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GRAND CINEMA SERIAL AND COMPLETE SCHOOL STORIES.



BILLY BUNTER POSES FOR HIS PHOTOGRAPH!

(An Exciting Scene in the Magnificent Long Complete School Tale of the Chums of Greyfriars.)



MORNINGTON'S PLOT!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. No Room for Mornington!

FLYNN in goal!" said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome nodded.

They were helping the junior captain of Rookwood with the footer list—at all events, they were listening to his remarks and nodding assent.

One of the big matches of the season was due on the following day, and Jimmy Silver was going over the list for the last time.

After tea it was to be posted on the board for all Rookwood to read—for the Lower Forms to read, at least. Great and important as the matter was, it was not likely to interest the Fifth and Sixth very much. But of the juniors there was hardly a fellow who was not looking forward keenly to the posting of the footer list. Fellows who had no chance whatever of getting into the team to play St. Jim's hoped against hope that they might, after all, find their names in the list.

For Jimmy Silver was a first-rate footer captain, and was certain to look for talent wherever he could find it—either on the Classical or the Modern side. So every fellow who felt an inward conviction that he was a budding International hoped that Jimmy Silver's well-known good judgment would lead him to the same opinion.

"Backs—Raby and Jones minor," said Jimmy.

"Hear, hear!" said Raby. "One's jolly good, anyway!"

"Halves—Rawson, self, and Doyle," said Jimmy. "Centre-half is about my mark, I think."

"Doyle's a Modern bouncer!" grunted Lovell.

"He's a good half," said Jimmy; "and the Moderns have got to have a show in the team, anyway."

"Yes. It's rotten, but I suppose so. Where do I come in?" asked Lovell.

"Forwards—Oswald, Lovell, Tommy Dodd, Towle, and Cook," pursued Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, and where do I come in?" demanded Newcome warmly.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"You don't come in at all, old chap."

"Well, my lad!"

"Football comes before friendship," explained Jimmy Silver. "I've left you out to put Towle in."

"Left me out for a measly Modern!"

"Yes. You'll have to wire in, you know. But I couldn't pass over Towle, could I?"

"This study ought to be always in the eleven," said Lovell, with a shake of the head.

"Quite so," agreed Jimmy Silver. "But this study will have to be the best of the bunch in that case. And at present Towle is rather ahead of Newcome."

"I don't quite see that," remarked Newcome.

"But it is so, old fellow."

"Br-r-r!"

"I think that's about the best team we could get together," said Jimmy. "Smythe & Co. will be snorting about the Shell being left out. But the Shell will have to buck up if they want to play for Rookwood. Mornington and his pals will be raging, too. Can't be helped."

"Mornington's been shaping jolly well at the footer," remarked Lovell. "Some of the fellows expect him to play."

"Blessed are those that don't expect, then," said Jimmy calmly. "Mornington doesn't play in my team."

"He makes out that you only play your own pals."

"Well, I'm playing four Moderns," said Jimmy, "and I've left out one of my own pals—Newcome. Morny can say what he likes. I'm sorry, Newcome, old chap, but it can't be helped, you know. Don't you begin to jaw me, as the others will."

Newcome grinned.

"Oh, all serene! I think you're an ass, that's all."

"So will twenty other chaps when they see the list," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Can't expect more than eleven chaps to be satisfied with a footer team, really. I suppose Jones minor will tell me he's best at centre-forward, and Doyle will suggest changing with me at centre-half. Never mind; it's all in the day's work. Hallo! Come in!" added Jimmy, as there was a tap at the door.

Mornington of the Fourth came into the study.

"List not posted up yet?" he remarked.

The dandy of the Fourth spoke quite agreeably, apparently oblivious of the fact that he was on the worst of terms with Jimmy Silver. When it suited him, Mornington could drop the superciliousness of his usual manner.

"Just going to take it down," said Jimmy.

"My name in it?"

"No."

Mornington's eyes glittered.

"You're leaving me out, then?" he asked.

"I don't know about that. I'm certainly not putting you in."

"May I look at the list?"

"Certainly!"

Mornington ran his eye over the names.

"You've seen me at practice," he said very quietly. "I ask you candidly, Jimmy Silver, do you think Towle is a better forward than I am?"

"No."

"But you've put him in and left me out!"

"Exactly."

"Is that what you call playing the game?"

"Quite," said Jimmy Silver, undisturbed.

"I've put Towle in because he's a good footballer and plays the game. He won't keep the ball to himself whenever he has a chance, and muck up the game for the rest. He won't try to bring off risky shots from the touchline to cover himself with glory, instead of centring when he ought to centre. He won't go all out for limelight, and let the game go hang. You would."

Lovell & Co. chuckled. Jimmy Silver's plain speaking tickled them.

"You'd be a better man than Towle if you played the game," continued Jimmy Silver.

"But you don't. I think you can't, in fact. You played me too many dirty tricks for me to trust you. Once bit, twice shy, you know."

"You mean that I'm not going to have a chance in the footer because we're on bad terms personally?" sneered Mornington.

Jimmy yawned.

"You can think so if you like," he remarked. "You know it isn't true; but you can think so. I don't mind."

"I've heard how you used to gird at Smythe when he was skipper, before I came, for makin' up a team of his own pals," said Mornington. "You're doin' the same."

"Not quite. But I don't mind you thinkin' so," said Jimmy blandly. "It's a free country, and you can think what you like."

Mornington clenched his hands hard. It was not easy to "draw" the imperturbable Jimmy.

"Does that mean that I'm not going to have a chance?" he asked.

"You won't play for Rookwood so long as I'm skipper unless we have a mighty big change in your manners and customs," said Jimmy. "We play footer matches to win, you know; not to give a swanking ass chances to show off to the gallery."

