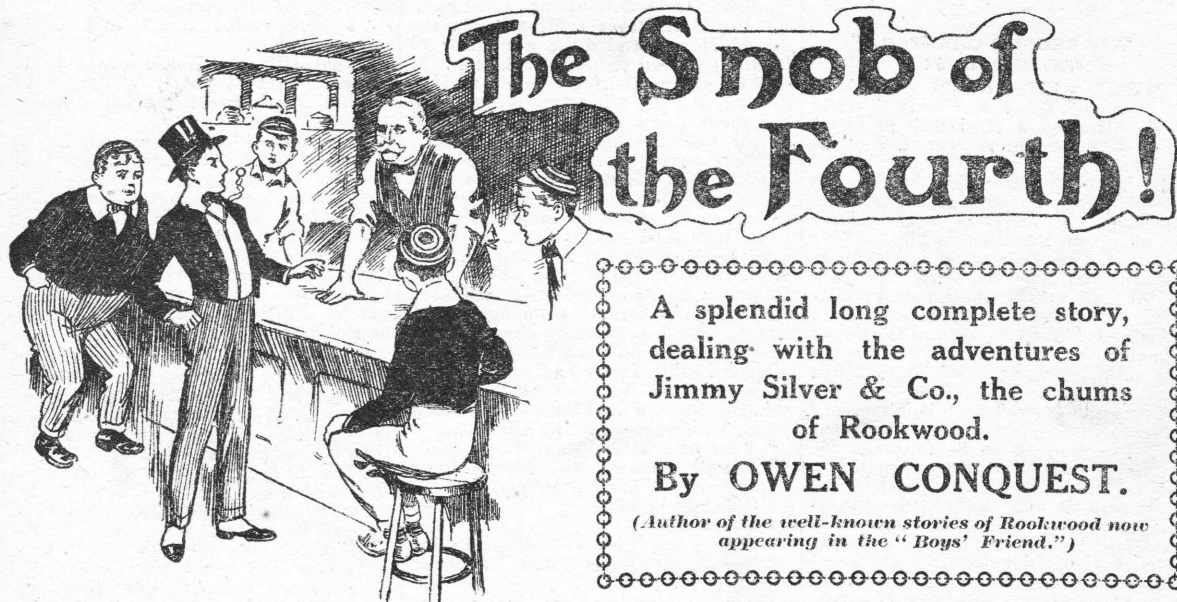


THE MYSTERY OF MONTMORENCY! Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the amazing new boy, has had more than his share of public notice since his first hour at Rookwood. Where Jimmy Silver & Co. had expected a shy, sensitive new boy, they are confronted by a snobbish, purse-proud bounder. And there is some mystery about him, too!



The Snob of the Fourth!

A splendid long complete story, dealing with the adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the well-known stories of Rookwood now appearing in the "Boys' Friend.")

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

A Mysterious Mistake!

"**G**EOURGE HUGGINS!"

"My only hat!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

From Tubby Muffin came a squeak of merriment.

"He, he, he! Huggins! He, he, he!"

"What the merry thump——" said Townsend.

It was a peculiar scene.

In the little tuckshop behind the beeches at Rookwood School, Sergeant Kettle stood, with his hands resting on his little counter, staring across at Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the new junior in the Fourth Form.

The ancient military gentleman, who for years had kept the school shop at Rookwood, seemed petrified with astonishment.

He gazed at Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency as if Cecil Cuthbert had been some grisly spectre, instead of a handsome and elegant and very expensively-dressed Fourth-Former of Rookwood.

The tuckshop was crowded with juniors fresh from the cricket-field, and they were all staring blankly.

Even Tubby Muffin stopped a jam-tart half-way to his capacious mouth in his amazement.

Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency's eyeglass had dropped from his eye. The amazing greeting from the sergeant seemed to have stunned him.

He returned the sergeant's fixed gaze as if equally fascinated.

Townsend and Topham, the new boy's chums, looked at one another, quite taken off their balance by the remarkable scene.

Montmorency of the Fourth had arrived at Rookwood School only that day. He was quite a stranger there.

Yet the sergeant addressed him as if he had known him all his life; and, more astonishing still, he addressed him as George Huggins.

Montmorency's wealth and elegance, and rather lofty manners, had already caused him to be remarked in the Lower School, newcomer as he was. Some of

the fellows had already called him a snob amongst themselves. Arthur Edward Lovell had taken a dislike to him on account of his fastidious looks and manners.

