

THE SON OF A CRACKSMAN!

By Owen
Conquest.



SCHOOLBOYS' OWN
LIBRARY N° 220



Says Billy Bunter of Greyfriars-

"I say, old fellow, there's nothing like a jolly good feed to put a chap right. I'm feeling peckish now; only had six helpings of pudding at dinner . . ."

"Eh? Whassat? Another issue of the 'Magnet' just out? Of course—it's Saturday! He, he, he! I bet I'm the star turn in this week's yarn of Greyfriars . . ."



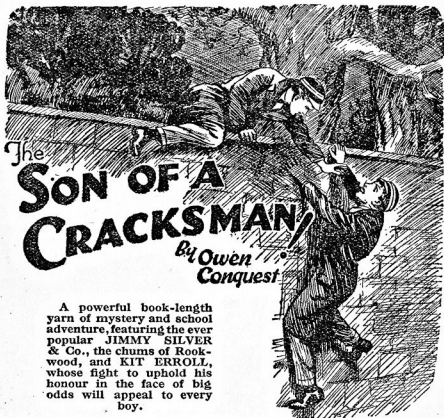
"I say, old fellow, lend me a bob, I mean sixpence—ahem!—that is to say, twopence, until my postal order arrives. Mustn't miss that Greyfriars yarn . . ."

"I say! Stop! Where are you going? I'll come with you to the newsagent's . . . you lend me the twopence! I say, old fellow—Yah! Beast! Now I shall have to buy my own copy of the 'Magnet.' Still, it's worth it—specially as I'm in it! He, he, he!"



The MAGNET

PRICE 2d
EVERY
SATURDAY



The
**SON OF A
CRACKSMAN!**
By Owen
Conquest

A powerful book-length yarn of mystery and school adventure, featuring the ever popular JIMMY SILVER & Co., the chums of Rookwood, and KIT ERROLL, whose fight to uphold his honour in the face of big odds will appeal to every boy.

CHAPTER 1.
Hard Up!

"ERROLL," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "I've heard that name before!"
"Eh? Who's Erroll?" asked Lovell.
"New chap coming into the Fourth."
"Bless him! I hope he won't be put in this study!"
"No fear!" said Raby promptly. "We're four already. Bootles won't plant him on us. We'll kick up a row if he does!"

"I've heard the name somewhere," remarked Jimmy Silver.

"Lots of people named Erroll," yawned Lovell. "Never mind the new kid. Look here, how are we going to make half an ounce of butter cover six rounds of toast?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Jimmy Silver.

That problem of economy was a little too much for him.

Funds were short in the end study.

and this fact played havoc with the old institution of "tea in the study."

"Try jam!" suggested Newcome.

"Jam on toast is all right."

"But there isn't any jam!"

"Well, dry toast is said to be good for the health," remarked Raby.

"Bow-wow!" growled Lovell.

"Better go along to Morny's study," grinned Raby. "Morny is still flourishing on the fat of the land!"

"Hallo, talk of angels!" added Raby, as the elegant form of Mornington, the dandy of the Fourth, lounged into the doorway of the end study.

Mornington glanced at the frugal tea-table, and smiled sarcastically.

"You chaps seem up against it," he remarked.

"Well, we're stony, at present," said Jimmy Silver.

"I didn't come here to rag with you, though," said Mornington. "Fact is, I came to ask you to tea."

"Oh, my hat!"

The Fistical Four stared at Mornington.

They were on anything but good terms with that wealthy and supercilious youth, and they certainly never expected to be asked to tea in his study.

Morny's study was a land flowing with milk and honey.

Mornington had more than all the money he wanted, and he was not bothered with any scruples about spending it on his own comfort.

"You're awfully good," said Jimmy Silver at last.

"There's goin' to be a decent spread," said Mornington. "Young Herbert is comin'. He'd like you to be there. Better come!"

Jimmy Silver hesitated.

He did not like refusing an invitation, but he had very strong reasons for disliking Mornington.

Holding these opinions, he could scarcely join in the "spread."

But Arthur Edward Lovell, who bothered much less than Jimmy about politeness, answered for him.

"Thanks! We won't come!"

Mornington laughed.

"You won't come?"

"Thanks, no!" said Jimmy.

"Go and eat coke, then!" said Mornington, and he lounged away. But he turned back in the doorway. "By the way, have you chaps heard of the new kid that's comin' to-day?"

"Yes. Tubby Muffin got hold of it," said Jimmy. "Chap named Erroll, Tubby says. I've heard the name before somewhere."

"It's been in the papers," said Mornington. "There was an officer named Erroll who did a big thing on the North-West Frontier of India some months ago. This chap Erroll is bein' brought down by his father, a Captain Erroll, I hear from Muffin. I was wonderin' if it was the same."

"Very likely," said Jimmy. "What did Captain Erroll do?"

"It was in the papers at the time," said Mornington. "He was last man in his trench, and held it against the tribesmen till he got relief; they found him covered with wounds, and still stickin' it out."

"Good man!" said the Fistical Four together.

"Yaas! I was thinkin' that if this chap Erroll is the son of a man like that, it's up to us to give him a bit of a reception," said Mornington.

"Well, that's a good idea," said Jimmy in surprise. He had not expected the dandy of the Fourth to be influenced by considerations of that kind. "We'll give him the glad hand, certainly."

Morny nodded, and sauntered away.

"Queer beggar, that!" commented Lovell. "Blessed if I quite understand Morny. I wish we had some of his cash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not too late to accept his invitation," grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats!"

Lovell proceeded with his difficult task of making half an ounce of butter cover

six rounds of toast. His comrades watched the experiment with interest.

A chubby face looked into the study while Lovell was still busily engaged,

"Master Mornington 'ere?"

Jimmy Silver smiled. It was 'Erbert, of the Second Form, the little waif who had been rescued from want by Mornington, and brought to Rookwood, and was now a member of the Second Form, and very popular there. A term at Rookwood had not enabled 'Erbert to master the difficulties of the aspirates.

"No; he's just gone, kid," said Jimmy.

"You blokes comin'?" asked 'Erbert. "I mean you coves—that is, you chaps."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sorry, no," said Jimmy.

'Erbert's face fell.

The waif of Rookwood was passionately loyal to the elegant Mornington; his gratitude to him knew no bounds. But he liked Jimmy Silver very much, and it was a trouble to him that Jimmy was not on good terms with his patron.

'Erbert was blind to Morny's faults, numerous and prominent as they were. But for Mornington, 'Erbert would have been tramping the roads still, in want and misery, and he did not forget it for a moment.

Jimmy read the little waif's thoughts in his expressive face.

"All serene, kid!" he said. "You see, we're just having tea. You run along and do justice to the spread!"

'Erbert hesitated a moment, and then turned and left the study without speaking.

It was 'Erbert's rule, as fixed as the laws of the Medes and Persians, to regard whatever Morny did as faultless.

The Fistical Four sat down to their tea.

But, in spite of Lovell's efforts, the tea-party in the end study had to admit that he had not succeeded very well with the butter. There was a bare suspicion of it on each round of toast, and the chums of the Fourth found what comfort they could in the reflection that dry toast is good for the health.

CHAPTER 2.

'Erbert Astonishes the Nuts!

"BY gad! Toppin'!"

"Rippin'!"

"Just in your style, Morny!"

Those remarks were made by Townsend, Topham, and Peele of the Fourth, as they came into No. 4 Study.

Tea was ready in that festive apartment.

It was not much like the tea in the end study, certainly.

There was cake, and biscuits, and ham patties, and doughnuts, and tarts. And there were ham and cold beef, and three kinds of jam, and crystallised fruits and other luxuries that were seldom to be found in any study but Morny's.

The nuts of the Fourth approved heartily.

Morny spent more upon a single meal than any other fellow at Rookwood spent in food in a week.

It required care, for the Rookwood masters were supposed to exercise some supervision, though, as the fellows were put on their honour not to be unduly extravagant, supervision was hardly needed in most cases.

But Morny had his own views about honour.

So long as he escaped the supervision he was content.

To the remarks other fellows made on the subject he replied only with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders.

'Erbert was in the study with Mornington, but he was not looking so cheery as usual.

In spite of his loyal devotion to his kind friend, 'Erbert wished that Mornington had been on better terms with Jimmy Silver.

Mornington & Co. sat down to tea in great spirits.

There were no problems in No. 4 Study such as covering six rounds of toast with half an ounce of butter. 'Erbert had made a pile of toast, and it was beautifully buttered.

Gower came into the study and

joined the tea-party. There was a merry buzz of talk in No. 4.

'Erbert did not share in it.

Mornington's aristocratic friends did not like the little waif, and they sneered bitterly among themselves at Morny's action in befriending him. Their idea was that Morny had done it simply out of cheek and uppishness, and mainly because his friends disapproved, and they never could understand why the Head allowed 'Erbert to enter Rookwood, and why Morny's guardian had consented to pay the little fellow's fees at the school.

His dear pals' disapproval of 'Erbert did not worry Mornington in the least, however. Morny had a peculiar nature, and it was as much to annoy his friends, as anything else, that he had brought 'Erbert to tea at all.

"You're not eatin', kid," said Mornington suddenly. "Try the cake?"

"Thank you, Master Mornington! I've had enough!" faltered 'Erbert.

Townsend burst into a laugh.

"Ha, ha! A giddy censor of morals in the study!" he exclaimed. "Murphy don't approve of such extravagance!"

'Erbert's face became crimson as the nuts burst into a roar of laughter.

Towny & Co. were quite pleased to find a chance of sowing trouble between the fag and his lofty patron.

Mornington's brow darkened. He fixed a far from pleasant glance upon his protegee.

"Is that it, Herbert?" he asked, in an ominous tone.

"I—I—"

"You're settin' up to judge what goes on in this study, are you?" asked Mornington, with a bitter sneer.

"No, I ain't, sir," said 'Erbert, crimson, and almost with tears in his eyes. "I wouldn't do no sich thing. I'll ave the cake."

"Suit yourself, you young ass!"

'Erbert helped himself to a huge wedge of cake, as if in proof that he was not sitting in judgment upon his benefactor.

"By the way, you've heard of the new kid?" remarked Mornington.

"Yaas," said Townsend, helping himself to ham and poached eggs. "Bulkeley was talkin' about him. His pater's done somethin' or other on the North-West Frontier."

"So it is the same Erroll?" said Morny.

"Killed a lot of tribesmen, and got wounded all over, or somethin'," said Topham, with a yawn. "If the kid puts on airs about it he will get sat on."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Peele.

"A blessed Colonial, I understand," remarked Gower. "We shan't pull with him. We don't pull with Van Ryn and Conroy and Pons—that gang in Number Three."

"I was thinkin' of askin' him into this study," said Mornington coolly.

Peele and Gower stared at him. They shared that study with Morny.

"Well, my hat!" said Peele.

"We're three already!" growled Gower. "We don't want a fourth. What the merry dickens do you want the fellow here for?"

"Well, his pater's a brick," said Mornington.

"Oh, bless his pater!"

"Well, I'm goin' to ask him."

"Look here, we're not going to have it!" exclaimed Peele angrily. "We don't want the fellow here! What do you care about what his pater's done?"

Mornington's eyes glinted.

His proposition seemed to his friends to be one more sample of the peculiar contrariness of his nature.

As a matter of fact, Morny's nature was a mixture of good and bad, and while Towny & Co. could thoroughly understand and appreciate the bad, the good was quite beyond their comprehension.

Peele and Gower looked sulky.

There was a sound of wheels in the quadrangle below before Mornington could reply to Peele's last remark.

"Hallo! That's the johnnie arrivin', I suppose!" said Townsend.

"See if it is, 'Erbert," said Mornington.

"Yes, Master Mornington."

'Erbert obediently crossed to the window.

The station hack from Coombe was rolling up the drive in the bright sunshine of the spring afternoon.

'Erbert's eyes fixed upon the two figures that sat in it. The vehicle was open, and he had a full view of them.

One of them was a man of about thirty-five, a handsome, well-set-up gentleman. The other, who sat by his side, was a lad of about fifteen.

It was upon the former that 'Erbert's eyes fixed with a strange intensity of gaze as he looked down from the study window.

He did not speak.

Mornington looked round irritably from the table.

"Well, is it Erroll?" he exclaimed.

"What the dickens is the matter with you, kid? Who is it?"

'Erbert did not speak.

He was leaning out of the open window now, his face pale, his breath coming thick and fast, his eyes fastened upon the handsome man in the vehicle below.

The nuts of the Fourth stared at him.

"What's the matter with the young idiot?" said Townsend.

"'Erbert!" exclaimed Mornington.

Still the fag did not turn his head.

The dandy of the Fourth rose and strode across to the window. He caught 'Erbert by the shoulder.

"You young ass! What's the matter?"

'Erbert looked round at last. Mornington was startled by the pallor of his face.

"'Im!" muttered 'Erbert. "'Im 'ere!"

"What?"

"Oh crumbs!" muttered 'Erbert.

"'Im! What's he doin' 'ere?"

"'He! Who?" exclaimed the astounded Mornington.

He glanced down at the vehicle

below, just as it passed out of sight under the big tree near the porch.

"That must be Erroll and his father," he said.

"'Im!" repeated 'Erbert dazedly.

Mornington shook him angrily.

"Are you dotty?" he exclaimed. "What's the matter with you? Have you ever seen Erroll before?"

"Erroll!" repeated 'Erbert. "The kid? No, I ain't never seed him."

"You know his father?"

"Yes, that ragamuffin is likely to know Captain Erroll!" sneered Townsend.

"Captain Erroll!" said 'Erbert.

"That bloke ain't no Captain Erroll!"

"You know that gentleman?" asked Mornington, still more astonished by the little walf's strange manner.

"Know 'im?" repeated 'Erbert bitterly. "I know 'im, Master Mornington. What's he doin' 'ere?"

"Who is he, then?"

"He's Gentleman Jim!"

"What?"

"Gentleman Jim!" repeated 'Erbert dazedly. "Thief, an' cracksmen, an' forger, an' gaol-bird! What's he doin' 'ere?"

CHAPTER 3.

What 'Erbert Knew!

"GREAT Scott!"

The nuts of the Fourth were all on their feet now.

'Erbert's astounding announcement had fallen like a thunderbolt in the study.

"Is he mad?" asked Peele.

"Must be!" said Townsend, with a stare. "What's he babblin' about?"

'Erbert limped to his chair, and sank into it. He seemed almost overcome. It was easy to see that the handsome, bronzed gentleman who had passed below, had some strange terror for him, Mornington drew a deep breath.

"This beats the band!" he said.

"Towny, old scout, cut downstairs and see whether that's Captain Erroll who's just come."

"Right-ho!" said Towny.

Townsend hurried out of the study, and the other fellows waited for his return with keen curiosity.

'Erbert sat pale and silent, the centre of all glances. The nuts had even forgotten the handsome spread on the table.

Townsend came back in two or three minutes.

"Well?" asked Mornington.

"It's Captain Erroll and his son Kit," said Townsend. "I asked the page—he's just shown them in to the Head."

"I thought so," said Mornington. "It couldn't have been anybody else. Now, Murphy, just explain yourself. That man was Captain Erroll, a Colonial gentleman, who came over from British Honduras to join the Army. What do you mean by calling him names?"

'Erbert gave him a haggard look.

"I don't rightly understand it," he muttered. "Ow he dares to come 'ere, I don't understand. He ain't no captain!"

"You young ass!" said Townsend. "I tell you he's just been announced to the Head as Captain Erroll!"

"I don't care! His name ain't Erroll—leastways, it might be, for all I know, but he wasn't never called that as I know on!" said 'Erbert. "He was called Gentleman Jim!"

"What a merry name!" grinned Peele. "I suppose your precious protegee has gone potty, Morny?"

"Blest if it doesn't look like it," said Mornington, utterly puzzled and perplexed. "You've got to explain, 'Erbert. Do you know you would be flogged if you said anything of the kind outside this study?"

"I've told you the truth, Master Mornington."

"Tell us what you know about the man, if you know anythin'!"

'Erbert drew a sobbing breath.

"I knowed 'im a year ago," he said. "It was arter old Bill Murphy died, an' I was on my uppers. I'd tramped to

London, 'opin' to get a job there, and I used to carry parcels, and doss in a tenement off the Euston Road. You ain't never 'eard of Dirty Dick's dossin'-house, Master Mornington—you ain't never seed sich things—"

"Sounds very cheery," grinned Townsend.

"Go on, kid," said Mornington quietly.

"Well, there was a gang of 'em used to 'ang out at Dirty Dick's," said 'Erbert. "They was pickpockets, and all sorts of rogues, and Gentleman Jim was the worst of the lot. He was down on his luck at that time, I fancy. I used to see him a lot—he was in the swell mob—and when he was flush he would dress like a gentleman—sometimes like an army officer—sometimes like a clergyman. He was awful clever. He took some notice of me, too, and he wanted to teach me to pick pockets—"

"Oh, gad!" said Townsend.

"I never did, though," said 'Erbert, flushing crimson. "I give 'im a wide berth. He said a sharp kid would be useful to 'im, and he told me I'd better make up my mind to it, or he'd see that it was fixed up for me to be sent to chokey, and after that I shouldn't 'ave no choice in the matter."

"My hat!" muttered Mornington.

"I cleared out. I was afeard of 'im," said 'Erbert. "I tramped it out into the country again, and never went near London after that. It was arterwards that you found me on the road, Master Mornington."

"And you say that that gentleman you've just seen is the man you knew as Gentleman Jim?" said Mornington.

"Yes!"

"You feel sure about it?"

"Dead sure, sir!"

"I suppose it's a case of resemblance," said Mornington, rubbing his nose in perplexity. "Of course, it can't be possible!"

"It's true!" said 'Erbert.

"You're making a silly mistake," said Peele. "How could Gentleman

Jim, as you call him, and a captain in the Army, be the same chap?"

"It's the same!" said 'Erbert obstinately. "I could prove it, too, if the man was searched. He's got a scar on his right arm, where he was hurt in a row with the police!"

"Better go down to the Head, and ask him to roll up the johnny's sleeve, an' examine him," chuckled Townsend.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course, it's not possible," said Mornington. "It's a case of resemblance, and you're making an idiotic mistake, kid."

"I ain't!" said 'Erbert.

"You are! You must be. And don't say anything about it outside this study," said Mornington warningly. "You'd get into a fearful row if you did."

"I'll do jest as you tell me Master Mornington," said 'Erbert submissively. "But—but—but——"

"But what, fathead?"

"But oughtn't the 'Ead to be told?" asked 'Erbert anxiously. "That awful villain must be takin' 'im in, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Townsend. "Fancy tellin' the Head a yarn like that!"

"You young ass!" exclaimed Mornington aghast. "Do you know what the Head would do? Flog you, for a cert, for saying such a thing, and perhaps turn you out of Rookwood."

'Erbert's lip quivered.

"But it's true!" he said.

"It isn't true, and it can't be true!" snapped Mornington. "And you're not to say anything about it, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir, jest as you say."

"Don't you fellows jaw about it, either," said Mornington. "It would be rotten to start such a yarn about the new chap, and it would get 'Erbert into a row, too."

"Serve him right for slanderin' a man like that," growled Townsend.

'Erbert started.

"It ain't slander!" he exclaimed fiercely. "I tell you——"

"Oh, dry up! You've told us enough fairy tales," said Townsend disdainfully. "Pass the cake, Peele."

The nuts of the Fourth went on with their tea.

'Erbert sat very silent, and he did not eat any more. Mistaken or not, it was evident that the waif of Rookwood was convinced of the truth of what he had said, and that it weighed on his mind.

Mornington & Co. rejected the idea, however, with disdain and amusement. It seemed too wildly impossible.

But 'Erbert's strange assertion made them very curious to see the new fellow, and see what he was like. And when tea in No. 4 was over, the nuts of the Fourth went downstairs, to see the son of Captain Erroll.

'Erbert remained alone in the study.

He stood at the window, leaning out on the sill, his eyes on the quadrangle below. He was waiting for the captain to come out again. The vehicle was standing outside, so it was evident that Captain Erroll was taking his departure after presenting his son to the Head.

'Erbert had some time to wait. But there was a stir below at last, and the handsome captain came out of the House.

He looked every inch a soldier, with his erect head and well-set up figure. Several juniors in the quadrangle "capped" him most respectfully.

'Erbert's eyes fixed on him intensely.

He watched the captain step into the hack and touch his hat, with a smile, to the Rookwood fellows who saluted him.

The vehicle rolled away.

'Erbert watched it till it disappeared out of the gates of Rookwood. Then he turned from the window, his face white, his breath coming thick.

"It's 'im!" so ran his muttered thoughts. "They don't believe me. I s'pose that ain't likely neither. But it's 'im. He ain't no more a captain than I am! And his name ain't

Erroll. He's Gentleman Jim, the swell mobsman. But—but who has he brought 'ere to put into Rookwood? It's a swindle! It's a game of some sort, and—and the 'Ead ought to be warned."

The fag of the Second left the study with a clouded brow and a heavy heart. He was sure of his knowledge, but he knew that if he stated it he could not possibly find the believers; that severe punishment for making such a statement would be his only reward from the Head. And Mornington had commanded him to be silent.

'Erbert's lips were sealed. But there was deep uneasiness in his heart, and his thoughts dwelt upon the new boy at Rookwood with vague anxiety and suspicion.

CHAPTER 4.

The New Fellow!

"SILVER!"

"Yes, sir?"

Jimmy Silver came up as Mr. Bootles called to him from his study doorway.

The master of the Fourth stepped back into his study. Jimmy Silver entered, and found himself in the presence of the new boy.

"Silver, this is Erroll, the new junior in the Fourth Form," said Mr. Bootles, with a wave of the hand. "Erroll, this is James Silver, the head boy of your Form."

Jimmy held out his hand frankly to the newcomer.

He rather liked Erroll's looks.

Kit Erroll was certainly a handsome fellow. He looked sturdy and strong, too, and Jimmy's keen eye judged that he would be good at games. And there was a frank, open expression on his face that was very prepossessing.

He shook hands with Jimmy very cordially.

"I am sure, Silver, that you will look after Erroll and help him in any way he needs, when I tell you that he is the son of a gallant officer who has distin-

guished himself in the recent fighting of the North-West Frontier of India," said Mr. Bootles solemnly.

"Certainly, sir!"

"Erroll will be placed in Number Two Study with Higgs and Jones minor," pursued Mr. Bootles. "Perhaps you will take him there, Silver, and introduce him to his study-mates."

"With pleasure, sir!"

Mr. Bootles shook hands with his new pupil, whom he evidently liked, and dismissed him with Jimmy Silver. Erroll followed Jimmy from the study.

"Come on!" said Jimmy cheerily. "This way! I'm glad you've been put on the Classical side, Erroll."

"Yes. Why?" said the new junior, with a smile.

"Well, it's the decent side of Rookwood," said Jimmy, laughing. "You're too good a chap to be shoved on the Modern side, if you're anything like your pater."

Erroll started.

"Like my pater?" he repeated.

"Oh, we've heard all about you, you know!" said Jimmy.

Erroll looked at him.

"I don't quite follow," he said. "What have you heard about me?"

"About your pater in India, you know," explained Jimmy. "Isn't your pater the Captain Erroll who was in the papers?"

"Oh, I see!"

"There are some other Colonial chaps here, too," said Jimmy. "You'll like to meet them. There's three, and they're three of the very best."

Erroll paused.

"Colonial?" he repeated.

"Yes. You're a Colonial, I understand," said Jimmy, looking at him. "Didn't your pater come over from Honduras to join the Army?"

"But I have always lived in England," said Erroll. "Captain Erroll was a planter in British Honduras once but I have never been there."

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

"Are any of the fellows you speak of from Honduras?" asked Erroll.

"Oh, no! Pons is from Canada, Conroy from Australia, and Van Ryn from South Africa," said Jimmy. "Nobody at Rookwood from Honduras that I know of. Here you are. This is your study."

Jimmy stopped outside No 2 in the Fourth Form passage.

Mornington came along the passage and joined them.

"This the new kid?" he asked.

"Yes," said Jimmy. "Erroll—Mornington of the Fourth."

"Glad to meet you, Erroll!" said the dandy of the Fourth, in his most agreeable manner. "If you're not fixed up yet, I was goin' to ask you if you'd care to dig in my study. It's a comfy room—about the best in the passage."

Erroll hesitated.

"You're very good," he said. "Mr. Bootles told me I was to go into Number Two."

"It's settled, Mornington," said Jimmy Silver, not at all sorry, either, that it was settled. The new boy looked too decent a fellow, in Jimmy's opinion, to be placed in the society of the black sheep of Rookwood.

Mornington knitted his brows.

The lofty Morny did not like his sovereign being crossed in any way. But he nodded.

"All serene," he said. "If you don't get on with Higgs and Jones you can change out later. That's allowed, you know. And I'd be glad to have you. Will you come into my quarters to supper—half-past eight?"

"Thanks! I will come with pleasure," said Erroll.

"Right-ho, then!"

And Mornington sauntered on.

Morny had scanned Erroll very keenly during the brief talk, and he smiled inwardly as he remembered 'Erbert's extraordinary allegation against Erroll's father.

Erroll certainly did not look like the son of a swell mobsman.

If Morny had been disposed to

attach any importance to 'Erbert's statement, he would have dismissed it now.

Erroll followed Jimmy Silver into No. 2.

Higgs and Jones minor were at tea there, and there was a sound of excited voices. Higgs, the bully of the Fourth, was sianging Jones minor, and Jones minor was retorting in kind. Higgs, being a powerful fellow who could knock Jones into a cocked hat in a scrap, considered that it was Jones' duty to do all the fagging in the study—and Jones did not agree.

Alfred Higgs was threatening to stuff the marmalade down Jones minor's neck, when Jimmy Silver came in with the new boy.

Jones minor had taken a business-like grip on the teapot, and was announcing his intention of "busting" it on Higgs' "napper" if Higgs didn't keep the peace.

Both of them stared at the new boy.

"Hallo! Enjoying yourselves as usual!" said Jimmy Silver. "This is the new chap, Erroll. Bootles has put him in here."

"You're welcome, kid," said Jones minor, civilly enough.

"Oh, you can come in, Erroll, if that's your name," said Higgs ungraciously. "I don't see what Bootles wants to stick you in here for."

Erroll smiled.

"I'm sorry if I'm in the way," he said.

"Oh, don't take any notice of Higgs," said Jones minor. "Higgs can't help being rude."

"Do you want me to wring your neck, Jones?" roared Higgs.