"It's no good my telling you I'll play up my best for Rookwood?"

"No good at all. If anything happened to upset your majestic serenity, you'd be quite capable of giving the game away out of sheer malice."

"So I'm left out?"

"Exactly!"

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"Well, I'm going to play," he said. Jimmy whistled.

"I'm goin' to play in the St. Jim's match," said Mornington deliberately. "So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Jimmy Silver!"

"And how are you going to manage it?" grinned Lovell.

"That's my bizney! But you can't pass over me like this. I'm not standin' it."

"Bow-wow!" grunted Raby. "What do you care for footer, anyway? Smoking cigarettes and playing nap is more in your line. Go back to your smokes, and shut up!"

"Hang the footer!" said Mornington coolly.

"But I'm not goin' to be passed over—that's my point. I'm goin' to play in the St. Jim's match."

And the dandy of the Fourth turned on his heel and strode out of the study. He left the Fistical Four chuckling. Mornington was a determined fellow, and he was known to be unscrupulous and to stick at little in gaining his ends. But it was really a little difficult to see how he was going to play in the St. Jim's match without the consent of the skipper.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Morny's Little Game.

ROTTEN!"

"Beastly shame, you know!"

"Just like Jimmy Silver!"

It was Wednesday, and morning lessons were over at Rookwood.

Immediately after dinner the Rookwood footballers were to start for St. Jim's. It was a good journey, and there was no time to waste.

Mornington's pals, the elegant Nuts of Rookwood, were sauntering in the quad, with the dandy of the Fourth, waiting for the dinner-bell. They were full of sympathy. Townsend and Topham, Peete and Gower, did

not understand or share Morny's desire to shine as a footballer, certainly. They regarded football as a beastly fag, and "dodged" the practice whenever they could. But as Mornington wanted to play in the junior eleven, they agreed that it was a rotten shame that he was excluded, and that it was like Jimmy Silver's cheek to exclude a member of their noble society.

But while they sympathised with Mornington, they "rubbed it in" a little. Even his own dear pals and faithful followers were not sorry to see that the lofty Morny could not have everything his own way.

And so they smiled as they made their sympathetic remarks.

Mornington was looking grim.

"I'm playin' all the same," he said.

Townsend winked at Topham, with the eye that was furthest from Mornington.

"Playin' all the same, Morny?"

"Yes."

"Without Silver's permission?"

"Yes."

"By gad! How are you goin' to do it?"

"You fellows are goin' to help."

"Any old thing," said Peele. "But I don't see—"

"The team's goin' over by train," said Mornington quietly. "It's a rather expensive journey, you know, and nobody else is goin'. Only Newcome. They generally have a crowd to watch them when they go to Bagshot, or any place near. But a railway journey to St. Jim's is rather a big order for the pleasure of standin' about with cold feet."

The Nuts chuckled.

"But we're goin'," added Mornington.

"We are?"

"Exactly!"

"My dear chap," protested Townsend, "we're not, you know. I'm not goin' to take a journey like that. No fear. Too faggin'. And I don't want to watch 'em play. I don't care a merry copper whether they beat St. Jim's or not."

"Same here," said Gower. "What's the good of wastin' money on railway tickets to watch those duffers faggin' after a muddy ball?"

"I shall stand the tickets, of course," said Mornington, "and anythin' else that turns up."

"Well, that's all right; but it's wastin' an afternoon," urged Townsend. "We're goin' to get up a game of bridge in Smythe's study, too."

"Bridge can wait," said Mornington coolly. "We're not goin' over to watch them play, of course. It's a wheeze."

"Blest if I see it."

"Only Newcome's goin' over with the team. If anything happened to any of the players, that means only one reserve for Jimmy Silver to call in."

"But nothin' will happen to them," said Townsend in astonishment.

"They won't fall out an' break their necks to please you, Morny. They won't, you know," argued Topham.

"At least two of them won't turn up at St. Jim's," said Mornington calmly. "Two, at least, will get left behind somewhere. Jimmy Silver can call in Newcome, but he'll still be a man short. He will have to play me."

"Oh!" ejaculated Townsend.

He understood now the cunning scheme that was working in Mornington's brain.

Certainly Jimmy Silver was not likely to be on his guard against tricks of that kind.

"Oh, my hat!" said Peele, with a whistle.

"They have to change trains twice, at least," said Mornington. "There's a good wait at each place. I've looked up the trains. Easy as winkin' for a chap to get left at the last minute—with somebody to help him."

"Oh, by gad!"

And a later train wouldn't be any good. A chap left behind would come on too late for the match. I don't mean you're to collar 'em by the neck and drag 'em out of the train," grinned Mornington. "It's all goin' to be done under the rose, of course. First change at Rookham, with ten minutes to wait. Well, when they're catchin' the second train one of you gets into a fight with one of them, and that one loses the train! What!"

"Oh!"

"Same thing happens at Laxham, and Jimmy Silver finds himself two men short at St. Jim's. Plays Newcome and me," smiled Mornington. "One man short wouldn't do. He'd play Newcome, not me. But two does the trick."

"Well, you are a deep-bonder, and no mistake!" said Townsend admiringly. "I don't see why it shouldn't work."

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"It will work, of course. I mean it to work," said Mornington arrogantly; "and at St. Jim's, even if Jimmy Silver didn't want to play me, the fellows would make him. The match will be touch-and-go, anyway, and playin' a man short simply means askin' for a lickin'."

"No doubt about that," chuckled Peele.

"And Jimmy Silver will be dished this time," said Mornington.

"Ha, ha!"

"But—but he'll smell a rat," said Gower. "He'll tumble to it that you've worked it, Morny!"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Let him!"

