

THE NEW PORTER!

A Long Complete School Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the
Chums of Rookwood.

By **OWEN CONQUEST**

(Author of the Famous Rookwood Stories appearing in "The Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Erroll's Enemy!

PENNY for 'em!" said Jimmy Silver humorously. Kit Erroll of the Classical Fourth started a little, and looked up.

Erroll was alone in his study when the captain of the Fourth looked in. He was standing by the window, his eyes on the quadrangle without, and a deep shade of thought upon his brow. He had not heard Jimmy's tap or the opening of the door.

"Well, what's the subject?" asked Jimmy Silver. "Thinking out something awfully deep in maths, or whether we're going to beat Greyfriars at footer—what?"

Erroll smiled.

"No, I was thinking about something else," he said.

"Well, chuck it now, and come down to footer," said Jimmy. "We're getting fine weather for once, and we mustn't waste it. Nothing wrong, I hope?" he added.

"N-no! Not exactly. I've had some news—" Erroll paused. "It's not exactly bad news; it doesn't concern me really. But—"

"Well, keep smiling!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "If it doesn't concern you, why worry?"

"I wasn't worrying exactly. I was wondering—" He paused again, and coloured. "You remember that rotten fellow, 'Gentleman Jim'?"

Jimmy Silver became very grave.

"I remember, Erroll. You haven't heard anything from him. He's gone to chokey, hasn't he?"

"I thought so. But it appears that he got away somehow after the trial. It was mentioned in the paper to-day. He's been at liberty quite a long time now, but I never knew. I—I suppose I shall never hear anything more of it. But—but I was wondering."

Erroll was evidently troubled.

He remembered Gentleman Jim well enough—the rascally cracksmen who had been supposed to be Erroll's father, until he was found and claimed by Captain Erroll.

Jimmy knew something of Erroll's strange and troubled earlier days, and of the struggle he had had to keep to the path of honour, against the influence and under the threats of his supposed father.

But the truth had come out at last, and Gentleman Jim had passed out of Kit Erroll's life—into the hands of the police.

Jimmy Silver had almost forgotten the matter, but, naturally, it lingered in

Erroll's mind. And the discovery that the cracksmen was not, as he had supposed, a prisoner of the law, had been a shock to the Rookwood junior.

"Well, the rotter will keep pretty clear of Rookwood, I should say," remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "I suppose the bobbies are looking for him. If you came across him, Erroll, you'd only have to give the word to the police, and he would be nailed. You'd do it?"

Erroll nodded.

"I certainly would. That man made my childhood a misery, and I owe him nothing. He wronged and injured my father. I would have no mercy upon him. But I hope he will never cross my path."

Mornington of the Fourth came into the study as Erroll was speaking.

"You're wanted, Erroll," he said.

"Yes, Morny, what is it?"

"Somebody's rung you up on the telephone," said Mornington, with a grin. "Old Bootles is rather waxy, but he says you're to answer it. Buzz off to his study. The man's holding the line, whoever he is."

"Thanks!"

Kit Erroll quitted the room, and hurried down to Mr. Bootle's study. He found the master of the Fourth frowning a little.

Mr. Bootles blinked at Erroll over his glasses. The receiver was off the telephone.

"Ah, Erroll!" said Mr. Bootles. "Someone has rung up to speak to you! This is—is somewhat disconcerting, Erroll! It is not usual for Fourth-Form boys to be rung up on their Form-master's telephone—what, what?"

"I'm sorry you've been troubled, sir."

"Yes, yes. As the—the person states that he is an old friend, and the matter is important, I have sent for you, Erroll. Kindly convey to your friend that his proceeding is—is somewhat disconcerting, Erroll."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Bootles, evidently disturbed, whisked out of the study, leaving the junior to take the call.

Erroll picked up the receiver, wondering who could be at the other end of the wire. His father was not in England, and he had no other relations that he knew, and he could not think of any acquaintance who would be likely to ring him up.

"Hallo!" he said, into the transmitter.

"Hallo!" came back. "Are you there?"

Erroll started. The voice was familiar to his ears.

"I am Erroll," he said quietly. "Who is speaking?"

"An old friend, Kit."

The receiver almost dropped from Kit Erroll's hand.

He knew the voice.

It was the voice of Gentleman Jim, the cracksmen, the man whose villainy had shadowed all his young life, and who had striven to lead him into the ways of crime—the man who was wanted by the police!

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

The Cracksmen's Farewell!

HALLO, hallo! Are you there, Kit?"

The voice came impatiently along the wires.

Erroll stood rooted to the floor.

Only that day he had learned that his old enemy was at large. And now here was the man speaking to him on the telephone.

The junior's face flushed, and his eyes glittered with anger.

Did Gentleman Jim suppose that he had still a hold upon him? If he did, he would find out his mistake fast enough.

"Kit, are you there?"

"I am here!" said Erroll, at last.

"I have surprised you—what?"

"Yes!"

"You hadn't forgotten me, Kit?"

"I had not forgotten you, Gentleman Jim! How dare you speak to me?" asked Erroll, his voice trembling with anger. "Do you think there is anything in common between us now?"

"Why not, Kit?"

"You scoundrel! Do you know what you have to expect from me? I shall ring up the police-station immediately, and tell them—"

"You cannot tell them where I am, dear boy—you don't know!" came the cracksmen's chuckling voice. "But don't be too hasty, Kit! I have something to say to you! Don't ring off! It's important!"

