

FIVE SHILLINGS FOR ONE SENTENCE! (See page 12).

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Greyfriars

The POPULAR

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Stories, Jokes & Pictures
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Rookwood

St. Jims



**FRANK NUGENT DEMANDS A SEARCH OF
SKINNER'S STUDY.**

**HOW THE CULPRIT CONCEALS THE
EVIDENCE OF HIS GUILT.**

(A tense moment in the long, complete Greyfriars tale in this issue.)

GENTLEMAN JIM'S STRATAGEM!

A Splendid, Long, Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co.
at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. A Talk on the Telephone!

TAP!
"Come in!" said Mr. Bootles. The master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood was finishing his morning paper in his study. It was nearly time for lessons.

The door opened, and Erroll of the Fourth came in.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him over his spectacles. The handsome face of the new junior at Rookwood was very grave.

"Well, what is it, Erroll?"

"May I ask you a favour, sir?" said Erroll hesitatingly.

"Certainly, my boy!"

Mr. Bootles blinked at him over his Erroll had not been long at Rookwood, but the Form-master had taken a liking to him, as most of the fellows had. Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Fourth were his firm friends, and he had no enemy in the school but Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth.

"May I use your telephone, sir?"

"Ahem! If there is any necessity for you to use the telephone, Erroll, you may certainly do so. But—"

"I should like to speak to my father, sir!"

Mr. Bootles regarded him rather curiously.

"I understood that Captain Erroll had returned to British Honduras, my boy!"

"He is still in London, sir!"

"Ah, you wish to bid him a last good-bye! Is that it?" said Mr. Bootles, with a benignant smile. "My dear lad, I should certainly place no difficulty in your way. I have a very great respect for Captain Erroll, who distinguished himself so greatly at the Front. You may certainly use the telephone, Erroll, and you may wait till you get your call if there is any delay."

"Thank you, sir!" said Erroll gratefully.

"That's all right, Erroll! Come to the Form-room as soon as you have spoken to your father."

"Yes, sir!"

Mr. Bootles glanced at his watch, laid down his newspaper, and quitted the study.

Erroll stepped towards the telephone. It was a trunk-call he wanted, to speak to his father in London, and there was likely to be delay in getting it. Mr. Bootles had benevolently given him permission to wait, under the impression that he desired to speak once more to Captain Erroll before the latter started on his voyage.

There was a faint flush in Erroll's

cheeks as he took up the receiver. He had not deceived the Form-master, but he had certainly allowed Mr. Bootles to deceive himself.

"Number, please?"

"Trunks."

There was a long pause, and then a feminine voice demanded the number. Erroll gave it, and put up the receiver.

He went to the window, and stood looking out into the quadrangle while he waited for "Trunks" to ring him up.

The sunshine of early summer fell brightly into the old quadrangle of Rookwood.

Erroll stood looking out, with a gloomy brow.

He was looking his last on Rookwood.

That day was to be his last at the old school, and his heart was heavy with the thought of it.

Buzzzzz!

He was through at last, and he crossed quickly to the telephone, and took up the receiver.

He gave the number again, and after a minute or so a cool, clear voice came through.

"Hallo!"

"Hallo! Who is speaking?"

"Captain Erroll. Who is that?"

"It is I, father—Kit!"

"I thought so. What are you telephoning for?"

"I have news for you."

"Mind how you talk. You understand?"

"I understand. But I must tell you, father. I am leaving Rookwood to-day!"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I suppose I shall find you when I return?"

"What do you mean, Kit? You are not to return! You are not to leave Rookwood. Are you out of your senses?"

"I have no choice, father!" Erroll's voice was calm and steady. "You remember our talk at the woodman's hut yesterday, in Coombe Wood?"

"Yes, yes!"

"It was overheard!"

"By gad! And by whom?"

"Mornington of the Fourth. I mentioned him to you—my enemy!"

"Was he spying on you, then?"

"Yes."

"And he knows—"

"Everything!"

An oath was audible on the telephone. The news came as a shock to Gentleman Jim, the cracksman. Erroll smiled bitterly.

"He has betrayed you?" went on Gentleman Jim's voice at last.

"Not yet. He has promised to say nothing if I leave Rookwood to-day without any fuss. I have agreed. After lessons I shall go out as if for a walk, and shall not return to the school."

"Nothing has been said, then, so far?"

"Nothing as yet."

"Then the secret is safe till after lessons?"

"Yes."

"Hang on a moment, Kit. I must think this over."

"Yes, father."

