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Week Ending—
June 4th, 1921.

New
Series.
No. 124.

Greyfriars

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Rookwood St. Jims



THE SPY! MORNINGTON WATCHES KIT ERROLL'S MEETING WITH
"GENTLEMAN JIM" IN THE WOODMAN'S HUT!
(A dramatic incident from the long complete tale of Rookwood School inside.)

The End of His Tether!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Famous Chums of Rookwood. —:— By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Strange News!

JIMMY SILVER—the rotter!"
Mornington of the Fourth muttered the words savagely, as he stood looking out of the window of Study No. 4.

It was a bright afternoon but the shadows were lengthening in the old quadrangle of Rookwood.

On Little Side a cricket match was in progress. Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, was at the wicket, facing a Bagshot bowler. Erroll, the new junior at Rookwood, was at the other end.

Jimmy Silver's name, in a roar from the juniors round the cricket-field, had reached Mornington's ears, as he stood with a moody brow at his study window.

Jimmy was putting up a great innings for his side, and a hit to the boundary had been the cause of the roar.

"Good old Jimmy! Well hit!"

"Good man, Jimmy Silver!"

Mornington stared over the beeches in the direction of the cricket-ground. Rookwood were beating Bagshot, though Pankley and Co., of Bagshot, were putting up a good game. And Mornington, who was as good a cricketer as any junior at Rookwood, when he liked, was scowling in his study—out of it!

The batsmen were running again now, the fieldsmen leather-hunting. It was a single, and it brought Kit Erroll, the new boy, to the batting end.

Erroll, the new boy, whom he had made his special enemy—Erroll was reaping glory in the Bagshot match, as well as Jimmy Silver. Everything seemed to Mornington to be going wrong. His persecution of the new boy, popular in the Fourth, had brought him into general odium among his Form-fellows. Even Peele and Townsend and Topham, his pals, were tired of it.

As he looked at the handsome young cricketer a doubt forced itself into Mornington's mind. Was the accusation he had made against Erroll true, after all? He had believed it. But had he been led too far by the bitter dislike of the fellow—led into making himself unpopular, disliked—into even a bore, as Townsend pathetically complained?

He wondered.

There was a timid tap at the door, and it opened. Mornington swung round impatiently. His dark brow grew darker at the sight of the fag who entered.

It was Murphy of the Second Form. "Erbert," as he was called, the little waif whom Mornington had rescued from want, and brought to Rookwood.

Erbert paused as he caught Mornington's scowl.

Deeply grateful as he was, Erbert had learned that his patron had a very uncertain temper, and he never knew how to take him.

"So it's you!" snapped Mornington. "Yes, sir!" faltered Erbert.

"You young ass!" said Mornington. "A pretty pickle you've got me into with your silly yarns about Erroll!"

Erbert started.

"They wasn't yarns, sir," he said steadily. "I told you the truth."

"Was it the truth?" said Mornington savagely.

"You don't think as I'd tell you a lie, sir?" stammered Erbert, his troubled little face growing crimson.

"Well, I don't see why you should. But you made a bloomer—at least, I think so now!" snapped Mornington.

"You told me you recognised Erroll's father—Captain Erroll—as a criminal you had known in some low den you used to live in before I found you."

"So I did," said Erbert stubbornly.

"It's true. I knowed 'im as Gentleman Jim, the crackman, and he ain't no more a Captain Erroll than I am!"

"You stick to that?"

"I does!" said Erbert. "It's true, I ain't got nothin' agin Erroll—he seems to be a right good sort; but it's true that the man wot brought him 'ere was Gentleman Jim, the forger and crackman, what I knowed once at Dirty Dick's tenement behind the Euston Road."

"He called himself Captain Erroll, of the Leamshire Regiment."

"It was a lie, then?"

"Look here!" said Mornington savagely. "I believed your yarn, an' accused Erroll to his face. I got an old paper with a picture of Captain Erroll, from a photograph taken after he got his distinction at the Front. Well, that was a genuine picture of the genuine Captain Erroll, and it's as like Erroll of the Fourth as one pea is like another."

"I don't understand it, sir," said Erbert. "If Erroll is really Captain Erroll's son, I don't see why Gentleman Jim should bring 'im to Rookwood."

Could there be a personal resemblance between Gentleman Jim the swell mobsmen, and Captain Erroll, the Honduras planter who had become an officer in the King's Army? It was absurd to suppose it.

"Sides, that there photograph don't prove nothing for Erroll," said Erbert, after a pause.

"It proves that he's the son of the real Captain Erroll, I suppose!" snapped Mornington.

"It proves that he ain't the son of the man what brought him 'ere. That man ain't anything like Erroll to look at!"

Mornington started.

"By gad!" he exclaimed, "I didn't specially notice the man who was with Erroll when he came—not specially. Do you mean to say that he's not like Erroll?"

"Nothin' like 'im!" said Erbert.

"Then he can't be the Captain Erroll whose photograph was in the paper!" exclaimed Mornington.

"I've said all along he ain't!"

"But—but— Oh, it beats me!" exclaimed Mornington restlessly. "If Erroll is the son of Gentleman Jim, how comes he to resemble Captain Erroll so closely? I tell you they're as like as two peas."

Erbert shook his head.

"That problem was too much for him."

"When you knew the crackman in that den you spoke of, did he have a son?" asked Mornington.