"Hallo, there's the dinner-bell!"

The Nuts of the Fourth went in to dinner. They were grinning with great delight over Mornington's precious plan. It really looked as if Jimmy Silver did not know that anybody else was accompanying the team.

But when the dozen juniors started from Rookwood to walk down to the station at Coombe five more fellows joined them.

Jimmy regarded the Nuts with surprise.

"Coming to see us off?" he asked.

"Comin' to see the match," said Townsend.

"What!"

"I suppose you'd like some Rookwood chaps there, to cheer your goals? What!" grinned Topham.

"You're going to make that journey to watch the game?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, the Rookwood centre-forward.

"Yaas."

"Blest if I know why you don't take up footer, then, if you're so jolly interested in the matches," said the Modern junior, puzzled.

"I suppose we can come? What!" said Mornington.

"Certainly!" said Jimmy Silver. "No harm in your coming. You're not asking the club to pay your fares, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha!"

The footballers were considerably puzzled. As a rule, the Nuts, of the Fourth did not even turn up to see the home matches. It was astounding that they should make a long railway journey to see an away match. Still, Jimmy was willing to regard it as a sign of grace; and he had no objection to Morny & Co. accompanying the team.

The party arrived at Coombe, and swarmed into the train for Rookham, the junction where the first change was made.

Morny & Co. travelled in a first-class carriage by themselves. Jimmy Silver and his team, who saw no object in wasting money, travelled third.

But they met again when the train stopped at Rookham, where there was ten minutes for the party to wait.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Left Behind.

"PUT that out, you ass!"

The Rookwood juniors were waiting on the platform at Rookham, when Townsend selected a cigarette from his case, and lighted it.

Jimmy Silver snapped at once.

He had no mind for the Rookwood party to be made ridiculous in the public eye by the nutty manners and customs of the giddy goats of Rookwood.

"Oh, rot!" said Townsend airily. "Why shouldn't a fellow smoke?"

"Well, one reason is that it makes you look a silly ass, and us, too, as we're with you!" growled Lovell. "Put it out!"

"Oh, rats!"

Lovell's eyes gleamed.

"Did you say rats to me, Towny?"

Townsend nodded coolly.

"Yes. Rats, dear boy, and many of 'em!"

"Why, you cheeky rotter," roared Lovell, greatly incensed by this unexpected bravado from Townsend, the slacker and dandy, "do you want me to mop up the platform with you?"

"You couldn't do it, dear boy!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"You couldn't, you know. Rather above your weight, I think," said Townsend, blowing a puff of smoke fairly into Lovell's face.

Lovell was crimson.

"By jingo, I'll show you whether I could or not!" he exclaimed, clenching his fists.

"Hold on!" exclaimed Raby. "The train's coming in."

"Blow the train! It won't take me ten seconds to mop up that slacker duffer!"

"Hold on, Lovell!" said Jimmy. "Never mind mopping him up now. He can wait."

Lovell grunted.

But he dropped his hands. It was not a judicious moment for a scrap. The train puffed into the station and stopped.

Townsend burst into a laugh.

"Well, of all the funks!" he ejaculated. Lovell had opened the carriage-door. But he spun round as Townsend spoke, his face crimson with wrath.

"You called me a funk!" he stuttered.

"Yes, rather! When is that mopping comin' off?" jeered Townsend.

"Get into the train, Lovell!"

"Look here—"

"Get in, you ass!"

Lovell swallowed his fury with difficulty, and turned again to follow his comrades into the train.

Townsend made a clutch at his collar and whirled him back. Mornington & Co. got into the next carriage, and they were watching Townsend from the window with grinning faces.

"Go it, Towny!" yelled Topham.

Jimmy Silver put his head out.

"Lovell, you ass, jump in! The guard's waving his flag."

"I'm coming!" panted Lovell.

He shook Townsend off fiercely, and made a rush for the train. But Townsend was not done with yet.

He rushed after Lovell, and grasped him again, and whirled him away from the carriage.

They stumbled over a trolley and rolled on the platform together.

"Right away!"

"Lovell!" roared Jimmy Silver.

He jumped out of the train, in great anxiety.

"Lovell!" yelled Raby. "Buck up! The train's going!"

"Lovell, you duffer!"

Lovell was struggling on the platform a dozen yards away. Townsend was holding grimly on to him.

Jimmy Silver ran towards them, but the guard was waving his flag, and he was holding the carriage-door to shut it.

"Jimmy!" shouted Newcome.

Jimmy bounded back to the carriage.

There was not half a second to lose. Lovell had to take his chance. It looked as if the captain of the football eleven would be left behind, too.

"Stand back—"

"Hold on a second!"

"Too late!" snapped the guard. "Stand back!"

But Jimmy fairly dragged the door open and hurled himself in. The train was moving. The guard slammed the door angrily.

On the platform Lovell sat up breathlessly, and blinked after the moving train. He had shaken Townsend off at last.

Towny was panting, on his back. Lovell leaped up and raced after the train. A porter dragged him back; but there was no chance.

The junior stood in utter dismay as the train swept out of the station.

He was left behind!

Lovell clenched his hands hard. That unlucky "row" with Townsend had settled his chance of playing in the match at St. Jim's.

There was only one consolation left—to hammer Townsend till he howled. As the train disappeared out of the station, Lovell turned back to where he had left the slacker of Rookwood, with clenched fists and blazing eyes.

But Townsend was gone.

He had known what to expect, and he had not waited for it. Lovell raged in search of him in vain.

And the train rushed on towards Laxham, bearing the Rookwood junior team—minus its inside-right.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd Has Bad Luck.

"SILLY ass!"

"Fathhead!"