The schoolboy waited. Far away in London, Gentleman Jim, the cracksman, was thinking hard. It was a sudden blow to all his plans. The cracksman had imposed himself upon the Head of Rookwood as "Captain Erroll." He had placed Kit in the Fourth Form at Rookwood without a hitch. And all his plans were thrown into disarray by the enmity of a junior schoolboy. Mornington, the dandy of Rookwood, had been too much for Gentleman Jim, the cracksman.

"Kit!" came the cracksman's voice at last.

"Yes, father!" said Erroll dully.

"You are sure that Mornington has said nothing so far?"

"Quite sure. I should have heard of it fast enough if he had."

"Yes, yes, that is true. Do not leave Rookwood until you hear from me again."

"But—"

"Who is this Mornington? Tell me all you know about him. It is important."

"He is the richest fellow at Rookwood, a good deal of a bounder. I think he is an orphan. His guardian is his uncle, Sir Rupert Stacpoole, one of the governors of Rookwood. That is all I know of him."

"Good! Does his guardian come to see him sometimes?"

"I believe so."

"What telephone are you using?"

"My Form-master's. Mr. Bootles thinks I wanted to say good-bye to you before you sailed."

A chuckle was audible on the wires.

"That was very cute, Kit. Give me the number."

"You cannot telephone to me again, father—"

"Give me the number!"

Erroll gave it.

"Good! Leave the matter to me, Kit. Lucky you let me know. Mind, you are not to leave Rookwood. There will be time to do that when the game

is up. And it is not up yet by long chalks!"

"Father! What is it you intend to do?"

"Good-bye, Kit! Stick it out!"

"Father—"
There was no reply. Gentleman Jim had rung off. Erroll, with a sigh, put up the receiver. With a gloomy brow he made his way to the Fourth-Form room, and took his place in the class.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Sword of Damocles!

JIMMY SILVER clapped Erroll on the back as the Fourth Form came out after morning lessons.

"Come along to the cricket, old scout!" said Jimmy cheerily. "I want you to give me some bowling before dinner."

Erroll smiled faintly. He was a keen cricketer, but cricket was not much in his mind just then.

"What are you scowling about?" asked Lovell

"Was I scowling?"
"Well, frowning!" said Lovell, laughing. "You've been at it all the morning. What's the merry trouble?"

"And what made you so late for lessons?" asked Raby. "I thought Bootles was going to drop on you when you came in half an hour late. But he didn't."

"I had leave," said Erroll. "I had been telephoning to my father."

"Oh! Hasn't Captain Erroll started for home yet, then?"

"Well, he couldn't have, if Erroll's been phoning to him this morning," said Newcome.

Erroll smiled faintly. He wondered, for a moment, what the cheery Co. would have thought if they could have known what had been said over the wires. The thought brought a flush to his cheeks. After all, if he had to leave Rookwood, it would be an end to deception. There was solace in that.

"Nothing wrong with your pater, is there, Erroll?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, no! Why?"

"You've been looking so jolly serious all the morning, I thought something might be wrong. If there's nothing the matter, get that scowl off your chivvy and come down to the nets."

And Erroll went down to Little Side with the Fistical Four.

"Awfully thick, that gang!" remarked Townsend to Mornington as they passed. "I hear that Erroll's name's down for the St. Jim's match."

Mornington smiled sarcastically.

"Erroll won't play for Rookwood against St. Jim's!" he said.

"Two to one he does—in quids!" said Townsend.

Mornington laughed.

"I should be robbin' you," he said. "Erroll won't play for Rookwood again; and you can bet your hat on that, Towny!"

"I don't see what you're drivin' at," said Townsend, puzzled. "Jimmy Silver selected him for the Junior Eleven. I know that!"

"You're talkin' out of your hat, Morny!" said Topham. "Erroll's safe for the St. Jim's match!"

"I say, Morny!" Tabby Muffin of the Fourth rolled up. "Bootles wants you!"

"Oh, bother Bootles!" growled Mornington. "What's wrong now?"

Tabby grinned.

"Tain't a licking. He's been rung up by your guardian, old Stacpoole, and he's got a message for you. He told me to tell you so."

Mornington yawned.

"By gad! Is my guardian comin'?"

THE POPULAR.—No. 125.

down here?" he said. "That means that I sha'n't be able to get out after lessons to-day, you fellows!"

"I'll tell 'em at the Bird-in-Hand that you're sorry you can't come," grinned Townsend.

"Oh, rats!"

Mornington looked decidedly cross as he went to Mr. Bootles' study. Morny's uncle was a most indulgent guardian, and in most matters Morny's wishes were law to him. But the dutiful nephew regarded the kind old gentleman as a good deal of a bore, and he was not at all enthusiastic about receiving a visit from him. Morny had his own engagements after lessons—engagements such as he could not quite have explained even to the most indulgent of guardians.