"I 'eard so," said Erbert. "I never saw 'im. He never came to Dirty Dick's. But I remember now I 'eard 'im spoken of."

Mornington knitted his brows.

His case against Erroll had been completely knocked on the head by the production of the photograph of Captain Erroll. The resemblance between the two had been striking.

And yet—

"I come 'ere to tell you somethin', sir," said Erbert diffidently.

"Well, what is it?" said Mornington impatiently.

"He's come 'ere!"

"Eh? Who's come here?"

"Gentleman Jim!"

THE SECOND CHAPTER. Mornington's Chance.

MORNINGTON ceased his restless pacing, and stared at the fag, his eyes gleaming.

"By gad!" exclaimed Mornington. "By gad! We've got Captain Erroll's photograph! If this man's nothing like it, as you say, we can show him up! I'll face him before the Head, if necessary. Is he at the school?"

"No, he ain't come to the school. But I've seed him."

"Where? How?"

"I was down in Coombe with Jones minimus and Snooks, bein' a 'arf-holiday," explained the fag. "I seed him come out of the station."

"Then he must have come down to see Erroll!" exclaimed Mornington.

"He will come to Rookwood!"

"He ain't coming," said Erbert. "I watched him go down the street, and I thought he was comin' to Rookwood, but he turned off the lane."

"Where did he go?"

"Into the wood," said Erbert.

"Cause I kept a eye on him. I left Jones and Snooks in Coombe. I says to myself, that Gentleman Jim's up to no good. And I reckoned I'd see wot he was up to. 'Course, I knew if he comes down 'ere, he's lookin' for a crib to crack. Pr'aps this very school, fur all I know. When I saw he didn't come on to Rookwood, of course I was sure he was up to some of 'is games."

Mornington smiled.

"Good old Erbert! And you saw him—"

"He went into the wood, sir, and I

foiled," said Erbert sturdily. "'Course, I kep' outer sight. Gentleman Jim would ha' thought precious little of knockin' me on the 'ead, if he seed me and knowed I was watching him."

"What did he do?"

"He sat down there on a log, and started smokin' cigars," said Erbert. "'Course, he's waiting for somebody."

"By gad!"

"So I come on to tell you, sir," said Erbert, with a troubled look.

"My hat!" said Mornington. "I think I've got it! Erroll's written to him about the real Captain Erroll's photograph being produced here, and warned him not to come to the school. You can bet every eye would be on him, to see whether he was like the picture. And you say he isn't?"

"Not a bit, sir."

"Then he can't come to Rookwood again. I've settled that for them!" grinned Mornington. "If he wants to see his precious son, he's got to meet him outside the school."

"Oh!" said Erbert. "He's at the woodman's 'ut."

"I'm jolly glad you told me," said Mornington. "Don't tell anybody else, Erbert. Mum's the word, you know!"

"Orl right, sir."

And the fag left the study, much relieved in his mind.

Mornington looked from the window again. The Rookwood innings was over, and Jimmy Silver and Co. had gone into the field. It was the second Bagshot innings, and Erroll was bowling. He was bowling in great style, too, as a yell from Little Side revealed.

"Bravo!"

"The hat trick! Hurray!"

"Bravo, Erroll!"

"Wait a bit, my fine fellow," muttered Mornington. "Wait a bit! You won't be cheered again on a Rookwood ground, I fancy."

The dandy of the Fourth left his study, and walked down to Little Side.

Mornington stood looking on at the game for some minutes. Kit Erroll was in great form, and his bowling was first-class. And in the field he was dangerous, too. As Morny watched there was a shout, as Erroll held up the ball, hot from Pankley's bat. The great Pankley, of Bagshot, himself had been caught out.

"Bravo!" shouted Jimmy Silver. And he rushed up and smacked Erroll on the back. "Well caught! Oh, well caught!"

"Good man!" chortled Lovell.

The match was drawing to an end. Bowling and fielding of that class would soon bring the finish. Mornington had not too much time on his hands. He left Little Side and hurried down to the gates.

Mornington walked quickly down the lane, and turned into Coombe Wood.

He knew the old woodman's hut very well—an untenanted ruin overgrown with weeds and creepers. How did Gentleman Jim know it? Evidently Erroll had written to his father and fixed that rendezvous with him.

Mornington did not approach the spot openly. He followed a footpath for some distance, and then made his way through the thickets, with infinite caution.

He came close to the old hut at last, where the trees were close, and the creeping plants grew thickly.

There was no door to the hut, and Morny, if he had chosen to put his head through the screen of foliage, could have looked into it. But he did not.

Close to the old hut, hidden from sight, he remained still as a mouse. He did not need telling that "Captain Erroll"

was there. For, from the old woodman's hut there came to his nostrils a strong, unmistakable scent—the scent of a cigar!

Gentleman Jim was waiting for the junior who was known at Rookwood as Kit Erroll. But Erroll was not first at the rendezvous. Mornington was there, and he, too, was waiting—within earshot of every word that should be uttered in the old hut.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Win for Rookwood!

PANKLEY, of Bagshot, made a grimace as another wicket went down.

"Man in!" he grunted.

And Poole went in, not with any joyful anticipations. Rookwood's new bowler was rather getting on the Bagshot nerves.

The Rookwood crowd were smiling sweetly. The Bagshot matches were always keenly contested, but this time it resemble a walk-over for Rookwood. Pankley & Co. had almost given up the hope of pulling the game out of the fire.