"I have nothing to say to you, Gentleman Jim!"

"Does that mean that we are enemies, Kit?"

"Did you expect anything else?" asked Erroll scornfully.

"No. But I am sorry! Kit, I've had my lesson. There are five years' penal servitude hanging over my head if I fall into the hands of the police. The old game is finished for me. I've made a fresh start, Kit. I wanted to tell you something—that is, that I'm sorry for the

THE POPULAR.—No. 143.

past, and that you will never be troubled by me again."

Erroll started.

He had wondered what the cracksman could have to say to him. But certainly he had not expected this.

"You'll never see me again, Kit," went on the cracksman's voice. "I'm leaving England to-morrow."

"Leaving England?" repeated Erroll.

"Yes, I'm off to America! Won't you say good-bye, and wish me luck before I go? I shall never come back!"

"I do wish you luck!" said Erroll in a moved voice. "I believe you, and I wish you the best of luck! I owe no grudge for the past; it's forgotten and forgiven, so far as I'm concerned."

"That's what I wanted you to say, Kit. That's all I wanted. You'll never know whether I live or die. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, and good luck!"

Erroll put up the receiver.

He left Mr. Bootles' study, his face very thoughtful, and returned to his own quarters.

Mornington was in his study, his handsome face bent over Xenophon, with grim and determined attention. But he looked up as his study-mate came in, glad of the interruption.

"I've had a message from Gentleman Jim," said Erroll.

Mornington started.

"By gad! What has he to say?"

Erroll explained.

"By gad!" repeated Mornington.

"Well, he couldn't do better, the rascal! He may make a fresh start over there. Anyway, you're well rid of him. Now, what about some footer?"

Erroll smiled.

"Yes, I think it would do us both good."

"Right-ho!" Mornington jumped up, and pitched the "Ten Thousand" across the study with a crash. "Come on, old scout! Blow Xenophon, and bother the scholarship!"

And the chums left Study No. 4 together, and joined Jimmy Silver & Co. on the football-ground.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Nothing Doing!

JIMMY, old chap—"

Tubby Muffin met the chums of the Fourth as they came back to the School House after footer.

There was an expression of almost owl-like seriousness on the fat face of Tubby Muffin. Jimmy Silver waved him off.

"Nothing doing, Tubby! Stony!"

"It isn't that," said Tubby warmly.

"I've got an idea, Jimmy, and I want you to help me carry it out, as captain of the Fourth, you know. It's up to you."

"Buzz off, Fatty!" interjected Lovell.

"We're going in to tea."

"Hold on a minute. It concerns the lot of you," said Tubby. "It's about old Mack, you know."

"Old Mack?" repeated Jimmy Silver.

"Has he been reporting you?"

"No, no! He's going."

"That's no news."

"Well, old Mack's been porter here for a jolly long time," said Tubby Muffin.

"Longer than the memory of the oldest inhabitant, in fact. Now he's got lumbago or something bad, and the Head's given him a long holiday. He's going, and he may not come back any more."

"Well, there will be dry eyes when he goes," remarked Raby. "Macky was rather too fond of reporting a chap."

"Still, he's an old and faithful servant!" urged Tubby Muffin. "He's been here dozens of years. It's up to us."

"What's up to us, you duffer?" asked THE POPULAR.—No. 143.

Jimmy Silver puzzled. "Do you want us to stand round and cheer when Mack goes? Or weep over him?"

"I was thinking of a testimonial."

"A which?"

"A testimonial," said Tubby Muffin firmly. "A testimonial in the form of cash, you know. It would be very acceptable to old Mack. I dare say lumbago comes expensive—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And it would be only grateful, considering that Mack has been porter here for nearly a hundred years—"

"Not quite that!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Still, it's a good idea. Get up the testimonial by all means, Tubby."

"You'll help?" asked Muffin eagerly.

"Certainly! You raise the cash, and I'll present it to Mack with a neat little speech. That will be an equal division of labour."

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"You fat duffer!" roared Lovell.

"Don't we know you? Do you think

THE MAN WHO KNEW THE SECRET



Look out for **ANSWERS'**
great new autumn serial story.
Two million people will read it.

we're going to shell out tin to help you gorge yourself? Buzz off!"

"But I say—"

Lovell made a jump at Tubby, and the fat junior fled. And the Fistical Four chuckled, and went to tea, uninterrupted by Tubby Muffin.

And the next day old Mack departed from Rookwood, minus a testimonial—never even knowing Tubby's benevolent intentions towards him.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

The New Porter!

LATTREY of the Fourth drove his hands deep into his pockets, his brows deeply knitted, as he left the School House on Wednesday afternoon.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had gone down to the playing-fields, but Lattrey's steps did not lead him in that direction. Football was not much in the line of the black sheep of Rookwood.

He moved slowly down to the gates with a moody face.

His eyes glittered as they fell upon

Erroll and Mornington, who were going out together on their bicycles.

Mornington glanced at him for a moment, and a sarcastic smile flickered on his lips.

"Lattrey looks down on his luck, Kit," Mornington remarked, as he wheeled his machine out with his chum.