"Do you want me to bust this teapot on your napper?" asked Jones.

"You cheeky little sweep!"

"You bullying lout!"

"Ahem!" said Jimmy Silver.

Erroll laughed. Jones minor and his study-mate evidently led a cat-and-dog life in No. 2, and it was not exactly a happy quarter for the new boy to

take up his abode in. But he took it cheerfully.

"Had your tea, Erroll?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, thanks."

"Well, can I help you? You want to get your things in here," said Jimmy. "I'll lend you a hand sorting out your books and things."

While the study-mates of No. 2 continued to wrangle, Jimmy Silver assisted the new boy to make himself at home.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome came along, and were duly introduced, and Van Ryn and Conroy and Pons, the Colonial Co., joined them. All of them were extremely cordial to the new junior.

It was not usual for a new "kid" to be made so much fuss of in the school, and Erroll probably knew it, for he looked very pleased. Certainly, he had begun very well at Rookwood. And when Jimmy learned that he was a cricketer, he arranged at once for him to join the junior club and join in the Form practice on the morrow.

"Seems a decent sort of chap," Lovell remarked, when the Fistical Four gathered in the end study again for prep.

"I think he is," said Jimmy Silver. "I like his looks, anyway. And I'm rather glad he's not going to dig with Morny. He's too good for that crowd."

And the Co. agreed.

CHAPTER 5.

Knocked Out!

"MORNYS got to be stopped!"

Thus said Alfred Higgs, later in the evening, in the junior Common-room.

Higgs was looking excited and indignant.

The Fistical Four had just come in, after prep. was finished, and they looked inquiringly at Higgs. Higgs' loud voice drew general attention upon him.

"What's the matter now?" yawned Lovell.

"It's disgraceful!" growled Higgs.

"Yes, it is rotten, and no mistake," said Tubby Muffin. "Tain't as if the fellow asked a chap to his little games, you know. Not that I want to go—I wouldn't!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's disgraceful!" hooted Higgs. "Bootles ought to know. He'd be down on it sharp enough. The rotter's got a regular pile of fags and cards in his study, and he don't care twopence about the rules. It ought to be stopped, and if I was captain of the Fourth, I'd put my foot down sharp enough, I can tell you!"

And Higgs bestowed a sneer upon Jimmy Silver.

Erroll, the new boy, was in the room, and he looked round at Higgs. He was invited to supper in Morny's study, and he had accepted the invitation.

"Well, a chap can't very well interfere," said Jimmy Silver. "Morny oughtn't to do it, of course."

"He ought to be made an example of," said Higgs. "If I was captain of the Fourth, as I ought to be—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, you can cackle," said Higgs. "I've a jolly good mind to raid the place, anyway. Fellows who go to Morny's spreads are a disgrace to the school, that's what I think. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it, Erroll!" added Higgs, with a scowl at the new boy.

Erroll flushed.

"I don't quite see what you're getting at," he said. "What's the matter in Mornington's study?"

"Well, he smokes and gambles quite openly," explained Jimmy Silver. "It's not done at Rookwood, you know."

"Oh, I see!"

"Bootles would have him up before the Head if he knew," said Dick Oswald. "But it isn't our business to sneak, I suppose."

"No fear!"

"The Form captain ought to deal

with it," sneered Higgs. "I know jolly well I would, if I was captain of the Fourth!"

"My dear chap, we know what you'd do if you were captain of the Fourth," said Raby. "Give us a rest!"

"Well, I think it's rotten, and ought to be stopped!" roared Higgs. "And another thing is, no chap in my study is going to Morny's gambling parties. You hear me, Erroll?"

Erroll looked at him quietly.

"Let the new chap alone," growled Jimmy Silver. Jimmy had very strong opinions about Mornington's conduct, but he did not want that conduct to be made an excuse by the bully of the Fourth for ragging the new junior. "It's no business of yours, Higgs."

"All this is news to me," said Erroll. "In my case, I shall decide the matter for myself."

Higgs strode towards him, with knitted brows.

When Higgs exercised his bullying proclivities, as a rule, he had public opinion against him, and it was quite a new sensation to him to feel that he was in the right, and standing up for a good cause.

In fact, he was feeling quite a glow of virtuous indignation at the present moment.

Erroll did not seem to be much affected by the Fourth Form bully's black looks.

He faced him quietly, and did not draw back an inch when Higgs thrust a square jaw right into his calm, handsome face.

Jimmy Silver made a step forward.

He did not intend Captain Erroll's son to be bullied by Higgs, so he said determinedly. "If you're spoiling for a row, I'm ready to oblige you."

"Mind your own business!" snapped Higgs. "Now, look here, Erroll, you're in my study and you're not going to disgrace my study, see?"

"I hope I shall not disgrace anybody's study," said Erroll calmly.

"You're not going to Morny's feed!"

"I have accepted his invitation."

"Then you can chuck it. You won't go!"

"I shall please myself about that!"

"Will you?" said Higgs, between his teeth. "Then I'll jolly well pull your nose as a warning of what you'll get if you don't toe the line and do the decent thing."

Higgs reached out for Erroll's nose.

Erroll's hand came up like lightning, and Higgs' wrist was struck, and his big hand knocked aside.

The bully of the Fourth uttered a howl of pain.

Jimmy Silver laughed. It looked as if the new junior could take care of himself after all.

"My hat!" gasped Higgs, nursing his wrist, which was hurt. "You—you cheeky rotter—I'll—I'll——"

Erroll stepped back.

"There's nothing for us to row about," he said pacifically. "I suppose you don't expect me to let you pull my nose, do you?"

"I'll mop up the floor with you," roared Higgs.

"Stand back, Higgs!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

But Higgs rushed on.

His big fists lashed out, and he was so much bigger and heavier than the new boy, that all the fellows in the Common-room expected to see Erroll swept away by his rush.

Instead of which Erroll easily eluded the heavy rush, and hit out.

His knuckles crashed on the side of Alfred Higgs' square jaw, and Higgs staggered, stumbled over, and went down with a crash.

"Well hit!" shouted Lovell.

"Bravo!"

Higgs sprawled on the floor, dazedly.

His hand went to his jaw, which was aching, and he sat up and blinked at the new junior in a stupefied way.

"My—m—my hat!" he gasped.

Erroll smiled.

He stepped forward and bent over Higgs. Higgs made a defensive movement, but all Erroll did was to catch

him by the shoulders and lift him to his feet. The heavy weight of the big Fourth Former seemed nothing to him.

"By gad! Plenty of muscle there!" said Raby.

Higgs blinked at Erroll in a very uncertain way.

"Now, chuck it," said Erroll, quite good-humouredly. "There's nothing to row about."

"You—you—you've knocked me down!" gasped Higgs, as if scarcely able to believe it himself.

"Well, you were trying to knock me down, you know."

Higgs' fists were clenched hard, but he unclenched them again. His jaw was aching, and his head was singing, from that terrific right-hander. It dawned upon Higgs that he had "woke up the wrong passenger," so to speak.

It was not much like Higgs to avoid a "scrap," but he showed no eagerness whatever to proceed with this one.

After a very uncertain look at Erroll, he put his hands in his pockets and walked out of the Common-room.

"Thus are the mighty fallen!" murmured Oswald, and there was a laugh.

Erroll rubbed his knuckles. They had suffered a little from the sharp impact on Higgs' square jaw.

Jones minor gave him a delighted thump on the back.

"Jolly glad you're in my study," he grinned. "You'll be able to keep Higgs in order. Well, I believe you could lick him as easy as falling off a form."

"I hope there won't be any more trouble," said Erroll quietly. "I don't want to get into a fight."

"You won't have to, when you can punch like that," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "Higgs has had enough. He isn't a bad chap in his way. You'll get on with him."

Erroll laughed. But his handsome face became grave, and he drew Jimmy Silver aside a few minutes later.

"What's this about Mornington?" he said in a low voice.

Jimmy looked uncomfortable.

"You might put me up to it, you

see, as I'm a new chap here," said Erroll. "I don't want to do anything that's considered low-down. Of course, it's all new to me here."

"Yes, that's so," said Jimmy slowly. "Well, it's a fact that Morny is a bit of a rotter. Only his own pals join in his little games, and they're not much class."

Erroll nodded.

"And it would be rotten of me to join him," he said, with a smile.

"Well, as you're a new chap, you didn't understand—"

"But I understand now. Only I've accepted his invitation," said Erroll. "Still, I can ask him to excuse me."

"I would if I were you," said Jimmy frankly. "There will be a row sooner or later about Morny's little games, and you don't want to be mixed up in it as one of the gang."

Erroll left the Common-room a little later to go to Morny's study. But it was not, after all, to join in Morny's magnificent supper. It was an awkward position for the new fellow, but it was evident that he was anxious to do the right thing, and if Morny was offended, that could not be helped.

CHAPTER 6.

Morny is Very Ratty!

MORNINGTON'S study was looking very festive.

The table was laid for supper, after prep, and the spread was certainly a very attractive one.

Peele and Gower were looking quite pleased.

Mornington was too careless with money to care whether his study-mates made any contribution to the study feeds, and Peele and Gower were quite willing to leave it all to Morny.

Townsend and Topham had come in, and the great Adolphus Smythe of the Shell had come along with his friends Howard and Tracy.

The nuts of Rookwood were prepared to enjoy that magnificent supper, and a

little game of banker afterwards, with cigarettes, supplied ad lib. by the munificent Morny.

To do Mornington justice, it was a kind and cordial impulse that led him to make much of the new junior. True, he was quite likely to quarrel with him a few hours after making friends with him; Morny's noble temper was very uncertain. But for the present he was all cordiality. Perhaps, too, he had an "axe to grind."

It was always Morny's object to make a party for himself in the Rookwood Fourth which might enable him, sooner or later, to achieve his favourite project of ousting Jimmy Silver from the captaincy. The new boy was likely to be popular, and he would be a valuable recruit.

"Come in!" sang out Mornington cheerily, as there was a tap at the study door.

Erroll came in.

The nuts greeted him civilly. Peele and Gower felt quite friendly towards him now that Morny's plan of "planting" him on them in the study had been nipped in the bud.

"Just in time," said Mornington, with a smile. "Here's your chair, Erroll."

Erroll stepped just within the doorway.

There was a slight flush in his cheeks, but his manner was quite firm.

Moreover, he had seen very clearly that any fellow who joined in the shady practices in Morny's study was certain to be unpopular, and Erroll probably did not choose to be unpopular in his Form on Morny's account.

"I'm sorry, Mornington," he said quietly. "I've only looked in to ask you to excuse me. I find I can't come. Thank you very much all the same."

Morny's face changed.

The nuts exchanged a grin, and Smythe of the Shell put up an eye-glass to survey the new boy.

Erroll stepped back to the doorway and would have gone. But Mornington, with a glitter in his eyes, strode forward.

"Hold on a minute!" he rapped out.

Erroll stopped.

"You can't come to supper?" asked Mornington.

"No."

"Another engagement?" sneered Mornington.

"I shouldn't be likely to have another engagement after accepting your invitation, Mornington."

"No, I suppose not. But if you've not got another engagement, why can't you come?"

"I've asked you to excuse me."

"You mean you don't want to come?"

Erroll did not reply.

"What the dickens does it matter?" yawned Smythe of the Shell. "Let's get on with the merry supper, dear boy."

"Will you answer me, Erroll?"

"I'll answer you if you wish," said Erroll. "I don't want to come, if you prefer me to put it like that."

"By gad!" murmured Townsend.

"You've thrown over my invitation?" said Mornington. "I suppose I needn't ask the reason. Jimmy Silver's been gettin' at you."

"I'd rather not say anything more."

"You needn't. It was Jimmy Silver, of course——"

"Not at all! I found that smoking and gambling goes on in this study, if you want to know, and I don't want to join in it," said Erroll, with a flash in his eyes. "You have forced me to speak out, Mornington. Good-evening!"

He stepped out into the passage.

"You insultin' cad!" shouted Mornington furiously, all the more enraged by the chuckles of his supper-party.

Erroll did not reply. He let the epithet pass unanswered. Without a word he walked away down the passage to his own study.

Peele closed the door.

"Now let's get on," he said. "We don't want the cheeky cad here, anyway."

"Yaas, let him go an' eat coke," said Adolphus Smythe. "He's not our sort, anyway."

Mornington did not speak. His face was pale with anger and chagrin.

Smythe & Co. exchanged smiles, not at all displeased by the rebuff the lordly Morny had received. In the opinion of his friends, it did Morny good to be taken down a peg or two.

The nuts of Rockwood sat down to the table, but Mornington did not join them. He was not thinking of supper now.

"Come on, Morny!" grinned Peele.

"The cheeky cad!" burst out Mornington. "After I'd taken the trouble to invite him to supper—a new fellow that nobody knows anythin' about. The cheeky hound!"

"You've changed your opinion of him rather suddenly!" chuckled Gower. "Don't you want him to share the study now, Morny?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington gritted his teeth.

The rebuff from the new junior had roused all the bitterness and evil in his nature. There was no cordiality in his breast now.

He had been prepared to be kind to Captain Erroll's son in a somewhat lofty and patronising way. His kindness, as he regarded it, had been thrown back in his teeth by the ungrateful recipient.

He made a step towards the door, his brow black and his eyes burning.

"Better go slow, old scout!" grinned Peele. "You can't lick him, if that's what you're thinkin' of."

"How do you know I can't?" demanded Mornington fiercely.

"He's knocked Higgs out already," said Peele coolly. "Higgy picked a row with him in the Common-room, and Erroll mopped him up, without getting a touch. He's a regular prize-fighter."

"By gad! He must be a corker, if he's handled Higgs," remarked Smythe. "I'd let him alone, Morny. Treat him with contempt."

Mornington gave the nuts a bitter look.

If he had thought of "licking" the new boy, the news that Erroll had proved more than a match for Higgs

changed his intentions. Morny would not have made much of a show against a fellow who could handle the bully of the Fourth.

"There's other ways of puttin' a cheeky cad in his place," said Mornington. "By gad! Considerin' the way I treated him—refusin' to hear a word against him, too——"

Peele whistled.

"Better let that drop," he said. "Murphy was talkin' out of his hat. You said so yourself, before you got your knife into Erroll."

"How do we know there's nothin' in it?" said Mornington, with a sneer. "The fellow comes from goodness knows where. And Murphy said he was quite certain of it."

"Oh, rats!"

"Aren't you goin' to have supper?" asked Gower, as Mornington opened the door.

"No."

The dandy of the Fourth left the study. The nuts smiled at one another.

"Beautiful manners, I don't think!" grinned Adolphus Smythe. "Morny's a delightful pal—sometimes. Anyway, here's the supper."

And the nuts chuckled and set to work on the supper, not particularly displeased by the absence of their host.

CHAPTER 7.

A Sudden Blow!

MORNINGTON strode down the passage with knitted brows.

It was in accordance with Morny's nature that as soon as he found a cause of offence in the new boy he should think at once of the allegation 'Erbert had made.

Mornington himself had laughed it to scorn. But now that he felt a bitter dislike for the new boy, there was a difference. His thoughts were coloured by his angry feelings. Suppose the story was true! It seemed impossible—Morny had said that it was impossible. But he

would have given a wedge of his plentiful banknotes for it to be true now.

At all events, he was going to put it to the test—and that was easy enough. And if it was true—if only there was something in it—it would be in his power to make Erroll pay dearly for his rebuff.

Jimmy Silver was in the doorway of No. 2 Study, chatting with Erroll, who sat on the table within. Higgs and Jones minor were still downstairs.

Jimmy glanced curiously at Mornington's white, furious face.

It was evident that Morny's brief kindness to the new junior was over, and that a "row" was coming.

Mornington brushed past him rudely into the study.

Erroll's cheery face clouded a little at the sight of him. He did not want trouble with Mornington.

"Well, what is it?" he asked quietly.

Mornington looked at him fixedly. He had resolved to put the question to the test—to take Erroll so suddenly by surprise that he could not possibly be on his guard. But the handsome, candid face of the new junior almost changed his purpose. It seemed more than ever impossible that 'Erbert could have had the slightest grounds for his statement.

But Mornington went through with it. There was a chance. Anyway, he was going to see whether there was a chance that what he hoped was true.

"Just a word or two," he said, with a sneer. "I understand that you're entered on the school books in the name of Erroll."

Erroll gave him a startled look.

"Yes, that is my name," he said.

"Is it your name?" said Mornington.

There was a dead pause.

Mornington's eyes gleamed, and his heart beat faster with savage satisfaction. For there was no mistaking the sudden light of fear that leaped into the dark eyes of the new junior. It was there only for a moment, but Mornington had seen it, and he knew!

Erroll recovered himself instantly.

"What do you mean?" he asked

quietly. "You are well aware that my name is Erroll, I suppose?"

"What the merry dickens are you getting at, Mornington?" asked Jimmy Silver, in utter amazement.

Mornington did not heed him. His eyes were fixed intently upon Kit Erroll's face.

"Your name is Erroll?" His tone was mocking now. "And your father's name is Erroll—what?"

"You know it is!"

"Then why is he called Gentleman Jim?"

The blow was so sudden that Erroll could not be on his guard. If there was guilt in his breast, he could not avoid showing it then. Mornington had expected it, but he had hardly expected the result that actually followed.

Erroll stared at him blankly, his face growing deadly white, and a hunted, almost wild look creeping into his eyes. His colourless lips moved, but no sound came; it seemed as if he could not speak.

Mornington laughed aloud, in vaunting triumph. He was quite sure of his victim now.

Jimmy Silver looked from one to the other in astonishment.

"What's the matter, Erroll?" he exclaimed. "You look as if you're going to faint. What's wrong?"

Erroll made an effort to recover himself.

"Nothing!" he panted. "But—but —"

Mornington laughed again.

"I'll tell you what's wrong," he cried: "That fellow, who's come here as the son of Captain Erroll, is the son of a cracksmen, a forger, and a thief—a swell mobsmen called Gentleman Jim, and known to the police!"

"Are you mad?" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Look at him!"

Jimmy Silver looked blankly at Erroll. But the latter had recovered now. He smiled contemptuously. The colour had come back into his face, and his eyes had an amused glimmer in them. He

laughed as he met Jimmy's look of consternation.

"Is this a game?" he asked. "Some sort of little joke you play off on a new kid?"

"It's true!" shouted Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You saw how he looked, Silver? You saw him turn white as chalk——"

"I was startled for a minute," said Erroll coolly. "It's a rather rotten joke to spring on a fellow suddenly. But if you are serious in what you say, Mornington, I can only say that you're out of your senses. Will you oblige me by getting out of my study?"

Mornington ground his teeth.

"So you're going to deny it now—after giving yourself away as you did. You know I can't prove it."

Erroll laughed.

"I think you'd find it difficult to prove a fairy tale like that," he smiled. "But I've had enough of it, Mornington. I don't like jokes of that kind, and I warn you I shall cut up rusty if you don't chuck it!"

"I should jolly well say so!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver warmly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Mornington."

"I tell you it's true! That fellow isn't the son of an Army captain!" yelled Mornington furiously. "He's the son of a thief and a cracksman——"

Mornington got no further.

Erroll made a stride towards him, and the dandy of the Fourth was grasped and thrown bodily through the study doorway.

"That's my answer to you!" the new boy said, between his teeth.

"A jolly good answer, too," said Jimmy Silver. "You asked for it, Morny."

Mornington picked himself up slowly. He gave the new junior a look of concentrated hatred, and limped away. Kit Erroll had made a bitter enemy in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver gave Erroll a friendly nod, and went on to his own study in a

thoughtful mood. He was wondering. Why had Erroll turned so white? Why had his eyes had that strange look when Mornington made his ridiculous accusation? It couldn't be true, of course. It was absurd! Yet why had Erroll looked like that?

But Jimmy Silver drove the creeping doubt from his mind. He would not think of it. Yet, in spite of himself, it was a long time before he could forget that strange, hunted look on the face of the handsome junior whom Mornington had accused of being the son of Gentleman Jim.

CHAPTER 8.

Bowled!

"WELL hit!"

"Bravo, Erroll!"

The new boy at Rookwood smiled, as the shouts of the Classical juniors rang round Little Side.

Erroll of the Fourth was at the wickets, and he was getting the bowling from no less a person than Jimmy Silver, captain of the Fourth, and junior cricket captain of Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver was the champion junior bowler; indeed, there were a good many senior batsmen at Rookwood who would have found it difficult to keep their "sticks" up against Jimmy at his best.

Tommy Dodd of the Modern Fourth was practically the only junior bat who could play Jimmy Silver's bowling with any degree of success.

And here was Erroll, the new "kid," standing up to Jimmy's best bowling, and never turning a hair.

It was only practice, but it meant a good deal to Erroll. For Jimmy had already spotted his form as a cricketer, and was giving him a final trial now, with the idea of playing him in the Classical versus Modern match on Saturday.

There was no doubt that Erroll was satisfactory.

Though it was Jimmy's own bowling

that he was defeating, Jimmy was brimming with delight. The new fellow was a rod in pickle for the Moderns, and that was all Jimmy Silver cared about.

He sent down the ball again, in his best style, and the crowd of Classical juniors round the field watched it breathlessly. It was an unusual entertainment to see a junior bat standing up to Jimmy Silver in this way.

"That'll be a wide," said Mornington of the Fourth, shrugging his shoulders.

But Mornny was wrong; it wasn't a "wide." It broke in at an utterly unexpected angle, and if Erroll had not been an exceedingly wideawake batsman, he would have been caught napping. As it was, he just stopped it.

"Good man!" shouted Lovell.

Mornington bit his lip.

Mornny prided himself upon knowing all about cricket, and certainly he was a first-rate player when he chose. As a bowler, he was very nearly the equal of Jimmy Silver, and, but for his usual slackness and his uncertain temper, he would have been assured of a place in the junior eleven.

"Not a wide, after all," grinned Peele.

"Not exactly," smiled Gower.

"I say, that new fellow can bat!" said Townsend, watching Mornington's face as he spoke, and grinning as it clouded angrily.

The nuts of the Fourth were very friendly with the wealthy Mornington, but it amused them to play on his sulky and passionate temper. They knew that he had a bitter dislike for the new boy; Mornny was a fellow who disliked very easily. It was sufficient to cross his lofty will in the smallest way to earn his hatred.

"Yes, he can bat," smiled Peele. "A regular corker, by Jove! Silver will have to shove him in the eleven."

"Even Silver can't touch his wicket," said Topham, taking up the tale, "and Silver's our champion bowler."

"Best in the Fourth!" said Townsend, with a nod.

Mornington gave his comrades a bitter look.

"Jimmy Silver can't touch me at bowlin', and you know it!" he snapped savagely.

"Oh, draw it mild, Mornny!" protested Townsend.

"Mornny's good, when he hasn't been smokin' too much," grinned Peele. "But when he has——"

"Hallo! Where are you goin', Mornny?" called out Gower, as the dandy of the Fourth stepped over the rope.

Mornington did not reply.

He went on the pitch towards Jimmy Silver, who had just caught the ball as it was tossed back by Conroy.

Jimmy looked at him.

"Clear off the pitch, Mornington!" he said. "Don't interrupt the practice."

"Off, there!" shouted Lovell.

"Get off, Mornington!" called out Newcome.

The dandy of the Fourth did not heed. He came on towards Jimmy Silver.

"You can't touch that fellow's wicket," he said.

"Well, I'm trying," said Jimmy good-humouredly. "You're in the way, Mornington."

"Let me try."

"Oh, I see!"

Jimmy hesitated.

"You know I can do it, and you don't want to let the fellows see it done," sneered Mornington.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" snapped Jimmy Silver. "You're interrupting the practice. Still, you can try if you like. Catch!"

He tossed the ball to Mornington, who caught it neatly enough with one hand, and went to the bowling-crease.

"Look here, we haven't come out to see Mornny playing the giddy ox!" growled Raby. "This is cricket!"

"Give him a chance," said Jimmy Silver. "After all, he's a good bowler."

"When he's fit!" snapped Lovell.

"How often's that?"

"Well, he looks fit enough now."

Erroll glanced along the pitch, and stood ready. He had not seen Mornington bowl, but he could see that the elegant Classical knew something of it, from his attitude.

All eyes were on Mornington now.

There was a bitter look on Mornny's handsome, sulky face. He meant to take the new junior's wicket somehow. He would have given a term's pocket-money to down the new batsman, after Jimmy Silver had failed to do so.

He disliked Erroll bitterly, but there was more than that in it. The junior team was weak in bowlers, and an exhibition of fine form might compel Jimmy Silver to put his old enemy in the Rookwood team, against his will. At least, Mornny hoped so.

He retreated, ball in hand, with a good grip on it, and took a little run.

"Now look out for fireworks!"

Townsend grinned to his companions, and there was a chuckle from the nuts. They looked on with the cheery anticipation of seeing the lofty Mornny make an ass of himself.

But Mornny's dear friends were disappointed.

The ball went down like a six-inch shell, and Erroll played it; but it seemed to curl round the ready bat, with a twist on it that only a first-class bowler could have put there.

Crash!

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Bowled!" gasped Lovell.

There was a shout.

"Well bowled, Mornny! Good man!"

"Bravo!"

Mornington was not popular in his Form, but the Rookwood juniors were never slow to recognise real merit at their favourite game.

"By gad, he's done it!" said Townsend. "Clean bowled, by thunder! Bravo, Mornny!"

Mornington glanced round him, his eyes gleaming. With a lofty and supercilious look, he walked off the pitch, and joined his congratulating friends. He did not want to bowl again. He

might not have had such luck a second time. He preferred to retire with his triumph intact. Like Cæsar of old, he had come, and seen, and conquered.

Oswald fielded the ball, and the cricket practice went on. Jimmy Silver downed Erroll's wicket at last. But there was no doubt that the honours were with Mornny, and Jimmy, when he left the ground, could not help thinking what a pity it was that Mornny was such a howling cad that it was impossible to play him in the Rookwood Eleven.

CHAPTER 9.

Accused!

THE Fistical Four had a guest to tea in the end study after the cricket practice.

It was Erroll, the new fellow in the Classical Fourth.

All the four—Jimmy, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—had taken a liking to the handsome junior.

Erroll was a quiet and somewhat reserved fellow; kind and good-natured, but of a more quiet and thoughtful turn than most of the Fourth. In some ways he seemed to have an old head on young shoulders.

Jimmy Silver had wondered once or twice whether there had been any trouble in Erroll's life, to bring that thoughtful cast to his handsome face.

If that was the case, Erroll never referred to it. He never, in fact, spoke about himself at all.

