmy Silver. "Besides, Mornington's had enough."

"But he hasn't promised to own up to Bootles."

"I know. There's a limit, though," said Jimmy. "He's had a Form-ragging, and a jolly good one. I'm done with him!"

And with that, Jimmy Silver turned his head on the pillow to sleep. The rest of the Fourth followed his example; but it was a long time before sleep came to Valentine Mornington.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER

MORNY'S LITTLE WAY

JIMMY SILVER did not speak to Mornington, or look at him, when the Classical Fourth turned out the next day.

Some of the juniors were inclined to renew the ragging; but Jimmy set his face against that, and he had his way.

Mornington had sinned against the laws and customs of the Rookwood Fourth, and he had had his punishment; and there, so far as Jimmy Silver was concerned, the matter ended.

Mornington strolled elegantly out of the dormitory, his easy manner not betraying in the least that he was feeling severely the effects of the overnight's ragging.

Some dark glances were cast after him, and that was all.

"He ought to have another dose of the same medicine!" muttered Arthur Edward Lovell gruffly.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"It wouldn't make any difference,"

he said. "Morny is as obstinate as a mule. He's had his medicine. The trouble is that I shall have to fill Erroll's place in the team. There isn't another man as good!"

"What about little me?" grinned Newcome.

"Next best!" said Jimmy. "If Morny doesn't do the decent thing, you'll have to go in instead of Erroll, Newcome!"

"Then I'll look for my bat!"

Jimmy Silver had little hope now that Mornington would do the decent thing, as he termed it. He was almost inclined to explain to Mr. Bootles himself how the matter stood; but that was not quite feasible. He gave Morny a grim look when they went into the Form-room for morning lessons, and the dandy of the Fourth came to him.

"You've decided not to play me to-day, Silver?" Mornington asked.

"Quite!" said Jimmy curtly.

"Why lose two men instead of only one?"

"Grace can take your place pretty well; and you know that you ought to be detained instead of Erroll. I'm leaving you free to do what is right."

"Oh, rats!"

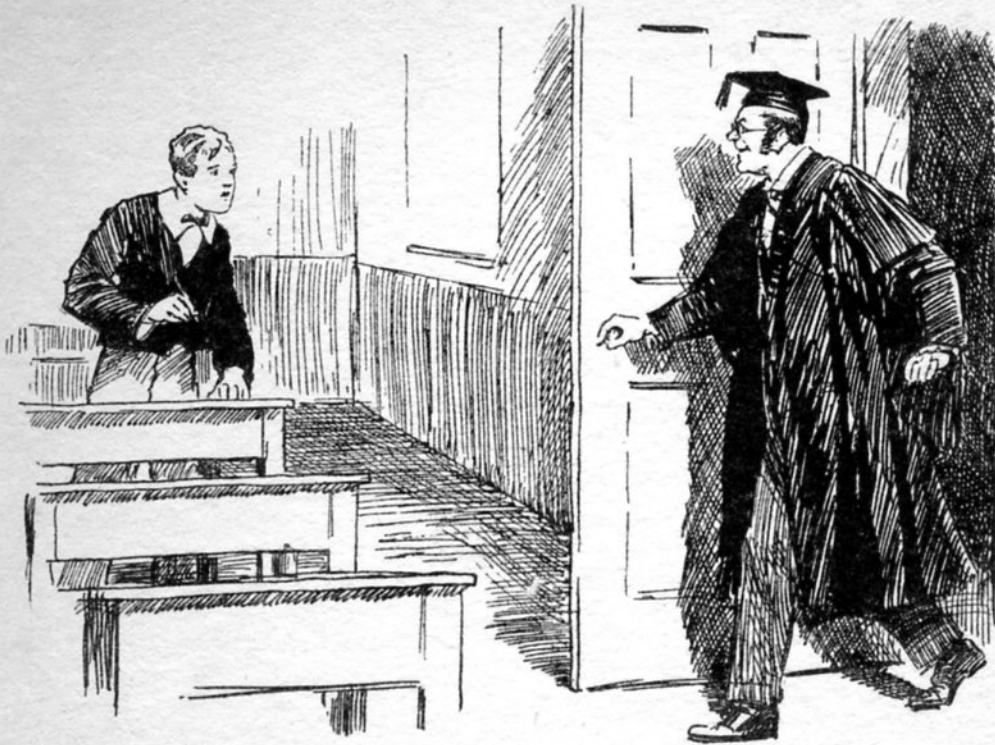
Jimmy Silver turned his back on him, and went to his place. He had had enough of Mornington just then.