"No wonder!" said Erroll drily. "He was lucky, though, not to be sacked from the school. He would have been if the Head had known what happened last week."

"No doubt about that!"

The chums mounted their machines and pedalled away towards Coombe. Lattrey stood in the gateway, looking after them with a bitter expression.

The cad of the Fourth was feeling that afternoon that the way of the transgressor was hard.

Since he had been at Rookwood Lattrey had earned more contempt than anything else among his schoolfellows.

True, there were other "blades" and "giddy goats" among the Rookwood fellows. Smythe & Co. of the Shell prided themselves upon being "dogs" of the first water. Townsend and Topham of the Fourth were very "goey," and Peele and Gower were still more goey, and decidedly shady in some ways.

But Lattrey was easily the blackest sheep of the whole flock.

He was careful enough to keep his shady character a secret from the school authorities, or he would not have remained at Rookwood long. But he could not help most of the juniors knowing him as he was.

The "nuts" of Rookwood associated with him, but in a somewhat lofty way, and hardly concealed their scorn for him. Fellows like Jimmy Silver & Co. seldom gave him even a word or a look.

And since his latest escapade even Peele and Gower had taken to avoiding him.

His hatred of Mornington, his former friend, had carried him too far, added to the state of "hard-upness" caused by losses on "gee-gees."

All the Classical Fourth knew that he had taken banknotes from the pocket-book of Mornington II., of the Second Form, and "planted" one of them on Valentine Mornington of the Fourth.

His trick had been detected, and he had been remorselessly exposed. He attempted a feeble pretence that the whole affair had been a "lark," but, naturally, nobody was inclined to credit that explanation.

He had been sent to Coventry at first, and, though that was wearing off, he was very generally avoided.

Even Peele and Gower, who were far from particular, did not care to be seen in his company till the affair had had time to blow over a little. Lattrey had his time on his hands that afternoon.

His bitterness was almost all turned upon Erroll. But for Erroll he felt he would still be friends with Mornington. It was Erroll's influence that had drawn Morny away from evil associates.

But for this break with Morny he would never have made that last false step, which would have caused his expulsion from the school if it had been made known.

It was Erroll—Erroll all the time; and Erroll, though known now to be the son of an Army captain, had been brought up from early boyhood by Gentleman Jim, the cracksman.

That he had been "straight" in spite of temptations and threats Lattrey did not believe. He was not the kind of fellow to place faith in anybody.

(Continued on page 13.)

THE NEW PORTER!

(Continued from page 8.)

And this fellow—trained by a cracksmen, probably a thief himself—was the cause of his downfall.

"Hang him!" muttered Lattrey, as he watched the two chums cycle away, unconscious that he was speaking aloud, in his savage bitterness. "Hang him! If ever I get a chance at Erroll—"

"Ahem!" Lattrey spun round angrily as he realised that someone was near him.

It was John Brown, the new porter. Lattrey flushed as he realised that the man must have heard his incautious words.

The porter had been standing near him, a little back, looking down the road after the two cyclists as they departed.

"Excuse me, sir. Is that young gentleman Master Mornington?"

"What are you hanging about behind a chap for?" snapped Lattrey.

"Sorry, sir, I'm sure!" said the new porter apologetically.

Lattrey grunted. "That young gentleman with Erroll, who passed by just now, is Master Mornington, isn't it, sir?"

"Yes," snapped Lattrey.

"A very wealthy young gentleman, isn't he, sir?"

"No; he's a dashed beggar!" growled Lattrey, finding some solace in making that remark, even to the school-porter.

"He lost all his money when his cousin turned up," Lattrey looked more sharply at the porter. "Brown—your name's Brown, I think—"

"Yes, sir."

"Haven't I seen your face before somewhere?"

Lattrey scanned the man's face.

John Brown was middle-aged in appearance, with a stolid-looking face, and somewhat dark and heavy brows and moustache.

He smiled as Lattrey asked the question, and it was not a pleasant smile.

"I think so, sir," he said. "Of course, you won't mention it here."

"By gad!" said Lattrey, under his breath. "It was yesterday I saw you in Coombe. You were—"

He broke off.

"You passed me in the garden of the Bird-in-Hand public-house, sir," said John Brown quietly. "I had gone in there for some refreshment, not knowing the reputation of the place, being a stranger in the district."

"You needn't give me that," said Lattrey. "You were jawing with Joey Hook, and pretty deep in it, too!"

"Ahem!"

"You saw me there," said Lattrey savagely. "Why haven't you reported me, then?"

"I shouldn't like to cause trouble to a young gentleman like you, sir," said the porter, with a cough. "I am afraid, sir, that neither of us ought to have been there. But I'm sure you won't mention having seen me in the place, and I should not think of causing you any inconvenience on the subject. I like to be obliging, sir."

Lattrey looked at him very curiously.

This was a very different kind of porter from old Mack and decidedly an accommodating man—so accommodating, in fact, that he would certainly have been discharged if Dr. Chisholm had known how accommodating he was.

John Brown shook his head.

"Thank you, sir—no! I am quite satisfied with my wages."

Lattrey thought he understood the man's object, and he groped in his pocket for a shilling.

Brown made a gesture. "Thank you—no, sir!" he said, as the shilling glimmered in Lattrey's fingers.