Jimmy Silver was smiling with a smile that would not come off.

Jimmy had a keen eye for a fellow's form, and he had chosen Erroll as a new recruit for the Eleven, though he had been only a few weeks at Rookwood; and the junior skipper could not help feeling a little proud of his perspicacity. Erroll had been a rod in pickle for Bagshot, and he was making Bagshot sit up now. There was no mistake about that.

Erroll was enjoying the game. He was pleased with his success, pleased with the cheers it brought, but he never seemed to think of putting on 'side.'

"Blessed if they haven't got a prize-packet in that chap!" Pankley grumbled to Putter. "Best of the bunch, I think!"

"Looks rotten for us!" said Putter dolorously. "Only thirty-six so far, and only one more wicket to go down! And we're licked on the first innings, and that bounder is gobbling up wickets like a Hun gobbling up sausages!"

"There he goes again!"

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Last man in!" growled Putter.

Tommy Dodd was bowling now for Rookwood. The innings survived the over. Then Jimmy Silver looked at Erroll.

"Can you manage another over, Erroll?"

Erroll laughed.

"A dozen if you like!" he said, swinging his arm.

"A dozen won't be wanted!" chuckled Jimmy. "Better go on and put 'em out of their misery!"

"I'll try."

Erroll caught the ball deftly, and went on. The batsman was not pleased to see him, and his misgivings were well-founded. A roar round the field announced the fall of a wicket.

"Well bowled, Erroll!"

"Rookwood wins!" grinned Lovell.

"Better luck next time, Panky, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver when the Rookwood field came off.

"My hat! You've got a cough-drop in that new chap!" said Pankley.

"We have—we has!" smiled Jimmy.

"Who the dickens is he?" asked Pankley. "New chap here?"

"Yes. His father is Captain Erroll, who got no end of kudos at the Front!" said Jimmy. "His chivvy was in all the papers at one time."

"By Jerusalem, is he?" said Pankley. "Why, we've got Captain Erroll's chivvy stuck up on the wall of our study at Bagshot. Poole cut it out. I can see now that the chap's like him. Erroll,

my pippin, you're welcome to your wickets. Your pater bowled over Huns like that, eh?"

Erroll smiled, somewhat constrainedly. The Rookwood fellows had noticed that Erroll did not like talking about his father's exploits against the Huns. They put it down to modesty.

"Time we were getting back!" said Poole. "The game's hung out a bit!"

Erroll was looking up at the clock-tower. He went into the pavilion, and came out with a coat over his flannels.

"Hallo! Where are you off to?" exclaimed Lovell.

"I'm going out a bit——"

"My hat! I should think you'd been on your legs enough this afternoon!" said Raby.

"I'm not going far."

"Hold on!" said Jimmy Silver. "If you want a trot, we'll trot part of the way home to Bagshot if you like."

"I—I'm going another way!"

Jimmy gave him rather a curious look.

"Oh, if you're going somewhere special, all serene!" he said. "Ta-ta!"

Erroll nodded, and walked very quickly down to the gates. Jimmy Silver and Co. went down the road with the Bagshot fellows, who were walking home.

"Rows" with Bagshot were "off" on match days, and the rival juniors were very friendly. Half-way to Bagshot went the Fistical Four, and then they took their leave of Pankley & Co., and turned back towards Rookwood.

"My hat! There's Erroll!" exclaimed Lovell in surprise.

Jimmy Silver started.

At some distance from the road, crossing the fields at a great rate, was a figure the Fistical Four recognised at a glance. It was Erroll of the Fourth!

As they looked at him he left the fields, and disappeared into Coombe Wood, where it adjoined the meadows.

Jimmy Silver and Co. looked at one another rather oddly.

"He said he was going in the other direction," said Newcome. "If he was going to the wood, why couldn't he come with us? I suppose he knows we pass the wood going to Bagshot?"

Jimmy Silver did not reply.

But he could not help thinking it odd. It looked as if Erroll had deliberately gone in the other direction to avoid company, and had doubled and made for the wood afterwards.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

"Gentleman Jim!"

KIT, you're late!" The man in the woodman's hut rose from the fallen log, and threw away the stump of a cigar he had been smoking.

A handsome, athletic figure had appeared in the shattered doorway of the hut—Erroll, of the Rookwood Fourth, with a blazer coat over his flannels. His face looked flushed under the cricketing cap. He had plainly been hurrying.

"Yes, I'm late," he said breathlessly.

"I couldn't help it, father!"

"I've waited a long time."

"It couldn't be helped. I've been playing cricket!"

"Cricket!"

There was a world of contempt and disgust in the man's voice.

"Cricket!" he repeated.

Erroll smiled slightly.

"Yes, cricket!"

"And you kept me waiting while you were playing a fool's game!" exclaimed the man savagely.

"It couldn't be helped. I am in the Form eleven, and if I'd left the game before the finish it would have made every fellow stare and talk. It would

4 "Milko, the Merry Magician!" Grand Feature in next week's "Chuckles"!

have meant a row, too. I couldn't do it. I suppose you didn't want all Rookwood to wonder where I had to go to?"

"No, of course not. If that's how it stood—"

"As it was, it wasn't easy," said Erroll. "Some of the fellows came in this direction—past the wood. I mean—going home with the Bagshot team. I had to go round a good way to make out that I wasn't coming towards this place. They would have wondered."

"You're right, Kit. You don't want the fellows wondering and talking about you, certainly."