But the juniors knew enough of him for their own satisfaction. Captain Erroll's name was enough to recommend his son.

Erroll was very cheery over tea in the end study, however. Jimmy had told him that he was to play in Saturday's match. It was a distinction to be played in a match after being only two or three weeks at Rookwood.

The cheery chat round the study table was interrupted, as Mornington of the Fourth looked in.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver. "Anything wanted?"

"Only a word with you," said Mornington.

"Two if you like."

"About Saturday's match——"

Jimmy Silver gave a comical groan.

"Are you beginning that again?" he said. "Do you want me to explain all the reasons why I won't play you any more for Rookwood?"

"You needn't. I know them. Jealousy and things like that," said Mornington coolly.

"You silly fathead!" cried Lovell.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, let it go at that!" he said.

"It saves argument."

"I hear you're putting a new man into the eleven," said Mornington.

"I'm trying Selwyn of the Shell," said Jimmy.

"And that fellow?"

"If you mean Erroll, by 'that fellow,' Morny, you're right. Erroll is a bat we can't leave out. I expect he will play in school matches this season, too, if you specially want to know."

Mornington smiled sardonically.

"I suppose I can't ask you to put in a better bowler than yourself, Silver, as bowling's your line. It wouldn't do for me to rob you of all the limelight."

"You're not a better bowler than I am—not so good," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "You did better to-day, though, that's a fact."

"But if you want to make changes in the team, and you won't put me in, there are plenty of other fellows, better than that outsider."

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

"That may be a special Mornington brand of manners," he remarked, "but you're insulting my guest. Will you get out on your feet or your neck?"

Mornington's lip curled.

"As a member of the club, if not of the team, I protest against that chap being in the eleven," he said.

Jimmy Silver stared at him.

"You utter ass!" he exclaimed. "And

why? Why shouldn't Erroll be in the eleven if he's considered fit?"

"I don't say he's not a good bat. It's a question of character."

"Got anything to say against Erroll's character?"

"Yes. The son of a thief and a forger is not a suitable member of the Rookwood junior eleven, in my opinion."

Mornington spoke slowly and very distinctly.

There was a breathless hush in the study. Erroll rose quietly to his feet. His handsome face had paled a little.

Jimmy pushed him back.

"Wait a minute, Erroll, before you smash the insulting cad," he said. "Mornington, we'll have this out. You've said something of the sort before, and I thought you were out of your senses. Are you quite mad, or what do you mean?"

"I mean what I say. You know young Murphy—'Erbert of the Second Form

—"

"Well?"

"You know he was mixed up with all kinds of rotters before I brought him to Rookwood."

"I know," said Jimmy, his angry brow relaxing a little. Cad as Morny was, it had been an act of genuine kindness, his rescue of poor little 'Erbert from poverty and want.

"'Erbert saw Captain Erroll when he brought this fellow to the school," said Mornington coolly. "He recognised him—not as an Army captain, but as a cracksmán, well-known as Gentleman Jim. That fellow is the son of a criminal who is passing himself off as an Army captain!"

"'Erbert said so?" exclaimed Jimmy in amazement.

"He did! He will tell you so if you like."

"He must be off his rocker!"

"Mad as a hatter!" said Lovell.

"Don't you worry, Erroll, we know it's all rot."

Erroll smiled.

"I hardly think you'd believe it," he said.

"Of course not!"

"You shrieking ass, Morny," said Newcome. "We know all about Captain Erroll. His name was in the papers some months ago. He was a planter in Honduras before he joined the Army."

"Oh, there's a real Captain Erroll, I don't doubt," sneered Mornington. "He was invalided out of the Army, I know that, too. I dare say he's gone back to America, and that's why Gentleman Jim borrowed his name."

"I don't want to make a row in your study, Jimmy Silver," said Erroll quietly. "But I can't stand this!"

"I don't expect you to," said Jimmy. "My advice is, take that slandering rotter by the neck, and rub his lying nose in the carpet!"

Jimmy stood aside.

Erroll stepped towards Mornington, who faced him with a sneering, mocking smile.

"Will you take back what you've said, Mornington?"

"I'm not likely to take back the truth."

"Then you'll put up your hands!"

"Willingly."

Erroll pushed back his cuffs. But the dandy of the Fourth stepped out into the passage.

"Not here!" he said. "I'll be ready for you in the gym in ten minutes."

Jimmy Silver's eyes blazed.

"You mean you want to make what you've just said the talk of the school!" he exclaimed.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"We usually have our little rows in the gym, don't we?" he sneered. "I'll wait there for the merry son and heir of Gentleman Jim!"

He walked down the passage with a laugh. Erroll hesitated a few moments and then sat down to the tea-table again. His face was quite calm, but the Fistical Four were all looking very uncomfortable. They did not believe a syllable of Mornington's wild accusation, but it left an unpleasant taste in the mouth, as it were.

When they had finished tea, the

Fistical Four marched down to the gym with Erroll, with a very sincere hope that he would give the dandy of the Fourth the licking of his life.

CHAPTER 10.

Too Much for Mornington!

THERE was a crowd in the gym when Erroll arrived there with Jimmy Silver & Co.

Moderns as well as Classicals had turned up in force.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows as he noted it.

He knew that Mornington and his friends had spread the news of the coming fight far and wide, in order that the cause of the conflict should be well known and discussed.

All eyes were turned on Erroll.

Morny's accusation was known to all the fellows—Morny & Co. had taken care of that.

True, most of the juniors regarded it as utterly wild and unfounded.

Most of them had seen Captain Erroll when he brought his son to the school, and the suggestion that the military-looking gentleman was a member of the "swell mob" masquerading as an Army captain seemed wildly absurd.

The suggestion, in fact, had done Morny no good. It made the fellows look upon him as a reckless slanderer, as a fellow who would stop at nothing to injure a person he chose to dislike.

At the same time, it made Erroll an object of general interest and scrutiny.

The new junior did not seem to observe it.

He walked with his head erect, and his face perfectly calm.

Assuredly he did not look like a fellow with a guilty conscience, who had entered the school under false pretences.

Morny regarded him with a sardonic smile. He was probably the only fellow present who believed in the strange story of "Gentleman Jim." Even Townsend and the rest of the nuts,

though they did not like Erroll, shook their heads over it—though they backed up Mornington in public.

Townsend & Co. welcomed the story simply because Erroll was a friend of the Fistical Four, and so anything against Erroll was, to a certain extent, against their old foes of the end study.

But their private opinion was that Erbert of the Second was a little ass, who had made a ludicrous mistake; and that Mornington was a hot-headed duffer who had taken up an improbable story for his own purposes, probably without even believing it himself.

Mornington was already in his shirt-sleeves, and was putting on the gloves.

Jimmy Silver, as Erroll's second, helped him off with his jacket, and brought the boxing-gloves.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell had appointed himself timekeeper, with a big gold watch in his hand for the purpose. The nuts approved of Adolphus as a timekeeper, but Jimmy Silver looked at him a little suspiciously. Smythe was hand-in-glove with Mornington, and Jimmy was not quite sure of fair play for his man.

"Look here, we don't want Smythe to keep time," said Jimmy directly. "Smythey don't know anything about boxing, anyway."

"By gad!" said Adolphus. "You cheeky fag, I suppose I know the rules!"

"We don't want a pal of either party," said Jimmy. "One of the Modern chaps will keep time—Tommy Dodd, for instance."

"I suggest Smythe," said Townsend. "I'm Morny's second, and I insist."

"It's all right," said Erroll. "What does it matter?"

"Well, I don't trust Smythe," said Jimmy.

"Oh, by gad!" said Adolphus.

"Never mind, let it go!"

"Oh, all right!" said Jimmy.

But he was dissatisfied.

It was not long, either, before there was good reason for Jimmy's dissatisfaction.

The two juniors stepped into the ring,

the crowd of fellows thickening round them. Erroll was sturdy and strong, and looked like a fighting-man. And Mornington was well known to be a boxer, and to have any amount of pluck and determination, as well as a savage temper. It was likely to be a "mill" of uncommon interest.

"Time!" yawned Smythe.

Mornington opened with a fierce attack, pressing the fighting from the start.

Probably the dandy of the Fourth intended to repeat the "veni, vedi, vici" performance on the cricket-field, in a new line.

It looked for a time as if he would succeed, too.

Erroll's guard was good, but he gave ground before the impetuous attack, and he was driven right round the ring, amid sneering grins from the nuts.

"Bravo, Morny!" chirruped Townsend.

Mornington appeared to be getting it all his own way—though it was true that few of his savage drives actually reached his adversary.

"How long are these rounds?" demanded Jimmy Silver suddenly.

"Two minutes!" yawned Adolphus.

"This one has lasted two minutes and a half!"

"Afraid of your man gettin' knocked out?" jeered Adolphus.

"Fair play!"

"Yes, fair play, you spalpeen!" exclaimed Flynn. "Sure, it's nearly three minutes intirely!"

"I'm keepin' time," remarked Adolphus.

"Look here——"

"Time!"

Even Adolphus was driven to call time at last. The first round was over. Jimmy Silver looked rather anxiously at Erroll, as he made a knee for him.

Erroll met his glance with a quiet smile.

"You let him walk round you," muttered Jimmy.

"I was taking his measure," said Erroll.

"Oh!"

"I think the next round will surprise him a little. Smythe will call time a little more quickly, I fancy."

"Oh, good!"

"Time!" came the call.

And the combatants stepped up to the line again.

Mornington's face was full of confidence now.

He felt that the combat was in his hands. He pressed the fighting again, fully determined to finish in that round if possible. But a surprise was awaiting the dandy of the Fourth.

This time Erroll did not recede a step.

He stood like a rock, and Morny, to his surprise and chagrin, found that he could not move him. Neither did his blows penetrate Erroll's guard. The dandy of the Fourth expended his wind and strength in a savage attack that had no more effect than a wave dashing on a cliff.

And then suddenly, as Morny paused, panting, Erroll took up the attack.

He came on like lightning, his left and right lashing out with drives that Morny could not stop.

Crash!

The dandy of the Fourth went down in a heap. He was up again in a second, springing like a tiger at the new junior.

But Erroll had "woke up" now with a vengeance. He attacked hard and fast, and Morny's guard seemed nowhere. Blow after blow rained in Morny's face and chest, and he staggered blindly round the ring.

"Time!" rapped out Smythe.

It was not quite the two minutes now. But the call of time came very opportunely for Mornington. Another second or two, and he would have been knocked spinning.

Erroll dropped his hands and stepped back.

And Jimmy Silver patted him on the shoulder, with a grin.

"Good man!" he said.

Mornington almost collapsed on Townsend's knee.

He was breathing in short, panting

gasps, and his face was dark with fury. But for the gloves, Morny's handsome face would have been terribly marked by the punishment he had received. As it was, he was hurt badly enough.

"By gad!" murmured Townsend.

"You've woke up the wrong passenger, Morny. You were lookin' for a sheep an' you found a tiger, by gad!"

"I'll beat him yet!" panted Mornington.

"I hope you will."

"Do you think I can't, you fool?"

Townsend shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing.

"How long are these rests?" asked Lovell sarcastically, when a couple of minutes had elapsed. Smythe was backing up his nutty pall all he could, with a lofty disregard for the rules of fair play.

"One minute!"

"Isn't that a jolly long minute?"

"I'm keepin' time."

"Wake me up when you start again," remarked Tommy Dodd; and there was a laugh.

"Time!" said Smythe reluctantly.

Mornington staggered into the ring.

Every fellow present could see that he was already beaten, but Morny would not admit it to himself. So long as he could stand, he would fight.

Erroll stepped up to him quietly.

The third round was a furious one. Morny's fury seemed to give him a chance for a moment or two, and Erroll receded a few paces. Once again Mornington hoped. But his hope was short-lived.

As he pressed on fiercely, Erroll met him with a sharp attack, and he was knocked right and left. Gamely the dandy of the Fourth stood up to that whirlwind attack. But he went back and back, his guard feeble and failing, till a heavy drive fairly on the chin carried him off his feet, and he crashed on the floor.

Smythe stared down at him blankly.

"Count!" yelled Raby.

"Count, you spoofer!"

Adolphus Smythe began to count. He

counted with as much slowness as he could put into it.

"One, two three"—a pause—"four, five, six"—another long pause—"seven, eight, nine"—a still longer pause—"out!"

Smythe might have counted a hundred, as a matter of fact. Mornington was unable to get on his feet.

"Our man wins!" grinned Lovell.

Erroll peeled off his gloves, and Jimmy Silver helped him on with his jacket. The new junior had been hardly touched.

Townsend and Topham helped Mornington up. The dandy of the Fourth, breathing quick and hard, leaned on them heavily. His eyes burned as they were turned upon Erroll.

The latter hesitated a few moments, and then came towards Mornington. He held out his hand.

"We've had it out," he said. "I've been lucky. That's all. There's my fist, if you choose to take it, Mornington."

"Good man!" said Tommy Dodd approvingly.

Mornington did not take the new junior's hand. He fixed his eyes upon him, with bitter hatred in his look.

"Shake hands, Morny!" shouted a dozen voices.

"Play up! Don't be a cad!"

Mornington's lip curled.

"I don't shake hands with the sons of forgers and crackmen!" he said very distinctly.

"You rotten cad!" shouted Jimmy Silver. "Are you still keeping that up?"

"I'm keepin' it up till that impostor is shown up and turned out of Rookwood!" hissed Mornington.

"Shame!"

Mornington cast a fierce glance round at the faces of the Rookwood fellows. He read condemnation and disgust in almost every face.

"Shame!"

Mornington staggered away, leaning heavily on Townsend's arm. The shout followed him.

"Shame!"

The popularity of the dandy of the Fourth had never been at so low an ebb. Even some of the nuts looked as disgusted as the rest. Mornington left the gym with an almost livid face.

Jimmy Silver squeezed Erroll's arm as they followed.

"Don't mind him," he said. "He's ratty, and can't get over his licking. Nobody takes any notice of his silly slanders."

Erroll nodded. Jimmy Silver was right enough. A loud cheer followed Erroll as he left the gym with the captain of the Fourth. There was no doubt as to the opinion of the Rookwood fellows between Erroll and his enemy.

CHAPTER 11.

King Cricket!

"FEELING fit?"

Jimmy Silver asked that question in cheery tones as he clapped Erroll on the shoulder in the quad after morning lessons on Saturday.

Erroll looked round quickly.

He was standing under one of the old beeches, reading a letter, with a dark and thoughtful expression on his face. He thrust the letter into his pocket, and gave the captain of the Fourth a smile.

"Fit as a fiddle!" he said.

"We're playing the Moderns this afternoon, you know," said Jimmy.

"Yes, I'm looking forward to it. It's jolly decent of you to put me in the team when I've been such a short time here."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"My dear chap, I shouldn't have put you in if you hadn't been worth your place. You can bet your boots on that!"

"Yes, I know," assented Erroll. "I hear that Mornington has been raising the question in the club."

"He tried to," said Jimmy, frowning. "That rotten yarn of his again. Nobody listened to him—even his own

friends didn't back him up. Morny's in a minority of one against you."

"I wish the fellow wouldn't pick on me in this way."

"You've ruffled his lordly feathers the wrong way, I suppose," said Jimmy. "Morny hates a fellow without much trouble. He hates me, for instance, and I'm rather a nice chap."

"Yes," said Erroll, laughing. "But it's rotten. I'd have preferred to be friends with everybody here."

"Not so jolly easy. There's all sorts in a school, same as everywhere else. Right 'uns and wrong 'uns," said Jimmy. "Morny happens to be a wrong 'un. Still, it is queer the way he sticks to that idiotic yarn. If he doesn't stop it, you'd be quite justified in appealing to the Head to shut him up."

"I shan't do that!" said Erroll quickly. "Wouldn't that come under the head of sneaking?"

"Not under the circs. If he said anything against my father I'd hammer him black-and-blue, and if he didn't stop then, I'd see he was stopped somehow. He's making himself awfully unpopular by it. The queer thing is, that Morny seems to believe it himself."

"You think he does?" asked Erroll, with a curious look at Jimmy Silver.

"Well, yes; but it's only because it's a handle against you, of course. A chap can make himself believe what he wants to believe. And it's jolly queer about young 'Erbert, too."

"I've seen that kid. He looks a decent sort."

"He's rough and ready, but he's one of the best," said Jimmy. "Morny got the yarn from him in the first place. 'Erbert believes it, the young ass! I've talked to him about it, and told him it's all rot. He won't argue, but I can see he's got it fixed in his silly head."

"Who is the kid? He's a queer little beggar to be here."

"A poor little beggar found starving on the road," explained Jimmy. "Morny is a queer fish. He's got good points. He picked him up, brought him

home in a motor-car, fed him and dressed him, and all that, persuaded the Head to admit him to the school, and got his guardian to pay the fees. It was awfully decent of Mornington, and, in fact, it fairly bowled us over. We never expected anything of the kind from him. It makes it all the more the pity he's such a howling rotter in other ways."

"You don't think Mornington put the story into the kid's head?"

"Oh, no," said Jimmy Silver at once. "The fact is, Erroll, your pater must resemble that cheery Gentleman Jim in looks. Such things do happen. It's a case of resemblance, and led 'Erbert to make the mistake. Still, he's a silly little idiot to think such a thing, and I've talked to him pretty plainly about it. He really ought to be licked!"

"Oh, no, no!" said Erroll quickly. Jimmy laughed.

"Mornington seems a good cricketer," said Erroll. "I hear that he thinks he ought to have the place you've given me. Why doesn't he play?"

"Because he's such a worm. We've tried him in the footer, and he would kick the ball through his own goal if he was in a nasty temper. You can't play a chap like that."

"My hat! No."

"Don't mind him," said Jimmy Silver. "If he keeps harping on that silly story about you he'll get a Form ragging next, and then he may ring off!"

"I'd rather make friends with him."

"Now much chance of that. You can't be friends with Morny unless you kow-tow to him. Look at his pals! They were all grinning when you licked him the other day in the gym. That's the kind of friendship he inspires. They were glad to see him taken down a peg, and a fellow can't quite blame them, either—he rides roughshod over them."

Erroll nodded, and they went in to dinner as the bell rang.

After dinner the Classical juniors streamed down to the cricket ground,

It was a sunny afternoon, and ideal weather for cricket. Tommy Dodd and the Moderns came down in great force.

Mornington & Co. were there also.

Morny was looking restive and moody.

The unpopularity he had brought upon himself by his persecution of the new junior was bitter enough to him.

His aim was to make himself popular, if he could, with a view of supplanting Jimmy Silver in the leadership of the Rookwood juniors. He had certainly gone the worst way to work to effect that object.

But he was far too self-willed and obstinate to recede a step. Bitterness and malice urged him on; though, as he firmly believed his accusation against Erroll, there was perhaps a vague sense of duty mixed up with his motives to a certain extent.

The Classics were fielding, and Erroll came into the field with the rest of the team, looking very fit in his flannels.

Mornington's eyes gleamed as he looked at him.

And when Erroll caught Tommy Dodd in the second over there was a thunderous cheer from the Classical crowd.

"Well caught!"

"Bravo, Erroll!"

"They're makin' a fuss of the cad!" said Mornington. "A Rookwood crowd cheering the son of a common criminal!"

Townsend and his companions looked impatient.

They did not want to quarrel with Mornington, but they were growing fed-up with the subject. The lofty Morny was, in fact, becoming a bore, with his incessant harping on one string.

"For goodness' sake give us a rest!" said Townsend tartly. "Why can't you let the chap alone? He's not our sort, but he's not doin' us any harm. Give him a rest, and us, too!"

"Yaas, for goodness' sake put on a

new record, Morny!" said Smythe of the Shell, with a huge yawn. "You're growin' tiresome."

Mornington gritted his teeth, and walked away from his friends. They were not sorry to see him go.

Smythe grinned quite cheerfully.

"Did you fellows ever come across such a fearful bore!" he asked. "He seems to have only one topic, and he bores a fellow to tears with it. I'm gettin' sick of the subject!"

"Same here!" said Topham. "Fed up to the chin!"

"It's time Morny let it drop," said Townsend. "It's all rot, an' Morny knows it, or he's a fool if he doesn't!"

"Hear, hear!"

Mornington went on to the pavilion by himself, and watched the cricket with dark, knitted brows.

Erroll was bowling now, and though his bowling was not so good as his batting, it was very good. He accounted for two Modern wickets. The cheers that rang around the field were gall and wormwood to Mornington.

Erroll had been popular almost from the first day at Rookwood, and his prowess as a cricketer added immensely to his popularity. He was easily one of the best in the Classical team, and there was no trace of swank about him.

When the Modern innings was over, and the Classical side went in, all eyes were on Erroll, who opened the innings with Conroy at the other end.

Mornington watched him, in the hope of seeing him fall to the Modern bowling; but that hope was disappointed.

Erroll was at the top of his form.

Five batsmen came and went, with Erroll still firmly set, and when he fell at last to Tommy Dodd's bowling there were fifty-two runs to his credit. It was a big individual score for a junior bat, and the Classics cheered Erroll vociferously as he carried out his bat.

Jimmy Silver rubbed his hands. Lovell and Conroy had also done well, and Pons was batting in great style,

and Rawson had taken twenty. The Classical score was, as Raby remarked, a corker, and it looked as if they might beat the Moderns with an innings to spare.

Tommy Dodd & Co. had scored only sixty for their first innings, and the Classical score was now at a hundred and fifteen, and by the time the last wicket went down it was a hundred and forty.

The Moderns looked very serious when they batted again.

Tommy Dodd & Co. worked hard in that innings. Loud were the shouts of the Classical when Erroll caught Doyle and Cook in succession. Jimmy Silver performed the hat-trick amid thunderous cheers.

The Moderns wanted eighty to save the innings defeat, but it looked as if they would not be scored. Seven for forty was not promising.

With Tommy Dodd and Towle at the wickets, however, the score looked up. When the last man came in to join Tommy Dodd it stood at seventy-six.

Tommy Dodd was on his mettle now. He had given up hope of winning the match; but, at all events, the Classicals should be forced to bat a second time.

But of even that consolation the Modern skipper was to be deprived.

Tommy Dodd drove away the ball with a safe margin, as he thought, and ran. But a lithe figure in white was fleeting to intercept the ball, and it fairly floated down into an upraised palm.

Smack!

"Hooray!"

"Well caught! Oh, well caught!"

"Good old Erroll!"

Tommy Dodd made a grimace, and walked away from the wicket. He was out—caught out by the new junior. Mornington gritted his teeth and stalked away, with rage and bitterness in his heart. And Erroll, as he came off the field, was surrounded by a cheering crowd.

The Moderns had been beaten by an

innings, and it was Jimmy Silver's new recruit who had made it possible. Loud cheers for Erroll rang in Mornington's ears as he stalked savagely away.

CHAPTER 12.

Uncle James Knows What to Do!

"I THINK I've got it!"

Thus exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

It was a couple of days after the cricket match, and the Fistical Four were at tea in the end study with Erroll and Oswald.

Jimmy Silver had been thinking, and the result was to be announced. Erroll was looking a little clouded.

Condemned as he was by Rookwood opinion on all sides, fed-up as his own friends were with the topic, Mornington had gone obstinately on his way, and he did not allow the subject of Gentleman Jim to be forgotten.

It was not surprising that it was getting on Erroll's nerves.

He had licked Mornington a second time for calling him uncomplimentary names in the Common-room. But that had had no deterrent effect upon Mornington—rather the reverse.

A good many fellows advised Erroll to place the matter before the Head, or his Form-master at least, and bring the voice of authority to bear upon the obstinate and malicious junior.

But Erroll firmly declined to do anything of the sort.

He simply let Morny "rip," so to speak. If the dandy of the Fourth insulted him to his face he hit out. What Morny chose to say among other fellows was Morny's own business, and Erroll passed it by, unregarding.

Erroll's friends—and they were nearly all the Fourth—were savagely angry with Mornington for not letting the wretched slander drop. A Form ragging had been suggested; but though it would have been a good punishment, it was certain not to stop Mornington in his curious crusade.

Mornington believed what he stated—that was the difficulty.

Hence Jimmy Silver's cogitations upon the matter, and his announcement at the tea-table in the end study that he had "got it."

"Well, what have you got?" asked Lovell. "If you've got any more grub you can hand it out!"

"Rats! About Erroll, I mean!"

"About me?" said Erroll, with a smile. "What about me?"

"And about that cad Mornington's silly yarn! You see, the trouble is that the silly chump believes it himself!"

"Because Erroll licked him!" remarked Oswald.

"Yes, that's the kind of evidence he's got!" snorted Lovell. "What Morny wants is a Form ragging, and he'll get it, too!"

"But suppose Morny could be made to admit that it was a mistake?" said Jimmy Silver triumphantly.

"He won't!"

"Well, I've thought of a way!"

"That's good news!" said Erroll. "It's awfully good of you to bother your head about it!"

"Well, Morny's got to be shut up, you know. He's getting on everybody's nerves with his silly rot! And I think I can squash him, and make him own up that he's played the giddy goat!" said Jimmy Silver, with satisfaction.

"Good old Uncle James!" grinned Newcome. "Listen to the pearls of wisdom that fall from his lips!"

"Fathead!"

"But what's the idea?" asked Raby.

"Oh, it's quite simple, but it's a corker!" said Jimmy. "I suppose you're like your father, Erroll? Chaps generally are."

Erroll started.

"Like my father?" he repeated.

"Yes; in looks, I mean."

"I suppose so," said Erroll. "Why?"

"That's the idea! I dare say you've got a photograph of him?"

"No; as it happens, I haven't."

"It doesn't make any difference; I

can get one," said Jimmy. "Now, some of the fellows saw Captain Erroll when he came here, but only some of them. Those who saw him only had a glance at him, mostly from a distance—so, of course, no fellow can say whether Erroll's like him or not. Now, my idea is to get a photograph of Captain Erroll."

"What for?" asked Lovell.

"Don't you see, ass? If Erroll's like his father, and he's sure to be—why, the photograph will show that he's what he says he is, and not what Morny says he is."

A troubled look came over Erroll's face.

"I'm afraid it won't do?" he said.

"Why not?" asked Jimmy.

"You see, if I send for a photograph of my pater, Morny will only say it is a photograph of the mysterious person he calls Gentleman Jim, and not of Captain Erroll at all!"

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Lovell. "Good old Uncle James, putting his foot in it! Of course, Morny would say that at once, and he would take it as evidence on his side of the argument!"

"Oh, don't cackle too soon!" said Jimmy Silver. "I meant a photograph that could be proved to be that of Captain Erroll!"