He tapped at Mr. Bootles' door and entered, and the Form-master looked up.

"Ah! You may come in, Mornington. I have just received a telephone call from your uncle, Sir Rupert Stacpoole."

"Yes, sir."

"Sir Rupert telephoned from the Royal George Hotel in Latcham. He is in Latcham at present, and he wishes you to go and dine with him there. He has asked me to excuse you from lessons for the afternoon." Mr. Bootles looked rather serious. "I did not see my way to decline, Mornington, so you may go to Latcham to meet your guardian."

Mornington brightened up considerably.

He was not "keen" on lessons, not by any means. The prospect of that sunny afternoon out of the Form-room was distinctly attractive.

"Thank you, sir!"

"That is all, Mornington."

"May I take a friend with me, sir?"

"You may not, Mornington. Sir Rupert Stacpoole stated that he wished you to come by yourself. In any case, Mornington, I could not give your friends permission to miss lessons for no reason at all."

"Very well, sir."

Mornington left the study.

"Licked?" asked Townsend, as the Nuts of Rookwood met him at the end of the passage.

"No, ass! I've got to go over to Latcham this afternoon. My uncle's there, and he wants to see me. Can't take a chap with me, though!"

"Rotten favouritism!" growled Higgs of the Fourth.

Mornington laughed.

"Well, nobody'll ever make a favourite of you, Higgs!" he remarked. And he walked on.

The juniors went in to dinner, and Mornington sauntered down to the gates, and started for Coombe to take the local train to Latcham.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.
Kidnapped!

THERE was no thought of danger in Mornington's mind when he sauntered away from the gates of Rookwood that afternoon.

He was in a cheery humour. An afternoon away from lessons was agreeable enough, even if coupled with spending the holiday in the company of that somewhat boresome old gentleman, Sir Rupert Stacpoole.

Mornington had allowed himself plenty of time to catch the local train to Latcham, and he sauntered in a leisurely way down the leafy lane to Coombe.

Near the cross-roads, where the lane turned off to Bagshot, a cart was standing, the horse with a nosebag on. The carter was sitting on the shaft, smoking a pipe.

Mornington glanced at him carelessly as he passed.

The carter wore corduroy trousers and a smock and a slouched hat, and looked like any other of the villagers Mornington had seen often enough about Coombe.

His face was decidedly dirty, and his beard thick and shaggy. He seemed half asleep as he sat on the shaft, smoking lazily, but from under his brows his eyes were fixed on the Coombe road, and a gleam came into them as the handsome, well-dressed junior came along from the direction of Rookwood.

He detached himself from the shaft, removed the pipe from his mouth, and called to Mornington.

"Excuse me. You be from Rookwood, sir?"

"Yes," said Mornington, glancing at the man again. He did not see why the carter should be interested in that circumstance.

"P'r'aps you know Master Mornington of Rookwood School, sir?"

The Classical junior looked at him harder.

"I am Mornington," he said.

"Then you're the young gent I've got a message for!"

"Oh! A message for me?" said Mornington, wondering whether Joey Hook, the bookmaker, had chosen this rough fellow as a messenger. "Well, I'm Mornington. Go ahead, my man! What is it?"

The man glanced up and down the lane, with a quick, suspicious look. The lane was lonely enough, and there was no one in sight.

Then he approached Mornington, who watched him curiously.

"Ere you are, sir, 'ere's the letter what was give to me," said the carter, holding out a grubby hand with an envelope in it.

Mornington carelessly stretched out his hand.

To his amazement, the carter, instead of handing him the letter, grasped his wrist in a grip that was like iron.

He uttered a whistle at the same moment.

There was a rustle in the trees by the road, and a man ran out behind Mornington.

The dandy of the Fourth, crimson with anger at the rude grasp laid upon him, struggled savagely, seeking to wrench his hand away.

"You impertinent scoundrel!" he shouted furiously. "How dare you lay hands on me! Let me go! Are you drunk, or mad?"

"Quick, Badger!" panted the carter.

As Mornington struggled with him, a strong grasp was laid upon him from behind.

Struggling violently, the Rookwood junior was swept off the ground, and, in

(Continued on page 3.)

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Gentleman Jim's Stratagem!

(Continued from page 8.)

the grasp of the two men, rushed towards the waiting cart.

His arms and legs flew wildly in the air as he was tossed into the vehicle.

"Help!"
Mornington had time for only that one cry.