Others, again, felt that some allowance ought to be made for a scion of the noble line of Montmorency. A fellow with a name like that might be pardoned for thinking no "small beer" of himself, Mornington had said.

In looks and manners Montmorency lived up to his high-sounding name—that was all.

Jimmy Silver was inclined to be tolerant towards the new fellow, because he had shown that he could play cricket. That was a more important matter, in Jimmy's eyes, than the blood of all the Montmorencys, though it might be as blue as the June sky.

"He, he, he!" Tubby Muffin's unmusical cackle broke the painful silence. "He, he, he!"

Townsend broke in, with a glare at Sergeant Kettle, who seemed unable to take his eyes off the new junior.

"What the thump do you mean, sergeant? What are you calling Montmorency by that idiotic name for?"

"Eh? What?" said the sergeant confusedly.

"This chap's name is Montmorency, sergeant," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh! said the sergeant.

Towny jerked at Montmorency's sleeve.

"What's the matter with you, Monty?" he asked. "You look fairly flabbergasted, by gad! You'll make the fellows think your name really is Huggins at this rate."

Montmorency made an effort to pull himself together.

But the colour was wavering in his cheeks, and his struggle to regain his calmness was plain to all eyes.

"I—I don't understand——" he stammered.

"I say, sergeant, do you know the chap?" squeaked Tubby Muffin, in great delight.

Tubby was annoyed with the new

junior, who had rejected without ceremony his chummy overtures that day. Tubby had been prepared to greet Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency with open arms. He had been snubbed unceremoniously. Whereupon Tubby had made up his fat mind that Cecil Cuthbert was a snob, and he was delighted to see the snob taken down like this.

"Is his name really Huggins, sergeant?" pursued Tubby. "I say, what a lark! Huggins don't sound so nobby as Mongmorangey, does it?"

"Montmorency!" stammered the sergeant, blinking at the new junior.

"That is my name."

Montmorency had recovered himself now.

His aristocratic impassiveness of manner had returned. He jammed his monocle into his eye, and took a cool and scornful survey of the astonished and confused sergeant.

"That—that's your name, sir?" stutted the sergeant.

"Yaas."

"I—I—I thought——"

"Is he like somebody you know, sergeant?" asked Jimmy, to help the painfully confused old gentleman out.

"Yes," gasped Mr. Kettle. "That's it, Master Silver. I—I thought——"

"This man Kettle has called me by a name that is not mine," said Montmorency calmly. "No doubt I look like somebody he knows of that name. I suppose nobody here is fool enough to think that my name is Huggins? Anyone who likes can see my name entered on the school books. The Head, I suppose, must know what my name is?"

"That's a clincher," said Mornington. It was convincing enough. For a fellow to be entered on the school books under an assumed name was impossible. All the fellows knew that. A chap was not admitted to Rookwood without the Head knowing who he was and where he came from.

"Of course," said Jimmy Silver. "The sergeant's taken you for somebody else, Montmorency."

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"Isn't that it, sergeant?" asked Raby. "Here's your ginger-beer, Master Lovell!"

Sergeant Kettle did not answer Raby's question. That fact was remembered afterwards by a good many fellows.

THE SECOND CHAPTER. The High Hand!

CECIL CUTHBERT MONTMORENCY had already attracted a good deal of attention in the Lower School at Rookwood.

His sounding name, his wealth, his elegant manners, the "whacking" car in which he had arrived at the school, had all drawn attention to him.

After the peculiar scene in the tuckshop, he was more than ever the cynosure of most eyes in the Lower Forms.

The incident was explained as a strange mistake on the part of the school sergeant; that really seemed to be the only possible explanation. But it was not forgotten.

It was odd enough that Montmorency should resemble a boy whom the sergeant knew so closely as to be mistaken for him by the old military gentleman.

It was, in fact, more than odd. For Montmorency was not an ordinary-looking fellow. His good looks and aristocratic bearing would have attracted a second glance anywhere.

It was extraordinary that among Sergeant Kettle's private acquaintances, there should be a boy named Huggins, who was so like Montmorency, that the latter could be mistaken for him.

Inquisitive fellows dropped into the tuckshop to talk to the sergeant, and ask him questions about George Huggins.

To their surprise, Mr. Kettle declined to say a word.

The subject was evidently distasteful to him.