"I did not mean that at all, sir. Perhaps you would care to step into my lodge, if you would do me the honour of chatting for a few minutes." He lowered his voice. "If you would care to try my cigarettes, they are quite at your service, sir—under the rose, of course."

Lattrey wondered whether he was dreaming for a moment.

How a man of this kind had succeeded in obtaining a post at Rookwood School was beyond comprehension.

But the cad of the Fourth was very quick to realise how useful such a man might be to him.

He nodded cordially, and followed the porter into his lodge for a "chat." A few minutes later he was smoking cigarettes in the safe seclusion of the porter's parlour.

The "chat," as it turned out, was all on the subject of Mornington of the Fourth. John Brown appeared to possess an inexhaustible curiosity on that subject.

Lattrey told him the story of the finding of Cecil Mornington, and the consequent fall from wealth and importance of Mornington of the Fourth. He had smoked a good many expensive cigarettes by the time the chat came to an end.

"Any time I can be of service to you, sir, you have only to mention it," said John Brown, when Lattrey rose to leave.

Lattrey left the lodge in a state of great astonishment. He chuckled as he wondered what Mr. Bootles would think if he could have known how the new porter had been entertaining a junior of the Fourth Form.

He wondered, too, what John Brown's object was. Whatever it was, there was no doubt that John Brown might be very useful to him, and it did not occur to Lattrey just then that he might be very useful to John Brown.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Suspicion!

"**L**ATE!" said Mornington.

Erroll and his chum came whizzing up to the gates of Rookwood in the deep autumn dusk now closing in.

They had been on a long spin that afternoon, and had put on speed on their return; but the gates of the school were closed and locked when they arrived there and jumped off their bicycles.

"Too bad!" said Erroll. "That means a report and lines."

"May only mean a bob or two to the porter," said Mornington carelessly. "It isn't old Mack now, you know. The new man may be a bit more accommodatin'. We'll see. You'll have to hand out the bob."

Erroll laughed as he rang the bell.

The porter came down to the gate, and looked at the two juniors through the bars.

"Let us in," said Erroll. "We're a few minutes late."

"Yes, sir," said the porter respectfully.

The gate was unlocked and opened. Morny and Erroll wheeled their machines in, and Brown reclosed the gates.

"I suppose this means a report?" said Mornington. "Is a bob any use to you, Brown?"

John Brown shook his head.

"Thank you, sir—no! I am quite satisfied with my wages."

"Isn't that rather unusual?" asked Mornington sarcastically.

"I hope not, sir."

"That means that you're going to report us. Well, report, and be hanged! Come on, Erroll!"

"Not at all, sir," said Brown smoothly. "I'm sure, sir, I shouldn't care to cause a young gentleman trouble for a matter of a few minutes."

"Oh, good!" said Mornington, in surprise. "You're a jolly good-natured chap, Mr. Brown!"

"Thank you, Master Mornington!"

"Good-night!"

"Good-night, sir!"

"Come on, Erroll! What's the matter?"

Erroll was staring at the new porter in the dusk, with a strange expression on his face.

Morny caught his arm.

"Come on! What are you dreaming about?" he asked. "We've got time to get in for calling-over!"

"Yes, I'm coming," said Erroll, his eyes still on the porter.

Brown seemed unconscious of his strange, fixed scrutiny. He touched his hat to the juniors, and went back into his lodge.

"That—that's the new porter, Morny?" said Erroll at last, in a low voice.

"Yes; man named Brown, I heard somebody say. What about him?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Erroll did not speak again as he wheeled his machine after his chum. They hurried into the Hall for calling-over, and were just in time to answer to their names.

"Nearly missed it, you bounders!" remarked Jimmy Silver, as the Fourth came out of Hall. "Had a good spin?"

"Oh, rippin'!" said Mornington.

"You don't look specially cheerful, Erroll. Overdone it?" asked Jimmy, glancing at the grave, troubled face of the Fourth-Former.

"Oh, no!" said Erroll. "Come up to the study, Morny. I'm as hungry as a hunter."

"Right-ho!"

Erroll had said that he was hungry, but when the chums sat down to tea in Study No. 4 he hardly touched the meal. Morny regarded him very curiously across the table.

"Out with it!" he said abruptly.

Erroll coloured.

"It's nothing, Morny. But—"

"But what?"

"But—but something about that man Brown—"

"The porter?" exclaimed Mornington in amazement.

"Yes."

"I noticed you were blinking at him. What about him?"

"It's nonsense, of course. But something in the tone of his voice struck me. It reminded me—"

Erroll smiled.

"He reminded me, somehow, of a man I'd like to forget the existence of— Gentleman Jim!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's rot, of course!" said Erroll. "I suppose I'm haunted by that man since I saw that he was free again. But, of course, he's on his way to America before this!"

"My dear chap, get Gentleman Jim out of your mind," said Mornington. "You've done with the rotter for good. That man Brown seems a very civil-spoken fellow. Not much likely to be a relation of Gentleman Jim, the cracks-

THE POPULAR.—No. 143.

A SPLENDID STORY OF THE JUNIORS OF GREYFRIARS.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

man— What do you want, you fat idiot?"

Tubby Muffin's fat face glimmered in at the door.

"It's all right. I haven't heard what you were saying!" said Tubby, in a great hurry. "I wasn't listening, you know. Can you fellows lend me a tin of sardines for tea?"