"Mornington would not take my word for that," said Erroll. "And—and if you'll excuse me, I don't care to enter into any argument with Mornington on the subject!"

"That's all very well, but it would close the matter for good," said Jimmy. "What you say's right enough—Morny would make out that your photograph of the captain wasn't genuine. But he can't say so to one that I can produce!"

"How the merry dickens are you going to get a photo of Erroll's pater?" demanded Raby.

Jimmy Silver smiled a smile of superior wisdom.

"That's where Uncle James' brains come in," he explained. "Have you forgotten the jaw there was about

Erroll before he came—on account of his father having been in the papers? A few months ago Captain Erroll was being jawed about no end for the way he won the D.S.O. on the North-West Frontier. His photograph was in a dozen papers, and I saw it myself at the time, though I've forgotten what he was like. Well, my idea is to get an old number of the 'Daily Sketch' with Captain Erroll's portrait in it. Even Morny couldn't deny that that was genuine, with the name printed under it, in a copy of the 'Daily Sketch' printed three or four months ago."

"My hat! What a ripping idea!" exclaimed Oswald.

"Then, if Erroll's anything like his father, the likeness will settle the matter," said Jimmy Silver triumphantly. "And that's a cert! Sons are always more or less like their dads."

"Bravo!"

"Isn't it a corker, Erroll?"

Jimmy Silver turned a smiling glance on Erroll, and started.

Erroll's face was white.

The smile died off Jimmy's face. What was Erroll looking like that for?

"Erroll!" he exclaimed.

The new junior pulled himself together.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing! But—but—"

Jimmy Silver's face was grave. Into his own loyal breast a dark doubt had crept, in spite of himself. Was it possible that Mornington had been speaking the truth?

Erroll was himself again in a moment, however. He smiled.

"It's an awfully good idea," he said.

"Oh!" said Jimmy, greatly relieved, and ashamed of the momentary doubt that had assailed him. "You think so."

"It's a corker," said Oswald, with a very curious look at Erroll. "It will settle the matter and finish it."

"Yes," said Erroll. "Only—"

"Only what?" asked the Fistical Four together.

Erroll compressed his lips a little.

"I'd rather not enter into any arguments with Mornington about it," he said. "It's not my business to convince him that he's lying. I dare say he will drop the subject in the long run. If he doesn't, I don't care much."

"He hasn't shown any sign of dropping it so far," said Jimmy Silver dryly.

"Well, let him rip, and be hanged to him!"

Again Jimmy Silver felt that chill doubt creeping upon him. He had expected the new junior to greet his ripping suggestion in the most hearty way. Surely it ought to seem worth while to Erroll to crush the slander once and for all.

"Look here," said Lovell. "That won't do, Erroll!"

Erroll looked at him.

"We don't believe anything against you, and we've said so. But if you raise objections to the thing being put to a certain test, the other fellows will begin to think there's something in it."

"I hardly think so."

"Well, I think so," said Lovell tartly, "and I'm blessed if I shouldn't agree with them, too!"

Erroll's eyes flashed.

"Easy does it, Lovell, old scout," said Jimmy Silver. "But it's quite right, Erroll. It's all very well to despise a silly slander, but if it can be proved to be a slander, it's no good mounting the high horse and declining to do it. We can get an old number of the 'Daily Sketch,' with Captain Erroll's chivvy in it, and that will shut Morny up for good."

"I don't agree with you, Silver. Mornington isn't worth that amount of notice."

"Oh, rot!" said Lovell.

Jimmy set his lips a little.

"I'm sorry to disagree with you fellows, when you've been such jolly good friends to me," said Erroll in his frank way. "But that's my view, and I stick to it. I shan't take any step in the matter."

"You needn't," said Jimmy. "I will. I can drop a line to the 'Daily Sketch'."

office, asking for the paper, if they've got one left."

Erroll started.

"You wouldn't do that against my wish?" he said.

Jimmy Silver looked him squarely in the face.

"I shall do it," he said. "You're making me wonder, Erroll, whether there's anything in the yarn. I tell you that plainly."

Erroll flushed crimson.

"I'm your friend, and you know it," said Jimmy. "As your friend I'm going to knock this slander on the head. If you raise objections to my doing it, what am I to think?"

"You can think what you like," said Erroll, rising to his feet. "I don't want to quarrel with you, so I'd better leave your study, Jimmy Silver. I decline to take the least notice of Mornington, and if you do as you suggest, it will be against my wish."

With that Erroll left the study, closing the door after him.

There was a grim silence in the room. The five juniors looked at one another rather blankly.

Lovell broke the silence at last.

"It's not possible——" he began, and paused.

"It—it can't be," muttered Oswald. "Erroll's a bit of an ass, I should say. Jolly queer he should get on the high horse like this. But—but——"

"I know what the fellows would say if they heard him talk as we've just heard him," said Newcome dryly. And Raby nodded assent.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep breath.

"I don't quite know what to think," he said. "I can't believe anything against Erroll. But—but this is going to be settled one way or the other. For his own sake it's going to be proved. I don't understand the line he's taken; but I'm going to have it settled."

And within half an hour the letter was written and despatched, and the

Fistical Four waited, after that, very anxiously for the "Daily Sketch" that contained the undoubtedly genuine portrait of Captain Erroll.

CHAPTER 13.

Put to the Test!

MORNINGTON of the Fourth wore a smiling face the next day.

The good humour of the elegant Fourth Former seemed to be quite restored. Townsend & Co. surprised by his smiling cheeriness, wanted to know the reason. They stared when Morny gave it.

"Jimmy Silver's come to the rescue," he said. "He's thought of a dodge for proving my case."

"By gad!" said Townsend. "You're wanderin' in your little mind, Morny. I hear that Silver is gettin' a picture of Captain Erroll to prove Erroll's case by his resemblance to his pater."

"Exactly!" grinned Mornington.

"Well, that will settle it, won't it?" demanded Peele.

"No doubt it will! I'm open to bet any chap five to one, in quids, that Captain Erroll's portrait won't resemble Erroll of the Fourth any more than it resembles you or me."

"Oh!" said the nuts together.

Mornington chuckled with glee. Jimmy Silver's scheme for clearing Erroll of the faintest vestige of suspicion was known in the Fourth, and regarded with approval by all the juniors. It was considered quite a master-stroke of Uncle James', and when the proof arrived, it was agreed that if Morny didn't own up that he was wrong he should be ragged till he did.

But the dandy of the Fourth took quite another view.

Convinced that Erroll was the son of Gentleman Jim, and not of Captain Erroll at all, Morny did not believe for a moment that the captain's por-

trait would show any resemblance to the new junior.

Jimmy Silver was, in fact, playing into his hands without the least intention of doing so.

If the man who had brought Erroll to Rookwood was not Captain Erroll, but a rascal masquerading in his name, as Morny contended, then certainly the new junior was not the son of the real Captain Erroll. In that case, it was absurd to suppose that he bore any resemblance to him.

The photograph, when it arrived, would prove Mornington's case; of that the dandy of the Fourth was convinced.

His friends did not agree with his view, but Morny's positiveness made some impression upon them, and they were very keen for the expected proof to arrive. The matter had now become one of general interest to the juniors of Rookwood. Erroll had jumped into prominence at once in the little world of the juniors, and Mornington was a prominent character, too.

The dispute was known and commented on by every fellow in the Third, the Fourth and the Shell, Classical and Modern. Indeed, it had reached the ears of some of the seniors by this time, and Erroll had been the recipient of a good many curious glances from fellows in the Fifth and Sixth.

Naturally, fellows spoke to Erroll on the subject. His objection to the scheme had not been mentioned outside the end study. But it was easy for anyone to see that he was not pleased. The usually frank and cheery junior seemed to have changed.

He was quiet, silent except when spoken to, and he kept a great deal to himself. He avoided Jimmy Silver & Co. that day; but his apparent resentment did not affect Jimmy. That he had done right in taking this step, Jimmy knew, and if there was anything "fishy" about Erroll, the sooner it was shown up the better.

Jimmy tried hard not to allow doubt to grow in his breast, but in face of

Erroll's attitude it was difficult to keep it down. The rest of the Co. shared his feeling, but they gave Erroll the benefit of the doubt, as Jimmy did, till the proof should arrive, which would settle the matter for good one way or the other.

There was no reply to Jimmy Silver's letter that day, and Morny sarcastically pointed out to his pals that Erroll was looking more cheery after the last post was in.

"I'm readin' his merry thoughts, dear boys," said the gleeful Morny. "Those papers don't keep back numbers, as a rule, and he hopes the blessed thing is out of print and can't be obtained. That cheers him up."

"My hat! That would knock it on the head!" remarked Townsend.

"It wouldn't!" said Mornington coolly. "I've written to London myself."

"You have?"

"Exactly! I've written to an agent, offerin' any price for some paper or magazine that contains a picture of Captain Erroll. Some of them must still be in print—there were a lot published his photograph. If Jimmy Silver doesn't get his paper I shall get one."

"You're playin' Silver's game."

"Jimmy Silver's playin' my game, an' I'm helpin' him," said Mornington, with a laugh. "Wait and see!"

And the juniors waited.

The next morning there was a letter for Jimmy Silver. It was a polite note regretting that the number of the paper was out of print, and could not be supplied.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated the Fistical Four in chorus as they read the letter in the hall. Erroll glanced at Jimmy inquiringly. Quite a number of juniors had gathered round.

"Can't get the paper!" said Jimmy abruptly, and he could not help noticing the light that leaped into Erroll's dark eyes.

"Sorry!" said Erroll. "Sorry if you're disappointed! But it really wasn't worth the trouble, you know."

"I think it was!" said Jimmy tartly.
 "Silver won't be disappointed," said Mornington, with a laugh.

"What do you mean?" snapped Jimmy. "They can't send the paper!"

"I mean that I'm gettin' a paper down, and it's pretty sure to arrive to-day," said Mornington coolly. "All the papers ain't out, of print. Hallo, Erroll, you don't look pleased!"

Erroll walked away.

"What are you doing it for, Mornington?" snapped Jimmy Silver savagely. "It will prove you a liar!"

"It will prove Erroll a liar! I'm open to bet any fellow quids to bobs that Captain Erroll's portrait is not more like Erroll than it's like Jimmy Silver!" said Mornington, looking round.

"Oh, go and eat coke!" growled Lovell.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and strolled away to the Form-room. The dandy of the Fourth was in high feather that day.

After lessons there was a rush to see whether there was a postal packet for Mornington. A rolled paper addressed to him reposed in the rack, and Morny grinned as he took it down.

"The Illustrated Gazette," he read on the label. "A bob paper—they keep the back number of that. Captain Erroll's chivy will be in this, dear boys. Come into the Common-room and bring Erroll. The dear fellow will be glad to see his pater's portrait—what?"

"Come on, Erroll!" called out Jimmy Silver.

Erroll had gone into the quadrangle. Jimmy ran after him.

"Come on!" he said.

"Thanks! I'd rather not!"

"Better come. You're going to see Morny knocked as flat as a flounder," said Jimmy. "Look here, Erroll, you've got to come!"

Lovell took Erroll's arm, and Jimmy took the other arm. Between them the new junior was walked into the House

and into the Common-room. Nearly all the Fourth and the Shell gathered there.

Erroll's handsome face was pale. The juniors cast curious glances at him. The same thought was in every mind now—was Mornington in the right, after all? But Erroll, if he was a cheat and an impostor, must have had plenty of nerve, and he was game to the last. He met the doubtful glances of the juniors with erect head and steady eyes.

The matter was quickly to be put to the test. Mornington's slim fingers were already unrolling the paper.

There was a hush of expectancy in the Common-room.

"After all," muttered Oswald, "if—it isn't like Erroll, that don't prove much. Chaps ain't always like their fathers."

"Are you like your father, Erroll?" grinned Mornington. "You ought to know."

"I have nothing to say to you, Mornington."

"We shall all have something to say to you pretty quick, I think!" sneered Mornington.

"Get it over, and not so much jaw!" said Jimmy Silver roughly.

Mornington was turning over the leaves of the thick paper.

"Here we are!" he exclaimed. "Here's the name—an article and a portrait! Why—why—what— By thunder!"

Mornington's eyes almost started from his head.

He gazed at the pictured face upon the thick glazed paper of the illustrated periodical as if it mesmerised him.

"Let's see it!" shouted a dozen voices.

Fellows crowded round on all sides to look at the reproduced photograph in the paper, under which was printed "Captain Erroll, Loamshire Regiment."

Erroll did not move. He was breathing deep and hard.

Jimmy Silver's face lighted up as he looked at the pictured features in the paper.

The portrait was that of a handsome man of about forty—a man with clear-cut features and dark eyes. But for the fact that it was evidently the portrait of a grown man, it might have been taken for Erroll's own face.

The resemblance was not only noticeable, but it was striking.

Every feature of Kit Erroll's handsome face was reproduced in the portrait under the eyes of the juniors.

"My hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "What have you got to say now, Morny?"

Mornington was dumb.

He had nothing to say. Gladly would he have denied the resemblance between the pictured face and Erroll's. But he could not. It was too striking for that. The two faces, allowing for the difference in age, were the same.

Morny's face was a study. There was a roar of laughter in the Common-room. A dozen fellows patted Erroll on the back.

Erroll spoke at last.

"Is it like me?"

"Like you!" yelled Jimmy Silver. "As like as two peas!"

Erroll gave a violent start.

"Haven't you ever noticed it yourself?" asked Lovell. "Why, if you looked older, you would pass for your own pater!"

"Give it to me," said Erroll huskily.

He looked at the pictured face with a strange expression on his own. He drew a deep, almost sobbing breath.

"It's like me," he said.

"You speak as if you'd never seen it before," said Jimmy Silver, in wonder. All his doubts were set at rest now.

Mornington found his voice.

"He never has seen it before!" he said thickly. "It's an accident—just a chance resemblance—"

"Oh, shut up!" muttered Townsend. "Don't be a fool, Morny!"

"You've got this proof here yourself, Mornington," said Jimmy Silver. "It's proved that Erroll is true blue—not that anybody ever doubted it—it's

proved that he is the son of Captain Erroll. They're as like as peas in a pod. Now you've got to beg Erroll's pardon!"

Mornington panted.

"Beg his pardon! I tell you he's a liar—an impostor!"

"You're still keeping to that with that evidence lying under your nose!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"I can't understand it! It's like Erroll. I can't catch on. But I know that he's the son of a cracksmán, not of Captain Erroll, and—"

Mornington got no further. A shout of angry disgust interrupted him, and he was collared on all sides by the juniors. Struggling and kicking, the dandy of the Fourth was bumped hard on the floor, and then pitched head-long out of the Common-room.

Jimmy Silver slipped his arm through Erroll's.

"Come on, old scout. All serene now."

Erroll nodded without speaking. But his handsome face was very much brighter now. His strange reluctance to have the matter put to the test was forgotten now—by all but Mornington.

But Mornington did not forget. Baffled and defeated, the dandy of the Fourth did not give in; but for the present he was silent. But he did not forget!

CHAPTER 14.

Strange News!

"JIMMY SILVER—the rotter!"

Mornington of the Fourth muttered the words savagely as he stood looking out of the window of Study No. 4.

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

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

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

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

"Good old Jimmy! Well hit!"

"Good man, Jimmy Silver!"

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

The dandy of the Fourth had thrown his cigarette impatiently away. He was in a savage temper as he stood there watching. It was, indeed, his savage temper, as much as anything else, that kept him out of the ranks of the Rookwood cricketers.

The batsmen were running again now, the fieldsmen leather-hunting. It was a single, and it brought Kit Erroll, the new boy, to the batting end. Mornington's eyes glittered as they rested on the distant white-clad figure. Even at that distance he could make out the handsome, flushed face. He watched moodily. He was not surprised to hear the shout that followed:

"Well hit!"

It was a 3.

Mornington drove his hands deep into his pockets, his teeth coming hard together.

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

As he looked at the handsome young cricketer a doubt forced itself into

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

He wondered.

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

It was Murphy of the Second Form. "Erbert," as he was called, stood in the doorway, and looked half-inquiringly at his patron.

'Erbert paused as he caught Mornington's scowl.

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

"So it's you!" snapped Mornington.

"Yes, sir!" faltered 'Erbert.

"You young ass!" said Mornington.

"A pretty pickle you've got me into with your silly yarns about Erroll!"

'Erbert started.

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

"Was it the truth?" said Mornington savagely.

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

"Well, I don't see why you should. But you made a bloomer, at least, I think so now!" snapped Mornington. "You told me you recognised Erroll's father—Captain Erroll—as a criminal you had known in some low den you used to live in before I found you."

"So I did!" said 'Erbert stubbornly. "It's true. I knowed 'im as Gentleman Jim, the cracksman, and he ain't no more a Captain Erroll than I am!"

"You stick to that?"

"I does!" said 'Erbert. "It's true. I ain't got nothin' agin Erroll—he seems to me a good sort; but it's true that

the man wot brought him 'ere was Gentleman Jim, the forger and cracksmán, what I knowed once at Dirty Dick's tenement behind the Euston Road."

"He called himself Captain Erroll of the Loamshire Regiment."

"It was a lie, then!"

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

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

Mornington paced the study restlessly.

Was there truth in the little waif's story?

He could not think that the fag had deceived him willingly. If 'Erbert was wrong, he was mistaken.

But how could such a mistake have arisen?

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

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

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

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

Mornington started.

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

"Nothin' like 'im!" said 'Erbert.

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

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

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

'Erbert shook his head.

That problem was too much for him.

"When you knew the cracksmán in that den you spoke of, did he 'ave a son?" asked Mornington.

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

Mornington knitted his brows.

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

And yet—

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

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

"He's come 'ere!"

"Eh? Who's come here?"

"Gentleman Jim!"

CHAPTER 15.

Mornington's Chance!

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

"The man who brought Erroll to Rookwood?" he exclaimed.

'Erbert nodded.

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

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

"Where? How?"

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

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

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

"Where did he go?"

"Into the wood," said 'Erbert. "Cause I kept a heye on him. I left Jones and Snooks in Coombe. I says to myself, that Gentleman Jim's up to no good. Ah! I reckoned I'd see wot he was up to. Course, I know if he comes down 'ere he's lookin' for a crib to crack. P'raps this very school, fur all I know. When I saw he didn't come on to Rookwood, course I was sure he was up to some of 'is games."

Mornington smiled.

"Good old 'Erbert! And you saw him——"

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

"Ha, ha! Erroll's father!" chuckled Mornington. "I wonder what Jimmy Silver would think of that!"

"Master Silver wouldn't believe it. He's jawed me about it already," said 'Erbert. "But I know what I know. Gentleman Jim—Captain Erroll, as he calls 'imself—went into the old woodman's hut. You know it, sir——"

"Yes, yes! And then?"

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

"By gad!"

"So I come on to tell you, sir," said 'Erbert, with a troubled look. "He ain't up to no good. If he wants to see Erroll, why can't he come to the school?"

What's he 'anging about for? I—I was thinkin' of goin' to the 'ead and tellin' 'im; but—but he wouldn't believe it, and he'd lick me!"

"No good going to the Head without proof, you young ass!"

"But—but that man ain't up to no good," said 'Erbert, looking distressed. "I don't feel as he ought to be allowed to keep on, whatever it is he's goin' to do. It's some thieving, you bet."

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

"Not a bit, sir."

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

"Oh!" said 'Erbert.

The fag looked relieved.

"Then you think he ain't up to any 'arm down 'ere, Master Mornington—only wants to see Erroll?" he asked.

"That's it."

"That's all right, then," said 'Erbert. "I thought he was 'ere for some of his thievin', or I wouldn't 'ave troubled you about it."

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

"Orl right, sir."

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

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

"Bravo!"

"The hat trick! Hurray!"

"Bravo, Erroll!"

"Wait a bit, my fine fellow," muttered Mornington. "Wait a bit! You

won't be cheered again on a Rookwood ground, I fancy."

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

All the frowns had vanished from his face now. The information 'Erbert of the Second had given him had put Morny into great spirits.

The strange resemblance between Gentleman Jim's son and the real Captain Erroll had baffled and beaten him. But he was more than ever convinced now that his theory was correct.

Gentleman Jim was evidently, to Morny's mind, waiting in the wood for Erroll. Why did he not come on to Rookwood, if all was fair and above-board? Why? Captain Erroll had nothing to fear from showing himself at the school; but Gentleman Jim had, since the captain's photograph had been produced.

It was proof enough for Mornington; but he meant to have more proof, and then the Fourth Form would have to acknowledge that he had been right, and Jimmy Silver had been wrong—that Kit Erroll was not the son of an Army captain, but of a scoundrel who had filched a brave man's name!

Was the man there to meet Erroll? Whom else could he be there to meet? He was Erroll's father!

Mornington was certain of it, and he intended that when the meeting took place there should be a third party on the scene.

"Hallo, Morny; fearful bore, isn't it?" yawned Townsend, as the dandy of the Fourth came on Little Side. Towny was alluding to the cricket match.

"How are they gettin' on?" asked Mornington.

Towny yawned again.

"Rookwood's 110 for both innings," he said. "Bagshot's 60 for first innings, and goin' great guns in the second. Erroll's doin' some rippin' bowlin' though. Pankley'll be licked! Yaw-aw-aw! Feel inclined for a little banker?"

"Yaas, let's go in an' get a game," said Smythe of the Shell. "You seem

to be in a better temper now, Morny, dear boy."

Mornington smiled.

"Yes. I rather fancy I'm goin' to bowl Erroll out and prove my case against him," he said.

"Oh, don't!" implored Smythe. "Do give that subject a rest, Morny. You're borin' us all to death with your yarns about Erroll—you are really, by gad!"

"Yes; do ring off that!" urged Townsend.

"Oh, rats!"

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

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

"Good man!" chortled Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

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

"Goin' out?" asked Peele, joining him with Gower.

"Yes."

"We'll come along!"

"Can't be bothered," said Mornington coolly.

And he hurried on, leaving his two friends staring.

"Well, the cheeky rotter!" ejaculated Peele in disgust.

"Morny's manners are improvin', I don't think!" growled Gower. "He can go an' eat coke!"

Quite heedless of what his dear pals thought of his brusqueness, Mornington walked quickly down the lane and turned into Coombe Wood.

He knew the old woodman's hut very

well—an untenanted ruin overgrown with weeds and creepers. How did Gentleman Jim know it? Evidently Erroll had written to his father and fixed that rendezvous with him.

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

He came close to the old hut at last—behind it—where the trees were close, and the creeping plants grew thickly. The old wooden walls were rent in places, and Morny, if he had chosen to put his head through the screen of foliage, could have looked into it. But he did not.

Close to the old hut, hidden from sight, he remained still as a mouse. He did not need telling that "Captain Erroll" was there. For, from the old woodman's hut there came to his nostrils a strong, unmistakable scent—the scent of a cigar!

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

CHAPTER 16.

A Win for Rookwood!

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

"Man in!" he grunted.

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

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

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

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

Jimmy, the champion bowler of the team, was in good form himself, but he had to admit that his very best was no better than Erroll's. Neither was Jimmy slow to admit it, either.

Erroll was reaping glory without limit, but there was never a trace of swank about him, and that was the kind of fellow Jimmy Silver could pull with.

So much distinction for Mornington, for instance, would have turned his arrogant head, and there would have been no tolerating him.

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

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

"Looks rotten for us!" said Putter dolorously. "Only 36 so far, and only two more wickets to go down! And we're licked on the first innings, and that bounder is gobbling up wickets like Tubby Muffin gobbling up sausages."

"There he goes again!"

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Last man in!" growled Putter.

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

"Can you manage another over, Erroll?"

Erroll laughed.

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

"A dozen won't be wanted!" chuckled

Jimmy. "Better go on and put 'em out of their misery!"

"I'll try."

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

"Well bowled, Erroll!"

"Rookwood wins!" grinned Lovell.

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

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

"We have—we has!" smiled Jimmy.

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

"Yes. His father's Captain Erroll, who got the D.S.O. in the fighting on the North-West Frontier," said Jimmy. "His chivvy was in all the papers at one time."

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

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

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

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

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

"I'm going out a bit——"

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

"I'm not going far."

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

"I—I'm going another way!"

Jimmy gave him rather a curious look.

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

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

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

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

Jimmy Silver started.

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

It was Erroll of the Fourth!

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

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

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

Jimmy Silver did not reply.

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

Why couldn't he have gone along the lane with the cricketers, and entered the wood from the lane, if he wanted to go there at all?

And why the merry dickens did he want to go into the wood as dusk was falling, close on locking-up time at the school? Why on earth didn't Erroll want the fellows to know he had gone into Coombe Wood?

For that was what it amounted to; and his statement that he was going the other way—true enough, as he had actually gone the other way—was perilously near a deception.

"Jolly queer!" said Lovell, after a long silence.

"Some of the chaps have been rabbiting!" said Raby. "Has the ass gone after rabbits—trying to keep it dark?"

"Well, it's no bizney of ours!" said Jimmy Silver. "Come on, I want my tea!"

And the Fistical Four went home to tea wondering—they could not help it—why Erroll of the Fourth had gone so secretly to Cobbe Wood.

CHAPTER 17.

"Gentleman Jim!"

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

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

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

"I couldn't help it, father!"

"I've waited a long time."

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

"Cricket!"

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

"Cricket!" he repeated.

Erroll smiled slightly.

"Yes, cricket!"

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

"It couldn't be helped. I'm in the Form Eleven, and if I'd left the game before the finish it would have made every fellow stare and talk. It would have meant a row, too. I couldn't do it. I suppose you didn't want all Rookwood to wonder where I had to go?"

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

"As it was, it wasn't easy," said

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

The man nodded.

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

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

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

"If you came to Rookwood the game would be up!" said Erroll quietly.

"There's a kid there who knows you——"

"What!"

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

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

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

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

Erroll nodded.

"And the kid's talked?"

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

"Oh, gad!"

"The fellows don't believe it. But the cad got an old newspaper with a portrait of Captain Erroll in it." Erroll's voice faltered. "I thought the game was up then. He was going to prove that I wasn't Captain Erroll's

son by that photograph. But—but— It was like a miracle. I can't understand it."

Gentleman Jim gave the schoolboy a peculiar look.

"What can't you understand, Kit?"

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

Gentleman Jim laughed.

"Lucky for you!" he said.

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

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

Mornington's eyes were blazing now.

If he wanted proof of his suspicion he had it now. He wondered what Jimmy Silver would have thought if he could have heard Erroll of the Fourth ask that question.

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

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

"Father, I asked you——"

"A foolish question," said the man.