Generally, the sergeant was a civil-spoken man; but when he was asked questions about George Huggins his manner became extremely gruff, and he snapped almost savagely.

Not a word of information could be drawn from him on the subject.

The curious inquirers soon gave the matter up; and, indeed, interest in it soon evaporated.

In a few days Montmorency had made a good many friends in the Fourth Form.

Towny and Topy were his devoted chums—Morny was friendly—and Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome did not dislike him. Arthur Edward Lovell, certainly, did not like him. Tubby Muffin was down on him with a very heavy "down"; but Tubby's condemnation alternated with effusive overtures of friendship, all of which were rejected by Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency. He utterly declined to believe in any connection between the families of Montmorency and Muffin; and though Tubby claimed only to be his second cousin twice removed, Montmorency would not admit even that distant relationship.

So Tubby—when he was not making overtures of friendship—expressed an opinion, with sage shakes of the head, that there was more about Monty than the fellows knew. He said that it was queer that the sergeant wouldn't say a word on the subject; and queer that Montmorency had looked so scared and startled under Mr. Kettle's eye; in fact, there was no limit to the queer circumstances Tubby had called to mind.

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But as it was perfectly evident that a nod or smile from the new junior would have slain all Tubby's suspicions and surmises on the spot, Tubby's opinion was not valued by anybody but Reginald Muffin himself.

On Wednesday in the week following Montmorency's arrival at Rookwood, the big Rolls-Royce snorted up to the School House, and quite a number of fellows gathered round to look at it. It had called for Cecil Cuthbert, to take him out for the afternoon, it appeared, and there were a good many fellows who envied Cecil Cuthbert. Townsend and Topham were the happy ones selected to accompany him in his drive, and Towny and Topy looked very pleased with themselves—as they came out of the house with their superb chum.

Tubby Muffin heard the car from afar, and came scuttling up breathlessly. Only half an hour earlier he had been remarking to several grinning fellows how "queer" were many circumstances in connection with Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency. But Tubby had evidently experienced one of his kaleidoscopic changes, for now he beamed on the new junior with almost adoring affection.

"Your pater's car, Monty?" he said. "Yaas," answered Montmorency coldly, without looking at him.

"Going for a drive?"

"Yaas."

"Taking any friends?" hinted Tubby.

"Yaas, Townsend and Topham. Jump in, you fellows."

"You've lots of room for another fellow there!" said Tubby.

Montmorency looked at him at last. "I've asked Morny, but he's keen on cricket, and can't come," he said coolly. "Get out of the way, Muffin, the door's goin' to be closed."

"I say, Monty—"

"Would you be good enough to refrain from callin' me Monty?" asked Montmorency, with polished contempt. "That's my name to my friends."

"I say, old chap—"

"Get off the grass, Muffin!" exclaimed Townsend impatiently. "You're not comin' in this car! Go and eat coke!"

"Montmorency, old fellow, I'd really like to come!" said Muffin, as if that settled it.

"Go an' eat coke!" answered the youth with the noble name. He reached out and closed the door, pushing Muffin aside.

The engine snorted. Tubby Muffin breathed hard with wrath. Once more he had offered the olive-branch; once more it had been refused with contempt.

"If you think I want to come in your car, you're jolly well mistaken," he exclaimed wrathfully.

"Good!" said Montmorency, and he signalled to the chauffeur to get a move on.

"Yah!"

The car glided down the drive.

"Yah!" roared Tubby Muffin, all adoration and affection gone now.

"Yah! Huggins! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, greatly tickled by Tubby's change of front.

From "Monty, old fellow," Montmorency had suddenly become "Huggins" in Tubby's estimation.

"Huggins!" shrieked Tubby. "Huggins! Yah!"

The car glided away, and turned into the road to Coombe. Townsend and Topham were laughing, finding something comic in Tubby's change of front, like the other fellows.

But Montmorency did not laugh.

To the surprise of his comrades, his handsome face was darkly clouded, and his well-cut lips quivered.

Towny touched him gently on the arm.

"Don't mind that fat cad, Monty!" he said. "Tubby would slang anybody who wouldn't let him sponge."

"I don't mind him," said Montmorency curtly.

"That silly ass Kettle ought to be kicked," said Topham. "Fancy his thinkin' you looked like a fellow named Huggins."

"Old chump!" said Townsend.