"I'll lend you a thick ear!" growled Mornington.

"Don't be a touchy beast, Morny. If you're not needing all your sugar, I'll borrow a few lumps. That beast Higgs uses all his own himself, and Jones is just as bad. I—"

Tubby Muffin did not stay to finish. Morny had grabbed up a cushion, evidently as a missile. Tubby backed out hastily and closed the door.

"Yah! Rotter!" he howled through the keyhole.

Then he departed hurriedly.

Tubby Muffin had had tea in the Hall, but he was hungry—he always was hungry. Supplies in his own study were cut off till he could stand his "whack," a matter of difficulty to the impecunious Tubby.

After some thought he started for Lattrey's study, with a very determined expression on his fat face.

Lattrey was having his tea alone there. Peele and Gower were honouring Smythe of the Shell with their company. Lattrey had not been included in the invitation. He sat at his solitary board in a black mood, and as Tubby came in he started up with an angry exclamation. The outcast of Rookwood was in no humour to be bothered by the greedy Classical.

"Keep your wool on, Lattrey!" said Tubby. "If you touch me with that stump I'll go to Bulkeley and tell him about you smoking in the lodge this afternoon!"

Lattrey dropped the stump.

"What?" he ejaculated.

Tubby Muffin gave a fat chuckle.

"You didn't know that I saw you. He, he, he!"

"You spying cad!" exclaimed Lattrey furiously.

"Well, I saw you chumming up with the porter," grinned Tubby. "I wondered what the game was, and I peeped in at the side window. I'm shocked at you, Lattrey—and at Brown, too! Smoking! I'm really surprised at you!"

Lattrey gritted his teeth. The Peeping Tom of Rookwood always seemed to know everything that went on. He was not particular in his methods of gaining information. His knowledge in this case was rather awkward for Lattrey.

"All serene. I'm not going to tell," grinned Tubby. "I'm awfully discreet, you know, if a chap treats me as a pal. But that man Brown is shockin', ain't he? Fancy letting a Rookwood chap smoke in his lodge! No wonder Erroll thinks he looks like a burglar!"

Lattrey jumped.

"What?" he exclaimed. "What are you babbling about?"

"He said so," said Tubby. "I happened to hear him. He said that man Brown reminded him somehow of Gentleman Jim. You've heard of Gentleman Jim. It was before you came here—"

Lattrey's eyes glittered.

"Did Erroll say that, Tubby, old chap?"

"Yes, rather!" said Tubby, greatly pleased by Lattrey's change of tone, which was a testimony to the interesting nature of his yarn. "Morny laughed. Erroll said Gentleman Jim was free now, and going to America. He said something about Brown reminding him of that

THE POPULAR.—No. 143.

fellow. Rot, of course! Erroll said it was rot himself. Can you lend me a tin of sardines, Lattrey?"

"Take it, and go!" grunted Lattrey. "Thanks, old chap! I sha'n't mention a word about your smoking. All right, I'm going!"

And Tubby Muffin went.

When he had gone Lattrey closed the door. He did not return to his lonely tea. He lighted a cigarette, and smoked in silence, pacing to and fro in the study. Strange thoughts were working in his brain.

"It's impossible!" he muttered. "Sheer lunacy! But why should that man remind Erroll of Gentleman Jim? It's rot, of course! Erroll thinks it rot, according to that fat fool. But—but Erroll doesn't know what I know—that Brown is a pal of Joey Hook, the sharper, and that he's shady—jolly shady! He wouldn't have given me cigarettes in his lodge if he hadn't been pretty shady. And—and what did he want to know all about Mornington's affairs for? What does Morny matter to an ordinary school porter? He isn't an ordinary school porter, that's a cert! By gad!" Lattrey's eyes fairly burned. "By gad! If—if there should be anything in it, and if I could find out, then—then I should have that hound Erroll in the hollow of my hand!"

And Lattrey laughed, a soft, low laugh, that was not pleasant to hear.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

A Spy in the Night.

THE departure of old Mack, the porter, and the arrival of the new man to take his place, were events of the smallest possible moment to the Rookwood fellows.

Nobody took any special notice of John Brown, naturally.

It was noticed that he was much more civil and obliging than old Mack had been, and that was all. Old Mack was a good-hearted man in his way, but he had a crusty temper, and when it was his duty to report a fellow for being late he never failed to perform that duty with great exactitude.

John Brown was much less exact in the performance of his duties.

So the fellows sometimes had a kind nod or word for the porter. Otherwise, they hardly noted his existence. They had little or nothing to do with him.

Erroll, it is true, for a day or two gave the porter keen glances when he came across him. But the quiet, sedate porter never seemed to notice it, and his manner to Erroll was the same as his manner to the others—quiet and civil and respectful.

Erroll himself smiled at the odd thought that had come into his mind, that something about the man had reminded him of Gentleman Jim the cracksman.

He soon dismissed the incident from his mind. If he thought of Gentleman Jim at all, it was to wonder how he was getting on in America, for there was no doubt in his mind of the truth of the statement the cracksman had made to him on the telephone.

Had he been able to assign a motive for deception, certainly he would not have taken Gentleman Jim's word. But he could think of no motive, and so he accepted the cracksman's statement at its face value.

But there was one fellow in the Fourth Form who was giving a great deal of thought to the new porter, and to Gentleman Jim.