"There's enough of that already!" said Kit bitterly.

"You said in your letter that I was not to come to Rookwood again," said the man abruptly. "Something has happened. Quite right not to put it in black and white, in case of accidents. Letters get opened sometimes. But what has happened, Kit? Tell me!"

"If you came to Rookwood the game would be up!" said Erroll quietly. "There's a kid here who knows you—"

"What!"

"A kid called Herbert Murphy—or, father, 'Erbert,'" said the junior. "He knew you at Dirty Dick's."

"By gad, how could a kid from Dirty Dick's be at Rookwood School?" the man exclaimed in utter amazement.

"A fellow named Mornington found him starving on the road, and took him in," said Erroll. "Somehow the Head was persuaded to let him stay at Rookwood. Mornington's guardian pays his fees. He's a good little chap. But—but he saw you the day you came to the school, and recognised you at once, and told Mornington."

"What awful luck! Nobody could have foreseen a thing like that."

Erroll nodded.

"And the kid's talked?"

"Yes, to Mornington. Mornington has set himself up as my enemy. He accused me before the whole Form."

"Oh, gad!"

"The fellows don't believe it. But the cad got an old newspaper with a portrait of Captain Erroll in it," Erroll's voice faltered. "I thought the game was up then. He was going to prove that I wasn't Captain Erroll's son by that photograph. But—but—it was like a miracle. I can't understand it."

Gentleman Jim gave the schoolboy a peculiar look.

"What can't you understand, Kit?"

"Instead of showing me up, Mornington only proved my case, because—because I am exactly like Captain Erroll in appearance."

Gentleman Jim laughed.

"Lucky for you," he said.

"It was lucky; but—but it nearly knocked me over," said Erroll. "How came I to be like a man I've never seen? It isn't a chance resemblance, it's exact. If he were my father he could not be more like me. Father, is Captain Erroll any relation of ours?"

Behind the screen of foliage near the woodman's hut the hidden listener drew a deep, deep breath.

Mornington's eyes were blazing now. If he wanted proof of his suspicions he had it now. He wondered what Jimmy Silver would have thought if he could have heard Erroll of the Fourth ask that question.

Mornington made no sound, no movement. Neither of the two in the hut dreamed that a listener was at hand.

Gentleman Jim did not reply to the schoolboy's question. He lighted another cigar.

"Father, I asked you—"

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"A foolish question," said the man. "How is it, then, that I am so like him?"

"Chance!"

"A very strange chance," said Erroll. "It saved me."

"Then the accusation against you is knocked on the head?" said Gentleman Jim. "It will die away?"

"I suppose so, Mornington keeps it up, but he has every fellow down on him. Even his own friends are fed up with it."

"That's all serene, then. It was a narrow escape, by Jove!" Gentleman Jim blew out a cloud of smoke. "By gad, it's lucky you warned me not to come to the school. With Captain Erroll's photograph in their hands they would have seen that I was not the man."

"At once," said Erroll.

"I shall have to give Rookwood a wide berth now." Gentleman Jim tugged at his moustache for a moment.

"Captain Erroll's supposed to be back in British Honduras, so that relieves me from any necessity of visiting Rookwood. I must keep clear. You say this Mornington is your enemy?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He is a fellow with a rotten temper. He can't stand being crossed by anybody. Everybody's on bad terms with him, except a few rotters like himself! Some of the fellows make up to him because he's rich."

"You'd better get on friendly terms with him, too."

"I couldn't do that without flattering him and toadying to him."

"Well, do so."

"Father!"

"Don't be a fool, Kit! Your future is at stake. You've got to make your position secure at Rookwood, and you can't afford to have enemies."

The schoolboy was silent.

"I had some business to talk to you," said Gentleman Jim. "Under the circumstances I can stand over. Nothing had better be done till this is blown over. It's doocid unlucky!"

Erroll looked startled.

"Business!" he repeated.

"Yes, business."

"You don't mean—"

The boy's face had become white.

"Never mind that now," said Gentleman Jim brusquely. "I can't stop longer. The last train back will be gone. You've kept me waiting so long. If anything turns up, you can let me know, and I'll meet you in the same place again. Good-bye, Kit!"

"Good-bye, father!" said the boy dully.

They shook hands, and Gentleman Jim disappeared through the trees. Erroll remained standing in the doorway of the woodman's hut. All the brightness had gone out of the handsome, boyish face.

"Business!" he repeated in a low voice. "That—that at Rookwood! Oh, never—never!"

The sun was sinking lower. Dusk was deepening over the woods. Gentleman Jim's footsteps had died away. The boy stood silent, plunged in miserable thought, his face white and set.

A footstep startled him from his black thoughts. He glanced up.

Mornington, of the Fourth, with a mocking smile on his face, stood before him.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Face to Face!

KIT ERROLL looked blankly at the dandy of the Fourth.

A ghost rising before his eyes could not have startled him more at that moment.

His pale face became paler as he realised the truth. The mocking smile on Mornington's face told him all.

Mornington knew!

He did not speak. His hands clenched hard, almost convulsively, but he did not move.

It was Mornington who broke the silence. The dandy of the Fourth was enjoying his triumph now.

"Surprised to see me—what?" he drawled.

"Yes," muttered Erroll.

"What a happy meetin'!" smiled Mornington. "Sorry I couldn't make the acquaintance of your estimable father. I thought it better not, under the circumstances. Gentleman Jim might have cut up rusty—what?"