"Of all the duffers—"

The remarks of the Rookwood footballers made on the subject of Arthur Edward Lovell were not complimentary.

Jimmy Silver was frowning.

He had a time-table in his pocket, and he took it out and consulted it anxiously. But he shook his head.

"No train?" asked Raby.

"Not for two hours. Lovell can't come on."

"Oh, rotten!"

"The silly ass, to get left behind!" growled Tommy Dodd. "Just like a Classical, I must say! You can't say I didn't warn you to put one or two Moderns in the team, Jimmy Silver!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Sure, it wasn't really Lovell's fault!" said Flynn, the goalkeeper. "That thafe of the wurruld fairly fastened on him, you know."



Whiz-sizz! A stream of soda-water caught Tommy Dodd full in the face. It was more than flesh and blood could stand. He rushed at Topham with blazing eyes, and struck out angrily. (See page 16.)

Faith, it's the first toime I've iver seen Towny spoilin' for a fight!"

"Well, it can't be helped," said Jimmy Silver. "Keep smiling! Lucky Newcome's with us."

Newcome chuckled.

"You'll want me now, Jimmy?"

"Yes, fathead!"

"Quite sure I'll do?" asked Newcome, rather sarcastically. "You've got the Nuts to choose from, you know. There are four of them in the next carriage."

"Fathead!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"It's hard cheese on Lovell!" remarked Raby.

"Still, Newcome will play up all right. It won't make much difference in the match."

"Pity a few Moderns didn't come along," said Tommy Dodd. "Too many Classical duffers in the team, anyway, if you ask me!"

"Well, I don't ask you," said Jimmy Silver politely.

"Mind some more of your Classical asses do not get left behind!" remarked Tommy Cook. "We've got another change at Laxham, you know."

"If anybody gets left behind, I'll scrag him!" growled Jimmy Silver. "We can't play St. Jim's a man short. It wasn't really Lovell's fault; it looks to me as if that cad Townsend was making him lose the train on purpose. I've never seen him on the war-path like that before."

The train rushed on, the juniors chatting

over the prospects of the match at St. Jim's. Lovell would be missed from the front line, but Newcome was able to fill his place pretty well—he was a quick and reliable forward. It was distinctly fortunate, Jimmy reflected, that Newcome had decided to come along and see the match. If he had taken his exclusion from the team as some fellows did, he would not have been available.

Matters might have been worse, and Jimmy Silver lived up to his own maxim, and "kept smiling."

"Laxham!" said Tommy Dodd, at last.

The train stopped, and the Rookwooders poured out of it. Mornington & Co. alighted from the next carriage.

Mornington glanced over the footballers as they gathered on the platform.

"Hallo, lost one of your men?" he asked.

"Lovell lost the train at Rookham!"

grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Oh! Like me in his place?"

"No, thanks!" said Jimmy curtly.

"I'm willin' to play," said Mornington. "I don't bear any malice. Say the word, and I'm your man!"

"Newcome's playing."

"Not much good against St. Jim's," said Mornington, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Why, you cheeky rotter," exclaimed Newcome indignantly, "I sha'n't kick the ball through my own goal if I get into a wax! You would!"

Mornington gave another shrug and strolled away with his friends. The footballers fol-

lowed them to the other platform, where they waited for the train for Wayland.

Topham and Peele and Gower were looking a little uneasy. It was nearly time for the second trick to be played, and the Nuts did not feel keen to be selected for it. Mornington regarded them with an ironical smile.

"You're the man, Topy!" he remarked.

"Oh, gad!" said Topham.

"I suppose you want Jimmy Silver to be dished, don't you?"

"Ye-es; but—"

"Collar Tommy Dodd!" said Mornington. "I rather fancy his place in the team—centre-forward suits me."

"Lots of limelight!" grinned Peele.

"I—I say, that Dodd beast is rather a tough beast," said Topham uneasily. "He's a beastly hard hitter, you know."

"Yaas, that's so. Gower had better lend you a hand!"

"Oh!" said Gower.

"I suppose you can handle him between you?" sniffed Mornington.

"Oh, yes. But—"

"It'll save you the trouble of comin' on to St. Jim's. I suppose you're not specially keen to see the match?"

"No jolly fear!"

"Well, you two keep an eye on Tommy Dodd, and collar him when the train's going. Mind they don't smell a rat, of course!"

"I—I say, how are we goin' to get up a

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row?" said Gower uneasily. "He won't row with us for smokin', as Lovell did!"

"Well, chip him about bein' a Modern cad, and mop him up," said Mornington coolly. "It won't look suspicious, Classics rowin' with a Modern cad!"

"Yes, that's a good idea; but—"
"They're goin' into the buffet," said Mornington. "Come along! You may be able to keep Dodd back when the others leave to catch the train!"

"Oh, all right!"
Jimmy Silver & Co. had gone into the station buffet, which opened from the up platform, to while away the quarter of an hour they had to wait. Mornington and his friends joined them there.

The juniors discussed ginger-pop and the coming match and the weather, and the minutes passed.

Towle looked out on the platform. "Train's signalled," he remarked.

"Get out, then," said Jimmy Silver. "Don't get losing the train any of you!"

Jimmy settled for the ginger-beer, and turned to the door. Mornington made a sign to Gower and Topham, and sauntered out with Peele.

Topham took hold of a syphon of soda-water. Tommy Dodd finished his ginger-beer, and turned away from the table. As he did so a sudden stream of soda-water caught him behind the ear.

"Yaroooh!" yelled Tommy Dodd, spinning round.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You clumsy ass!" exclaimed Cook wrathfully.

"Do you want some?" grinned Topham.

"Why, you— Yow—ow—grooogh!"