Lattrey had pondered again and again over what Tubby Muffin had told him.

If the cracksman was there, and if he was there with Erroll's knowledge, what a revenge upon Kit Troll, when he had the proofs in his hands!

Lattrey felt his heart beat more quickly at the thought.

One thing was certain. He meant to know.

When he knew the truth, if it was the truth, he would use his own judgment as to the use he would make of his knowledge. But, at all events, he would know.

Lattrey was a good deal about the porter's lodge for the next two or three days.

The cad of the Fourth was such an outcast at present among the juniors that his new occupation was hardly noticed, if noticed at all. Peele remarked sneeringly that Lattrey had taken to talking to the porter because nobody in the Fourth wanted to talk to him, and that was all.

But Lattrey did not drop into the porter's lodge simply to talk.

He was there to watch and observe.

If the man was playing a part he played it well. Lattrey had found a photograph of Gentleman Jim in a newspaper, but it bore little or no resemblance to John Brown.

But the cracksman was clean-shaven, while John Brown wore a heavy moustache, and that would account for the difference.

And Lattrey, observing the man closely, knew that the hirsute adornment was genuine enough. That proved nothing, for Gentleman Jim had been long enough out of prison to grow as much hair as he liked on his face.

Lattrey made no progress, but the suspicion remained sharp in his mind, and he meant to know. If he could not make the discovery from the man himself, he might make it in another way, and ere long he had laid his plans for making a search in the lodge during the porter's absence.

After a few days, too, Lattrey learned a new fact from his estimable friends at the Bird-in-Hand. Sometimes when John Brown was supposed to be asleep in his lodge, when all Rookwood was plunged in slumber, the porter was in reality engaged in card-playing in the back parlour of the village public-house, strictly under the rose, with Joey Hook and a few select sporting gentlemen.

And that discovery gave Lattrey the cue he wanted. During one of those nocturnal absences of John Brown there would come his opportunity of making a search in the lodge.

And a few nights later Jimmy Silver woke up in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth at the sound of someone quietly dressing in the dark.

Jimmy sat up in bed, and blinked at the dim figure in the gloom.

"Who's that?!" he ejaculated.

"Do you want to wake the House, you dummy?" came Lattrey's snarling whisper.

"So you're breaking bounds again, you cad!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Find out!"

Jimmy Silver grunted. He was greatly inclined to get out of bed and "mop up" the cad of the Fourth on the spot. Fortunately for Lattrey, Jimmy decided that it was too much fog, and turned over and went to sleep again.

Lattrey finished dressing, and slipped quietly out of the dormitory.

Five minutes later he was in the cool, keen air of the quadrangle.

The hour was late. Not a single light glimmered from the great array of

windows. Like a ghost in the gloom, Lattrey glided away towards the porter's lodge.

He knew that John Brown would be absent that night. He had learned that much from Mr. Hook in Coombe. It was his opportunity at last, and he meant to make the most of it.

The porter's lodge was closed, and there was no light. Anyone passing it would have supposed that John Brown was fast asleep in bed, and he certainly ought to have been at that hour.

Lattrey knew better. In the shade of the big beech near the lodge, Lattrey worked at the catch of the little parlour window with his pocket-knife. His face was a little pale. He knew well enough the risk of his proceeding. But he did not falter.

The catch yielded at last. Lattrey slid up the lower sash and drew himself into the dark room. With a beating heart, he closed the window behind him, and drew the blind carefully across it. He was fairly committed to his rascally adventure now.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.
Gentleman Jim.

"BY gad!" muttered Lattrey. The junior had not been idle. He had been in the lodge a whole hour, and it had been a very busy hour.

But if there was any evidence in the building to connect John Brown with Gentleman Jim it had escaped him.

He was standing now in the bed-room, unoccupied save by Lattrey. His eyes were bent upon a small oaken chest, fastened by a patent lock, which he had dragged from under the bed, where he had discovered it.

The chest was well-made of tough oak, and the lock was far beyond Lattrey's powers.

What did John Brown want with such an article unless he had something in his possession which it was absolutely necessary to conceal from prying eyes?

He was still regarding the chest with a baffled look, in the dim light of a candle-end, when a sound below made him start and draw a panting breath.

In the silence of the night he heard the faint but unmistakable sound of a door unlocking and opening.

The porter had returned!

Lattrey, with a thumping heart, instantly blew out the candle, and thrust it into his pocket.

He had intended to be gone without leaving a trace before John Brown returned to his quarters. He had stayed too long.

His heart beat almost to suffocation as he listened to the soft footfalls on the old stair.

The man was coming up in the dark.

He was very quiet in his movements. It would not have suited John Brown, whatever he was, to allow Rookwood to learn of his nocturnal excursions.

Lattrey was white now.

There was no escape for him. The man was coming up to the bed-room, and there was no escape by the door, and no time to escape by the window. He would be found there. And if the man was the man he suspected, what might not the cracksmen do?

That thought came into Lattrey's mind now for the first time, and it was a terrible thought.

For he knew that Gentleman Jim was a desperate man, with a sentence of penal servitude hanging over his head in case of discovery. And if he found that he was suspected!

Lattrey trembled.

And if the man was, after all, only John Brown, the porter, how was he likely to take this treacherous search of his quarters?