"How is it, then, that I am so like him?"

"Chance."

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

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

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

"That's all serene, then. It was a narrow escape, by Jove!" Gentleman Jim blew out a cloud of smoke. "By gad, it's lucky you warned me not to come to the school. With Captain

Erroll's photograph in their hands they would have seen that I was not the man."

"At once," said Erroll.

"I shall have to give Rookwood a wide berth now." Gentleman Jim tugged at his moustache for a moment. "Captain Erroll's supposed to be back in British Honduras, after being invalided out of the service, so that relieves me from any necessity of visiting Rookwood. I must keep clear. You say this Mornington is your enemy?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

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

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

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

"Well, do so."

"Father!"

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

The schoolboy was silent.

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

Erroll looked startled.

"Business!" he repeated.

"Yes, business."

"You don't mean——"

The boy's face had become white.

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

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

They shook hands, and Gentleman Jim disappeared through the trees.

Erroll remained standing in the doorway of the woodman's hut. All the brightness had gone out of the handsome, boyish face.

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 18.

Face to Face!

KIT ERROLL looked blankly at the dandy of the Fourth.

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

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

Mornington knew.

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

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

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

"Yes," muttered Erroll.

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

Erroll did not speak.

"I suppose the cheery gentleman carries a revolver—what?" grinned Mornington. "He might have been tempted to use it. Rather a shock to him to learn that the game was up—don't you think so?"

"You have been listening," said Erroll.

Mornington nodded.

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

Mornington's laugh rang under the dusky trees. He expected to see the junior he hated shrink and tremble under his gaze. Erroll did not shrink. The son of Gentleman Jim had courage, and his nerve seemed to be of iron. All was known, and known to his enemy. Yet he was cool, calm, unmoved, save for the deadly paleness of his face.

"You spied on me!" he said.

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

Erroll winced.

"Ah, that touches you, does it?" said Mornington. "Well, you're bowled out, my dear chap! By the way, what's your name?"

The junior did not reply.

"Gentleman Jim, junior—what?" grinned Mornington. "Have you any other name?"

No answer.

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

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

"No," said Erroll quietly.

"Oh, you're not plannin' to disappear one night with the Rookwood silver?" chuckled Mornington.

"No."

"Then what's the game?"

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

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

"You needn't ask that," he sneered.

"You can't suppose I'm goin' to allow a cracksmán's son to stay at Rookwood. I've found out the truth, an' all Rookwood will know soon. A cheery prospect for you!"

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

"You mean you'll deny it again?"

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

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

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

He laughed again.

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

Erroll was silent.

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

"Probably."

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

"It looks like it."

"By gad, you take it coolly!" said Mornington, with reluctant admiration. "You've got a nerve! A pity you didn't make a friend of me, Erroll."

Erroll's lip curled.

"If you heard all I said to my father, you heard why a fellow couldn't make friends with you," he said.

"Still on the high horse? I'll bring you down soon, my friend! You're jolly particular for the son of a cracksmán—what?"

"So it appears."

"Hanged if I can quite understand you!" said Mornington. "You must know the game's up. You don't ask me to let you off?"

"Would it be any use?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

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

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

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

"Ha, ha! I fancy not!"

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

Mornington gave a sardonic laugh.

"You want me to believe that you

came honest to Rookwood, and that you are honest now?" he sneered.

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

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

A strange smile came over Erroll's pale face.

"You believe that I am a criminal—"

"Like your father—yes."

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

"Exactly!"

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

Mornington started back.

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

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

CHAPTER 19.

Under the Shadow

MORNINGTON did not move—he could not in that muscular grasp.

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

For some seconds it lasted.

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

Slowly he picked himself up.

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

"You need not fear," said Erroll.

"Fear!" Mornington ground his teeth. "Do you think I'm afraid of you, you hound?"

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

Mornington set his collar and tie straight.

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

"By gad!" said Mornington at last.

Erroll looked at him mockingly.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked.

"I've nothin' to say to you!" said Mornington. "You'll hear from me again at Rookwood."

He turned and strode away.

Erroll, in silence, watched him go. Mornington turned back and came towards him.

"This will be a rotten disgrace for Rookwood when it comes out," he said.

"Well?"

"I'll give you a chance," said Mornington. "Get out quietly, and let it drop. Leave Rookwood, and save me from havin' to turn you out."

"Thanks!"

"Don't go back to the school now. You're out of gates. Well, clear off. You know you can't stay at Rookwood after I've seen the Head an' told him what I know. Save the disgrace for the school, and clear!"

"You think that even the son of Gentleman Jim cares whether the school is disgraced?"

"I think you're not wholly a rotter," said Mornington. "Rookwood's done you no harm. You don't want to make

our school the talk of the newspapers. Get out quietly, now the game's up, and I won't say a word."

Erroll looked at him. It was not like Morny to care much for the honour of the school; certainly he had never done it any credit himself.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Mornington, as Erroll did not reply.

"I'll think over it."

"Better go. Look here," said Mornington, "I'll give you till to-morrow. Then, if you're not gone, you'll be booted out!"

"Thanks!"

"Does that mean that you're goin' to make a fight for it?"

"I think I shall make a fight for it." Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd rather save the scandal," he said. "Take your choice. This time to-morrow, either you're gone or you go before the Head!"

And he walked away.

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

"Got lines?"

"Yes."

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

Higgs grunted and made room, and Erroll sat down to his prep. His work was carefully done, as usual. To-morrow, perhaps, was to be his last day at Rookwood. Twenty-four hours and

he was to be driven in disgrace from the school he had learned to love—from the cheery friends he had made. It was a blow that shattered everything for him, yet he was calm.

Why had Mornington given him that respite?

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

Perhaps the cool, quiet courage with which Erroll had faced this shattering blow had evoked an unwilling admiration in Morny's breast. His motives probably, were mixed. Be that as it might, the son of Gentleman Jim had twenty-four hours in which to decide his course.

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

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

Mornington & Co. were there, and Morny was in great spirits. He gave Erroll a mocking smile as he came in.

Erroll did not appear to notice him.

He joined Jimmy Silver & Co., who were talking cricket. Jimmy greeted him with a cheery smile and nod. The captain of the Fourth had not forgotten the curious incident of the afternoon, and he wondered whether Erroll would make any reference to his somewhat mysterious visit to the wood. But Erroll did not mention it.

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

The Fistical Four little dreamed, as they chatted away cheerily till bed-time, of the thoughts that were working in Erroll's mind.

The morrow—the morrow; that was

the besetting thought. What was to happen on the morrow?

Mornington strolled over to the group. "Settlin' the great question of the eleven for Greyfriars?" he asked.

"It's settled," said Jimmy Silver.

"Erroll goin' to play?"

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Gee-gees?" asked Towny.

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

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

"Same here," said Topham.

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

"What's the good?"

"Well, I'm goin'."

"More duffer you," said Townsend.

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

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

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

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

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

CHAPTER 20.

The Last Chance!

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

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

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

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

Then the door opened and closed more cautiously than before.

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

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

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

Midnight!

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

Mornington was returning.

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

He knew well the spot where the wall

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

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

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

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

There was a low laugh above him in the gloom.

"Erroll!" muttered Mornington.

"Yes."

"Let me pass!"

Erroll laughed again softly.

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

"Will you let me pass?" he hissed.

"No!"

Mornington's eyes burned.

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

He saw the junior above him wince.

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

"No."

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

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

"Wha-a-at!"

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

"I!" hissed Mornington.

"You! We're birds of a feather, you

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

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

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

Mornington panted.

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

Mornington was silent.

He understood clearly enough.

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

Erroll had the upper hand now.

Mornington knew what it meant if he

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

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

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

He laughed.

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

"Well?"

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

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

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

"All's fair in war!"

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

Erroll was silent.

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

wood would seek to make terms. Morny had done so, and Erroll had won the game.

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

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

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

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

"Do you hear?" he muttered. "I come to your terms. You are safe. Let me in. Anybody might pass. You're safe, I tell you!" Mornington raised his voice as Erroll did not speak. "Do you hear me, Erroll? I promise. You know I shall keep my word."

Erroll spoke at last.

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

He disappeared from the wall.

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

"By gad!" muttered Mornington. "By gad!"

He crossed cautiously to the school-house. The window by which he had left was still unfastened. He climbed in, strange thoughts working in his mind.

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

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

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

Erroll joined the Fistical Four as they went down.

Mornington was very silent that morning. He went out into the quadrangle by himself, his brows knitted. Why had Erroll spared him the previous night? He had thrown back his offered promise in his teeth. Why?

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

Erroll looked at him icily.

"Your last day here," said Mornington.

"Well?"

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

"You wouldn't understand."

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

"I know."

"And now——"

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

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

"I know it."

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

Erroll drew a deep breath.

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

Mornington nodded, and Erroll went quietly into the house.

Mornington followed him slowly.

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

CHAPTER 21.

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' tone was very kind. 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 the 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!"

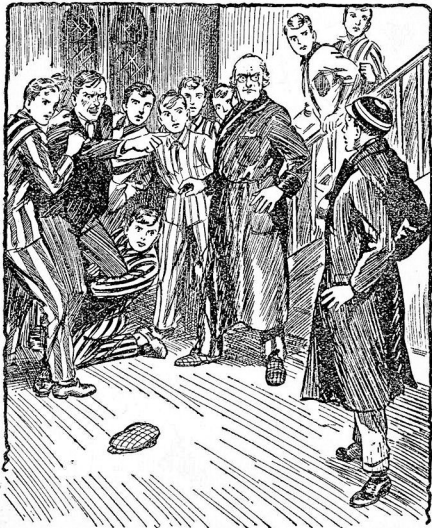
"He is still in London, sir!"

"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. 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."



Gentleman Jim staggered to his feet, and pointed a finger at Kit Erroll. "If I go to prison," he snarled, "that boy comes with me. He's my son, and accomplice!" A breathless hush followed his words, and accusing eyes turned to the fully-dressed figure of the handsome schoolboy.

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 watched the fellows heading for the School-House for morning lessons.

The Fistical Four—Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—spotted him at Mr. Bootles' window, and gave him cheery nods as they passed. Mornington and Peele came lounging by, and Mornington paused as he saw Erroll, Peele going on his way.

"Anythin' up?" asked Mornington, looking very curiously at the junior in the open window.

"Nothing."

"What are you doin' in Bootles' study, then?"

"Waiting."

"You don't mean to say you've owned up to Bootles?"

"No."

"Then what's the game?" asked Mornington curiously. "What the merry dickens are you waitin' in Bootles' study for? The bell's just goin' for class."

"I am telephoning to my father," said Erroll quietly. "Mr. Bootles has given me permission."

"Oh, I see! Givin' him warnin' that you're clearin' out of Rookwood to-day?" said Mornington, with a grin.

"Yes."

"Give him my kind regards," grinned Mornington. "Don't fail to remember me to Gentleman Jim."

And the dandy of the Fourth strolled on, laughing.

Erroll compressed his lips.

The bell was going now, and the juniors were hurrying in. The old quadrangle was deserted at last.

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 over this."

"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——"

"The boy may be induced to keep silent."

"Impossible!"

"It may not be impossible to me, Kit. Leave it in my hands. I command you to remain at Rookwood!"

"Father! If I do not leave of my own accord, Mornington is going to the Head. You know what will happen then. The truth will be out, and I shall be forced to leave in disgrace. You might spare me that."

"It may not come to that. 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. 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.

CHAPTER 22.

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! I remember you were in Bootles' study," said Jimmy Silver. "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.

"Well, as he was wounded and invalided out of the Army, I suppose he is rather crooked," said Jimmy. "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 chivy 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!" Tubby Muffin of the Fourth rolled up. "Bootles wants you."

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

Tubby 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' down here?" he said. "That means that I shan'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."

"Oh, rotten!"

"Some fellows have all the luck!" growled Peele. "This is what comes of havin' an uncle who's a governor of the school."

"Well, Bootles couldn't very well refuse. I expect old Stacpoole only wants to give me a jawin'," said Mornington. "He's written to me about extravagance. Silly rot! Still, I shall get a decent dinner for once, that's something."

When the Rookwood juniors came in to dinner they met Mornington going out, looking extremely elegant and

cheerful, with a shining topper on his head and a light coat on his arm.

"Hallo, where are you off to?" asked Oswald.

Mornington gave him a lofty look.

"Oh, I've got leave for the day!" he drawled. "Goin' to dine with my guardian at Latcham. Ta-ta!"

"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.

When the Fourth Form turned up in the Form-room that afternoon Mornington's place was empty.

Most of the fellows envied him his good luck as they ground away at lessons in the dusky Form-room. They would have given a good deal to be out of doors themselves in the sunshine.

Lessons were over at last, however, and the Fourth came out. Arthur Edward Lovell gave a portentous yawn in the passage.

"Never found Bootles such an awful bore before," he said. "I thought it would never end. What about some cricket before tea?"

"Good egg! You coming, Erroll?"

Erroll shook his head and went to his study.

Higgs and Jones minor, his study-mates, were out, and he had No. 2 Study to himself.

He paced the study in a restless mood, with darkly-knitted brows.

The hour had come!

At that hour he was to have left Rookwood. The alternative was that Mornington would inform the Head of what he knew—that Erroll, known at Rookwood as the son of Captain Erroll, was in reality the son of Gentleman Jim, the crackman, who had stolen a brave man's name in order to place his son in the school.

He would have to go then—in disgrace and humiliation. Why not go at once? Why had his father bidden him remain?

How could he "stick it out," as Gentleman Jim had said? Mornington had only to speak, and he would be driven forth in shame and disgrace. What was the use of waiting for that?

Mornington, as it happened, was absent now. But the revelation would be made as soon as he returned to the school, if he found Kit Erroll still there. Apart from his dislike of Erroll, Mornington was acting, to a certain extent, from a sense of duty. He had discovered the miserable truth, and the Head must know it—unless the impostor shook the dust of Rookwood from his feet.

When the dandy of the Fourth came home from Latcham, the game would be up. Why wait for that cruel humiliation? Yet Gentleman Jim had bidden him wait. What unknown scheme, then, was working in the cunning brain of the cracksmán? Erroll felt himself oppressed with a vague fear.

He had always obeyed his father—excepting in one matter. The cracksmán's son, so far as his own actions went, was as honest as any fellow at Rookwood. He could remember more than one bitter and angry scene in his strange home, but in that he had never faltered, and in that he never would falter.

How gladly he had come to Rookwood. It had seemed an escape from the surroundings that galled him to the very soul. To escape from such associations, it had seemed a light thing to chance his name. What did it matter if he was called Erroll? Gentleman Jim had chosen that name for him by chance, or for some reason the boy knew nothing of. What did it matter?

What mattered was that it meant a chance for him to throw the black, shadowed past behind—to begin to make his own way in the world. He would have chosen death itself before

he would have followed his father's profession.

Yet, from that lawless profession came the bread that he ate. Could he help it? He had grown up in ignorance of it, and the discovery had been a fearful shock to him.

His father had bidden him remain at the school. It must mean that he hoped to be able, somehow, to silence Mornington.

Erroll knew that that was impossible.

How was Gentleman Jim even to see the fellow? What influence could he have over him, even if he saw him? Erroll was strangely perplexed and troubled. But he obeyed his father's command. He did not wish to go. If there was a faint chance, he would take it. Rookwood meant everything to him.

But when Mornington returned!

He went down to tea at last. Mornington had not come in. But when old Mack, the porter, locked the gates at dusk he expected to see the dandy of the Fourth. But Mornington did not answer to his name at calling-over.

"Morny's stickin' it out," Townsend grinned to Topham, as the fellows came out of Hall. "Makin' a day of it, by gad!"

"Lucky bargee!" grunted Topham.

It was later in the evening when Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood, came into the junior Common-room.

"Has Mornington come in?" he asked.

"Haven't seen him," said Conroy.

Nobody had seen him. Bulkeley left the Common-room. When the Classical Fourth were shepherded off to their dormitory later, there was a buzz of excitement among the juniors.

Mornington had not returned!

CHAPTER 23.

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 Stacpool.

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, sir! Will you tell me the time?"

The Rookwood junior halted.

He drew out his handsome gold watch and glanced at it. The carter came a little nearer, touching his hat very respectfully.

"Quarter to two," said Mornington.

"Thank you, zur. Time I was gettin' along, then," said the carter. "You be from Rookwood, zur?"

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

"Pr'aps you know Master Mornington of Rookwood School, zur?"

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 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 Rockwood.

"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 the kidnapers.

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, like Moses of old, 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 kidnaping.

A market-cart came lumbering along from the direction of Coombe. The driver exchanged a sleepy good-day with the carter as he stood in the road.

Then the market-cart lumbered on.

The carter returned to his companion, breathing hard, but with a smile on his bearded lips.

"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.

Half-way 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.

CHAPTER 24.

Held By the Enemy.

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

The Rockwood junior could see nothing, hear nothing but the heavy bumps 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 kidnaping had been carefully planned; he realised that. The cart had been in waiting, the kidnapers 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 kidnapers 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——"

"A few days!" shouted Mornington.

"Perhaps a week or two."

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

"Your uncle is not in Latham."

"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 roll of blankets, several rugs, a camp-chair, cooking utensils. Evidently the kidnapers 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 cracksmen—Gentleman Jim!"

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

"Oh, I know it all now! Erroll's told you that I've found him out!" shouted Mornington. "That's what he telephoned about."

"Exactly."

"And—and he planned this with you."

"He knows nothing about it, so far," smiled Gentleman Jim. "I laid my plans as soon as I knew that you had nosed out matters that did not concern you, my fine fellow. If you choose to play the spy, you must pay for it."

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 cracksmen, as he passed the chain round Mornington's waist and locked it.

"You hound!"

The cracksmen fastened the end of the chain to the stake. Mornington

had a freedom of eight or nine feet. Then the cracksmen 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 pretend to run risks. If you utter one cry, you will be gagged, and kept 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. You cannot escape; but if you attempt to do so, you will be bound again, hand and foot. You will have food and drink—plain, but enough for you—and a blanket and rug to sleep in. So long as you give no trouble, you have nothing to fear. 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 was gone!

CHAPTER 25.

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 given 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 cracksman 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 cracksman? 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 specious "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 can't help fearing that some accident has happened to him, Bulkeley. Even his guardian has no right to keep him late for bed-time. 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 Stackpoole. Is he still at the hotel?" said Mr. Bootles, into the transmitter.

"What name?"

"Sir Rupert Stackpoole."

"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 Stackpoole 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.

Again the voice came through from Latcham.

"Nothing is known here of any schoolboy 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 Stackpoole 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.

Mr. Bootles sat down to wait with him, very much perturbed. It was quite possible that some acquaintance of Mornington had used Sir Rupert's name to get the junior an extra holiday. But, even so, what had become of Mornington? Why had he betrayed the trick by staying away so late, and why did he not return?

The Head, too, 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 today. 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 bed-time 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.

Dr. Chisholm paced his study in great perturbation.

There was nothing more to be done. He did not even know whether Mornington had gone to Latcham or not. He did not know whether something serious had happened, or whether this was a reckless escapade, such as Mornington had sometimes been guilty of in his early days at Rookwood School.

Midnight passed, and one o'clock tolled out, and Mornington had not returned. That he could be staying away of his own accord, it was not possible to suppose any longer.

The Head went to bed at last and Mr. Bootles followed his example, but 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!

CHAPTER 26.

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.

After lessons there was no news.

Townsend went to Mr. Bootles boldly, to ask for information, but the distressed Form-master had none to give.

He shook his head as he came back to the crowd of juniors waiting to hear whether there was any news.

"Nothin'," said Townsend.

"By gad," said Smythe of the Shell, "this beats everythin'! What can Morny be up to?"

"Must have been an accident," said Conroy.

"But the police are looking for him right and left," said Jimmy Silver. "If there'd been an accident he'd have been found."

"I've been down to the station," said Van Ryn. "It's quite certain Morny never took a ticket there yesterday.

He never got as far as the station after he left here."

"And it's come out that the telephone call from Latcham was a swindle," said Oswald. "Old Stacpoole wasn't there at all."

"Some pal of Morny's gettin' him a holiday—what?" said Smythe. "I believe Morny's worked that before."

"It isn't that this time," said Jimmy Silver. "Morny would have come back in any case. Whoever telephoned from Latcham was the merchant who's responsible for keeping him away now."

"You think he's being kept away?" asked Newcome.

"He must be."

"N-n-not kidnapped!" ejaculated Lovell.

"Well, it looks like it."

"Oh, crumbs!"

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. 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 kidnappers' 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.

Yet he could not wholly understand.

He dared not think that the cracksmen would do Mornington an injury. But he could not be kept a prisoner for long. It was only putting off the evil day, and making matters worse, when at last the end should come.

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——"

"By Jove, you're looking seedy!" said Jimmy. "I've hardly seen you to-day, Erroll. Anything wrong?"

"N-no."

"Not worrying about Mornny?" asked Jimmy. He became graver. "I say, Erroll, I don't think there's any real need to be alarmed. It's pretty certain that some rascals have got hold of him for his money but they won't hurt him."

"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.

The Fistical Four were concerned about Mornington, enemy of theirs as he always had been. But they did not see any use in going about looking glum, at all events until it was known that the matter was serious.

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 cracksmen 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 paced 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 with out 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 school-boy.

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. You—you have not——"

He faltered.

The cracksman laughed contemptuously.

"Don't be a fool, boy! Do you think I am imbecile enough to put my neck within reach of a rope?"

Erroll drew a deep breath of relief.

"Thank Heaven, he is not hurt!" he muttered.

"He is not hurt, and will not be hurt. If he gives trouble the Badger may handle him a bit roughly, but that is all. I suppose the school is in a flurry about his disappearance?"

"Yes."

"What do they suppose has happened?"

"That he is kidnapped, I suppose!"

"They could scarcely think anything else. But they will hardly think of Captain Erroll in connection with the affair," smiled the cracksman. "You can sleep soundly to-night, Kit."

The schoolboy smiled bitterly.

"It is not so easy!" he said. "You have not told me where Mornington is."

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

"Yes, yes."

"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, 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."

The junior shook his head.

"No! I have done with it. I am tired of lies and impostures. I did not think there would be great harm in taking a name that was not mine, to get 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 cracksmán, 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 all safe for me to enter, and when we are ready, you will let me in at night——"

"Never!"

"Did you think you were placed in the school only to play the gentleman?" sneered the cracksmán. "You must earn your bread and your fine schooling, my boy. You will do as you are ordered!"

"Never! Never that!"

The cracksmán'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 telling 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. You are not like me. I have wondered often, since I knew what you were, whether you really were my father!"

"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 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 cracksmán 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. Was that man steeped in lies and crime his father? Be that as it might, he had no right to exact obedience, and the schoolboy's mind was firm and fixed.

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.

CHAPTER 27.

No News!

TOMMY DODD of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood came into the School House with a serious expression upon his face.

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

There was a match fixed between Moderns and Classicals for that afternoon, but for once the thoughts of the Rookwood fellows were not turned on cricket, though it was a sunny, smiling afternoon, ideal weather for the great summer game.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth—Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome—were chatting by the hall window, looking graver than usual. Erroll, with a frown on his face, was with them, but he was not speaking. Tommy Dodd looked round, and came over to the group.

"Looking for you, Silver!" he said. Jimmy nodded.

"Here I am."

"About the match this afternoon," said the Modern junior hesitatingly.

"I suppose we're going to play, all the same?"

"We were just talking about it."

"I suppose it won't look unfeeling to be playing cricket when nobody knows what's become of Mornington of the Fourth?" said Tommy Dodd. "Of course, a chap doesn't want to seem unfeeling, but—"

"Might as well play," said Lovell.

"Well, Mornington was a Classical chap," said Tommy Dodd. "It's for you fellows to say. If you'd rather chuck it, say so."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

The mystery that hung over Mornington's fate cast something of a cloud over the Lower School. Even fellows who had not liked him shared in the general anxiety.

Nobody wanted to appear unfeeling, as if "business as usual" was going on in spite of what had happened to Mornington. But it did not seem that it would do Morny much good to cut cricket and "mooch" about Rookwood doing nothing.

"Better play, all the same," said Jimmy Silver at last. "No good wasting the afternoon doing nothing, as far as I can see."

Tommy Dodd nodded.

"Well, I thought I'd ask you," he said. "Don't want to look as if we don't care. But mooching about with our hands in our pockets won't help poor old Morny, wherever he is. We play, then?"

"Yes."

"Right-ho! Stumps pitched at two."

And Tommy Dodd walked out.

"What do you think, Erroll?" asked Jimmy Silver, with a rather curious look at the new junior.

Erroll was the fellow who had seemed to be quite knocked over by Morny's strange disappearance, which was odd enough, for Mornington had been his bitter enemy.

Kit Erroll started.

"Eh? You said—"

"Better play this afternoon—what?" said Jimmy.

"Oh! Oh, yes! Why not?"

"You seem to be jolly cut up about Morny, Erroll!" said Lovell, in wonder. "At least, ever since he vanished you've been looking jolly blue. You didn't like the chap, did you?"

Erroll shook his head.

"Well, I don't see how you could, considering how he treated you," said Lovell. "I can't say I expected you to care. Considering that Morny was down on you from the day you came, and accused you of being the son of a merry burglar, or somethin', the silly ass—"

"Oh, never mind that now!" said Jimmy Silver. "We proved that was all rot. But really, Erroll, you do seem knocked over by it. I expect Morny's safe enough, if it comes to that."

"He's been kidnapped right enough," remarked Lovell. "But they won't hurt him, why should they?"

"It can only be a dodge to get money," said Newcome.

"And the bobbies may find him any minute, and bring him home," added Raby comfortingly.

"I—I don't suppose he'll come to any harm," said Erroll. "But I've been thinking about the poor chap. Must be having a rough time, wherever he is."

Erroll nodded to the Fistical Four, and sauntered out into the quadrangle.

He left the chums of the Classical Fourth looking very puzzled.

"Blessed if I see why Erroll should worry over it!" said Lovell. "Morny was a beast to him."

"Tender heart, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver. "Hallo, there's old Stacky!"

Under that somewhat irreverent title Jimmy alluded to a white-moustached old gentleman who was coming across the quad to the School House.

It was Sir Robert Stacpoole, one of the governors of Rookwood School, and

uncle and guardian of Mornington of the Fourth.

The old gentleman's face was darkly clouded.

He had been staying at Rookwood since he had been apprised of his nephew's disappearance, hoping for news of the missing junior.

Jimmy Silver left his chums, and approached the baronet as he came into the House.

"Excuse me, sir! Any news of Mornington?" he asked.