Mr. Bootles came into the Form-room, and the buzz of talk among the juniors ceased. It was noticeable that Mr. Bootles had lost his usual urbanity in dealing with Erroll. He had not forgotten the incident of the previous day.

When lessons were over, and the Fourth Form were going out, Mr. Bootles called to the junior in disgrace.

"Erroll!"

"Yes, sir."



"Erroll!" Kit Erroll started to his feet as Mr. Bootles came into the room. "Yes, sir?" "You foolish boy!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles. "Why did you not tell me the facts yesterday? I could not guess that you were shielding another. Mornington has confessed to me!"

"You will come to the Form-room at two o'clock, and I shall set you your task. You will remain till five."

"Very well, sir!" said Erroll quietly.

And he followed the rest out of the Form-room.

"And you're going to let him be detained, you utter rotter!" Lovell muttered fiercely to Mornington, in the passage.

Mornington did not seem to hear. He walked away with his hands in his pockets, whistling.

He came into dinner later with a smiling face.

Unpopularity is not easy or pleasant to bear, as a rule; but to judge from

Morny's looks, he really appeared to be enjoying it.

After dinner, Jimmy Silver & Co. gave their attention to preparations for the cricket match. The Bagshot cricketers were expected at two o'clock and the game was to begin very soon after.

Kit Erroll stood in the School House doorway, watching the cricketers as they started for Little Side, with a clouded brow. It was not pleasant to give up a cricket match on a sunny afternoon for detention in a dusky old Form-room and grinding Latin. And he knew, too, that his presence was required on the cricket field. But it could not be helped, and he turned away with a sigh.

He was in the Form-room at two punctually, and Mr. Bootles came in a minute later and found him there. With a cold face and freezing voice, the Form-master set him his task. Mr. Bootles was very much offended, and he did not conceal that fact. And Erroll, painful as it was to him to fall in the opinion of a master he liked and respected, could not explain. It was for Mornington to explain; and Morny had declined.

"You will remain till five, Erroll!" concluded Mr. Bootles. "I shall expect your task to be completed by that time."

"Very well, sir!"

Mr. Bootles rustled out of the Form-room.

Erroll rose and glanced from the window, which gave a view of a part of the cricket ground. The green field was dotted with white-clad figures, and a crowd of fellows was gathering to watch the game. Bagshot had just arrived, and Jimmy Silver was greeting Pankley and Poole. Erroll gazed at them for a minute or two, and then returned quietly to his desk. As he sat down, he became aware that the Form-room door was half open, and that Mornington was standing there, regarding him with an amused grin.

"Been lookin' at the cricket—like cheery old Moses on the mountain lookin' at the Promised Land!" grinned Mornington. "Feelin' pretty down—what?"

"A little," said Erroll.

"All my fault—what?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you row with me?"

Erroll smiled.

"I don't want to row, Morny. Clear off, there's a good fellow, and let me get to work. I've got a certain amount to grind through."

"Best wishes for a happy after-

noon!" grinned Mornington, and he strolled out of the Form-room whistling.

Erroll set patiently to work.