The footsteps sounded at the bed-room door, and the door opened. Lattrey stood rooted to the floor.

He heard a sniff and a sharp exclamation. The odour of the hastily-extinguished candle had been detected at once.

"By thunder! Who is there?" The voice rang out sharply and threateningly, quite unlike the usual silky and civil tones of John Brown, porter.

Lattrey did not speak.

"I know you're here! Who are you?"

The voice was savage and threatening.

"By thunder!"

A match scratched in the darkness.

As the flame flickered up, the porter

it was some rascal of his own fraternity, there for purposes of robbery. He certainly would not have revealed his weapon otherwise.

The cracksmen made a movement, and Lattrey stepped back hastily. There was a muttered curse as Gentleman Jim's feet came into collision with the brass-bound chest on the floor.

Another match glimmered out, and the man turned on the gas and lit it. Keeping between the junior and the door, he scanned Lattrey's face grimly.

"So it is you, Master Lattrey!"

"Yes!" muttered Lattrey huskily.

The man was the smooth, suave porter again now. Had not Lattrey seen the weapon he had betrayed in the light, he would never have guessed that this quiet, suave man had so deadly a thing about him.



As the flame flickered up, the porter held up the match, and the light gleamed on Lattrey's white face. "So it is you, Master Lattrey!" said the porter suavely. (See this page.)

held up the match, and the wavering light gleamed on Lattrey's white face.

Lattrey's heart gave a great throb.

The man held the match in his left hand. In his right was grasped something that shone and glittered in the flickering light. Lattrey knew that it was a revolver, and his heart almost ceased to beat.

For a moment there was tense silence.

In the wavering gleam of the match the man and the boy looked at each other, their glances meeting.

The match went out.

Lattrey heard a sound. It was the sound of the weapon sliding back into a pocket. But the sight of it had been enough for Lattrey. It was more than enough.

He knew now what he had come there to find out, and he knew instinctively that Gentleman Jim, finding someone in his room in the dark, had suspected that

But he knew it now, and there was a deep and gnawing fear in his breast. He would have given worlds to be safe out of the lodge—safe back in the Fourth Form dormitory.

He made a movement, but the man waved him back.

"You don't go yet!" he said.

"I—I—"

"What are you doing here?"

No answer.

John Brown stooped, and slid the brass-bound chest back under the bed. Then his eyes gleamed at Lattrey again.

"Tell me why you came here, boy."

"I—I came to—to—"

"To steal?"

"No."

"Then why?"

Lattrey was silent.

"I suppose you know," said John Brown quietly, "that I shall report this

to your headmaster in the morning, Master Lattrey?"

Lattrey almost smiled, in spite of his fear. The man's eyes were scanning him anxiously, furtively, as he spoke. He was trying to divine how much Lattrey knew, how much he suspected, at the same time careful not to give himself away, in case the junior suspected nothing.

"I—I came to—to—"

"Well?"

Lattrey was recovering himself a little. "I—I am sorry. I—I come— I'm hard up. I've had bad luck with the cards, and—and—"

"You came here to commit a theft?"

"Yes," whispered Lattrey.

He saw, and noted, the relief that flashed into the man's eyes. And Lattrey's own relief, as he saw that his lie was believed, was as great as Gentleman Jim's.

"You were very foolish." The man spoke more calmly now. "Did you think, then, that there was money in that chest?"

"I—I thought perhaps—"

"How did you know I was not here?"

"I—I found it out at the Bird-in-Hand—"

The man compressed his lips hard.

"You know, then, that—"

"That you go there—yes." Lattrey

was recovering his confidence now.

"You won't say anything about this, Mr. Brown. You keep my secrets, and I'll keep yours."

"You are a precious young rascal!"

said John Brown, after a pause. "But

you are right! Don't try this game on

again, that's all! You can get out!"

He gripped Lattrey's arm, and for a

moment the junior's heart failed him, and

a cry trembled on his lips. But he did

not utter it. The man led him out of

the lodge.

Without another word he closed the

door after Lattrey.

Lattrey hurried away

In the cool, keen air of the quad he

paused under the beeches to think. There

was a mocking, triumphant smile on his

face now. He had learned all, and he

was safe!

He no longer regretted that Gentleman

Jim had returned to the lodge so inopportu-

ly. Lattrey was still smiling, in a

feline way, as he came back softly into

the dormitory of the Classical Fourth.

"Hallo!" Morny sat up in bed, and

yawned. "What's that? Some merry

roysterer comin' home just before the

milk in the mornin'—what?"

"Exactly!" said Lattrey coolly.

The dandy of the Fourth yawned again,

and laid his head on the pillow. Lattrey

turned in, but it was long before he slept.

He was thinking of his coming triumph

—with Kit Erroll at his mercy!

Gentleman Jim, the cracksman, was at

Rookwood, in the guise of a school porter,

and Erroll must know it; and in that fact

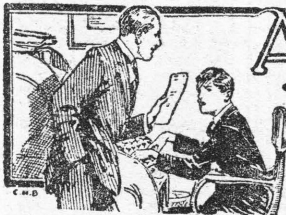
—which he did not doubt for a moment—

Lattrey saw endless triumph over his

enemy. He held the whip-hand now that

he knew Gentleman Jim's secret!

THE END.