Tommy Cook jumped back as the stream was turned on him. Jimmy Silver's voice was heard from the platform:

"Come on, you duffers! The train's in!"

"Coming!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Come on, you chaps! No time to scrag those cheeky cads now!"

The three Moderns rushed for the platform.

Whiz-sizzzzz!

A fresh stream of soda-water caught Tommy Dodd in the back of the neck.

"Give it to the Modern cad!" howled Gower. "Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd turned back with blazing eyes.

"Come on!" called out Doyle.

"I'm coming!"

Sizzzzz!

It was more than flesh and blood could stand. Topham was deliberately sizzling the soda-water over the Modern junior, drenching him. Tommy Dodd rushed at him, with blazing eyes, and struck out angrily.

"Yow-ow!" roared Topham; and he rolled on the floor, and the soda syphon went down with a smash.

Tommy Dodd did not wait for more. He turned to rush out, and rushed over a foot Gower put out just in time. The Modern junior stumbled and rolled over.

Topham staggered up.

"Collar the cad!" he panted.

"Come on, Tommy!" yelled Cook from the platform. "They're shutting the doors!"

Tommy Dodd scrambled up, only to find himself in the grasp of Topham and Gower, and to go down sprawling with them.

"Let me go!" yelled the junior, struggling fiercely. "You rotters, you want me to lose the train!"

"Sit on him!" panted Gower.

"Leggo!"

"Ha, ha! Sit on the Modern cad!"

Tommy Dodd struggled fiercely, and though the Nuts were two to one, he hurtled them off at last, and picked himself up.

He rushed breathlessly out of the buffet to the platform.

The train was vanishing down the line. Tommy Dodd had lost it by a good minute.

The Modern junior stood rooted to the platform.

He had lost the train. The match at St. Jim's was to be played without him as well as without Lovell.

"M-m-my hat!" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

Two dishevelled youths looked out of the buffet. They grinned as they saw Tommy Dodd standing in dismay on the platform, staring blankly in the direction the express had gone.

"Done!" grinned Topham.

"Done to a turn!" chuckled Peele.

But they left off grinning and chuckling as the Modern junior of Rookwood came towards them.

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"You've lost me the train!" said Tommy Dodd, between his teeth. "You've done me out of the match, and goodness knows how it will go now! You did it on purpose!"

He pushed back his cuffs.

"I think I can see the game. Towny at Rookham, and you cads here—a sneaking game to muck up the team for the St. Jim's match! Well, you've done me, and now I'm going to do you. Come on!"

"I—I say—" stammered Topham, backing away.

"Keep off, you Modern cad!" panted Gower. "There's two of us, and—"

"I don't mind the two of you!" said Tommy Dodd disdainfully. "I shouldn't mind half a dozen of your sort! Come on; you're going to have it!"

And as the slackers of Rookwood did not come on, Tommy Dodd came on—like a whirlwind.

Topham and Gower put up the best fight they could, and they were two to one. But the indignant Modern junior made short work of the two weedy slackers of the Fourth.

Right and left, left and right, he piled in, till Topham and Gower lay sprawling on the platform, and refused to rise for any more. They were likely to show serious damages when they returned to Rookwood.

Tommy Dodd turned away with a black brow.

He had made the Nuts suffer for their sins, and that was a solace. But he was out of the St. Jim's match now, and the Rookwood skipper was a man short. And Tommy Dodd anathematised his luck as he waited wearily for a train.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Mornington's Chance.

JIMMY SILVER'S face was a study. The loss of Lovell had been serious enough, but there was Newcome to take his place more or less effectively.

But the loss of Tommy Dodd was a knock-down blow.

Jimmy sat silent, in utter dismay, as the train buzzed out of Laxham Junction. It was hard under the circumstances to "keep smiling."

The eleven had lost its centre-forward, and there was no one to fill the place.

Tommy Dodd was one of the very best men in the team, and there was not even a reserve to fill the gap.

Jimmy could hardly blame himself. He could not have foreseen that two players in succession would lose the connection.

"The silly ass," said Jimmy at last, "to get into a row with those fellows just at that minute—just as Lovell did!"

"Sure, it wasn't Tommy's fault!" said Tommy Doyle loyally. "I tell ye Topham was squirting soda-water all over him, bedad! He was lookin' for a row!"

"Looks to me like a rotten trick!" said Rawson, the right-half of the team. "Towny at Rookham, and Topsy at Laxham—it's a game to muck up the team!"

"A rotten Classical trick!" snorted Towle.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"That's why they came!" growled Raby.

"They meant to play that game all along! It's just as plain as the nose on your face, Jimmy!"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Jimmy Silver slowly.

"And now we're a man short!" said Rawson.

"What are you going to do, Jimmy?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"I saw Morny and Peele get in farther down the train," said Towle. "You'll have to play one of them!"

Jimmy compressed his lips.

"Peele's not a bad forward, if he chooses to buck up," he said thoughtfully. "I might play Peele."

"Better Peele than nobody."

"Well, yes."

"My hat! Was that the game, then?" exclaimed Tommy Cook. "Did they play those rotten tricks to give Peele or Morny a chance?"

"I shouldn't wonder," Jimmy set his teeth.

"Still, those cads are always up against us. I don't see any evidence that Mornington or Peele had a hand in it. Anyway, we must have another player, as the matter stands, and Peele will have to play."

It was evidently the only thing to be decided on—unless Mornington was to be chosen.

Mornington was far and away a better player than Peele—indeed, he was very nearly as good as Tommy Dodd himself when he

chose. But Jimmy knew the unreliable temper of the cad of Rookwood too well. Not until he had no other possible resource would he have dreamed of playing Mornington.

Jimmy's face was not so cheerful, as the train rushed on, now.