The carter was on him, kneeling on him as he lay panting in the bottom of the cart. His eyes blazed down at the dazed junior of Rookwood.

"Silence!"

"You—you hound!" panted Mornington; he was astounded, dazed by the strange attack, but he was not terrified. It was rage, not fear, that was in his looks. "What does this mean, you scoundrel?"

"Silence!"

The second man clambered in. As Mornington sought to shout again, he drove a wad of rag into his mouth, and the junior's shout died in a choked gurgle.

The carter dragged a cord from his pocket.

In a minute or less, the kidnapped junior was bound hand and foot, and lay helpless in the bottom of the cart.

The gag jammed in his mouth kept him silent. He lay helpless, only his eyes blazing defiance and fury at his kidnappers.

The carter jumped down into the road. The man he had called "Badger" covered a tarpaulin over the bound junior.

The carter stepped back to the cross-roads, and looked this way and that. The clumps of trees by the roadside had screened the scene. In the fields, at a distance, labourers were working, but none had seen the kidnapping.

"All O.K., Badger?" he said.

"Easy as winkin', guv'nor."

"Get going, then."

"What-ho!"

Badger sat in the cart, after taking the nosebag from the horse. The carter mounted in front, taking the whip and reins. The clumsy cart rolled off up the lane towards Bagshot School.

Halfway to Bagshot it turned into a rough cart-track that led across Coombe Moor. It followed the track for half a mile or more, and then turned upon the moor itself, jolting and bumping away over the rough ground. Under the tarpaulin in the cart Mornington lay helpless and silent.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Held By the Enemy!

MORNINGTON writhed helplessly in his bonds under the tarpaulin as the cart jolted over the rough ground.

The Rookwood junior could see nothing, hear nothing but the heavy bumping of the wheels on the moor.

The rage that consumed him died away, however, and his struggles ceased. He realised his helplessness. He was utterly at the mercy of the ruffians who had kidnapped him. What was their object? Who were they? He asked himself those questions a score of times without being able to find an answer.

What did it mean? What could it mean? Whither was he being taken? The kidnapping had been carefully planned; he realised that. The cart had been in waiting, the kidnappers ready for him to pass. How had they known that he was leaving the school at

that time—a time when all the fellows were usually within gates?

Evidently they had known.

It was a hopeless puzzle. He waited with feverish anxiety for the strange journey to come to an end. He could not guess in what direction he was being taken; only the jolting of the vehicle told him that he was traversing the pathless moorland.

The cart stopped at last.

The tarpaulin, after some delay, was drawn aside, and Mornington blinked in the sudden sunshine.

He sat up with difficulty.

Round him stretched the wide moor, dotted here and there with gorse and trees.

No habitation was in sight.

The cart had halted in a hollow of the moor, and the view was cut off on all sides by rising ground.

He looked at his captors.

The ruffian Badger grinned down at him. It was the man who had played the part of a carter who was the leader, Mornington knew. He knew, too, that the man could not be a carter. Who and what was he?

"Get him out, Badger."

"Right-ho, guv'nor!"

Mornington was lifted from the cart in the ruffian's strong arms. The cord about his ankles was loosened.

"Walk!" said Badger laconically.

His heavy grasp was on the Rookwood junior's shoulder. Mornington moved along as the man led him.

The grassy slopes of the moor, as he saw now, were marked and scarred by old quarry workings. He remembered the disused Coombe quarries, which had lain idle for a hundred years or more, and were mostly flooded. Why had the kidnappers brought him there?

The carter had tied the horse, and he was moving ahead. Badger followed with Mornington.

They followed a sloping path into the deepest part of the grassy hollow.

From there a rough and precipitous way led down into one of the old quarry workings.

Fifty feet below the level of the moor, in the shadowy old working, they stopped.

Here a gap opened in the quarry side, where slaty edges cropped out into view. It was like a small cave, extending a dozen feet into the earth, closed on all sides but one.

Mornington stood alone, while Badger returned the way he had come. The carter remained with the kidnapped junior.

Mornington's eyes scanned him savagely.

The carter met his glance, and smiled slightly. He removed the gag from the junior's mouth.

"You know where you are, I suppose?" he said.

Mornington gasped for breath.

"Yes. What am I brought here for?"

"You are a prisoner, as you can see."

"I know you have kidnapped me, you scoundrel! But what is it for? I suppose you've got some reason?"

"Naturally."

"Who are you?" Mornington watched the man's face savagely. "I've heard your voice before; I'm sure of that."