A WORD WITH YOUR EDITOR

YOUR EDITOR IS ALWAYS PLEASED TO HEAR FROM HIS READERS. Address: EDITOR, THE "POPULAR," THE FLEETWAY HOUSE, FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

FOR NEXT FRIDAY!

"THE HEAD'S GUEST!"

By Frank Richards.

That is the title of our next grand, long, complete school story of the chums of the Remove-Form at Greyfriars. The Head's guest is not a man, as one might suppose. He is a boy—a very remarkable boy—who makes things hum at Greyfriars. If you like really funny stories, then on no account miss this one!

"A RASCAL FOILED!"

By Owen Conquest.

Under this title you will read about the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, and of Lattrey's great scheme to obtain a hold over Kit Erroll, of the Classical Fourth. That everything does not go the right way for the cad of the Fourth can be gathered from the title, but the way in which the rascal is foiled makes an extremely interesting story.

There will also be another splendid supplement in our next issue, and another fine instalment of Mr. Sidney Drew's immensely popular serial. Altogether we can safely say that our next issue will be one of the finest numbers turned out. Order your copy, my chums, and you are certain to have it.

RESULT OF "POPLETS" COMPETITION No. 29.

The Ten Prizes of Five Shillings each have been awarded to the following readers, who have sent in the best efforts to the above competition:

E. Parr, 16, Alexandra Street, Whitley Bay; Herbert Dixon, 93, High Street, Dorking, Surrey; Arthur Carpenter, 1, Dene Street Gardens, Dorking, Surrey; Albert Lynch jun., 2, Dene Street Gardens, Dorking, Surrey; R. W. Childs, 5, Lindore Road, Clapham Common, London, S.W.11; F. G. Bissenden, 35, Nightingale Lane, Dover; A. Dimmock, 124, Warwick Road, Kensington, W.14; H. Comp-

THE POPULAR.—No. 143.

NEXT FRIDAY!

"A RASCAL FOILED!"

ston, 33, Kipling Street, Bootle, Liverpool; Edward Holt, 89, Somers Road, Walthamstow, E.17; H. Gaskin, 10, Gleave Street, Everton, Liverpool.

Again I am offering a FOOTBALL for the best "Poplet" sent in in connection with

"POPLETS" COMPETITION No. 37.

Examples for this week:

Putting It Off.	Take Trouble When.
The Carnival Ball.	Falling Off.
Bunter In Form.	Fishy Found Fishing.
Smoking in Woodshed.	Not Always There.
Manners Cuts Football.	On the Ball.
A Hurried Exit.	The Modern Romeo.

REMEMBER! A FOOTBALL FOR THE BEST, and TEN PRIZES OF FIVE SHILLINGS EACH for the next in order of merit.

Select two of the examples, and make up a sentence of TWO, THREE, or FOUR words having some bearing on the example. ONE of the words in your sentence must commence with one of the letters in the example.

1. All "Poplets" must be written on one side of a POSTCARD, and not more than two "Poplets" can be sent in by one reader each week.

2. The postcards must be addressed "Poplets," No. 37, The "Popular," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

3. No correspondence may be entered into in connection with "Poplets."

4. The Editor's opinion on any matter which may arise is to be accepted as final and legally binding. This condition will be strictly enforced, and readers can only enter the competition on this understanding.

5. I guarantee that every effort will be thoroughly examined by a competent staff of judges, PROVIDED that the effort is sent in on a POSTCARD, and that it is received on or before October 20th.

Your Editor,

A GRAND TALE OF THE ROOKWOOD CHUMS. By OWEN CONQUEST.

THE END.

Nugent's Splendid Sacrifice!

(Continued from page 6.)

rapidly mending now. When he left his bed it was only to go out in a bath-chair, with his chum walking with him, but every day saw an improvement, and Frank was very cheerful.

And what made him happiest was to see the new footing upon which his parents stood. Mr. and Mrs. Nugent, one or both, hardly ever left him. The suffering and anxiety over Frank's sick-bed had drawn them together, and the bond had been so strengthened that it was never likely to be broken again. They had had their lesson, and they had profited by it; and they thanked Heaven, with full hearts, that it had been no worse.

The day came at last when Frank was able to return to the school. He was not quite his old self yet, but he was well, and growing stronger every day.

His father and mother and his chum came to Greyfriars with him, and Frank Nugent was given a rousing welcome by his comrades of the Remove.

After his people had gone there was quite a reception in Study No. 1. Coker of the Fifth came to shake hands with him and to congratulate him, and so did Wingate, and the Head himself.

Vernon-Smith came into the study later in a rather shamefaced way.

"I'm sorry, Nugent," he said. "I hope you'll forget all about it."

Frank shook hands with the Bounder. "It's all right," he said. "Thank goodness, it's all over now."

Half the Remove crammed themselves into Study No. 1 to the feed which was stood by the Famous Five to celebrate Frank Nugent's return. Billy Bunter, claiming his rights as Nugent's firmest pal, who had stood by him in time of trouble, insinuated himself into the feed, and greatly distinguished himself in clearing the festive board. But Frank was so happy now that he was cordial even to Billy Bunter.

Frank had suffered; but, like most who suffer for the sake of others, he had had his reward. Peace and love in his home were his reward, and an ample recompense for what he had suffered for his mother's sake.