Peele could play forward after a fashion, but he was out of condition, and at the best he would not have been a patch on Tommy Dodd.

It meant a weak spot in the team that required to be at its very best for the match. Tom Merry & Co. of St. Jim's were footmen worthy of the steel of the best footballers that Rookwood could send out.

But it could not be helped, and Jimmy took it as cheerfully as he could.

The train stopped in Wayland, at last.

The footballers alighted, and Mornington and Peele stepped out of a carriage farther along.

They did not join the footballers, however. Mornington was sure of his point now, and he would not appear eager. It suited him to be approached by Jimmy Silver now that he regarded himself as indispensable.

Jimmy hurried towards the two Nuts as they were leaving the platform. Mornington regarded him with an insolent smile.

"Hallo! Lost another man?" he remarked.

"Yes, I shall want you, Peele."

Peele started, and a steely look came into Mornington's eyes. He was not, after all, indispensable. It had never even occurred to him that Jimmy Silver might choose Peele instead.

"I—I'm wanted!" repeated Peele, equally surprised.

"Yes, Tommy Dodd's left behind at Laxham, and he can't get here in time for the match. I shall put Oswald in the centre, and you can play on the wing. I suppose you're willing to play?"

Jimmy added that as an afterthought. Most Rookwood juniors would have jumped at the chance of playing for the School, but Peele was a well-known slacker.

"I—I've got no things here, you know," stammered Peele, quite taken by surprise.

"I've got Lovell's things in my bag—that's all right."

"Lovell's things wouldn't fit me."

"Oh, don't be an ass! A football-field isn't a monkey-parade in Bond Street!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "They'll fit you near enough!"

Peele hesitated.

As a matter of fact, slacker as he was, he would have liked to bag the distinction of having played for Rookwood in a big match.

He looked doubtfully at Mornington.

The dandy of the Fourth met his eyes, his own gleaming with menace. If Peele trumped Mornington's trick in this manner, he knew the deadly enmity and malevolence he had to expect afterwards. He was not prepared to quarrel with the leader of the Rookwood Nuts, and to make an enemy of the richest fellow at Rookwood.

He shook his head.

Jimmy stared at him. He could hardly comprehend, for a moment, that the slacker of the Fourth was refusing a place in the eleven.

"Sorry!" said Peele at last. "I can't do it." "You can't do it!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Sorry! No; I'm not in form for footer."

"It's for me to settle whether you are or not. I'd rather play you than play a man short. Will you play—yes, or no?"

"No!" said Peele, driven to a plain answer at last.

"Why, you unspeakable cad," broke out Dick Oswald savagely, "do you want to leave your own school in the lurch?"

"Ye thafe of the wurruld—"

"There's Morny," said Peele, a little alarmed by the looks the footballers bent upon him. "Morny's a better man than I am, and he's willin' to play."

"Quite willin'," said Mornington, smiling.

Jimmy Silver paused. Peele's refusal left him no resource but to play Mornington, or to play a man short against St. Jim's. That, of course, was asking for a tremendous licking. And Mornington, if he chose, could play a good game. Would he choose? Certainly, he seemed keen and willing now.

Jimmy Silver made up his mind.

"I'll play you, Mornington," he said abruptly.

"I'm your man."

"I suppose you won't mind if Lovell's clobber don't fit you to a hair?" added Jimmy bitterly.

"Not at all!" said Mornington laughing.

"Then you're in the team. As for you,

Peele, you cad, you won't come on to St. Jim's. And before I leave you, you'll put up your hands."

"I—I say—"
Peele did not have time to say anything. The angry and indignant football skipper was already hitting out, and the Nut of Rookwood had to put up his hands. His hands did not help him much, however.

Jimmy left him gasping on the platform, to be picked up by a porter, and the footballers streamed out of the station.

Mornington went with them, smiling unfortunately Peele had the pleasure of nudging his nose at the station till a train came in to take him home. By that time he had repented very sincerely of his share in Mornington's plot. But the plot had succeeded, and the dandy of Rookwood was a member of the Rookwood team.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.
Checkmate.

"BAI JOVE, heah you are, deah boys!"
The dulcet tones of Arthur D'Arcy of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's greeted the Rookwood footballers as they came out of the station.

A brake was waiting for the team outside, and Tom Merry and D'Arcy were seated in it. The Rookwooders clambered in.

"Had a good journey?" said Tom Merry cheerily.

"Oh, ripping!" said Jimmy Silver grimly. "Topping!"

"First-rate!" said Mornington, laughing.

Jimmy Silver shot the cad of Rookwood a suspicious glance as he sat down in the brake. There was no direct evidence to connect Mornington with the disasters that had befallen the Rookwood team, but Jimmy could not help being suspicious.

It was true that Townshend & Co. were "up against" the Fistical Four and all their works, yet it was surprising that they should have taken so much trouble to "dish" the footballers, unless there was some strong motive behind it.

Was Mornington at the bottom of it? Peele's refusal to play was the last straw. Peele could have had only one motive for refusing—to leave the place open for Mornington.

Did that mean that Mornington had plotted the whole business, and all that had happened on the journey was due to the machinations of the cad of Rookwood?

Jimmy remembered Mornington's declaration in the end study the previous day—that he would play in the St. Jim's match in spite of Jimmy Silver. Had he planned all that had happened in order to carry out his boast?

It looked like it. But there was no proof, and without proof Jimmy Silver could not act. If it was so, he was playing into his enemy's hands. He was rewarding him for his treachery with a place in the team. The thought of that made him set his teeth hard. But there was no proof.

Jimmy was almost silent as the brake rolled away to St. Jim's. Mornington was in great spirits, however, and he chatted cheerily all the time. The brake arrived at the old school, and the Rookwooders followed Tom Merry and D'Arcy to Little Side. Tom Merry's team were on the ground already, punting a ball about.