"You have seen me before," smiled the carter. "You need not be alarmed, Master Mornington. You are not going to be hurt. You will simply remain here a prisoner for a few days—"

"You think you can keep me here?" panted Mornington. "I shall be searched for. My uncle is expecting me in Latcham this very minute—"

"Your uncle is not in Latcham."

"What!"

"And he will not know that you have disappeared until he hears it from Rookwood."

Mornington staggered.

He began to understand now.

"Then—then the telephone-call—it was not Sir Rupert Stacpoole?" he stammered.

"It was I."

"But you—you—how did you know anything about me—about my uncle? I—I don't understand." Even as he was speaking a light broke upon the junior's mind. "Erroll!"

Badger came back into the cave with bundles in his arms. He put down the bundles, and tramped away again to the cart.

Mornington glanced at the things—a pair of blankets, several rugs, a camp-chair, cooking utensils. Evidently the kidnappers were making preparations for camping in that desolate recess.

His eyes fixed on the pretended carter again.

"I know you now!" he muttered. "I know your voice. You are the man who brought Erroll to Rookwood, calling yourself Captain Erroll. You are the man he met in the woodman's hut. You are Erroll's father, the cracksman—Gentleman Jim!"

"It has taken you a long time to guess it," smiled Gentleman Jim.

Mornington ground his teeth with rage.

"You've brought me here so that I can't give Erroll away to the Head!" he exclaimed.

"You've guessed it."

"But—but— Oh, you're mad!" panted Mornington. "You can't keep me here long. I shall be hunted for. Suppose they don't find me for a week, even a month, it comes to the same thing. The minute I set foot in Rookwood again I shall tell Dr. Chisholm everything."

"You will be welcome to," yawned Gentleman Jim.

He turned away from the junior as Badger entered the excavation again, his arms full.

The two rascals unpacked the bundles together, Mornington watching them with a moody brow.

Gentleman Jim uncoiled a thin, strong chain, with a padlock at the end. Badger was driving a stake into a cleft in the hard ground.

"You will find this more comfy than being tied up, my boy," said the cracksman, as he passed the chain round Mornington's waist and locked it.

"You hound!"

The cracksman fastened the end of the chain to the stake. Mornington had a freedom of eight or nine feet. Then the cracksman cut through the bonds on his limbs.

"I am going now, Master Mornington," said Gentleman Jim quietly. "One word of warning before I go. This is a lonely spot, miles from any house. If you shout you will not be heard. But we do not intend to run risks. If you utter one cry you will be gagged. If you have any regard for your own comfort you will toe the line quietly."

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"You will be cared for as well as circumstances permit," resumed Gentleman Jim. "You are being kept out of the way till you cannot do any further harm. That is all."

He turned away with that, and left the excavation.

Mornington heard his footsteps die away in the hollow. A few minutes later the sound of wheels rumbling in the distance came to his ears.

Gentleman Jim has gone!

THE POPULAR.—No. 125.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER. Missing!

"WHERE'S Mornington?"

That was the question in the Classical Fourth dormitory.

"By gad, he's keepin' it up!" said Townsend, with a grin. "Bootles will have somethin' to say when he comes back!"

"He's giv'n Nunky the slip, and gone on the spree," opined Peele. "Just like Morny!"

"Well, I suppose nothing can have happened to him," said Jimmy Silver, as he kicked off his boots. "He's making a day of it, that's all."

"Just like him!" growled Lovell.

Erroll made no remark.

His face was pale.

The absence of Mornington was being prolonged. So far it had saved him from the revelation that meant ruin to his hopes.

Was it merely the recklessness of the blackguard of Rookwood manifesting itself once more in this way? Or—

With a chill at his heart, the unhappy junior thought of Gentleman Jim.

The crackman had bidden him remain at the school; he had undertaken that Mornington should keep silence.

Was Mornington's absence due to some scheme of the crackman? Was it a coincidence, or a plot of Gentleman Jim? He could not tell, but his heart was heavy. There was no sleep for Erroll of the Fourth that night.

The rest of the Fourth were not anxious about the missing junior. They had no doubt that he would turn up late with some "yarn" to satisfy Mr. Bootles.

But Mr. Bootles, who did not know Mornington quite so well as his Form-fellows knew him, was decidedly anxious.

After Bulkeley had put out the lights for the Classical Fourth, he went down to the Fourth Form-master's study.

"Mornington has not come in, sir!" he announced.

"It is extraordinary," said Mr. Bootles. "I cannot help fearing that some accident has happened to him, Bulkeley. Even his guardian has no right to keep him late for bedtime. I will telephone to Sir Rupert, and ask him whether Mornington left him in time to get home for bed."