"You have been listening," said Erroll.

Mornington nodded.

"I've been here all the time," he said. "I was here before you. I've heard every word. I heard you ask that man whether Captain Erroll was any relation of yours. I wish Jimmy Silver could have heard it. Ha, ha!"

Mornington's laugh rang under the dusky trees. He expected to see the junior he hated shrink and tremble under his gaze.

Erroll did not shrink. The son of Gentleman Jim had courage, and his nerve seemed to be of iron. All was known, and known to his enemy. Yet he was cool, calm, unmoved, save for the deadly paleness of his face.

"You spied on me!" he said.

"I heard that a professional cracksmen was coming here to meet you," smiled Mornington. "As a law-abidin' citizen, my duty was to chip in. By the way, I suppose the police would like to know where to meet your pater? He's wanted by the police, I suppose?"

Erroll winced.

"Ah, that touches you, does it?" said Mornington. "Well, you're bowled out, my dear chap!"

Mornington laughed again. He had hoped, but he had never expected, that his enemy would be placed in his power so completely as this. There was a keen relish of the situation in Mornington's breast, and he had no mercy.

"What are you doin' at Rookwood at all?" he continued. "Are you there to help Gentleman Jim crack a crib? I think that's the expression, isn't it? You'd know better than I do."

"No," said Erroll quietly.

"Oh, you're not plannin' to disappear one night with the Rookwood silver an' the Head's war bonds?"

"No."

"Then what's the game?"

"You have spied on me, but I am not bound to answer your questions," said Erroll coolly. "May I ask what use you are going to put your spying to?"

Mornington bit his lip. His enemy was at his mercy, but his spirit, at least, was not conquered.

"You needn't ask that," he sneered. "You can't suppose I'm going to allow a cracksmen's son to stay at Rookwood. I've found out the truth, an' all Rookwood will know soon. A cheery prospect for you!"

"You have accused me before, but you have not been believed," said Erroll.

"You mean you'll deny it again?"

"I did not deny it before," said Erroll.

"I simply left you to prove your case, if you could. You couldn't."

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"No, you were lucky," agreed Mornington. "But this time your luck can't hold out. It's not a matter for the Fourth. Now that I know you are the son of a criminal, beyond the shadow of a doubt, it's my duty to inform the Head. I suppose you know that?"

He laughed again.

"It will be a bit of a surprise for the old boy, and he won't believe it at first. But he will have to inquire into it. He will have to send for Captain Erroll—ha, ha!—and when Captain Erroll shows up, and his chivvy is compared with the photograph I can produce—ha, ha!"

Erroll was silent.

"In fact, as soon as I take the photograph to the Head, that ought to settle it, now I'm sure!" pursued Mornington. "The fellows didn't notice your pater's face specially, but the Head must have. He was jawing with him in his study for a long time. When he sees the real Captain Erroll's picture he will know that it isn't the face of the man who came to Rookwood as Captain Erroll. Don't you think so?"

"Probably."

"And the game will be up then, won't it?"

"I might ask you to—to hear what I have to say," said Erroll in a low voice. "I could tell you that I'm not at Rookwood with any rotten intentions. That I came here intending to play the game. That I've been unlucky, and that coming to Rookwood seemed a chance of getting out of a life that was horrible to me; that it seemed like getting into the daylight out of the dark—"

"In another fellow's name?" sneered Mornington.

"No. There is no Kit Erroll in existence. I have borrowed a name that belongs to nobody—at least, my father selected it for me. I do not know why. I could not come in my own name."

"Ha, ha! I fancy not!"

"It was a fresh start, the beginning of an honourable life," said Erroll. "There did not seem much harm in changing my name. It was not as if the name belonged to anybody else. My father is—you know what, now. Is that my fault? At least, it was a kind thought in him to try to place me in a position where I could live a decent life, and avoid the pitfalls he has fallen into himself."

Mornington gave a sardonic laugh.

"You want me to believe that you came honest to Rookwood, and that you are honest now?" he sneered.

"I do not expect you to believe it," said Erroll dully.

"You are right. I shouldn't believe a word of it."

A strange smile came over Erroll's pale face. "You believe that I am a criminal too—"

"Like your father, yes."

"That I have plans to carry out at Rookwood, and that your betrayal of me will ruin them?"

"Exactly!"

"And yet," said Erroll, "you tell me this in a lonely wood, where you are at my mercy?"

Mornington started back.

"By gad! If you dare—hands off!" shrieked Mornington, as Erroll leaped upon him.

He struck out fiercely, savagely, madly. Erroll received the blows without heeding them. Mornington went down into the grass with a crash, and Erroll's knee was planted on his chest, and Erroll's eyes blazed down at him. And Mornington's face grew whiter than Erroll's own as he looked up into those blazing eyes.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Under the Shadows!

MORNINGTON did not move—he could not in the muscular grasp. He was at the mercy of his enemy, over whose head he held disgrace and ruin. He did not call for help. He knew there was no one within hearing. He could only gaze up, with a frozen look, at the face above him.

For some seconds it lasted.

Then Erroll, with a light laugh, released him and sprang to his feet. Mornington lay sprawling, breathless, in the grass.

Slowly he picked himself up.

The contemptuous amusement in Erroll's face stung him to the soul.

"You need not fear," said Erroll.