Outside the school gates the car had to slow and stop, as a heavily-laden lorry came lurching along the middle of the road. The Rolls-Royce backed on the grass belt by the road to escape the big baulks of timber with which the lorry was loaded. Tubby Muffin had rolled down to the gates, and finding the car still within range, so to speak, he rolled up to the door.

He had come to taunt the new junior, in his annoyance; but the handsome turn-out, and the possibility of a motor-drive without expense to his worthy self, softened him. He was smiling by the time he reached the window.

"Too bad, those beastly lorries on the road, Monty!" he said.

Montmorency's eyes gleamed at him through his monocle.

"Will you clear off?" he said.

"You're not good enough for this little party, Tubby," said Townsend, with cheerful insolence. "Couldn't be seen with you, you know."

"Exactly!" grinned Topham.

"Oh, quite!" assented Montmorency.

Once more Tubby Muffin's mantle of beaming friendliness dropped off him.

"Jolly stuck-up, Huggins, ain't you?" he said.

Montmorency turned a look on him that startled him, so intensely savage and passionate was it. It startled Towny and Topy, too.

"If you call me Huggins again you'll get hurt, you fat cad!" said Montmorency, between his teeth.

"Yah! Huggins!"

Montmorency had a light cane in his hand. He reached out of the car window, and before Tubby knew what was happening, Montmorency lashed him with the cane full across his fat face.

"Yaroooh!" roared Muffin, in surprise and anguish.

The car moved on at that moment, and a second slash from the cane just missed Tubby Muffin, as he staggered and sat down in the grass.

Montmorency had his hand on the door, as if to open it and jump out. His face was convulsed with rage, and did not look very handsome at that moment.

Townsend, in alarm, caught him by the shoulder.

"Hold on, Monty! The car's movin'! Don't open the door—"

"I'm goin' to thrash that cad!" panted Montmorency.

"Sit down, old chap!"

Towny pushed his new chum back into the seat.

Montmorency gave him a fierce look, but it was only momentary. Then he recovered himself and nodded.

"You're right," he said. "He's not worth lickin'."

"Not worth takin' notice of," said Towny.

"Oh, quite!"

"I say, that was rather a hefty lick you gave him, Monty," said Topham, uneasily. "It's goin' to leave a mark on his chivvy."

Montmorency shrugged his slim shoulders.

"Let it!" he answered. "The low rascal wanted a lesson."

"Oh! M'm! Certainly!"
The car rolled on, leaving Tubby Muffin sitting in the grass, dazed, with a thick red mark showing across his fat cheek.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Champion of the Oppressed!

"**W**HAT on earth's the matter with your chivvy?"
Jimmy Silver asked the question as the Fistical Four met Tubby Muffin on their way to cricket.

"Been busting in a door with your face, old tub?" asked Lovell.

Tubby groaned.
He was hurt, there was no doubt about that. But his groan was deep enough and anguished enough for a very serious injury. It was like Reginald Muffin to make the very most of it.

"That beast Huggins—" he moaned.
"Do you mean Montmorency?" asked Jimmy Silver with a frown.

"I mean Huggins!" said Tubby Muffin savagely. "I say Huggins, and I mean Huggins! Old Kettle called him Huggins—"

"Oh, cheese it!"
"But did Montmorency give you that mark on your chivvy?" asked Raby.

"Yow-ow! Yes! He slashed me with his cane!" groaned Tubby.

"I say, that's rather thick, even if Tubby is an irritating little beast!" remarked Newcome. "Fellow ought not to hand out that sort of thing."

"Confounded brute, I think!" said Lovell. "I'd like to see him hand it out to me!"

"It is rather thick," said Jimmy Silver. "But Tubby ought to let him alone. I don't see why the chap should be insulted because he won't let Tubby sponge on him."

"Oh, I say, Jimmy, don't—"

"Serve the fat cad right!" said Valentine Mornington.

"Oh, I say, Moiny, you—"

Tubby rubbed the mark on his cheek. It was very painful and swollen.

"I'd give him a jolly good licking," he mumbled, "only he—"

"Only you could not," said Mornington. "You have to take the kicks along with the ha'pence, Tubby. You should not sponge!"

"Yah!" snorted Tubby. "I'm jolly well going to show this to Mr. Dalton. He will make the cad answer for it."

"Don't sneak!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Dickie Dalton will see it, in any case, and inquire into it," said Lovell, as the juniors went on towards the cricket-field. "Montmorency will be called to account, and serve him jolly well right! Like his cheek to lash a fellow like a dog!"