The visitors went into their dressing-room to change. Mornington, fastidious as he

usually was, made no objection to donning Lovell's football shorts and jersey, though they were considerably too large for him.

Tommy Dodd's clobber was available for Newcome.

"You'll go in the centre, Oswald," Jimmy Silver remarked, as the juniors changed; "Newcome, inside-right; Mornington, outside."

Mornington looked up quickly from lacing his boots.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, his brow darkening.

"You heard what I said."

"I understood that I was going to take Tommy Dodd's place. I'm best at centre-forward."

"Isn't that for me to judge?" said Jimmy quietly.

"You'd better play me in the centre. I like the place better," said Mornington. "Oswald won't be much good there, in my opinion. He's a pretty fair winger."

"Your opinion doesn't happen to matter," said Jimmy Silver icily. "My opinion is that Oswald is worth about three of you at centre-forward, and my opinion happens to be the one that counts."

Mornington's face was dark as he left the dressing-room with the rest. St. Jim's were waiting in the field.

"You won't give me the place I want?" Mornington asked, joining Jimmy Silver as he went into the field.

"No, I won't!" snapped Jimmy. "Shut up!"

Mornington's eyes gleamed. "You've got into the team, and that's more than enough for you," said Jimmy. "Don't let me have any more of your chin-wag; I'm fed-up with it!"

Mornington laughed mockingly. "I told you I should be in the team," he sneered. "You are not quite the great pandrum you fancy, Jimmy Silver. I told you I should play in the St. Jim's match, and I'm going to play. That's good enough for me, after all!"

Jimmy stopped dead. "Does that mean that you fixed this up for me, Mornington?" he asked in a quiet voice. "You planned fixing me like this?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders. He was utterly reckless. He was convinced that Jimmy Silver could not do without him now at any price; and he was keen to enjoy his triumph.

"What did I tell you?" he sneered. "If there isn't one way, there's another, and I told you I should play against St. Jim's. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Jimmy Silver!"

"Come on, Jimmy," said Raby anxiously. "The fellows are waiting for us."

Jimmy did not move.

"Mornington's owned up that he planted this on us," he said. "He put Townsend and the rest up to their game. I suspected it; but the cad has owned up now!"

"You can lick him at Rookwood," said Raby. "Come on now!"

"Mornington isn't going to play," said Jimmy quietly.

There was a buzz among the Rookwood footballers.

"Not going to play!" ejaculated Rawson.

"No!" Jimmy Silver's eyes were gleaming.

"Whether we win, or whether we lose, Mornington doesn't play for Rookwood. He's dodged Lovell and Tommy Dodd out of the team to steal their place; and I'm not back-

ing up a plotting thief! Mornington won't play!"

"I—I say, Jimmy—"

"It's settled!" said Jimmy Silver, frowning. "But we shall be a man short!"

"Better that than play a rotten, scheming rascal. Get off the field, Mornington!"

Mornington's face was white with rage and chagrin. He had never dreamed of this. He had deemed it safe to triumph over the football skipper he had so cunningly outwitted. But he did not know Jimmy Silver.

"You—you—" he panted. "I tell you I'm going to play!"

"You're not!" said Jimmy Silver tersely. "Get out! If you don't want the St. Jim's fellows to see you kicked off the field, you'd better clear at once!"

Mornington stood, rooted to the ground for a moment. It looked as if there would be a scene; Jimmy's hands were already clenching. But the humiliation of being kicked off, under the staring eyes of the St. Jim's crowd, would have been too bitter. The dandy of Rookwood, deadly white with passion, turned on his heel and strode away.

In silence the footballers went into the field. The die was cast now. And the Rookwooders, now that they knew the truth, did not blame Jimmy Silver. Better to take any chances than to play the traitor in the ranks. But their hopes of a win in the first big match of the season had sunk to zero.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
A Fight to a Finish.

TOM MERRY looked rather curiously at the Rookwooders as they came on.

"Man short?" he asked.

Jimmy Silver nodded shortly.

"Yes; one of my men can't play."

"Better pick up a chap here," said Blake. "It won't be much of a match, otherwise."

Jimmy Silver paused.

Naturally, he wanted to play that match with a wholly Rookwood team. But the suggestion was good; and the looks of his followers showed him that they thought so. He nodded at last.

"Thanks!" he said. "If you can lend me a man—"

"A dozen, if you like," said Tom Merry, with a smile. "Of course, we've got the best in the team, but there are others jolly good!"

"Bai jove! I will play for Wookwood, you know," said D'Arcy generously. "We musn't give a visitah a second-wate playah. Is it a forward you want, Silvah, deah boy?"

"Yes; outside-right."

"Then I'm your man!"

"Take D'Arcy, if you like," said Tom Merry. "I'll put in young Julian; he's quite as good."

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"Well, if D'Arcy's agreeable—"

said Jimmy Silver.

"I am quite at your service, deah boy."

"Then it's a go. Thanks!"

"If you have any clobber for me, I will change—"

"That's all right. Come with me!"

Mornington came out of the dressing-room, in his Etons, with a bitter look on his face. He gave Jimmy Silver a dark look, and went into the crowd round the ropes. He had one consolation left—that of watching the Rookwood team thoroughly licked by St. Jim's—as he fully anticipated.

D'Arcy entered the dressing-room, and

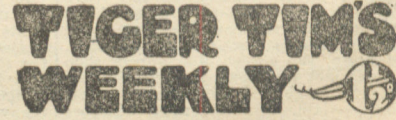
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MORNINGTON'S PLOT!

(Continued from Page 17.)

Jimmy picked up the "clobber" Mornington had thrown savagely on the floor.