"Fear!" Mornington ground his

teeth. He followed him slowly in the direction of Rookwood. It was past locking-up when he reached the school, and old Mack gruffly told him he was to report himself to Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy Silver and Co. met him as he entered the schoolhouse. The Fistical Four looked curiously at his pale, tired face.

"You've missed call-over," said Jimmy.

Erroll nodded. He went on to Mr. Bootles' study to report, and was rewarded with fifty lines. Then he went to his own quarters. Erroll shared No. 2 Study with Higgs and Jones minor, and he found his study-mates busy on their preparation.

"You're jolly late!" said Jones minor.

"Yes."



Mornington was at the mercy of his enemy, over whose head he held disgrace and ruin. He did not call for help, he knew that there was no one within hearing. He could only gaze up at the face above him, with a frozen look! (See chapter 6.)

teeth. "Do you think I'm afraid of you, you hound?"

"I think that you were," said Erroll coolly. "I should not have hurt you. I was only proving to you that you were mistaken—that if I were the fellow you believe you would not be allowed to go back to Rookwood and say so."

Mornington set his collar straight.

He had been afraid, terribly afraid for a moment, though he did not lack courage. But he knew now that Erroll had only been fooling him, that he had never been in any danger. But he realised—he could not help that—that he was at the stronger fellow's mercy, whatever Erroll chose to do; that he owed his safety to the fact that Erroll was not what he had accused him of being.

"By gad!" said Mornington at last. Erroll looked at him mockingly.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked.

"I've nothing to say to you," said Mornington. "I'll give you twenty-four hours to clear out of Rookwood. Then I shall speak!"

He strode away.

Erroll, in silence, watched him go.

"Got lines?"

"Yes."

"Well, you'd better get on with your prep. Make room, Higgs, you Hun!"

Higgs grunted and made room, and Erroll sat down to his prep. His work was carefully done, as usual. To-morrow, perhaps, was to be his last day at Rookwood. Twenty-four hours, and he was to be driven in disgrace from the school he had learned to love—from the cheery friends he had made. It was a blow that shattered everything for him, yet he was calm.

Why had Mornington given him that respite?

Perhaps, blackguard as he was in most things, the dandy of the Fourth had had some regard for the good name of Rookwood. Perhaps it was part of his revenge, to play with his defeated enemy like a cat with a mouse.

Perhaps the cool, quiet courage with which Erroll had faced this shattering blow had evoked an unwilling admiration in Mornny's breast. His motives, probably, were mixed. Be that as it might, the son of Gentleman Jim had

• You Must Not Miss Reading "Wun Lung's Feud!" A Grand School Tale—

twenty-four hours in which to consider his course of action.

Mornington would keep his word, he knew that. Morny was a very unreliable fellow in most things, but his word was his bond. What he had said he would do.

After prep was over Erroll went down to the Common-room.

Mornington and Co. were there, and Morny was in great spirits. He gave Erroll a mocking smile as he came in. Erroll did not appear to notice him.

He joined Jimmy Silver and Co., who were talking cricket. Jimmy greeted him with a cheery smile and nod.

The captain of the Fourth had not forgotten the curious incident of the afternoon, and he wondered whether Erroll would make any reference to his somewhat ~~inopportune~~ visit to the wood. But Erroll did not mention it.

He talked cricket with a cheery smile on his face. The juniors had been discussing the forthcoming match with Greyfriars. After the splendid game he had put up against Bagshot, it was a foregone conclusion that Erroll would play in the Greyfriars match.

The First Four little dreamed as they chatted away cheerily till bedtime, of the thoughts that were working in Erroll's mind.

The morrow—the morrow! That was the besetting thought. What was to happen on the morrow?

Mornington strolled over to the group.

"Settlin' the great question of the eleven for Greyfriars?" he asked.

"It's settled," said Jimmy Silver.

"Erroll goin' to play?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" demanded Jimmy Silver gruffly. "I don't see anything to chortle at myself."

"Perhaps you will later," said Mornington, laughing. "What do you think, Erroll?"

Erroll turned away, and took up a book and did not seem to hear the question. Mornington rejoined his friends, still grinning. Townsend and Topham and Peele were puzzled by his mood.

"You seem to be thumpin' merry this evenin'!" said Peele.

"I've been havin' good luck," smiled Mornington.

"Gee-gees?" asked Towny.

"Oh, no. Better than gee-gees."

"Well, I wish some of your luck had come my way," grunted Townsend. "I've been cleaned out—clean as a whistle. No more sportin' for me for a week or two."

"Same here," said Topham.

"Does that mean that you're not comin' out to-night?" asked Mornington.

"What's the good?"

"Well, I'm goin'."

"More duffer you," said Townsend. "You were out on Monday. Once a week is quite enough for me. You'll get spotted by a prefect sooner or later if you keep this up."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

His luck had always held good, and he did not care for risks. Erroll glanced up over his book at the nuts of the Fourth, and dropped his gaze again. But there was a strange gleam in his eyes.

He was not reading now; he was thinking. It was as if an avenue of escape from his terrible dilemma had opened before him.

The dandy of the Fourth would not have laid his plans for that "night out" so carelessly if he had known what was in the new junior's mind.

THE POPULAR.—No. 124.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Last Chance!

JIMMY SILVER stirred and moved drowsily in the dormitory of the classical Fourth.

He blinked round in the darkness for a moment or two, and dropped off to sleep again. Some sound had awakened him; but it was not repeated.

The sound had been that of a softly-closing door.