Sir Rupert glanced at him.

"None, my boy!" he said.

"The police haven't found out anything yet, sir?" asked Jimmy.

"Nothing so far, I am sorry to say."

Sir Rupert passed on towards the Head's study.

Jimmy's face clouded for a moment. He had hoped that there might be news.

It seemed certain that Mornington of the Fourth had been kidnapped. Yet no demand had yet been made to his guardian for money, and it seemed that that could be the only object of the kidnapers. It was puzzling.

But the juniors dismissed it from their minds when the time came for stumps to be pitched. Jimmy Silver's Eleven went down to Little Side, with one exception. Erroll was not there, and Jimmy looked round for him. He found him in Little Quad.

"Forgotten the match?" asked Jimmy pleasantly.

"You want me?" asked Erroll.

"Of course, fathead! Can't spare you!"

"If—if you don't mind, Silver, I—I was thinking of going out this afternoon——"

"Rats!" said Jimmy decidedly. "Come along to the cricket. Buck up! You've got to get changed, and the Modern chaps are ready!"

He took Erroll's arm, and marched him away. And the new junior joined the Classical cricketers on Little Side. Erroll was too good a bowler to be left out of the Classical Junior Eleven, excepting for good reason.

CHAPTER 28.

The Prisoner of the Quarry!

"MY Heaven, I can't stand much more of this!"
Clink! Clink!

It was the rattle of a chain.

Some miles from Rookwood School, in the heart of the old moor, where the ancient disused quarries offered many a trap for the unwary, Mornington of the Fourth paced to and fro in a deep quarrryside.

On the moor the afternoon sun was shining warmly, but little sun penetrated into the old quarry.

In the cave in the quarrryside a dim light reigned, almost of twilight.

About the cave lay several rugs, blankets, cooking-utensils, and a camp-stool or two.

Few would have dreamed of looking for dwellers in that dark and remote recess.

But it was there that the kidnapped junior of Rookwood tramped to and fro.

He was alone in the quarry cave.

He looked little like the Mornington of Rookwood—the dandy of the Fourth—whose elegance was secretly envied even by Sixth Form "nuts."

His well-cut clothes were thick with mud and dust. His hands and face were dirty, his hair unkempt.

Camping out in the quarry cave had left its mark on the dandy of Rookwood.

It was Saturday afternoon, and he had been there since Thursday afternoon. His eyes were burning under his knitted brows as he tramped to and fro.
Clink! Clink!

A long thin chain was padlocked round the junior's waist, the other end riveted to a strong stake in the ground.

The kidnapers were running no risks with their prisoner.

"By gad! How long is this goin' to last?"

Mornington muttered savagely as he tramped to and fro on the narrow confines of the cave, dragging the chain.

His breast was seething with rage and bitterness.

He had hoped at first that the police would soon find him. He had looked forward with malicious anticipation to the arrest of the kidnappers and their punishment. He would not have regretted his discomforts, if they led to penal servitude for Gentleman Jim and the Badger.

But rescue did not come.

After forty-eight hours he despaired.

He realised that he would not be found. It was probable that the police would not even think of looking for him so near Rookwood.

He had to remain there, in dirt and discomfort and fury, till it pleased his captors to let him go.

He clenched his hands and ground his teeth as he thought of it. It was a bitter blow to the lofty pride of Mornington.

There was a step in the quarry, and a thick-set, heavy-jowled man stepped into the cave, with a couple of rabbits slung over his arm. He grinned and nodded to the restive junior.

"Change fur you to-day, young feller-me-lad," he said. "Look at these 'ere! They ain't cost me nothing, either!"

And the Badger grinned.

"Look here. How long are you going to keep me here, my man?" hissed Mornington.

The Badger chuckled.

"That's for Gentleman Jim to say," he answered. "You wait!"

"You'll go to prison for this!"

"Maybe."

"Look here, I'll make it worth your while to let me go," said Mornington. "My guardian would pay you what you liked to ask—"

"More likely to send me to chokey," grinned the Badger.

"I will give you my word you shall be safe."

"And what's that worth?" asked the Badger.

"You impertinent hound?" shouted Mornington.

"Oh, chuck it!" urged the Badger. "Do you want a lick with this 'ere

stick? If you do, you only got to keep on like that."

And the ruffian proceeded to prepare the poached rabbits for his repast, Mornington watching him with savage eyes.

He threw himself down to rest at last. How long was this going on? How long before he saw the light of day again?

Erroll's secret was safe so long as Mornington remained a prisoner in the old quarry.

How long did the rascals intend to keep him there?

As soon as he returned to the school Kit Erroll would be shown up in his true colours; he would have to go, if he was not arrested.

It could not be long—days or weeks at the most.

What was the object of the cracksmen in taking such desperate measures to keep the secret which must, ere long, be revealed?

Mornington was fatigued with thinking over it.

His thoughts turned to Rookwood. It was afternoon now, and the Classical and Modern match would be going on, on Little Side.

Jimmy Silver & Co. would be playing Tommy Dodd's team, and Erroll would be prominent among the cricketers!

Mornington's eyes blazed as he muttered the name.

The cracksmen's son, who had cheated Rookwood into believing that a gallant Colonial soldier was his father, he was enjoying the limelight at Rookwood, while the fellow who knew his real identity was chained like a dog in the quarryside!

He ground his teeth at the thought. When would the hour come, when, before all Rookwood, he would denounce the impostor, and hold him up to contempt, derision, scorn? Would that hour never come?

The savoury smell of the rabbit, boiling over a spirit-stove, filled the cave. The Badger glanced at the sullen-faced, furious prisoner.

"Take it quiet, young gent," he advised. "Take it heasy! You ain't goin' to be 'urt. Only enjoying my serciety fur a day or two! Ain't that 'ere a pleasure—wot?"

And the Badger chortled good-humouredly. Mornington, savage and sullen, did not answer. When would the hour of deliverance and revenge come? That was his only thought.

CHAPTER 23.

The Moderns Are Lucky!

"BUTTERFINGERS!"

"Muff!"

Erroll turned crimson.

Jimmy Silver gave his latest recruit a curious look.

The Moderns were batting, and Oswald had bowled. Tommy Dodd, at the wicket, had landed a catch fairly into Kit Erroll's hand at cover-point.

Erroll was a first-class bowler, and very reliable in the field—as a rule. His catches had often earned him cheers from the Rookwooders.

It was an easy catch this time. Tommy Dodd had been careless for once.

And the ball, which should have floated fairly into Erroll's hand, slipped through his fingers and dropped.

Smythe & Co., the nuts of Rookwood, were watching the match, and that muffed catch was a delight to the nuts.

And they yelled in chorus:

"Butterfingers!"

"By gad!" said Adolphus Smythe, grinning at his friends. "Did you see that, begad? And Jimmy Silver says we're not good enough for the eleven!"

"Rotten!" said Townsend. "The fellow can't field."

"Lot of fuss they've made about him, too," said Peele. "He was never as good as Morny! Poor old Morny!"

"Give him a yell!" grinned Smythe.

And the nuts gave the unlucky fieldsmen another yell of derision.

It was but seldom that Smythe & Co.

had an excuse for deriding one of Jimmy Silver's eleven on the cricket-field.

Now that the excuse had come along they made the most of it.

Other fellows, as well as the nuts, stared at Erroll, and grinned. He had missed a catch that would have been easy to Snooks of the Second.

And it was only a beginning.

Erroll, generally fit as a fiddle, was evidently off his form.

He was fit enough, so far as that went, but his mind was plainly off the game.

Jimmy sent him into the long field at last, not that he expected him to be very useful there, but he thought he would do least damage there.

Erroll had already been tried at bowling, and he had bowled in a way that was too profitable for the Moderns for Jimmy to try him again.

The Classical junior skipper began to regret that he had routed Erroll out of Little Quad after all.

He wondered what on earth was the matter with him. It was not a question of physical fitness; Erroll was quite well. It was as if he had something on his mind, which came between him and the game.

Yet, as a rule, he was one of the keenest of the Rookwood cricketers.

Erroll's failure was serious enough for the Classical side, in its results.

The Moderns scored 90 for their innings, a figure they certainly would not have reached if Erroll had been his usual self.

And when the Classicals went in to bat, Jimmy left Erroll for the tail of the innings. He foresaw only too clearly that his new recruit was very likely to retire with a big round 0 to his credit.

The Classical batsmen played up hard, but the Modern score was not easy to overtake.

It was a single-innings match, and it looked as if the Moderns would walk away victors on their innings.

The Classical score stood at 76, with

Lovell at the wicket, when last man in was called.

Smythe & Co. grinned in happy anticipation as the latest recruit came out to join Lovell at the wickets.

"Now look out for fireworks!" said Adolphus.

"Two to one it's a duck's-egg!" said Gower.

"Five to one if you like!" chuckled Smythe. "You won't find any takers."

Smythe & Co. were right for once, though, as a rule, what they did not know about cricket would have filled large volumes.

Tommy Cook was bowling, and he gave Erroll a ball which, as a rule, would have been worth at least 2 to the batsman.

Erroll missed it hopelessly, and his middle stump flew out of the ground.

"How's that?" chuckled Cook.

"Ha, ha!"

And the umpire chortled as he said: "Out!"

Erroll's face crimsoned, and he cast a quick, almost appealing glance at Jimmy Silver as he came off the field.

Jimmy's face was rather grim.

If Erroll had backed up Lovell well there would still have been a chance of pulling the game out of the fire. Instead of which he had been bowled first ball. The Classical side had been beaten by 14 runs.

"I—I'm sorry, Silver!" muttered Erroll. "I know I've played rottenly!"

"You have!" agreed the captain of the Fourth. "No mistake about that, old scout! What's the matter with you?"

"I—I——"

"You look fit enough."

"Oh, I'm fit enough, but——"

Erroll did not finish.

Jimmy forced a grin. He was not the kind of cricket skipper who rags and worries a man for a failure.

"Never mind, old son! Better luck next time!" he said. "Don't worry!"

"I meant to do better," said Erroll.

"That's all right!"

The Moderns were looking very satis-

fied with their victory.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were far from attributing it to the inexplicable failure of Jimmy Silver's new recruit. From the Modern point of view, the win was perfectly natural, and due to the superiority of Modern cricket.

Adolphus Smythe joined the cricketers as they came off, grinning.

"Valuable man you've got there, Silver—what!" he remarked.

"Yes, rather! Worth fifty of you, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"After the show he's put up this afternoon!" sneered Adolphus.

"Yes, it was quite your style, wasn't it?" growled Jimmy.

And Jimmy strode on.

"Well, we're licked!" said Lovell as the Fistical Four went in to tea. "What on earth's the matter with Erroll, Jimmy?"

"Give it up!" said Jimmy. "A fellow gets off-colour every now and then, you know."

"He seemed to be half asleep half the time!" said Newcome.

"Never mind. We'll ask him to tea, to show that there's no ill-feeling!" said Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver looked for Erroll. He found Jones minor and Higgs in Study No. 2, but Kit Erroll was not there.

"Seen Erroll?" asked Jimmy.

"Gone out!" said Jones minor.

"Oh, right-ho!"

Jimmy remembered that Erroll had said he wanted to go out that afternoon, but he had stayed in for the match.

Owing to the Moderns' somewhat easy victory, the match had ended much earlier than had been anticipated, and Erroll had gone.

Jimmy returned to the end study.

"Erroll's cleared off," he said. "Let's have tea. As we've got time on our hands, we'll have a trot out after tea, and pick up a row with the Bagshot Bounders—what?"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co.

And when the tea had been disposed of, the Fistical Four strolled out of the

gates of Rookwood, with the laudable intention of improving the shining hour with a row with their old rivals of Bagshot School.

CHAPTER 39.

The Parting of the Ways!

"YOU'RE late!" growled Gentleman Jim.

Kit Erroll came up breathlessly to the old woodman's hut in Coombe Wood.

It was the same spot where the junior had met Gentleman Jim on the previous occasion, when Mornington of the Fourth had played the spy, and learned the secret—learning which had cost the dandy of the Fourth so dear.

The man who had appeared at Rookwood as "Captain Erroll" was waiting with knitted brows, chewing a cigar with savage impatience.

He muttered an oath as the Rookwood junior came up, breathing hard after his haste.

"Another cricket match?" he asked sarcastically.

"Yes," said Erroll quietly. "I tried to get out of it, but it couldn't be done."

"Well, this won't last much longer!" said Gentleman Jim.

"You mean I shall not be at Rookwood much longer?"

"Naturally. Mornington cannot be kept a prisoner for long. It is not likely that he will be discovered where he is hidden, but it is always possible, and I want the matter to be finished up. There is always risk."

"Why not let him go, father?"

"Don't be a fool, Kit! The moment he sets foot in Rookwood again you will be known as the son of Gentleman Jim; he knows the whole business. You will be kicked out of the school, if you are not arrested."

"I can leave at once."

"It does not suit my plans for you to leave at once!" sneered Gentleman Jim. "The game is up so far as your staying permanently at Rookwood is

concerned. But all the trouble and expense is not going to be taken for nothing. We shall not leave empty-handed."

Kit Erroll set his teeth.

"I shall leave empty-handed," he said.

"What has been done about Mornington since I last saw you?" asked the cracksmán, unheeding.

"His guardian is at the school now. The police are still searching for him."

"In what direction?"

"I don't know. Latham, I think."

Gentleman Jim grinned.

"They have not thought of looking near the school?" he remarked. "I calculated on that."

"I don't know," said Erroll; "but I have not heard anyone suggest that he might be still near the school."

"Good! It was the easiest plan, and the safest. He could not have been taken to a distance without risk. Now, about your plans, Kit. Have you brought the plan with you that I told you to draw up?"

"No."

"You have had ample time to get it through."

"I know."

"You fool!" said Gentleman Jim between his teeth. "Do you understand that you are wasting time that cannot be recovered? It is always possible that Mornington may be found. It may occur to the police to search the old quarries on the moor. It is not likely, but it is always possible. If he should be found, the game is up. You know that."

"I know it," said the schoolboy dully.

"Then why have you not done your work?"

Erroll did not reply.

"Listen to me!" said the cracksmán. "There is danger, and time is precious. As you have not drawn up the plan of the school, I shall act without it. You will let me into the House, and you will be my guide. The sooner the job is over the better. I shall remain in the

vicinity, and come to Rookwood to-night."

Erroll drew a deep breath.

The parting of the ways had come, and he was prepared for it.

"You will not come!" he said. "If you force your way in, I shall alarm the House."

Gentleman Jim started back, his eyes glittering.

"Are you mad, Kit?" he ejaculated.

The schoolboy smiled bitterly.

"I've made up my mind. I told you so before. Isn't it enough for me to be here at Rookwood under a false name, with a disgraceful secret to keep? Do you think I'm going to repay the kindness I have received by letting in a criminal to rob the school? If you'd told me that before I went I would never have set foot in Rookwood!"

"My son will obey my orders!" said Gentleman Jim.

Erroll looked him in the face.

"I do not believe that you are my father," he said. "I have always had doubts, ever since I was old enough to think, and ever since I knew what you were. I do not believe it. But even if you are my father, you have no right to tell me to commit a crime. I will not do it!"

The cracksman bit through his cigar in his suppressed rage.

The boy's determination was clearly to be read in his face.

He was pale, but his face was hard and set, his eyes gleaming. Every line in the handsome face told of a resolution that was not to be shaken.

There was a long silence. Gentleman Jim broke it at last.

"You think that you will stay at Rookwood after defying me?" he muttered. "Take care!"

"I shall not stay at Rookwood. I cannot now Mornington knows. I must go. And I shall go! I was mad to think that I could stay there, that a decent and honourable life was possible for me!" said the junior bitterly.

"And what will you do if you cast off your friends?"

"I shall be better without such friends as the Badger," said Erroll, "and without such a father as you!"

"Take care!"

"You have driven me to speak out. So long as you did not ask me to help in what you did I owed you obedience, I suppose. It seemed so to me. Now that you have done so, I shall never see you again," said Erroll.

"And what will you do?" sneered Gentleman Jim.

"Leave Rookwood."

"And then?"

"Work!"

"And what work are you capable of?" asked the cracksman contemptuously. "You have been educated to take your place in the Lower Form of a Public school. Are you going into the labour market, saying that you can construe Virgil, that you can compose tenth-rate Latin hexameters, that you are passably good at French and mathematics? When will you get a job?"

"I can work with my hands. Other fellows do. I have envied the grocer's boy who comes to Rookwood with groceries," said Erroll. "I would gladly take his basket and do his work rather than keep on as I have done."

"Oh, you are out of your senses! And even a grocer's boy's job is not easy to get by a helpless Public schoolboy."

"I know that. But I will work at anything I can find," said Erroll, his eyes glistening.

Gentleman Jim gnawed his lip and stared at the boy. He seemed at a loss for words.

"You mean, then, to throw me over, and everything—to begin for yourself?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And if you starve—"

"I shall face that. I am not afraid."

"And you think I shall let you go?" said Gentleman Jim. "You think that I shall pardon your desertion? You

think you will be allowed to start this wonderful new career without your past being revealed to your new employer every time you succeed in getting a job?"

Erroll compressed his lips.

"I only ask you to leave me in peace," he said.

"And if I refuse?"

"I shall face that, too. But"—his eyes flashed—"I warn you, too, to take care! I know enough of your doings, and the Badger's, and the rest, that the police would be very glad to know. If I am meddled with I shall make you all sorry for it!"

"By gad! And this is my son!" said Gentleman Jim. "Rookwood has done this in a few weeks!"

"I do not believe I am your son."

The cracksmen did not reply.

He stood looking at the schoolboy, his hands clenched, his eyes glittering. It looked for some moments as if he would hurl himself at the lad.

But he repressed his fury.

"You will think better of this, Kit," he said at last.

"I shall not change my mind."

"Listen to me! The haul I could make at Rookwood may come to two thousand pounds—even more. You can be started at another school, under another name, at a distance, and lead there the life you wish to lead."

Erroll was silent.

"What do you say, Kit?"

"That I will be a beggar before I am a thief!"

The cracksmen muttered an oath.

"You will think better of this!" he said. "You had better, or——" He left the threat unfinished. "I shall see you again, Kit."

"You will not see me again."

Without replying, the cracksmen turned and strode away into the wood. Gentleman Jim's plans—for that night, at least—had to be abandoned.

Erroll waited till his footsteps had died away, and then he, too, moved from the spot. But he did not go in the direction of Rookwood.

CHAPTER 31.

Erroll to the Rescue!

CLINK!

Mornington was moving restlessly.

The summer sun was sinking over the moor, and in the deep quarry dim twilight reigned. In the cave in the quarry-side there was deep dusk.

The Badger was stretched on a heap of rugs and coats, dozing. He had been refreshing himself from a black bottle, and he was half-asleep. He moved, with an irritable growl, as the chain clinked.

"Keep still, can't you?"

Mornington gritted his teeth and stood still. More than once he had felt the heavy hand of the ruffian when he had irritated him.

He sat on a slate block, and stared moodily out of the cave over the recumbent ruffian into the dim quarry.

How long was this to last?

Escape was impossible, rescue seemed hopeless. His liberty depended on the caprice of his captors. How long? Even the prospect of revenge upon Kit Erroll had little comfort for Mornington now.

A moving shadow in the old quarry caught his eyes, and he watched it curiously.

He knew it meant that someone was moving along the quarry, though he could hear no sound.

Was it the cracksmen returning?

Mornington felt his heart beating.

If it was the cracksmen, why was he moving so silently? But if it was someone else——

He glanced at the Badger.

The ruffian lay half-asleep, breathing stertorously, on the rugs. He did not see the shadow.

Mornington suppressed a cry as a figure appeared in the opening and peered into the cave.

Then, as he recognised the newcomer, he snapped his teeth.

"Erroll!"

He gave the Rookwood junior a glance of bitter hatred. It was not the

rescue he had dreamed of for a wild moment; it was only one of his enemies who had come.

The Badger stirred and sat up.

"Hallo! You 'ere?" he mumbled. "Did the boss send you 'ere?"

Erroll stepped quietly into the cave. His eyes rested on Mornington for a moment and gleamed. Then he faced the Badger.

"Gentleman Jim does not know I am here, Badger. I have been two hours hunting for this place. I knew you were hidden on the moor, that was all. Now I have found you."

"What do you want 'ere, then?"

"I have come to release Mornington."

"Wot?"

Mornington started.

"You heard me, Badger," said Erroll coolly.

The Badger grinned.

"Them ain't Gentleman Jim's orders!" he said. "I don't take no orders from you, Kit."

"I am going to release Mornington," said Kit coolly. "If you try to stop me, Badger, it's between you and me!"

He stepped towards the dandy of the Fourth, who watched him dazedly.

"Don't you play the goat, Kit!" said the 'Badger. "Look 'ere, Gentleman Jim is coming 'ere later, afore he goes back. You wait till he comes!"

"Gentleman Jim would be against me, Badger, and that's a good reason for not waiting till he comes," said Erroll quietly. "Have you the key to this padlock?"

"I 'ave, and I'm keeping it."

"I want it, Badger."

"Mind, I shall 'urt you," said the ruffian, as the sturdy junior advanced upon him.

He picked up a billet of wood.

Erroll did not recede.

"Will you give me the key, Badger?"

"No, I won't!"

"Then I shall take it!"

"I'll brain you if you come on another step!" roared the ruffian.

Erroll sprang forward.

The heavy billet of wood swung down,

and Erroll would certainly have fallen, stunned, if the blow had reached its mark.

But a quick backward spring saved him, and the Badger, almost over-balanced as his arm met with no resistance, staggered forward.

Before he could recover the Rookwood junior was upon him.

A drive straight from the shoulder caught the ruffian upon his stubby chin, and he went over backwards as if he had been shot.

The schoolboy was upon him the next moment.

His knee was planted on the Badger's chest, and the billet of wood was in his hand now, and it circled over the ruffian's terrified face.

"Better give in," said Erroll grimly.

The Badger twisted his head aside frantically.

"Ow! Don't! Give over!" he yelled.

"I give in."

"Which pocket is the key in?"

The Badger sullenly indicated the pocket. With his left hand, Erroll groped in it and drew out a small key. He tossed it to Mornington.

"Unlock the padlock," he said.

Mornington, dazed, wondering whether he was dreaming, picked up the key. It slid into the padlock, and in another moment the dandy of Rookwood was free.

"Help me to put the chain round him," said Erroll.

"Look 'ere, Kit——"

"Shut up!"

Mornington grinned faintly.

He grasped the Badger, not gently, and the two juniors dragged the wriggling ruffian within reach of the chain.

It was passed round the Badger's waist and padlocked.

Erroll, rose, breathing hard.

Mornington looked at him. He was so astounded by the sudden turn of events that he could hardly realise what had happened. The Badger, confined by the padlock that had lately held Mornington a prisoner, pouted out a

stream of oaths as he sprawled helplessly.

"You've not been hurt?" said Erroll.

"No," Mornington gasped.

"You are free now."

"And you have set me free?" said Mornington.

"Yes."

For a moment some ray of gratitude, of friendly feeling, had flickered in Mornington's breast, as he had watched Erroll struggling with the Badger. But it was gone now.

It was with his old sardonic smile that he looked at Erroll.

"What game is this?" he said bitterly. "Did you think I should be found soon? I suppose you did. Sooner or later, anyway. I tell you plainly, you nameless hound, that this doesn't buy you off! The minute I get to Rookwood you'll be known in your true colours!"

Erroll smiled contemptuously.

"I did not expect it to buy me off," he said. "I do not want you to keep silent. I leave Rookwood to-day for ever. But I would not leave you a prisoner, and I have searched for you and saved you. That is all. You can go!"

Mornington, without another word, strode out of the cave.

He was free!

He drew in a deep breath of enjoyment as he stepped into the open quarry from the cave, and his heart beat.

But the next moment his face changed.

On the rugged path that led into the quarry from above a form appeared, and Mornington recognised Gentleman Jim.

The cracksman sighted him at the same moment, and his face darkened with rage. He quickened his steps.

Erroll followed Mornington from the cave. A hunted look came into his face as he saw the cracksman hurrying down the rugged path.

Well he knew that Gentleman Jim's plans, though postponed, were not aban-

doned—that his design on Rookwood still held good, and that for the accomplishment of that design Mornington's imprisonment was indispensable.

He caught the dandy of Rookwood by the arm.

"Come!" he muttered. "We've got to run for it!"

"He's barring the way out!"

"The other way—quick!"

Mornington made no demur. His fate was in Erroll's hands. The two juniors rushed along the bottom of the old quarry, and disappeared from Gentleman Jim's sight as the cracksman came panting up to the cave.

CHAPTER 32.

Saving His Foe!

"I—I can't run!" panted Mornington.

He stumbled blindly.

The prospect of liberty had for the moment endowed Mornington with strength. But as he ran his limbs almost failed him. He realised that his imprisonment in the cave had told more upon him than he had imagined. He was weak in all his limbs, and his breath came in gasps.

Erroll's strong grasp on his arm saved him from falling.

"Keep up, if you can," muttered Erroll, as he drew his companion on. "They will be after us. Gentleman Jim is armed, and he is capable——"

He did not finish, but ran on, helping the panting dandy of Rookwood.

They ran and stumbled over the rugged ground, with its jagged edges of half-hewn slate. How far the old quarry extended they did not know. They were ascending, and Erroll hoped to emerge upon the moor. But the dusk was deepening into darkness now.

In the distance behind they heard the clatter of stones under hurrying feet, the echo of a shouting voice.

"I—I'm done!" Mornington stopped, and sank on his knees from sheer weakness. "I'm done! Let me alone."

Erroll halted in despair.

He looked back. The last twilight of the quarry was vanishing. Above, on the moor, a glimmer of light yet lingered, but it did not penetrate into the depths. Two voices were calling in the distance. He knew that Gentleman Jim had found the Badger in the cave and released him.

The two scoundrels were in hot pursuit, and if they came up— Erroll wondered dully. He knew the savage temper of Gentleman Jim. Mornington would be dragged into captivity again, where Kit Erroll would not be able to help him. And Erroll? In his case, would the savage cracksman stop short at threats?

But it was not of himself that Erroll was thinking, but of the wretched junior who lay exhausted at his feet—who was his enemy, but whom he was determined to save.

Mornington peered up at him in the growing gloom.

"You can cut off, Erroll," he said. "I—I thought at first it was some trick you were playing. I'm sorry! Get out and leave me."

"I'm not going to leave you," said Erroll. "Come!"