"Muffin annoyed him," said Mornington.

Snort! from Arthur Edward Lovell.
"Chap can be annoyed without acting like a dashed hooligan," he said. "And why should Tubby's rot annoy him so much? If his name's not Huggins, he needn't mind Tubby hooting Huggins at him so much. Blessed if it doesn't look—" Lovell paused.

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily. "We know the chap's name. It's on the books, isn't it? Think the Head would enter him as Montmorency if his name was Huggins?"

"Well, then, I don't see why he should be so jolly waxy about it," said Lovell tartly.

"Both him, and Tubby, too!" said Jimmy. "Let's play cricket!"

And cricket soon drove the matter from the minds of the Fistical Four. But Tubby, naturally, could not dismiss it so easily. He had an injury, and it hurt him, and he was boiling with wrath and indignation. He paraded his mark up and down the Lower School, in search of sympathy. Some of the fellows told him that it served him right; but others, who had been annoyed by what they considered Montmorency's "uppish" ways, sympathised, and were indignant. At tea-time Tubby marched into his study—No. 2—and displayed his injury to his study-mates, Jones minor, and Higgs and Putty Grace.

"Whacked me across the face with his stick, you know, that cad Huggins!" said Tubby, thrilling with undying indignation.

"Serve you right!" said Jones minor.

"I dare say you asked for it," said Putty. "You shouldn't call a fellow by a name that isn't his."

"The sergeant said—"

"Oh, bother the sergeant!"

"I say, Higgs, you ought to lick the cad!" said Tubby pathetically. "You could, you know! You oughtn't to let him treat your study-mate like this."

"That's right enough," said Higgs

with a nod. "I'll talk to him about it when he comes in."

"Look here, Higgs!" said Grace. "You let the chap alone! None of your confounded bullying!"

"I'll do as I like!" roared Higgs. The bully of the Fourth did not like being gainsaid.

"After all, he'd no right to whack Tubby like that," said Jones minor. "It was brutal. When Tubby gets too annoying the proper thing is to kick him. That's what we do in this study, isn't it, Tubby?"

"Yah!" was Tubby's reply.

"Who does this fellow think he is?" demanded Higgs warmly. "I spoke to him the other day, and he was dashed standoffish. Not that I care a rap about the fellow, but I'm not going to be looked up and down."

Apparently Higgs was one of the unfortunate youths who were kept at arms-length by the superb Cecil Cuthbert.

Naturally, Alfred Higgs did not like that. As he could "whop" nearly all the Form, he considered himself a person to be treated with respect.

"If he thinks a Montmorency is better than a Higgs," continued the bully of the Fourth, "I'll give him some education on the subject."

"Oh, rats!" said Putty.

"Lashing a kid as if he were a dog!" continued Higgs. "I'll jolly well show show him that it won't do at Rookwood."

And Alfred Higgs, after tea, was hanging about waiting for the big Rolls-Royce to come in. Higgs' intention of taking up the quarrel for Tubby, and licking the new junior, was widely known in a short time. But Higgs received no admiration in his new role of champion of the oppressed. It was pretty clear that Higgs was only looking for an excuse to exercise his favourite propensity of bullying, and it was more than suspected that he wanted to avenge the "standoffishness" of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency. But Higgs was not to be argued with.



THE SNOB'S BRUTAL ACTION! "You will whack me with your cane if I call you Huggins?" spluttered Higgs. "Yaas!" "Huggins!" roared Higgs. "Oh, my hat!" Lash! Montmorency's arm came up like lightning and Higgs staggered back as the cane lashed across his face. (See Chapter 3.)

It was about six o'clock when the great car came rolling in, and Montmorency & Co. alighted. The car departed, and the three knuts came sauntering cheerily into the School House.

Then Higgs of the Fourth bore down upon them with a very ugly and threatening look on his rugged face.

"A word with you, Montmorency!" he said gruffly.

The eyeglass—already celebrated in the Classical Fourth—turned loftily on Higgs.

"Yaas?" said Montmorency.

"Step into the Common-room," said Higgs.

Montmorency did not stir.

"You hear me?" demanded Higgs threateningly.

"Yaas. But the fact is," said Montmorency calmly, "I don't care for either your company or your conversation, Higgs, if you don't mind my mentionin' it?"

Townsend and Topham grinned, but they grinned rather uneasily. Higgs was not a safe person to talk to in this strain.