Five minutes later a dim figure moved silently from a bed, dressing almost without a sound in the darkness.

Then the door opened and closed more cautiously than before.

Jimmy Silver slept on, dreaming of a cricket match in which he was scoring a century for Rookwood amid thunderous cheers. He did not dream that two beds in the Fourth Form dormitory were vacant.

Mornington of the Fourth was gone. His nutty friends had been left fast asleep. But there was one other who had been awake, and that other had followed.

The night grew older. Midnight had sounded in muffled strokes, and the last light in Rookwood School had been extinguished. The great building lay dark and silent. In the old quadrangle only the branches of the beech-trees stirred in the night wind.

Midnight!

From the direction of Coombe a soft footstep was audible on the shadowy road, had there been ears to hear.

Mornington was returning.

The dandy of the Fourth was humming a tune faintly as he came. He stopped under the shadow of the school wall, where branches of the trees within overhung the road.

He knew well the spot where the wall was facile to climb, where the old, worn stone gave foothold. It was not the first time by many a one that Mornington had returned to Rookwood at that hour of the night.

The junior stepped close to the wall, felt over the inequalities of the old stone, and climbed. His hand caught the coping, and he was about to draw himself up to the top, when he paused with a sudden, gasping ejaculation.

Above him, dim in the darkness under the overhanging tree, a head appeared. A dimly seen face looked down on him.

"Who—who is that?" panted Mornington, holding on.

There was a low laugh above him in the gloom.

"Erroll!" muttered Mornington.

"Yes."

"Let me pass!"

Erroll laughed again softly.

Mornington's face grew a little pale as he hung on to the wall, his boots scraping on the stone as he strove to keep his foothold.

"Will you let me pass?" he hissed.

"No!"

Mornington's eyes burned.

"What's your game? Have I interrupted you, you hound? Are you out of bed to let your cracksman father into the school?"

He saw the junior above him wince.

But Erroll's voice was quiet and steady as he answered:

"No."

"Then what's your game, confound you? Let me get in. I can't hang on here long."

"You are not coming in!" said Erroll coolly.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Have you forgotten," asked Erroll, with a bitter accent in his voice, "I have to leave Rookwood to-morrow. You are sending me back to what I've left. You're spoiling my only chance of

leading a decent life. Well, you're going to leave Rookwood with me, Mornington."

"I?" hissed Mornington.

"You! We're birds of a feather, you know," said Erroll bitterly. "I am the son of—you know what. You are a gambling, rascally blackguard, a disgrace to the school. Sooner or later, you'll be found out and expelled, if you're not run in by the police some night. Rookwood will be better off without either of us."

"You—you hound!" said Mornington between his teeth. "You've played this trick on me because I've found you out."

"Haven't I found you out, too?" smiled Erroll. "Which is the bigger disgrace to Rookwood, you or I, Mornington? Perhaps my past won't bear the light, but will your present? If a decent fellow had found me out, I couldn't have looked him in the face. Jimmy Silver, for instance. I should have gone away from Rookwood rather than met his eyes. But you're different. Whatever I am, Mornington, whatever I've been, I'm a better fellow than you are."

Mornington panted.

"I told you I was playing a straight game here, and you scoffed at it. Jimmy Silver would have believed me in your place. He is honourable himself, and he can see honesty in others. You could not. Because you are not honourable. Morny—because you're a bigger rascal than I've ever been. You're driving me from Rookwood—for the honour of the school, you've said. You will leave Rookwood at the same time, Mornington, for the honour of the school. Do you think I don't care as much for Rookwood's good name as you do?"

Mornington was silent.

He understood clearly enough.

When he had held the upper hand he had shown no mercy. In his heart of hearts he had believed Erroll, he had believed that the cracksman's son was seeking to throw his old life behind him in coming to Rookwood. Erroll's words had carried the stamp of truth with them. Yet he had scoffed, and he had had no mercy.

Erroll had the upper hand now.

Mornington knew what it meant if he was found out of school bounds at night. More than once suspicion had fallen upon him already. It would be the finish—expulsion from the school in undying disgrace. His career at Rookwood would finish on the same day as Erroll's.

There was a long silence. Mornington's aching arms gave way, and he dropped back into the road. Erroll looked down at him.

"I'm going in now," he said. "I shall fasten the window. You can ring the bell, Mornington, if you want to get in before morning. I shall have your company in the train to-morrow. A pleasant journey for both of us!"

"Erroll!" Mornington's voice was husky. "Don't go! Listen to me!"

"Well?"

"You've got me!" said Mornington between his teeth. "I'll make a bargain with you. That's what you want, of course. I can see that. You've got me down, and you want to make terms with me to save your skin. It's what I might have looked for from you. I forgot I was dealing with a criminal!"

"You lie!" said Erroll. "You know I am nothing of the sort!"

"You are the son of your father, I suppose?" sneered Mornington. "You rotter, you plotting scoundrel, you're proving now that you're a criminal! Would any decent fellow have thought of a trick like this? Nobody but the son of Gentleman Jim!"

(Continued on page 15.)

THE END OF HIS TETHER.

(Continued from page 6.)

"All's fair in war!"
 "To a criminal—yes!" sneered Mornington. You've got me! I'll make terms. Let me in, and I'll keep your rotten secret. Stay here till your father burgles the school, you scoundrel! I suppose that's the game. I can't afford to be sacked. Let me in, and you're safe from me."