The worried Form-master turned to the telephone, and rang up the Royal George, at Latcham.

"Hallo!"

"I wish to speak to Sir Rupert Stacpoole. Is he still at the hotel?" said Mr. Bootles, into the transmitter.

"What name?"

"Sir Rupert Stacpoole."

"No gentleman of that name here, sir."

"Dear me! Has he left?"

"I do not think anyone of that name has been here, sir; but I will inquire."

"Thank you!" said Mr. Bootles, very much surprised.

He waited.

The voice came through again in a few minutes.

"No one of that name at this hotel, sir."

"Dear me! That is very extraordinary! Sir Rupert Stacpoole telephoned to me from your hotel early to-day."

"Some mistake, sir."

"Kindly tell me this. Has a boy belonging to this school—Rookwood—called at your hotel to-day to see a gentleman there?"

"I will inquire."

Another delay, while Mr. Bootles wrinkled his brows in perplexity. He was both puzzled and alarmed by this time.

THE POPULAR.—No. 125.

Again the voice came through from Latcham.

"Nothing is known here of any school-boy having called, sir. Perhaps it is some other hotel you want. This is the Royal George, Latcham."

"Yes, yes; that is right. You are sure that Sir Rupert Stacpoole has not been at your hotel, and that his nephew from Rookwood School has not called upon him?"

"Absolutely."

"It is extraordinary!"

Mr. Bootles rang off, and hurried out of the study. He was disquieted and alarmed. He found Dr. Chisholm in his study, and hurriedly explained the matter to him.

The Head listened in utter astonishment.

"This is astounding, Mr. Bootles. It appears that the telephone-call did not come from Mornington's uncle at all, then!"

"Apparently not."

"It is extraordinary! And the boy has not returned from Latcham?"

"No; neither is he known to have arrived there."

The Head knitted his brows. The strange affair put him entirely at a loss.

"I must speak to Sir Rupert Stacpoole!" he said at last. "It appears that someone has used his name, in order to obtain a holiday for Mornington. We shall see."

The Head rang up the baronet's town house, and waited for his trunk call to be put through.

The Head was looking anxious now.

He had returned to his papers, but his brow was knitted. The telephone-bell rang at last, and the Head took up the receiver.

"Is that Sir Rupert Stacpoole?"

"Yes, yes." The thin, cracked voice of the old gentleman came through.

"What is it?"

"This is Rookwood School; Dr. Chisholm speaking. Have you any knowledge of your nephew's present whereabouts?"

"Eh? Is he not at Rookwood?"

"He left early this afternoon, presumably to visit you at Latcham."

"What? What? I have not been to Latcham. I have not left London to-day. What do you mean?"

"Mr. Bootles received a telephone-call from Latcham in your name, asking for Mornington to visit you at the Royal

George Hotel there. He went, and has not returned."

"Bless my soul! Some trick to get the young rascal a holiday, I presume. But he has not returned?"

"He has not."

"Good heavens! Well, I know nothing of the matter. Reckless young rascal! Let me know in the mornin' that he is all right."

"Oh, certainly!"

The Head put up the receiver, and looked at Mr. Bootles.

That gentleman looked at him.

"This is very strange," said Dr. Chisholm. "We had better wait a little longer, and if Mornington does not return, I shall conclude that he has met with an accident, and the police had better be communicated with."

"Very well, sir!"

Mr. Bootles left the study. It was his bedtime now; but he did not go to bed. At eleven o'clock all Rookwood had turned in, excepting Mr. Bootles and the Head. Mornington had not returned.

Then Dr. Chisholm, really alarmed, rang up Coombe Police Station, and then the police-station at Latcham.

Neither had any information to give him; neither knew of any accident having happened to a schoolboy.

The Head went to bed at last, and Mr. Bootles followed his example, both in a very uneasy frame of mind.

In the morning, when the Rookwood fellows came down from the dormitories, the news spread through the school like wildfire. Morny had been away all night, and had not yet returned.

The telephone-bell rang very often in the Head's study that morning. In the afternoon Sir Rupert Stacpoole arrived at the school, looking pale and worried.

A police-inspector called from Latcham, and was shut up with the Head for some time.

Rookwood thrilled with the strange news.

Mornington of the Fourth had disappeared without leaving a trace behind him!

THE SIXTH CHAPTER. Father and Son!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. discussed the strange mystery in every tone of amazement that day. All Rookwood was talking of it. Tommy

Dodd & Co. came over from the Modern side to learn all particulars, and to give their opinion.