Higgs' rugged face became almost purple.

"Why, you—you cheeky cad!" he spluttered.

Montmorency raised his hand.

"That's enough!" he said.

"I asked you to step into the Common-room, out of the way of prefects, while I talk to you," said Higgs. "But you can have it here, if you like!"

"I don't care for your conversation at all, thanks."

"You cut Muffin across the face with your cane this afternoon?" said Higgs.

"That cane you've got there, I suppose?"

"Quite so!"

"Do you think you can play stunts like that at Rookwood?" demanded Higgs.

"Yaas!"

"You cheeky cub, you cut a fellow across the chivvy because he calls you Huggins! Do you think I wouldn't call you Huggins if I chose?"

"Not unless you want to be served the same."

"Wha-a-t? You—you'd whack me with your cane if I called you Huggins—what?" spluttered Higgs.

"Yaas!"

"Monty—" murmured Townsend.

"Huggins!" roared Higgs. "Huggins! There! Huggins! Oh, my hat!"

Lash!

Montmorency's arm came up like lightning, and Higgs of the Fourth staggered back as the cane lashed across his face.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Knocked Out!

THERE was a rush of juniors to the spot. Jimmy Silver & Co., coming in from the cricket, halted to look on at the scene in the corridor. Mornington gave a chirrup of approval.

"Well done, Monty!"

Higgs staggered, gasping for breath, scarcely able to believe for a moment or two what had happened.

But he recovered himself and straightened up, but the look he gave Cecil Cuthbert would have made a Hun envious.

"Put down that cane!" said Higgs thickly. "Put up your hands, you cheeky rotter! I'm going to smash you!"

Montmorency handed his cane to Townsend, who took it with a feeble hand. The new junior did not seem

dismayed by Higgs' towering wrath. He pushed back his spotless cuffs.

"Monty," gasped Townsend, "you—you can't tackle him—that hulking brute!"

"I'm goin' to."

There was no choice about it, for Higgs was rushing on to the attack like a maddened bull.

Montmorency, with his hands up, faced him with perfect coolness.

The superb youth might be a snob, doubtless he was, but there was no doubt that he had plenty of pluck and plenty of nerve. Both were required to face Higgs' savage rush; and Montmorency faced it without turning a hair.

"By gad!" murmured Mornington. "That merchant's got the real stuff in him, by gad!"

Crash!

Higgs came on like a bull at a gate, and the next instant a furious fight was raging in the corridor.

A crowd of juniors stood round, looking on breathlessly.

There were not more than half a dozen fellows in the Fourth who could stand up to Higgs and give a good account of themselves. It seemed out of the question that the slim, elegant Montmorency could stand against him for one minute.

But he did.

He gave ground a little, but he stalled off the fierce attack, and hardly one of Higgs' breathless drives touched him.

But as Higgs paused, a little out of breath after his furious attack, which had not got home, Montmorency suddenly attacked in his turn, and—as the juniors described it afterwards—"fairly walked into Higgs."

His fists moved like lightning, and Higgs' clumsy defence was nowhere.

Montmorency played him almost like a fish, driving in a blow here and a blow there, almost at his own pleasure.

And the blows were heavy, and hard, too, and had evidently plenty of muscle behind them. Higgs was knocked right and left, and finally a terrific right-hander swept him clean off his feet, and he crashed on the floor.

There was a buzz of deep-drawn breath from the crowd of juniors as the bully of the Fourth went down.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

Arthur Edward Lovell had entertained the idea of giving Montmorency a licking for his own good. He mentally decided now that that idea was the least feasible idea he had ever thought of.

"Hefty—what?" grinned Mornington. "I fancy the esteemed Higgs has had about enough to go on with!"

Higgs sat up dazedly.

He gasped and spluttered helplessly. It was clear that he could not go on, unwilling as he was to give in.

"Oh! Ow, ow! Oh!" spluttered Higgs.

Montmorency, breathing hard, adjusted his eyeglass in his eye and glanced down at him with cold scorn.

"Have you had enough?" he asked contemptuously.

"Oh! Ow! Oh! My chin! My nose! Ow!" mumbled the unfortunate bully of the Fourth.

"He's had enough!" grinned Townsend. "Monty, 'old man, who'd have thought you were such a holy terror? You don't look it!"

"Dashed if you do!" said Topham.

Montmorency smiled loftily.