Erroll was silent.
 The game was in his hands. That Mornington would keep a promise he had little doubt. He had observed the character—a strange mixture of good and evil—of the dandy of the Fourth.

And in the hour of his success came doubt and hesitation.

Mornington's taunt had struck home. It was the son of Gentleman Jim who had planned this defeat for Mornington; not the frank, honourable, schoolboy that Jimmy Silver believed him to be.

Erroll knew it. He knew that in driving Mornington into this bargain he was giving up all that he had come to Rookwood for; he was abandoning the path he had marked out for himself—the path of honour. He would save himself by becoming what Mornington had accused him of being.

There was a long silence. Mornington looked up anxiously at the dim face above him.

Erroll spoke at last.
 "You can come. I don't want your promise. I want nothing at your hands, Mornington. Do your worst!"

He disappeared from the wall.
 Mornington stared up blankly into the gloom. He was slow to understand. But he saw that the wall was clear, his passage was free. He climbed the wall and dropped into the quadrangle. Erroll had disappeared.

"By gad!" muttered Mornington.
 He crossed cautiously to the school-house. The window by which he had left was still unfastened. He climbed in.

The Fourth Form dormitory was silent as the black sheep of Rookwood crept into it. A glimmer of starlight from the high windows fell upon the beds, and he saw Erroll. The junior's eyes were closed, and he seemed to be sleeping.

Mornington turned in. But it was long before he slept.

Jimmy Silver and Co. turned out cheerily as the rising-bell clanged in the early summer morning.

Erroll joined the Fisticul Four as they went down.

When the breakfast-bell rang, and the juniors trooped in, Mornington joined Erroll, and stopped him.

"You had me down," said Mornington. "Why didn't you strike a bargain?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"I should have kept my promise if you had taken it. You know that?"

"I know."

"And now—"

"And now," said Erroll quickly, "I know what to expect. Have you anything more to say to me?"

"Only this," said Mornington. "Clear off to-day, and nobody shall know who and what you are. I'll do that much. Get out of Rookwood, and I'll keep my mouth shut. You know you can't keep up this game after I've spoken."

"I know it."

"You had your chance last night, and you didn't take it. Well, take the chance that's left. The fellows will wonder, but they won't know the truth. Will you go to-day?"

Erroll drew a deep breath.
 "It's more than I expected from you," he said. "After lessons to-day I shall leave Rookwood. I shall not return. Are you satisfied?"

Mornington nodded, and Erroll went quietly into the house.

Mornington followed him slowly.
 His brow was moody. He had triumphed, but his triumph had left a bitter taste in his mouth.

THE END.

(Another grand story of Jimmy Silver & Co. next week in the POPULAR. By the way, do you read the long story of Rookwood which appears in the "Boys' Friend" every Monday?)

POPULAR FAVOURITES.

No. 16.—S. Q. I. FIELD.



Sampson Quincy Ilfrey Field is his real name, but Bob Cherry said that, seeing life was so short, they couldn't call him all that, so he altered it to "Squiff," and that name has stuck to him through thick and thin. It was when the Famous Five went to meet him at the station, and the humorous Bob saw the initials on his case, "S. Q. I. F.," that the name occurred to him, and Field good-naturedly agreed with him.

In some small points the average Australian schoolboy may differ from our boys here. But he is like them in things that matter most. He has his love for japes and fair play, and their high ideals of honour.

Squiff has more than ordinary skill in the devising of japes and he never lacks the audacity to carry them through. Anyone can think of a jape, of a sort, but it takes a person with a clear and cool head to carry it through. You doubtless remember the story which appeared in the "Magnet," entitled "A Cool Card." That was the story in which Squiff came to Greyfriars. Nothing better explains him than that title.

People have often wondered where he gets all the ideas from for the numerous japes he has been responsible. All through his

career at the school there is never a week that passes that he has not "japed" someone. Of course, they are quite harmless, inasmuch as the victim seldom suffers from the ruling rod of the "powers that be." That would go against the grain absolutely. Squiff would see that such a thing would not happen if he could stop it—which shows the type of boy we are dealing with.

The Famous Five took to the Australian from the very first, and, indeed, so did the rest of the Remove. They saw, or thought they did, a likely "recruit" for the cricket eleven. They had heard so much about these Australian schoolboys who were such Trojans at cricket that they were completely off their guard when the new boy "japed" them. Perhaps they deserved to be taken in.

Squiff meekly informed them that he could play a little, but would improve himself if they would like to wait a little while. He meekly studied that very useful handbook, "Hints to Young Cricketers," much to their amazement and amusement. He meekly took hints and advice from the other fellows at the nets, and when he played they had to admit that he was certainly very elementary. Then he meekly fell in with Harry Wharton's offer to give him to Dick Trumper's eleven, who were a man short.

Then the mask fell off, and all Greyfriars had the surprise of their young lives, for he licked the Remove off his own bat, and licked them unmercifully. Nevertheless, they had to laugh at the joke against them. And from that day Squiff has been one of the most popular fellows in the Lower School.

Another sport in which he has helped the Remove in is boxing. Early in his career he knocked out Bolsover in a great fight, and he has always been a very useful man with the "mitts"—in fact, he is one of the four or five best in the Remove.

If you wanted me to tell you in a few words my opinion of Squiff, I should say: "You couldn't have a better chum if you searched the whole world over."

This is his signature:

S. Q. I. Field

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