"I won't keep you three seconds, dear boy," said Arthur Augustus.

As a matter of fact, D'Arcy kept him fully five minutes; changing clothes was not a rapid process with the swell of St. Jim's.

But he was changed at last, and he returned to the football-field with the Rookwood skipper.

Julian of St. Jim's was already in football garb, and in the ranks of the Saints.

Tom Merry's team was ready.

Arthur Augustus D'Arcy took his place on the right wing as the Rookwood team lined up.

The kick-off fell to Tom Merry, and the ball rolled as Lefevre of the Fifth blew his whistle.

The great match began.

The Rookwood footballers realised at once that they were "up against" a very tough proposition in Tom Merry and his team. And, although they found Arthur Augustus D'Arcy a first-rate winger and decidedly useful in the front line, they had the disadvantage of having a stranger in the ranks—a player with whom they had never practised, and whom they knew nothing of.

Jimmy had trained his team to work together like clockwork; and there was a loose screw, as it were, in the machine. But D'Arcy was doing his very best for his adopted side; and his best was very good indeed.

The first goal came to Talbot of St. Jim's, after a struggle that had lasted for twenty minutes without a score on either side.

But close on half-time the Rookwood forwards made a hot attack on the home goal, and D'Arcy centred to Oswald in the nick of time, and the Rookwood junior put the ball into the net in spite of the efforts of Fatty Wynn in goal.

The score was level when the whistle went for half-time.

Mornington, looking on, ground his teeth.

It was anybody's match, so far, and it was quite on the cards that he would be deprived of the consolation of seeing his side defeated.

Rookwood kicked off for the second half. Mornington's sulky eyes watching them from the crowd.

The wind was behind the Rookwooders now, and they took full advantage of it. They came down on the home goal with a rush.

Twice Fatty Wynn in goal narrowly saved the struggle went away to mid-field.

The game was hard and fast all through, and both goals were in danger incessantly; but Flynn for Rookwood and Fatty Wynn for St. Jim's proved equal to the test.

The referee looked up at the old clock-tower above the trees.

Five minutes to go, and the score level.

Tom Merry's men came on gallantly, and there was a fierce struggle before the Rookwood goal, and the ball went in, only to meet a quick Irish fist and come out again like a pip from an orange.

This time Raby cleared, and Jimmy Silver saw his opportunity, and sent the ball out to D'Arcy on the wing.

The Rookwood forwards were away again. The ball came in to Newcome, who centred to Oswald as he was tackled, and Oswald rushed it on.

The St. Jim's backs accounted for Oswald, but not before he had passed to Towle, who rushed on and kicked. Fatty Wynn made a leap too late, and the leather reposed in the net.

"Goal!" Towle panted and blinked. He had had good luck.

"Goal!" gasped Jimmy Silver, as he thumped Towle on the back. "Good for you, you Modern bouncer! Rookwood-wins!" "Hurrah!"

Rookwood had won, for the whistle went, and the game was over.

Mornington, with a scowling face, tramped away, after seeing the Rookwood team victors in the hard-fought match.

But nobody missed Mornington.

Tom Merry & Co. took their defeat cheerfully enough, and they entertained the Rookwood footballers in great style till it was time to start for the station.

Jimmy Silver & Co. departed in great spirits. The first match of the season had been won, after all, and without Mornington. The cad of Rookwood had plotted in vain, and Jimmy Silver could afford now to dismiss him contemptuously from his thoughts.

"Morny, how did it go, dear boy?"

Mornington arrived at Rookwood before the footballers. He had caught an earlier train. Lovell and Tommy Dodd were there, eager to know how the match had gone. Townsend & Co. greeted Mornington as he came in.

But Mornington scowled.

"You played, of course?" said Topham.

"No."

"My hat! Why?"

"Hang them!" was Mornington's reply.

"Then they lost?"

"No; they won!"

"By gad!"

"Rookwood's won?" asked Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, good! What are you scowling about, you image, if Rookwood's won?"

"Go and eat coke!" was Mornington's reply.

He went sullenly to his study with the Nuts. A little later the merry voices of the returning footballers were heard. Jimmy Silver & Co. had scored a victory to open the season, and they let all Rookwood hear their delight.

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"No good gronsin', old chap," remarked Townsend. "Can't be helped! Jimmy Silver has all the luck!"

"His luck is goin' to turn!" said Mornington, his eyes gleaming. "Jimmy Silver! There isn't room at Rookwood for Jimmy Silver an' me!"

Townsend stared.

"What the dickens are you drivin' at, Morny?"

"He won't leave to please you, Morny."

"He may be made to!" said Mornington, in a low, tense voice.

"I tell you there's no room at Rookwood for the two of us; and Jimmy Silver is getting near the end of his tether!"

"What the dickens are you drivin' at, Morny?" muttered Townsend duncily.

But the dandy of Rookwood did not reply. Only the savage gleaming of his eyes told of the dark thoughts that were working in his brain.

In the end study the Fistical Four were rejoicing. Little did Jimmy Silver dream of the black thoughts in the mind of his enemy, and little would he have cared if he had known. But he was not done with Mornington yet.

THE END.

(Another grand long story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood School, next week, entitled "FOUND GUILTY!" Order your copy of the PENNY POPULAR early.)

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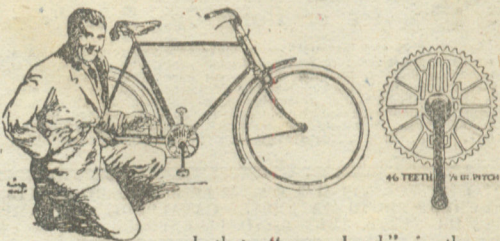
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