The only junior in the school, in fact, who did not discuss the mystery, and venture an opinion on it, was Kit Erroll.

Erroll was silent.

The all-absorbing topic of Morny's disappearance prevented the fellows from noticing Erroll specially. Otherwise they could not have failed to note his pallor and his harassed looks.

Afternoon lessons were almost a farce, so far as the juniors were concerned. They could think of nothing but Mornington.

There were many theories among the juniors. An accident seemed scarcely possible, for even if there had been a fatal accident, the search must have discovered Mornington by this time.

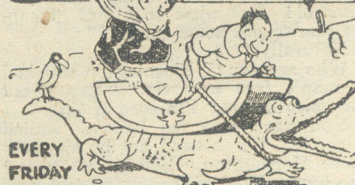
Tubby Muffin certainly suggested that Morny had run away to sea to become a pirate, but that suggestion was not taken seriously.

But unless Mornington had run away from Rookwood, he must have been taken off by force; and a case of kidnapping, amazing as it seemed, was the only explanation.

As a matter of fact, the Head had already come to the conclusion that it was a case of kidnapping, and so had the police.

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THE COLOURED PICTURE PAPER... 12

Sir Rupert Stacpoole was in full expectation of receiving a demand for money from the unknown miscreants as the price of his ward's liberty. But if that was the kidnapers' intention, they were in no hurry, for no word came to the baronet.

Kit Erroll said no word. He was the only fellow at Rookwood who could have thrown light on the subject.

For his doubts were gone now. He knew that Mornington's disappearance was the work of Gentleman Jim.

It was at that price that he was to remain at Rookwood. While Mornington was gone he was safe there.

Jimmy Silver looked for Erroll after tea, and found him in Little Quad, with a letter in his hand. The school page had brought it to him, explaining that it had been handed to him by a lad from the village.

Erroll understood, and he "tipped" the page, and retired to Little Quad to read the letter. He coloured, and thrust it hastily into his pocket as Jimmy Silver came up.

"I've been looking for you," said Jimmy cheerily. "What about the cricket?"

"I—I don't feel so fit as usual to-day," said Erroll. "I won't come down to the cricket, if you don't mind."

"All serene. It's a free country," said Jimmy; and he went off to join his chums.

Erroll took the note from his pocket again.

There was a single line scribbled upon it in pencil:

"The hut at six-thirty."

There was no signature, but that was not necessary. He knew the handwriting of Gentleman Jim.

Erroll tore the note into fragments, and threw them into the fountain. Then he walked down to the gates.

The days were drawing out now, and locking-up was later. Erroll strolled out of gates with an assumption of carelessness; but once out of sight of Rookwood, he broke into a run.

It was already past six.

He crossed the fields to the wood, and plunged into the trees. Without a pause, he made his way to the old woodman's hut in the heart of the wood—the spot where he had met the cracksman before, and where Mornington had played the spy upon them.

The old hut was silent and deserted when he arrived there. Gentleman Jim had not yet put in an appearance.

The junior, breathing hard after his hurry, sat on the log in the hut to wait. But he could not keep still.

He rose again and raced to and fro, occasionally glancing anxiously out at the shattered doorway.

There was a step in the grass at last, and Erroll uttered an exclamation.

"Father!"

Gentleman Jim stepped into the hut.

The Rookwood fellows who had seen him as "Captain Erroll" would not have known him now. He had discarded the carter's garb, and he looked like a business man of middle age. It was not judicious for "Captain Erroll" to risk being seen near Rookwood without coming to the school.

"You're here first this time, Kit," he said, with a smile. "So you got my note?"

"Yes. I came at once."

"Good!" Gentleman Jim bit the end from a cigar, lighted it, and blew out a wreath of smoke. "All goes well, Kit. You can sleep quietly to-night in the dormitory at Rookwood. Mornington will not talk."

"Where is he?" muttered the schoolboy.

Gentleman Jim grinned through the smoke.

"In a safe place, Kit. The Badger is looking after him. You remember the Badger?"

Erroll shuddered. "I remember him! It was from him I first learned—"

He broke off. "That your father was Gentleman Jim, the cracksman," said the adventurer, laughing. "I should have told you sooner or later, Kit. You had to know. You were already wondering, long before you knew the facts."

"Where is Mornington?"

"Not very far from you," smiled Gentleman Jim. "You remember telling me of the old quarries on the moor in your letters?"

"Yes, yes!"

and as soon as he is released the truth will be known. You will have to leave Rookwood. The plans I laid did not count on this chance. Mornington's interference has shattered them. You cannot remain at Rookwood, as I intended. It would have been a great advantage to you. It would have made you more useful to us in many ways. But that is over now."