"I fancy I can handle a cad like that!" he said carelessly. "If the brute's satisfied, we may as well go in to tea."

"Oh, don't crow!" snapped Lovell.

Montmorency walked on with his

chums without heeding that remark. Lovell gave Higgs a hand up. He did not like Higgs, but he was sorry for him just at that moment.

Higgs stood very unsteadily, mopping a streaming nose with his handkerchief, and blinking painfully with his eyes.

"Who'd have thought it?" he gasped. "Not you, evidently!" said Mornington.

"He's too hefty for me," said Higgs. "He doesn't look it, but he is. But he's a cad, all the same, to crow when he's licked a fellow. His name may be Montmorency, but he's a cad!"

And Morny had nothing to say to that. Higgs' words found an echo in the minds of all present. Higgs staggered away, leaning heavily on Lovell's arm. He had been badly licked, and he was feeling very bad indeed. Arthur Edward Lovell was frowning when he rejoined his chums in the end study for tea.

"More in that snob than meets the eye!" he remarked, evidently alluding to Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency.

"He's hefty!" said Jimmy Silver. "But Higgs is all rush and thump. There are tougher propositions in the Fourth than Higgs. Still, it was pretty good to knock Higgs out like that in five minutes. He can play cricket, too. He's got the right stuff in him, with all his funny little ways."

"He's got pluck," said Raby. "But he—"

"He's a hefty boxer," said Newcome.

"But—" said Jimmy Silver, pursing his lips.

"But he's a cad!" said Lovell quietly.

"There's a rotten streak in him. He doesn't speak to Rawson in his study because Rawson's people are poor. He crowed over Higgs when he'd knocked him out. He's a puppy and an upstart!"

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Jimmy Silver.

"He's not genuine!" said Lovell obstinately. "A gentleman doesn't snub a chap because he's poor, or crow over a fellow who's down and out. His name may be Montmorency, but he's no gentleman, and I'm going to tell him so if ever he wants to know my opinion!"

"Let's hope he won't, then," said Jimmy Silver. "Pass the sardines, old top, and talk cricket!"

"Bother cricket! Old Kettle could tell us something about the fellow if he liked."

Jimmy looked grave.

"Chuck it, Lovell! Some of the fellows have been trying to worm something out of the sergeant, but that kind of thing isn't done in this study. Chuck it, old fellow!"

And Lovell coloured a little and chuckled it.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Short-lived Friendship!

"MUFFIN!"

"Yes, sir!" said Tubby Muffin, with his mouth full.

It was the following morning at the breakfast-table of the Classical Fourth.

Mr. Dalton was at the head of the table, and his eye had fallen upon Tubby Muffin, and upon the swollen red mark across his fat cheek. It was not likely to escape the keen eyes of the Form master.

"What has happened to your face, Muffin?"

Montmorency kept his eyes on his plate. Tubby Muffin coloured and coughed.

"M-m-my face, sir?" he stammered.

The juniors sat still as mice. They expected Tubby Muffin to blurt out the whole story, with serious consequences for Montmorency.

To the general surprise, Tubby didn't.

"I—I—I got a knock on it, sir!" he stammered.

"It looks like the slash of a stick," said Mr. Dalton, eyeing him.

"Yes, sir; quite an accident, sir."

"You should be more careful, Muffin."

"Oh, yes, sir! I—I will, sir."

To Tubby's evident relief, the matter was dropped there. After breakfast, the juniors came out into the quad, and Jimmy Silver dropped his hand on Tubby's fat shoulder.

Tubby was speeding towards the tuckshop, and he stopped unwillingly.

"I say, don't stop a fellow," he said.

"There's not much time before lessons, and the tuckshop—"

"My hat! Are you going to feed just after brekker, you porpoise?"

"Well, just a tart and some ginger-pop," said Tubby. "I never really get enough brekker, you know; and as Monty's lent me five bob—"

"Montmorency has!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. Rather decent of him, wasn't it?" purred Tubby. "I mentioned to him that I was short of cash—"

"You weren't so jolly pally with Montmorency yesterday," said Lovell drily.

"Oh, that's all over," said Tubby loftily. "We're quite good friends now. Let a chap go, Jimmy!"

"I was going to say," said Jimmy Silver quietly, "that it was rather decent of you not to give Montmorency away about that cut on the face, Tubby."

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Tubby fatuously. "Of course, I wouldn't give a pal away."