He stooped and, exerting all his strength, lifted Mornington over his shoulder. Thus burdened, he tramped on up the rugged slope, stumbling, but never losing his footing.

Mornington said no more.

Erroll clambered and stumbled on. The slope was growing steeper. Would he ever reach the top and emerge upon the moor?

Below, a voice sounded, echoing:

"Kit! Kit Erroll! Stop!"

The panting junior stopped and looked back. Deep in the gloom below the cracksman stood invisible. But a ray of the dying sun penetrated to the higher ground where Erroll stood, and he was visible to the man below.

"Come back!" shouted the cracksman, his voice hoarse with rage. "You shall suffer for this, Kit!"

"I will not come back!"

"I warn you, Kit!" Gentleman Jim's voice was shaking. "By all the powers of darkness, Kit Erroll, if you do not obey me, I will shoot!"

"Shoot, then!"

Kit Erroll let Mornington slide from his back to the ground. He grasped a jagged fragment of slate from the soil.

"Keep back!" he called out steadily. "If you come on one step farther I will stop you!"

There was a scrambling of boots on the rugged slope. With a steady hand Kit Erroll hurled the fragment in the direction of the sound.

There was a howl of pain. It was the Badger's voice, and the juniors heard him roll down the slope.

"By gad!" muttered Mornington. "By gad! Erroll, old scout, if they get to us I'll stand by you. I've got a kick left in me yet!"

"They will not get to us," said Erroll quietly. "I could keep a dozen men down with these stones. They cannot overtake us now."

"And that man's your father!" muttered Mornington.

"I do not believe he is my father! But I am done with him, in any case," said Erroll, setting his teeth.

Deep below, in the gloom, the Badger was groaning and cursing. Gentleman Jim did not venture to follow his attempt. The fragments hurled from above would have swept him from his footing. And he knew that the Rookwood junior was in deadly earnest.

"For the last time, Kit!" There was a snarl as of a wild animal, in the cracksman's voice. "If you do not come down, I shall shoot!"

Erroll did not reply.

He seized Mornington and lifted him behind the shelter of a jutting spur of slate.

Crack!

The sudden report filled the old quarry with echoes. Gentleman Jim, in his fury, had kept his word.

Erroll gave a sudden gasp. Then he crouched behind the spur, a heavy stone in his hand ready for hurling.

"By gad!" said Mornington. "Erroll, you're not hit?"

"No; it was near enough." Erroll laughed grimly. "There's a hole in my sleeve, Morny! And I'm glad of it! I know now that what I've always suspected is the truth—that that man cannot be my father."

He waited and watched.

There was no second shot. Perhaps even the infuriated cracksmen realised that his rage had borne him too far. There was a scraping of boots on the rough quarry side, and Erroll, with unflinching hand, hurled the slate fragment. It crashed down the slope, and there was a cry and an oath.

Silence followed—a minute that seemed like a century to the Rookwood juniors.

Then there was a sound of receding footsteps, dying away into silence in the distance.

"They're gone!" panted Mornington.

"They're gone," said Erroll, "to try to cut us off at the top, Mornington. I don't think they'll be in time. Come!"

"It's no good," groaned Mornington.

"I can't walk. I'm done!"

"I can carry you."

Erroll lifted the exhausted junior upon his shoulder, and tramped on. The slope was steeper, but the rugged slaty earth offered good foothold, and Erroll had one hand free to help.

But it seemed an age to the juniors before he scrambled out at last upon the moor, and sank down in the gorse.

Exhausted by his efforts, Erroll lay without motion for some minutes.

But he knew that there was no time to waste.

It was certain that the cracksmen had left the quarry in the other direction, and were hastening to intercept the fugitives.

Erroll struggled to his feet.

Mornington peered at him with a strange expression on his white face. He made an effort to rise, but sank back.

Without speaking, Erroll picked him up and staggered away with him across

the moor, now buried in deep darkness.

More than a mile had passed under his weary feet before he stopped at last, under the first trees of Combe Wood.

There he lowered Mornington into the grass, and sank down himself against a tree-trunk.

"Safe now!" he said.

Mornington drew a deep breath.

"Thanks to you!" he said. "You're a queer beggar, Erroll. You know I'm going to denounce you as soon as I get to Rookwood?"

"Yes, yes!" said Erroll impatiently.

"And yet you're taking me there?"

"As soon as I've rested I'm going to take you to the gates of Rookwood," said Erroll quietly. "I shall not enter!"

"You're going, then?"

"Yes."

"Not going back to that gang, I suppose?"

"Scarcely!"

"What are you goin' to do?"

"I don't know."

And then there was silence.

CHAPTER 35.

From Foes to Friends!

FOR an hour or more the two juniors lay in the grass under the sombre trees, in silence. Both were utterly exhausted, and they lay resting while their strength came slowly back.

They were safe from pursuit. A mile lay between them and the old quarry, and on the wild moor there was no track, in the darkness, to guide their enemies.

They were no longer thinking of Gentleman Jim and his ruffianly companion. Both had food for thought. Erroll was thinking dully of the blank and dreary future that lay before him. Ousted from Rookwood—the only home he had ever known—cut off from his old associations, that inspired him only with horror.

Yet through it all there was one

satisfaction—his doubts were set at rest. He was sure now that he was not the son of Gentleman Jim. That murderous shot fired in the old quarry had convinced him of that. And Mornington's brain was busy, too; and the thoughts that worked in his mind were strange.

It was Mornington who broke the silence at last. His voice was low, and there was a tone in it that struck Erroll strangely.

"Erroll, that bullet might have knocked you out!"

"It didn't," said Erroll.

"What did you fish me out of their clutches for?"

"I thought I owed you that much before I went. They might have kept you there for months. You might have died there! Gentleman Jim would never have released you till I had carried out his instructions—and that I should never have done!"

"What were his instructions, Erroll?"

"To admit him to the school at night and help him rob Rookwood," said Erroll quietly.

"By gad!"

There was another silence. Again it was broken by the dandy of the Fourth, whose eyes were glimmering curiously in the gloom.

"You're a queer beggar, Erroll. When I found out that you were really the son of that rotter, I thought you'd been planted at the school to help in a robbery."

"I had," said Erroll. "But I did not know it—then."

"I've done you an injustice!"

"It doesn't matter."

"It does matter—to me," said Mornington. "If we're going to part for good to-night, Erroll, we shall part friends, I hope!"

Erroll stared at him in the gloom.

"That's rather a change, isn't it?" he said.

"It's rather a change what you've done for me."

"Yes; I suppose so."

"How did you come to be mixed up

in such a gang?" said Mornington. "You might tell me that. I don't understand!"

"I don't mind telling you," said Erroll wearily. "I'd rather you knew I wasn't—what you've supposed. Not that it matters—now!"

"It does matter," said Mornington. "Tell me!"

There was a pause, and then Erroll spoke in a low voice.

"It's a queer story. A good bit outside your experience, Morny! I was brought up by that man—Gentleman Jim. We never lived long in one place. Sometimes we had plenty of money, sometimes we had none. He called himself my father; but, even when I was a little kid, I had my doubts about that. He was a hard and cruel man. I did not have a happy time then. I never knew any other relation, and I doubted whether he was really my relation.

"Sometimes I had a tutor, and sometimes I did not study for months together unless I chose. But I was always a bit of a swot, in a way, and I did pretty well in that line. Sometimes he was away for months at a time, and I stayed in lodgings, in the country. Sometimes I used to make friends, and joined in cricket, and so on; but there always came an end of it. He took me away somewhere else. He never liked me. I can remember being beaten as a child—more times than I could count."

"The brute!" muttered Mornington.

"I was about fourteen when I discovered what his profession was. I had never known, till then. The Badger let it out when he was tipsy. But I suppose Gentleman Jim would have told me sooner or later—as soon as I was old enough to be of use to him. It was a shock to me. You can guess that! After that, my life was a misery. I thought of clearing off. I did so once, but he found me, and took me back. He found me starving. A score of times he tried to make me enter into his schemes, and I would not. I couldn't

have stood it much longer—but then came Rookwood!"

"How did that happen?"

"He told me I should have my way—and keep clear of his way of life. He was going to put me into a good school, and leave me to make my way there, and live my own life afterwards. I thought it was kindness. He chose the name of Erroll for me. I don't know why. I suppose he had a reason, but I had never heard the name before, and it seemed as good as any other. I— I ought not to have come to Rookwood in a name that wasn't my own. I know it. But there was what I had to escape from. Anything seemed good that took me out of that.

"I meant to play the game—to study, to get on and find some way of earning my own bread. He told me I could, if I liked, work for a scholarship and owe him nothing, perhaps, after the first term. I could not understand his kindness, as I thought it, but I was glad and grateful then. Only lately I've found out what he really wanted."

"And that was?"

"He thought that when I'd got used to Rookwood I'd do anything rather than give it up and go back to what I'd come from. He thought I'd help him in his schemes rather than give up everything. It was a temptation, but—"

"But you refused?"

"Yes. When you found me out, that brought matters to a head. The game had to be played at once, or not at all. It won't be played at all. I think he had further schemes in his head, too—not only Rookwood. But if I made friends, and was asked home to fellows' places, I could help him all round. There was to be no end to it. I can see it all now. I should have been worth a fortune to him, if I'd been worth anything. But I think he understands at last that it's all over."

"By gad, you've had a queer life!" said Mornington, his voice curiously soft. "And you think that man isn't your father, after all?"

"I am sure of it now!"

"You remember nothing of the time before you knew him?"

"Yes, in a vague way," said Erroll. "I've got some dim recollection of another country—a tropical country, with a blue sky and palm-trees and lagoons, like the things I've read about since. I think I was brought from a foreign country when I was too young to remember.

"But it's all dim. I can't fix anything. I can remember the sea, too—a long voyage. But it's like a dream. But I've heard Gentleman Jim say that he's never been out of Europe, and that was another reason why I doubted that he was really my father. But how I came to him I don't know."

"You must have people somewhere," said Mornington.

"I suppose so. I never knew them."

"It's a queer story. If I'd known it all—" Mornington paused. "Look here, Erroll, need you go?"

"What!"

"Why not stick it out at Rookwood?" said Mornington.

"It's too late."

"It's not too late," Mornington's voice was low and earnest. "Look here, that man won't dare to trouble you again there. He daren't show his face at Rookwood, where he palmed himself off as Captain Erroll. It does no harm for you to call yourself Erroll. You must use some name, and you don't even know your own. Why not stick it out?"

"You ask me that?" said Erroll.

Mornington coloured in the darkness.

"You don't think I'd give you away after what you've done?" he said.

"Why shouldn't you?"

"Well, I'm not going to!" said Mornington. "I've been against you; I know that. But—but that's all over now, if you choose. We've been through some things together to-night. By gad, Erroll, you're just the chap I'd have chosen to make a pal of if I'd known you better! Why shouldn't we be friends?"

"Friends!" echoed Erroll.

"Well, why not?"

"You're dreaming, Mornington!" Erroll peered at the dim face of the dandy of the Fourth in utter amazement. "You, the nephew of a baronet, the wealthiest fellow at Rookwood, with no end of titled people; and I, a nobody and an outcast, not knowing my own name, brought up by a thief. You're dreaming!"

"You're a jolly good sort. I know that," said Mornington. "You've got no end of pluck, and I'm your friend if you choose, and if you choose to stick it out at Rookwood, I'll stand by you like a pal."

Erroll was silent. He was too astonished to speak. Was this Mornington, the reckless, cynical black sheep of the school? Yet there was something in Morny's words, in his tone, that awoke a responsive throb in the outcast school-boy's heart.

And to stay at Rookwood? It might not be all a dream, after all, to win a scholarship that would see him through, to live by his own efforts, and find an honourable place in the world.

If Gentleman Jim would leave him in peace, why should he not try it? And the cracksmen must know, too, by this time, that Kit was not to be bent to his purpose. Why should he not try it?

"Do you mean that, Mornington?" he asked, after a long, long pause.

"Every word of it," said Mornington; "and there's my fist on it, Erroll. Is it a go?"

Kit Erroll grasped the hand that groped towards him in the gloom.

"It's a go, Morny, if you choose!"
 "Done!" said Mornington. He broke into a chuckle. "By gad, won't Jimmy Silver be surprised when we come home pals?"

Erroll smiled.
 "Can you walk now?"
 "I think so, if you help me."
 "Come on!"

With Mornington leaning heavily on his arm, Kit Erroll started for Rookwood.

"Not a word about your merry secrets at the school!" said Mornington. "Tell 'em all that concerns 'em, and no more. You found me in the quarry. You fished me out, and brought me home. I shan't be able to identify anybody. I fancy those two merchants will clear out pretty fast—what!"

"Good!" said Erroll.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were looking out of the School House doorway into the gloomy quadrangle. It was nearly bedtime, and Erroll of the Fourth had not yet returned. He had missed calling-over.

Some of the fellows were beginning to surmise that Erroll had been kidnapped, like Mornington, and Mr. Bootles had been asking anxious questions. There was a sudden ring at the bell at the gate, and a minute or two later two shadowy forms came across the quad.

"Here's Erroll!" said Lovell. "Who's that with him?"

"Morny!" shouted Jimmy Silver.

"Mornington! My hat! Erroll's found him!"

"Morny's come back!" shouted Raby.

The news spread through Rookwood like wildfire. A buzzing crowd surrounded the two juniors as they came into the House.

"So you were looking for Morny, Erroll?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Yes."

"And you've found him!" said Lovell. "My hat! Was he kidnapped, after all? Were you kidnapped, Morny?"

"I was," said Mornington; "and Erroll found me and fished me out. We've got to go and tell the Head. Come on, Erroll, old chap!"

Mornington slipped his arm through Erroll's, and they went to the Head's study. Jimmy Silver blinked after them.

"Looks as if those two have made friends!" he remarked.

"By Jove, it does!"

"Well, I'm jolly glad of it!" said

Jimmy Silver heartily. "Morny won't do Erroll much good, but Erroll may do Morny heaps of good."

"Ha, ha!"

It was later that Jimmy Silver & Co. heard of the happenings on the moor, and they did not hear all the story. What was told was true, but there was no need to tell all, for Kit Erroll had resolved to take Mornington's counsel, and to make a fight for his place in Rookwood.

CHAPTER 31.

Morny's New Pa.:

"LOOK at them!"

Cyril Peele, of the Fourth Form, contracted his brows savagely as he glanced out of the window of Study No. 4.

Townsend, Topham, and Gower were seated round the study-table. There was a haze of cigarette-smoke in the room.

The nuts of the Fourth were enjoying themselves in their own peculiar way that sunny afternoon.

Through the open window, shouts could be heard from the cricket-field, where Jimmy Silver's eleven were playing a Modern team. But the sunshine and the breeze, and the green cricket-field, did not call the nuts of Rookwood out of doors. They found banker in the study more attractive.

Peele was staring from the window, but it was not towards the cricket-ground that his glance was turned.

It rested on two juniors in the quadrangle below. One was in flannels, and had evidently come off the field after his innings. The other was an elegant youth in Etons.

Townsend, who was shuffling the cards, looked round lazily towards Peele. "What's goin' on?" he asked.

"Look at them!" repeated Peele savagely.

The juniors joined him at the window. "Erroll!" said Townsend, glancing downward.

"And Morny!" said Gower.

The two juniors below were chatting cheerily, heedless and unconscious of the dark glances from the study window.

"Thick as thieves!" said Peele bitterly. "Accordin' to what Morny used to say, Erroll is a thief, as a matter of fact. An' now they're chummy."

"Jolly queer!" said Townsend, shrugging his shoulders. "What can Morny see in the chap. And they used to be at daggers drawn, too!"

"That was before Morny was kidnapped," remarked Topham. "Accordin' to his yarn, Erroll got him out of that."

"That don't make any difference."

"It seems to Morny."

The nuts stared down from the window. From below, the voices of Erroll and Mornington floated up to them.

"You'll be wanted for fieldin' soon, Erroll," Mornington was saying.

"Come down and see the match," said Erroll.

Mornington laughed.

"There's a little party in my study," he said. "I was thinkin' of joinin' it!"

"On an afternoon like this?" said Erroll. "It's not good enough, Morny. Come along to the cricket. I wish you could hit it off better with Jimmy Silver. You ought to have a place in the team on your form!"

Mornington and Erroll walked away towards the cricket-ground while the latter was speaking.

The dandy of Rookwood had evidently given up the idea of joining the sportive circle in his study, for the sake of his new chum.

Peele and his companions exchanged dark glances.

"There they go!" said Peele. "Morny's about done with us! You can see that rotter's game. He wants to make a break between Morny and us. I've seen his idea some time ago!"

"Lookin' after Morny's morals!" grinned Townsend. "I like that! Why, Morny's the blackest sheep of the whole flock, and chance it!"

"He's not comin' here," said Topham. "He's regularly given us the go-by since he chummed with Erroll. I'd like to put a spoke in that interferin' cad's wheel. But—but a fellow can't lick him."

"That's so," said Gower. "He's hot stuff, as we've seen."

"Come an' get on with the game. We can do without Morny!"

Peele wrinkled his brows.

"That's all very well," he said. "We don't want to do without Morny. He's been our pal, an' we made him our leader, an' now he's thrown us over for that fellow Erroll. I don't feel inclined to stand it, for one!"

"What can we do?" growled Townsend. "Morny always has his own way! Look at the way he picked up that little ragamuffin, 'Erbert, an' brought him to Rookwood, an' got the Head to let him enter the school as a new kid. We were down on that; but did it make any difference to Morny? Not a bit!"

"He's an obstinate cad! But we don't want to lose Morny. We can't keep our end up against Jimmy Silver without Morny," remarked Gower.

"He'll be chummin' with Jimmy Silver next, if Erroll can work it," sneered Peele. "That's the cad's game!"

"Blessed are the peacemakers!" grinned Townsend.

"It's jolly queer, too," said Peele, frowning. "When Erroll came here, that kid from the slums, 'Erbert, swore that the man who brought him wasn't really Captain Erroll at all, but a rotter he called Gentleman Jim, a cracksmán. Mornington believed the yarn, an' accused Erroll. I must say I never swallowed it. But—but suppose there should be somethin' in it?"

Peele paused and looked at his nutty companions.

It was evident that, with Cyril Peele, the wish was father to the thought.

Morny's desertion of his old cronies had exasperated and alarmed the nuts, and there was little that Peele, at least, would not have stopped at to make a break between the new friends.

Nobody but Morny and little 'Erbert of the Second Form had believed that strange accusation against Kit Erroll.

But any weapon was good enough to use against an enemy, in Peele's opinion. The wealthy and reckless Mornington was too valuable a pal to be lost if it could be helped.

"There's nothin' in it," said Topham.

"Morny believes there was."

"Morny was an ass! An' he's chucked it now, too."

"That's because Erroll got him away from the kidnappers, and he feels called upon to be grateful," sneered Peele.

"But Erroll knocked the yarn on the head," said Townsend impatiently. "Didn't Morny go to the trouble of gettin' a photograph of Captain Erroll, and didn't it turn out to be as like Erroll as two peas?"

"That's so! But Erroll's father has never been near Rookwood since," said Peele. "There's a chance, at least, that there was somethin' in the yarn. Look here, let's have that kid 'Erbert up here and question him."

"He wouldn't come—"

"Tell him Morny wants him. You go, Topy!"

"Silly waste of time," said Topham.

"I tell you there may be somethin' in it. If we could fix it on Erroll an' give him the kybosh, Morny comes back to us."

"Oh, I'll fetch the kid, if you like," said Topham, yawning. "But you're barkin' up the wrong tree, Peele. There's nothin' in it."

And Topham left the study.

The "Giddy Goats" of Rookwood resumed their game while they waited for Topham to return with the waif of Rookwood. In about ten minutes there was a tap at the door, and little 'Erbert looked in.

"Come in, kid," said Peele.

Topham had not returned with the faç. He had gone to join Mornington in the cricket ground.

'Erbert of the Second came into the study, and Peele closed the door.

CHAPTER 35.

Mornington Chips In!

ERBERT looked round the study, puzzled. He had evidently expected to see Mornington there.

"Master Topham told me Mornington wanted me here," he said.

"That's all right! We want you," said Peele. "Don't be alarmed. I only want to ask you some questions."

"Yes, sir," said Erbert.

He stood shuffling his feet. The little waif had been some time at Rockwood now since Mornington, following a generous impulse, had rescued him from want. But he had not yet learned the repose upon which the nuts of Rockwood prided themselves. He shuffled his feet and twisted his thumbs uneasily.

"You remember Erroll of the Fourth coming here a few weeks ago?" said Peele.

"Ye-e-es."

"The man who brought him here was called Captain Erroll—his father."

The fag shifted uncomfortably.

"You told Mornington that the man wasn't Captain Erroll, but a criminal called Gentleman Jim, a cracksmán you'd seen and known when you lived in some slum or other in London," continued Peele.

Erbert did not reply, but his gaze wandered uneasily to the door. But Cyril Peele had his back to the door.

"Now, we didn't swallow that yarn," said Peele. "But I've been wonderin' whether there was anythin' in it. Just you go ahead, kid, an' tell us all you know about that man, Gentleman Jim, and Erroll. Give us the whole yarn from start to finish."

"I—I can't!" stammered Erbert.

Peele stared at him angrily.

"Eh? Why can't you?" he exclaimed.

"Master Mornington 'ave told me not to talk about it."

The nuts of the Fourth exchanged quick glances.

"Oh!" said Peele, with a deep breath.

"Morny's told you to keep it dark since he's made friends with Erroll?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, never mind. We want to know the facts. Do you still believe that Erroll is the son of this Gentleman Jim?"

Silence.

"Have you any idea where Gentleman Jim can be found by the police?"

Still silence.

Peele's eyes glittered dangerously.

"Another thing. You've seen the photograph of Captain Erroll. It's like Erroll of the Fourth—we've all noticed that. But is it like the man you called Gentleman Jim—the man who brought him here? You know the man well, according to your account."

The fag did not answer.

"Do you hear me?" shouted Peele angrily.

"I 'ear you, Master Peele."

"Well, answer, then!"

"I can't, sir."

"You mean you won't, you cheeky cub!" exclaimed Townsend.

"Well, I won't, then!" said Erbert sullenly. "Master Mornington 'ave told me not to say nothin' about Erroll, an' I ain't going to."

"You want your arms twisted, you mean?" asked Peele.

Erbert backed away a little.

"I s'pose you can bully me if you want now you've got me 'ere," he said steadily. "But I ain't sayin' nothin', not agin Master Mornington's orders."

Peele strode towards him.

The fag put up his fists at once. But Townsend and Gower joined Peele, and in a moment Erbert was wriggling in the grasp of the three. Peele took a savage grip upon his arm.

"Are you going to answer my questions now?" he asked between his teeth.

"No, I ain't!"

"Take that, then!"

There was a yell of anguish from Erbert as Peele twisted his arm with cruel force.

He struggled in vain in the grip of the three nuts.

"Ow! Lemme go!" roared 'Erbert. "I ain't going to tell you nothin'! Let me alone, you coward! Yah! Oh!"

The fag's yells rang through the study as Peele twisted his arm again.

"Now will you speak up, you scrubby little cad?" hissed Peele.

"No!" yelled 'Erbert. "I won't! 'Elp! 'Elp!"

"Hallo! What the merry dickens —" The door was thrown open, and Mornington strode into the study.

He stared at the scene in blank astonishment for a moment.

Then his brow grew thunderous. "Bullyin' 'Erbert—what? Let him go at once, you cads!"

He strode at the nuts with his fists clenched and a blaze in his eyes.

Peele & Co. released the fag, who scuttled behind Mornington at once. The nuts of the Fourth looked angry and irresolute.

"Have they hurt you, kid?" asked Mornington.

"N-not much, sir," faltered 'Erbert. "It—it's all right."

"What were the cads bullyin' you for?"

"They wanted to know about Erroll and Gentleman Jim, sir!" muttered 'Erbert. "I wasn't sayin' nothin', as you told me, sir."

Mornington made a gesture to the door.

"Cut off, 'Erbert!"

Peele made a movement forward. He backed away again as Mornington faced him with a glitter in his eyes.

'Erbert scudded out of the study.

"So you were bullyin' that kid to make him talk about Erroll?" said Mornington. "You won't do that again, Peele!"

"Who's goin' to stop me?" sneered Peele.

"I am! I'll lick you till you can't stand if you put a finger on that kid again!" exclaimed Mornington savagely. "Understand that! And if I have two words from you I'll lick you

now. You're goin' to leave 'Erbert alone, and you're goin' to leave Erroll alone!"

"You've chummed up with the son of a crackman, as you always called him," sneered Townsend.

"Never mind what I called him. That's done with now."

"Is it?" said Peele. "Well, it's not done with! I believe it was true all the time, an' I believe you know it now. Morny, an' you want to keep it dark because you've palled on with him. As for lettin' him alone, I'll tell you what I'm goin' to do. I'm goin' to show him up, an' get him kicked out of Rookwood! So you can put that in your pipe an' smoke it! Your burglar pal——"

Smack!

Peele broke off with a yell of rage as Mornington struck him across the mouth.

The next instant he rushed at Mornington.

Townsend and Gower stood looking on with sullen faces. Their feeling was all with Peele, but they did not interfere.

The dandy of the Fourth met his erstwhile chum's attack coolly and with grim vigour.

His left and right came out in rapid succession, and Peele reeled back, and went with a crash to the floor.

Mornington looked down on him grimly.

"Want any more?" he asked.

Peele groaned.

"You fellows feelin' inclined for a little trouble this merry afternoon?" asked Mornington, with a mocking look at Townsend and Gower.

"Go an' eat coke!" growled Townsend.

Mornington laughed, and quitted the study.

Townsend helped Peele to his feet. The cad of the Fourth was pale with rage, and his eyes glittered like a serpent's.

"I'll make Morny smart for that!" he muttered. "And I can do it! I

believe he knows now that Erroll is what he accused him of bein'! I believe he knows it, by gad, an' that's why he warned the kid not to talk! And I'm goin' to have the truth out before all Rookwood!"

"You can't do it!" said Gower.

Peele gritted his teeth.

"I know the way!" he said. "I've got it cut and dried! I'd rather have made sure first; but now I'm goin' to chance it! I've got a surprise up my sleeve for Morny an' his precious chum!"

And Peele went savagely out of the study.

"What the merry dickens was he drivin' at?" said Gower, in wonder.

"Only gas!" said Townsend, shrugging his shoulders. "Let's get on with the game!"

But there was more than "gas" in Peele's words as Mornington—and Kit Erroll—were to discover before long.

CHAPTER 36.