He had always borne with his chum with a patience the other fellows found a little difficult to understand; and perhaps, at this moment, Erroll wondered whether he was a little too patient with Mornington. Friendship, even such deep and sincere friendship as his own, had its limits. Mornington was not likely to keep another friend. But that reflection was enough to determine Erroll to be loyal to his trying chum. With a clouded brow he worked at Latin; but his thoughts were with the fellows on the cricket field.

"Erroll!"

Erroll started to his feet as Mr. Bootles came hastily into the Form-room.

"Yes, sir?"

"You foolish boy!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, in a moved voice. "Why did you not tell me the facts yesterday? I could not guess that you were shielding another!"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Erroll. "You—you know——"

Mr. Bootles gave him a very kind smile.

"Mornington has just come to my study and confessed," he replied. "It seems that it was Mornington who chalked that disrespectful picture on the door, and you were only trying to save him from his foolishness, when I came in, and supposed—— You should have told me, Erroll!"

"I—I——"

"However, I understand your motives," said Mr. Bootles kindly. "You may go, Erroll. Your detention is, of course, cancelled."

"Thank you, sir!" stammered Erroll.

His face was very bright now.

It was not only that he was free to join the cricketers; but his chum had done the right thing; that was what made Erroll's face flush with pleasure.

Mornington followed the Form-master into the room. Erroll's sentence had been transferred to him; he had expected that. He grinned at his chum as Erroll came from his desk.

"Cut off!" he whispered. "They are just goin' to begin!"

"Morny, old chap, I'm awfully glad you——"

"Glad you're goin' to play cricket? Cut off, then!"

"Glad you've done the right thing, Morny. I was wrong to doubt you for a moment."

Morny's face softened.

"I was only keepin' it up to show I didn't care for their silly raggin'. You should have known that——"

"I did know it, Morny——"

"Mornington!" It was Mr. Bootles' voice.

"Yes, sir."

Erroll hurried from the Form-room, with a last grateful glance at his chum.

As he went, he heard Mr. Bootles' voice instructing Mornington in the task that was to occupy him till five o'clock. With a light heart, Erroll ran down to the cricket field.

Jimmy Silver and Kit Erroll were at the wickets, in Rookwood's second innings, when Mornington strolled down to the cricket field a few minutes after five.


"How's it goin', Newcome?" drawled Morny, joining that youth by the ropes.

Newcome nodded to him. Erroll's presence in the team was a sufficient indication that Morny had done the right thing, and Newcome only wondered why he had not done it earlier.

"We made seventy-five in the first innings, to their eighty. Then they made sixty in their second innings, and we are sixty-two, with three wickets to fall," said Newcome.

"Good egg! We're goin' to win!" said Mornington, cheerfully. "Oh, well hit, Erroll! Well hit, old man!"

And Valentine Mornington joined loudly in the ringing cheer that greeted the winning hit.



THE END

THE CHANT OF A CHEERFUL CHUMP

By TEDDY GRACE,

The Joker of Rookwood.



I WONDER why some fellows think
A joker hasn't any wits?
When I put gum in Lovell's ink
I thought he'd laugh himself to fits;
Instead of that, he blacked my eye!
I wonder why!

I wonder why a booby-trap
Annoys the ass it falls upon?
The sight is funny for a chap
Who's standing by and looking on!
I often shake my head and sigh
And wonder why!

When Tubby ate a doughnut, which
Had mustard and not jam inside,
His burning features were so rich
I thought he'd laugh until he cried!
And yet he didn't even try!
I wonder why!

Old Dalton is a cheerful chap;
I thought he'd like my little tricks;
Yet when a toad jumped in his lap,
He called me out and gave me six!
Indeed, he smote me hip and thigh!
I wonder why!

When someone put in Carthew's bed
A painted rubber rattlesnake,
He came along and punched my head;
In fact, he did not seem to take
The joke like a good-humoured guy!
I wonder why!

And yet some fellows, I agree,
Are brainless fatheads at the game;
My study-mates fixed up for me
A booby-trap, and down it came!
I saw them cackling on the sly—
I wonder why!