"But it seems that he's given you five bob to keep your mouth shut," said Jimmy contemptuously.

"Nothing of the kind!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin warmly. "That's quite a different transaction, of course. Monty was—was rather hasty, and he was sorry for it. He didn't want the matter gone into with Mr. Dalton."

"I shouldn't have thought his noble

nibs would have come down off his perch to that extent just to dodge a caning," remarked Newcome.

Lovell gave a snort.

"It wasn't the caning," he said.

"What was it, then?"

"He didn't want Tubby to yell out about his name being Huggins—about the sergeant calling him Huggins, I mean," said Lovell shrewdly. "He doesn't want Mr. Dalton to hear the Huggins story."

"Oh, dash it all!" said Jimmy Silver uneasily.

But there was a feeling in his breast that Lovell was right.

Tubby Muffin cut away to the tuckshop, where he had just time to get rid of his five shillings before lessons. He rolled into the Form-room very shiny and sticky and happy, and bestowed a genial nod and smile on Montmorency.

Jimmy Silver noticed, however, that Montmorency avoided meeting Tubby's genial eye. Jimmy was feeling very thoughtful and uneasy. He could not help feeling, with Lovell, that Montmorency had been anxious to keep from Mr. Dalton, not the fact that he had lashed Muffin with his cane, but the Huggins' story which had led to the incident, and which would certainly have come out if Tubby had related what had happened.

There were no suspicions in Tubby Muffin's fat mind that morning. He was dwelling pleasantly upon his new friendship with Cecil Cuthbert. He had quite forgiven Monty—quite! Never again would he dream of calling him Huggins! He was going to call him Monty, when he slipped an arm through his, after lessons, and strolled into the quadrangle with him.

After lessons Montmorency walked out with Townsend and Topham, and as Tubby Muffin rolled up, with an affectionate grin, he was greeted by a stony stare from Monty. He made a feeble effort to slip his arm through Montmorency's, and the superb youth stared away as though from the contact of an adder!

THE END.

(You must not miss next week's grand long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, entitled "The Pretender!" It deals with the mystery of the new boy Montmorency.)

PRAIRIE JUSTICE!
(Continued from page 18.)

The rancher listened like a man of bronze. Justice, the stern justice of the prairie, had overtaken the outlaw at last. His long career of wickedness had reached its close.

A quarter of an hour later the rancher rejoined his son and Beauclerc on the other side of the wood. He spoke no word, and they asked no questions. In silence they mounted and rode.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

From the Valley of the Shadow!

FRANK RICHARDS opened his eyes.

A red glare struck upon them—the sun was setting in the west, the sky was ablaze with crimson and gold. The mustang was in motion again; once more the gripping ropes lacerated his aching limbs, and the bitter-pain brought consciousness back—consciousness of suffering.

Something hurtled through the air and struck the horse's flank, and slipped aside. The mustang started and swerved, and dashed off furiously in a new direction.

Frank tried to pull himself together. He tried to raise his head from the tossing mane and look.

What did he see?

It was a dream—a dream! He knew it must be a dream. For he saw the face of his Canadian cousin—he saw Bob Lawless, mounted upon Handsome Alf's horse, riding hard behind, with a lasso in his hand, and, farther back, Rancher Lawless and Vere Beauclerc riding hard.

It was a dream—a vision to torture him in his last moments! His head sank back again into the tossing mane, and he groaned.

Whiz!

The rope was cast again, and with better fortune this time. The loop slid over the tossing head of the mustang, and the rope tautened. The wild career of the Mexican mustang slackened down, the horse was still at last, standing trembling—roped in!

"Frank—Frank, old man!" Bob Lawless whispered, as the tears coursed down his face. "Frank!"

"Frank!" whispered Beauclerc. "Saved, old fellow! You are safe now with your friends!"

And then Frank understood, and his haggard face lightened up for a moment ere he sank into deep insensibility.

It was more than a week later that Frank Richards, still pale and weak, rode into the Thompson Valley with his friends.

But home at the ranch, with his fearful adventure in the wilderness of the North-West only a memory, Frank Richards was not long in recovering. And the day came at last when he was able to return to school, and it was a happy day for the chums when they rode together to Cedar Creek.

THE END.

(Next week's topping long complete story of Frank Richards & Co., the chums of Cedar Creek, is entitled "Bunker Honk's Sweepstake!" and is full of fun and thrill.)

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