"Let me go at once, and let Mornington return."

The cracksman did not seem to hear. "But the game is not up, Kit. You can make a fresh start elsewhere," he said. "Another school at a distance, perhaps, under a fresh name."

"No! I have done with it. I am tired of lies and imposture. I did not think there would be great harm in taking a name that was not mine, to get



Struggling violently, the Rookwood junior was swept off the ground, and, in the grasp of the two men, rushed towards the waiting cart. (See chapter 3.)

"Well, I have made use of them, that is all. It did not take me long to make my plans, and I lost no time carrying them out. All goes well. The boy cannot be traced, that is certain. He will remain in my hands as long as I choose."

"And then?"

Gentleman Jim shrugged his shoulders. "Then he can go back to Rookwood or to the dickens!"

"Father, when he comes back I shall be given away. Why did you not let me leave Rookwood to-day instead—"

"Because your work is not done at Rookwood!" said the cracksman coolly. "We may as well have this out, Kit. You must know by this time why you are at the school."

"You told me that it was to give me a start in life, to enable me to learn to earn my bread, and to hold up my head among decent people!" said the schoolboy bitterly.

"And that still holds good. But you must be useful as well, Kit. Mornington cannot be kept a prisoner indefinitely,

away from—from—" He did not finish. "But I've made friends there—decent fellows who would despise me if they knew. I'm done with it. When I leave Rookwood, no more of it."

"And what will you do?" sneered the cracksman.

"Work for my bread, or starve!" said the boy between his teeth. "That is what I have determined, and nothing shall change me."

"A turn of starvation may help to teach you sense!" said the cracksman, with a sneer. "But before you leave Rookwood, Kit, there is work to be done. Mornington cannot betray you so long as he is kept safe. Before he is released our work at the school must be finished, and you will be safe away. I have information about the place. The school silver alone is worth more than a thousand pounds, and there are other things. You are in the place. You can give me the information I need to make

(Continued on page 16.)

GENTLEMAN JIM'S STRATAGEM!

(Continued from page 11.)

all safe for me to enter, and when we are ready you will let me in at night—"

"Never! Never that!"

The cracksman's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"That is the way you speak to your father, Kit!" he said in a hard voice.

"Take care!"

The boy gave him a bitter look.

"Are you my father?" he said.

"What!" Gentleman Jim started forward, his eyes on the boy's face.

"What do you say? Who has been tell-

ing you—" He broke off. "You mad young fool! What has put that folly into your head?"

"I have thought of it many times," said Erroll, with quiet bitterness. "You have never treated me as a son. I never knew a mother. I never knew a relation."

"Oh, you are mad!" muttered Gentleman Jim. "I have no more time to waste here, Kit. Remember my orders!"

"I will not obey them!" said Erroll steadily. "I told you at our wretched home that you should never make me a thief. You cheated me into going to Rookwood. You said nothing of this then. I will die before I will lift a finger to help you to rob Rookwood!"

"You will obey, Kit, or you will take the consequences!" said Gentleman Jim

between his teeth. "Enough now. I shall see you again. Return to the school, and hold your tongue!"

The cracksman turned away and disappeared into the wood. With a heavy heart Kit Erroll tramped away to Rookwood.

It had come at last—what he had known must come.

Gentleman Jim might give his orders, but they would not be obeyed. Upon that point at least Kit Erroll's mind was clear, and his resolution would never be shaken.

THE END.

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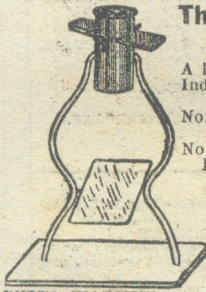
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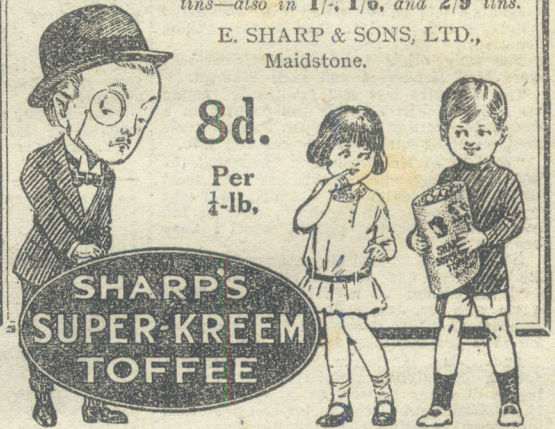
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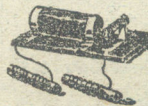
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