Gentle Persuasion!

JIMMY SILVER paused.

The captain of the Fourth was sauntering through the archway into Little Quad, towards the library, when he came on the scene.

On the old oaken bench near the stone arch four juniors were seated.

Peele held an open newspaper in his hands, and Townsend, Topham and Gower were gathering close to read it with him.

There was evidently something in the newspaper that intensely interested Peele & Co.

It was the day following the scene in Mornington's study. Since that scene Mornington had been on icy terms with his former chums—a fact that did not seem to worry the lordly Morny in the least.

A more tactful fellow than Mornington might have made the break with his old friends a little more gradual

and delicate. But since he had chummed with Erroll, Morny had changed somewhat, and for the present, at least, he seemed "fed-up" with the nuts and their ways, and he betrayed the fact without the slightest compunction.

Whether he was lost for good to that select circle, or whether it was merely temporary, could not be said—probably the latter.

But, in any case, the dandy of the Fourth did that which was right in his own eyes, with complete disregard for the feelings of others.

Undoubtedly, under Erroll's influence, Mornington was a good deal less of a blackguard than he had formerly been. But his cool indifference to his own friends and their opinion had a naturally exasperating effect upon them.

When Morny was tired of his new role he would doubtless expect them to come round again at the beckoning of his finger. That was Morny's way. But, little as he cared what they thought, he did not dream of the real extent to which his change of line had exasperated them. To be taken up, or thrown over, at Morny's lordly will was not flattering. And Peele, who had been knocked down in his own study, was bitterest of all.

The four juniors were so deeply engrossed in the newspaper that they did not observe Jimmy Silver. Jimmy would have passed on his way but for the fact that they were speaking of Erroll in a way that struck his attention at once.

"There it is, in print!" said Peele, through his compressed lips. "If Captain Erroll is Erroll's father, he can say so. He's still in England."

"So it seems," said Townsend. "I understood that he had gone back to British Honduras after he was wounded. He was a planter there before. I know that. Erroll thinks he's gone back."

"I know he does—I've heard him say so," grinned Peele. "Now, if he's

Captain Erroll's son, as he says, how can he think his father's gone back to America when the newspaper says he's in England?"

"By gad," said Topham, "it looks as if you're right, Peele!"

"I was sure of it," said Peele. "I found this in the paper yesterday. That's what started me on it, and I haven't any doubt at all that Morny knows the truth about Erroll and is keepin' it dark. It's odd the fellow being like Captain Erroll's portrait. But a son generally knows where his father is."

"Ha, ha, ha! Yes, rather."

Jimmy Silver walked towards the bench. He disdained to listen to the talk of the nuts, though what they had said had made him very curious.

"Hush!" muttered Peele as the captain of the Fourth came up.

He hastily thrust the newspaper under his jacket.

"Something about Erroll's father in that paper?" asked Jimmy.

"Find out!" said Peele coolly.

"I'm asking you to find out. It would interest Erroll. Lend me the paper to show him," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's my paper, an' I'm keepin' it," said Peele.

"You said Captain Erroll was in England," said Jimmy. "It's supposed that he went to British Honduras after being wounded."

Peele yawned.

"Erroll must know," grinned Topham. "Ask Erroll."

"He may have been stopped by something, and hasn't written to Erroll yet," said Jimmy. "Erroll has a right to see that paper, Peele. Lend it to me."

"I won't!"

"Tell me its name and date then, so that I can tell Erroll."

"Go and eat coke!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed. The four nuts rose to their feet and stood together. Four to one; they were not afraid of the chief of the Fistical Four.

Jimmy smiled, and uttered the signal

of the Rook patrol. It echoed through the stone archway.

"He's calling those other cads here," muttered Gower. "Let's clear."

There was a patter of feet from Big Quad, and Lovell, Raby and Newcome came through the archway at a run.

"Hallo! What's up?" demanded Lovell.

Jimmy Silver pointed to Peele.

"That worm's got a newspaper with something about Erroll's father in it," he said. "He won't lend it to me. I want to borrow it."

"Rotten worm!" said Raby. "Why can't you lend your paper?"

"Because I won't!" snarled Peele. "Hands off, you rotters!"

"You can have it back afterwards," said Jimmy.

Peele did not reply, but he moved away. The Fistical Four moved after him fast enough.

"Hands off, I tell-you!" shouted Peele.

But Jimmy Silver did not "hands off" he put his hands on—hard! Cyril Peele struggled with him furiously.

The Co., grinning, charged the other three nuts off the scene. Towny and Topy and Gower were scattered before the rush.

Peele struggled in vain in Jimmy Silver's sturdy grasp. The crumpled newspaper was jerked out from under his jacket. Jimmy cheerfully sat Peele down on the ground with a bump.

"Thanks for the loan of the paper," he smiled. "I'll leave it in your study when I'm through with it."

"Hang you!" said Peele, between his teeth.

He scrambled up, and looked for a moment as if he would spring at Jimmy Silver. But he knew that it would be futile; and he turned away, scowling blackly. Lovell and Raby and Newcome rejoined their leader.

"Why didn't the disoblising rotter want to let you see the paper, Jimmy?" asked Newcome, in wonder.

"Blessed if I know—they've got something up against Erroll, I suppose. I'll

soon see what there is here about Erroll's pater."

Jimmy opened the paper and scanned the columns in search of the item of news that had so interested the nuts. He soon found it—a paragraph marked with pencil. The Pistical Four read it together:

"Among the passengers landed from the S.S. Ceiba, recently sunk in collision with a German freighter, is Captain Erroll. The gallant captain was severely wounded on the North-West Frontier, and on leaving hospital intended to return to his colonial home. Captain Erroll's many friends will not regret that the accident, fortunately unattended by any loss of life, will compel him to remain somewhat longer in his native land."

The Pistical Four looked at one another.

"I suppose Erroll knows!" said Raby.

"I—I suppose so," said Jimmy Silver.

"Anyway, I'm going to take this paper to him. If he hasn't heard from his pater he'll be glad to know that he's safe."

And Jimmy Silver hurried off to the School House with the newspaper in his hand.

CHAPTER 37.

Erroll is Worried.

"WHAT'S the trouble?"

Mornington asked the question. He was lounging in the window-seat in Erroll's study. Higgs and Jones minor, Erroll's study-mates, were out of doors.

Mornington had just come in, and he had found Erroll with a moody brow, in deep thought. Erroll smiled slightly as the dandy of the Fourth spoke.

"Nothing!" he said.

"Thinkin' about Gentleman Jim?"

"Well, yes," said Erroll, colouring. "I can't help thinking of him, Morny."

"You've seen the last of the rotter," said Mornington. "You've told me you

are sure that he is not your father—and I feel sure of it, too. Why bother about him?"

"I am sure he is not my father, though he has always called himself that," said Erroll quietly. "I am not the son of a cracksmán. But—but if the other fellows knew all you know, Morny, they would believe—"

"They don't know, and they won't know."

"I'm not so sure," said Erroll. "I haven't finished with that man yet, Morny. Since I told you my story you've palled with me, and I'm jolly glad of it—but the others wouldn't look at it as you do. If it came out that the man who brought me here, and called himself Captain Erroll, was in reality Gentleman Jim the cracksmán—" He paused. "It's not my fault! But—but I'm here under a name that does not belong to me—"

"But you don't know your own name," said Mornington. "You're as much entitled to it as any other."

"That's true—I must be called something," said the junior, with a slight smile. "I may as well be called Erroll as anything else. But—"

"Why did Gentleman Jim pick out that name for you?" asked Mornington. "It's not a common name."

"I don't know. Unless—" Erroll paused. "You remember, Morny, when you got the real Captain Erroll's photograph it turned out to be exactly like me. Gentleman Jim may have known of the resemblance, and that may be why he chose that name for me to come to Rookwood under. It's queer. I—I've been thinking, Morny—" He broke off again.

"There's nothin' to worry you—give it a rest."

"But it does worry me," said Erroll quietly. "I'm not doing wrong in using the name since I must use some name. But I am represented here as the son of Captain Erroll—and I am not his son. That does worry me."

"I don't see that it hurts him. Didn't you tell me that Captain Erroll went

back to British Honduras after leavin' the Army?"

"Yes, Gentleman Jim told me so."

"Well, it won't hurt a man in America to be supposed to have a son at Rookwood," said Mornington, laughing. "Besides, you'll do him credit."

Erroll smiled.

"I can't quite square it with my conscience," he said. "I don't really know what I ought to do—but—but I've thought it over, Morny, and I'm afraid I shall have to clear out of Rookwood."

"What rot!" exclaimed Mornington. "I should miss you. Look here, Erroll, your fees are paid for this term, and you're going in for a scholarship to pay your own exes after that. You can do it."

"My fees were paid by Gentleman Jim in Captain Erroll's name. You know how he gets his money," said Erroll in a low voice.

"But it can't be handed back now. By gad," exclaimed Mornington, "you're not thinking of telling the Head!"

"I've been thinking whether I ought to."

"It means clearin' out of the school."

Erroll nodded.

Mornington moved to and fro restlessly in the study. He was plainly perturbed.

Strange enough as it was that the reckless dandy of the Fourth should have chummed up with the son of Gentleman Jim, it was a very real friendship that had grown up between the two.

"Look here, Erroll," said Mornington at last, "there's no need for you to jaw to the Head, take my word about that! Gentleman Jim may never turn up again now that he knows you're done with him. It may never come out."

Erroll shook his head.

"He will turn up, and soon," he said. "I was placed here to help him rob Rookwood. I was to get invitations to fellows' homes, and give him other chances there. He had it all cut and dried. He thought he would force me,

by threatening to show me up here if I refused. He will not let me off scot-free, Morny. Besides, he will not give up the idea of robbing Rookwood. Every night I expect him to come."

"Good gad!"

"I have remained awake many times, listening," said Erroll, his cheeks flushing. "I know that he will come. And when he comes, Morny, I'm going to stop him if I can. But—but can I chance all that? I know I ought to speak to the Head, and put him on his guard."

"And be turned out of Rookwood!"

"I suppose that would follow."

"You're not goin' to do it!" said Mornington angrily.

There was a tap at the door. Mornington uttered an impatient exclamation, but Erroll said quietly:

"Come in!"

Jimmy Silver entered the study with a newspaper in his hand.

"News here about your pater, Erroll!" he said cheerily.

Erroll started.

"About whom?" he muttered.

"Captain Erroll. He sailed for America, didn't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's back in England."

"Oh!"

"Safe and sound," said Jimmy Silver at once. "Nothing to worry about, Erroll. The steamer was wrecked in a collision, but the paper says he's landed safely. Here it is."

Erroll's face was crimson.

Hardest of all to bear in his strange situation was the hateful, implied deceit of his position in the presence of the cheery confidence of Jimmy Silver & Co.

Jimmy Silver and his chums had scouted the suggestion that Erroll was not the son of the man whose name he bore. Erroll avoided the subject as much as he could, writhing inwardly whenever it was mentioned. But his silent assent was deceit, as he realised only too keenly.

He had grown to love Rookwood, and

he had made many friends there. But it was borne in more and more upon his mind that this could not go on—that he must have openness and truth, however heavy the price he paid for it.

He read the marked paragraph, and handed the newspaper back to Jimmy Silver, who was eyeing him oddly.

"Thank you, Jimmy!" he said.

"Didn't you know?" asked Jimmy.

"No."

"Oh, I thought your pater would have written!"

"I have had no letter."

"Then that's jolly good news to you!" said Jimmy. "I made Peele lend me the paper, and I'm glad I did!"

"Peele!" said Mornington, with a start.

"Yes. Your merry pals were nosing over it, but Peele didn't want Erroll to see it for some reason," said the captain of the Fourth. "The fact is, Mornny, your pals seem to have taken up that old yarn you used to spin about Erroll, and they're trying to make something out of it."

"The rotten cads!" growled Mornington.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, they're only following your example," he said. "Still, they're cads, there's no doubt about that. It really seems as if that yarn will never die out, at this rate. I'll tell you what, Erroll!"

"Yes, Jimmy?"

"Ask your father to come down to the school, as he's still in England," said Jimmy Silver. "I dare say he can do it all right. That will knock the silly rot right on the head if Captain Erroll comes here!"

"Oh, rot!" muttered Mornington.

Jimmy Silver gazed in amazement at Erroll's crimson face.

As had happened once before, a chill of doubt came into Jimmy's honest heart.

"That's a good tip, Erroll," he said quietly. "It will clear up the matter for good and all if Captain Erroll comes to Rookwood and all the fellows see him. I should advise you to do that."

And Jimmy left the study.

Erroll looked at Mornington.

"You see," he said in a low voice, "I—I can't keep it up. I can't be taking in fellows who trust me! I can't stand it!"

And Mornington was silent. He felt, too, that the junior was right—that it could not last.

CHAPTER 28.

Good-bye to Rookwood!

ALL eyes were turned upon Kit Erroll when he came into the Junior Common-room that evening with Jimmy Silver & Co. Peele & Co. were grinning as over some good joke. All the fellows looked curious.

"Hallo! What's the merry joke?" asked Jimmy Silver, looking round.

"Your friend Erroll is!" chortled Townsend.

Rawson came over to Erroll.

"I hear your pater's in London, Erroll," he said in his direct way. "Peele says he's wired to him to come here."

Erroll started violently.

"Why, you cheeky cad, Peele!" exclaimed Lovell. "What business is it of yours to wire to Erroll's pater?"

"Only to show whether Captain Erroll is Erroll's pater at all," said Peele, with a mocking grin. "I've told these fellows, an' now I'll tell you. I telephoned to my cousin, who's got an Army job in Whitehall, to get Captain Erroll's address; an' he got it for me. And then I wired to Captain Erroll: Nice telegram, in perfectly good taste, pointin' out that his son's friends were awfully anxious to see him, because of his gallant conduct in India, an' gettin' the D.S.O. Askin' him if he couldn't come down to Rookwood before he sailed next time, because his son's pals were so anxious to see him. Nothin' to complain of in that, was there?"

"Well, no," said Jimmy Silver. "Only you're not a friend of Erroll's."

"If Captain Erroll's his father, no harm's done," grinned Peele. "He'll

take it as a schoolboy compliment. But if the merry captain hasn't got a son at Rookwood, it will be rather a surprise—what?"

"You rotter!" shouted Mornington.

"What are you complainin' about?" said Peele coolly. "Don't you want Erroll shown up if he's an impostor? you were keen enough on it at one time."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the nuts in chorus.

Erroll's face was deadly pale.

"Captain Erroll's bound to answer my wire," grinned Peele. "We'll find out from his answer whether he's got a son here, or whether a rotten cracksmen has planted his son here under a false name, as Morry used to declare!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't mind, Erroll," said Jimmy Silver. "No harm done if your pater does come here. We'd all like to see him."

Erroll nodded without replying. With the pallor as of death in his face he walked out of the Common-room.

There was a buzz after he had gone. Mornington followed him, but the rest of the juniors remained in excited discussion.

When the school page came into the Common-room with a telegram in his hand the excitement was very keen.

"Master Peele!"

"Here you are," smiled Peele.

He took the telegram and opened it.

His brow grew a little perplexed as he read. The other fellows crowded round him to read it, too.

"Arriving Rookwood early morning.—ERROLL."

"Well, my hat!" said Gower.

Peele's jaw dropped.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver. "That rather knocks you out, Peele. The merry captain's simply accepted the invitation. Looks as if he thinks he's got a son here, anyway!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad!" muttered Peele, utterly crestfallen.

The laugh was against the plotting Fourth Former.

Jimmy Silver, still laughing, hurried away to Erroll's study. He found him pale and troubled.

"Right as rain, old fellow," said Jimmy. "Your pater's coming down to-morrow morning early."

Erroll gave him a strange look.

"How do you know?" he asked dully. Jimmy chuckled.

"He's wired back to Peele. Rather queer he didn't wire to you instead. But it's come to Peele, and it says he's arriving early in the morning. Of course, he doesn't guess that it was a cad asked him, for a rotten trick. No need to tell him that either."

"Well, it's a good thing Erroll's pater's coming," said Higgs, looking up from his prep. "It will stop the jaw about Erroll."

"A very good thing," said Erroll tonelessly.

"Of course, it's a rotten cheek of Peele," said Jimmy, looking queerly at Erroll's colourless face. "But you'll be glad to see your pater, Erroll, won't you?"

Erroll nodded, and Jimmy left the study with that old chill of strange doubt in his breast again. Why did Erroll look like that? Jimmy Silver asked himself the question, without being able to find an answer.

Erroll had been working at his prep; but he did not resume it when Jimmy was gone. He remained idle for some minutes, with contracted brows, and then rose and went to the door.

"Finished?" yawned Jones minor.

"No; I don't think I shall finish."

He left the study, and Mornington met him in the passage, his face pale and excited.

"Erroll, you know—" muttered Mornington.

"I know."

"He's coming to-morrow morning."

"Yes."

"What are you going to do, old chap?"

"I've got to think that out."

"I'll make Peele sit up for this trick, the cad!" muttered Mornington, clenching his hands.

"Let him alone," said Erroll quietly. "I deserve it! It was bound to come sooner or later."

He went on by himself, and went out into the shadowed quadrangle.

Long, in the dim starlight, the unhappy junior paced to and fro under the old beeches, thinking—thinking.

The end had come, he knew that. Captain Erroll, whose name he bore, was coming to Rookwood in the morning. The man he so strangely resembled, and whom he did not know—whose name had been chosen for him by Gentleman Jim, doubtless on account of that strange likeness. He was coming, and the imposture would be discovered!

One thought was borne in upon the boy's mind. He must go! No need to wait and face out the shame and humiliation of exposure. Before Captain Erroll arrived at Rookwood he must be gone.

Erroll was not seen again by the Rookwood juniors till bed-time. He came into the dormitory of the Classical Fourth with a face that was a little pale, but set and calm. His mind was made up. When all the school was sleeping he was to leave Rookwood—quietly, and the discovery that now must come would come after he had gone for ever.

Long after the rest of the Fourth were asleep, Erroll lay with wide-open, sleepless eyes, while the hours passed.

It was at midnight that he slipped quietly from his bed and dressed in the darkness. The Classical Fourth were still sleeping soundly as the hunted junior closed the dormitory door quietly behind him. A few minutes more and he had dropped softly from a window, and the cool wind of the summer night blew fresh upon his face.

CHAPTER 39.

The Last Blow!

CLINK!

Erroll stopped, his heart beating violently.

He was skirting the great building with silent footfalls in the dim starlight to cross to the wall on the road when that faint sound struck his ears, faint but clear, in the silence of the night.

His heart beat almost to suffocation as he listened, breathing hard.

Clink!

One thought rushed into his mind as he listened to that sound from the lower hall window in the dark recess of the School House porch.

Gentleman Jim!"

He stood as if rooted to the ground for some minutes. He knew that the clink was of a fragment of glass that had fallen from a pane under the penetrating diamond of the cracksman. Gentleman Jim had come at last! Every night Erroll had feared it—had dreamed of it! Now, on his last night at Rookwood, the cracksman had come—and the unhappy lad breathed a prayer of thankfulness that it was still in his power to save the old school from the lawless hand of the thief and out-cast.

There was no fear in his heart as he stepped silently towards the porch. He knew—none better—the desperate nature of the cracksman. He knew that death itself might be his lot! And he did not falter!

He stepped noiselessly into the porch. The little window by the door was open. The cracksman had reached the fastening within by removing a fragment of glass. The window was open, and within the dark building was the unseen thief of the night.

Erroll smiled bitterly in the gloom.

He had been sent to Rookwood to help in this work—to make it safer for Gentleman Jim to carry out the robbery. And now he was there to baffle it. He stood for some moments in thought, undecided. Then he

grasped the great bell-handle beside the door and dragged upon it.

Clang, clang, clang!

The sudden clanging of the bell rang with a din almost like thunder through the silent School House.

Clang, clang, clang!

A light gleamed from a window above. There was a sound of an opening door. Clang, clang, clang!

The School House was awakened from end to end.

Even from outside the House, where he stood, Erroll could hear the sound of startled voices.

He let go the bell and stepped to the open hall window. There was a sound within—a hurried footstep—a panting breath. A figure loomed up within the window—a white and savage face looked out in the dimness. Even in the dark Erroll knew the hard, desperate face of the man he had called his father!

The alarm had been given, and the baffled cracksman was thinking only of escape. Already lights gleamed on the stairs.

But Gentleman Jim started back at the sight of the face without the window.

He panted.

"You!"

He knew the schoolboy even in the gloom. For a moment they looked at each other through the open window. Erroll's handsome face pale and tense—Gentleman Jim snarling like a cornered wild beast.

"You!" The cracksman choked with rage. "You!"

There was a glimmer of metal, and Erroll started back.

Crack!

The enraged cracksman had fired through the open window, and the bullet passed within a foot of the schoolboy as he sprang aside. The next moment Gentleman Jim was scrambling, head-foremost, through the window.

But as he did so a strong grasp was laid upon him from behind.

"I've got the rotter!"

It was the deep voice of Bulkeley of the Sixth, captain of Rookwood.

"Here he is!"

There was a fierce struggle, and Gentleman Jim disappeared from the window, dragged back into the house by the stalwart Sixth Former. Erroll heard the fierce struggle within, and he scrambled furiously in at the window, fearful of hearing again the cracksman's revolver. There was a flood of light in the hall. Mr. Bootles was down, and he had switched on the electric light. Bulkeley and the cracksman were struggling on the floor, and Gentleman Jim had freed his right hand to use his weapon. Erroll leaped upon him and grasped his wrist, and turned the revolver to the floor. With a fierce twist of the wrist he forced the ruffian to drop the weapon.

The stairs were crowded with startled fellows. Jimmy Silver and Carthew of the Sixth ran forward and collared the struggling villain. It was the signal to

THE TWO BEST BOOK-LENGTH SCHOOL STORIES FOR JUNE!

THE SCHOOLBOYS' OWN LIBRARY

Nos. 221 and 222.

"THE SCHOOLBOY SHEIK!"

By FRANK RICHARDS.

"THE BOY WHO HATED ST. JIM'S!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

On Sale:

THURSDAY, JUNE 7th.
BUT BOOK YOUR ORDER
NOW!

the rest. A moment more and twenty pairs of hands were on the cracksman.

"Got him!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Sit on him!" shouted Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"Bless my soul!" Mr. Bootles was gasping. "Dear me! Oh, bless my soul!"

The crowd moved back as the Head of Rookwood, in dressing-gown and slippers, hurried on the scene. Dr. Chisholm was startled, but very calm.

"A burglar, sir," said Bulkeley, panting.

"So I see, Bulkeley! Secure the man, but do not hurt him," said the Head. "Take up that pistol, please, Mr. Bootles!"

"We've got the rotter, sir!" chortled Lovell.

Gentleman Jim was dragged to his feet. With a dozen pairs of hands upon him, the cracksman could not even struggle. He stood, panting, with flaming eyes, exhausted by the savage struggle.

The Head eyed him grimly.

Erroll stood quiet, silent, with deadly pale face. He was the only fellow there who was fully dressed, and already curious glances were turned upon him.

"Someone gave the alarm," said the Head. "Who was it that rang the bell?"

"It was I, sir," said Erroll quietly.

"You, Erroll! You are dressed!" Dr. Chisholm frowned. "Is it possible, Erroll, that you were up at this hour of the night?"

"I was in the quadrangle, sir, and I heard that man enter," said Erroll dully. "I gave the alarm at once."

"You have prevented a robbery," said the Head. "I shall inquire to-morrow, Erroll, how you came to be out of doors at such an hour. This man must be secured till the morning, when the police—"

There was a fierce exclamation from Gentleman Jim. His eyes burned at Erroll with deadly animosity.

"Send for the police!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "Let them take me, and let

them take that boy at the same time! He is my son and accomplice!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "How dare you!"

"It's the truth!" said Gentleman Jim between his teeth. "Look at me, Dr. Chisholm—look at me, and you will remember my face. It was I who brought that boy to this school—under the name of Captain Erroll!"

The Head started violently. He bent forward and scanned the sullen features of the cracksman, and his face became darker. Peele, on the staircase, pressed Townsend's arm.

"It's out now!" he whispered.

"By gad, yes!" murmured Townsend. "But what the thunder did Erroll give his pater away for?"

"It is true!" said the Head at last in hard, icy tones. "I recognise you! You came to this school as Captain Erroll, bringing that boy with you. Who are you?"

"Gentleman Jim, the cracksman," said the outcast with a reckless laugh. "The father of that boy. We shall go to prison together!"

"Erroll!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Erroll did not speak. His face was like stone. Mornington drew to his side, and slipped a hand through his arm. The unhappy lad gave a faint smile.

Dr. Chisholm fixed his eyes upon Erroll.

"You hear what this man says, Erroll?" His voice was cold and hard.

"Yes, sir."

"Have you anything to say?"

All eyes were upon the son of the cracksman. Erroll's head was drooping, but he raised it proudly.

"Only this, sir," he said in a firm voice. "That man has told part of the truth. I was brought up as his son, but I never believed that he was my father. He tried to make a thief of me. He ill-used me because I would not consent. He placed me in this school, making me believe I was to be free of his influence here—that I was to have a chance in life. He deceived me. He told me later that I was to help him rob you—and others. I broke with him then for ever.

I left my dormitory this night to leave Rookwood, because Captain Erroll is coming here to-morrow, and I could not face him. I should have been gone, but—but I heard that man breaking into the house, and I stayed to give the alarm. That is all, sir. He lies when he says that I am his son, and he lies when he says that I am his accomplice. I have never been a thief!"

There was a quiet dignity in Erroll's look and in his tone that carried conviction with it. A deep silence followed his words. It was broken by a scoffing laugh from Gentleman Jim.

"A likely story! I repeat——"

"Silence!" exclaimed the Head sternly. "That the lad is not your accomplice is proved by the fact that he has prevented your crime. Bulkeley, take that man to the cellars, and see that he is secured for the night."

"Yes, sir."

Gentleman Jim was led away by half a dozen of the Sixth, darting a last malevolent glance at Erroll as he went.

"Erroll," said the Head, after a long pause, "this matter must be inquired into. I forbid you to leave Rookwood. You will return to your dormitory. My boys, you may go back to bed."

"Let me go, sir!" said Erroll. "I have done you a service, which helps to make up for the wrong I have done—unintentionally, Heaven knows!—in deceiving you. I cannot remain at Rookwood. Let me go now!"

Dr. Chisholm shook his head.

"You must not go, Erroll. I shall hear your story in full in the morning, and will decide what is to be done with you. For the present, go back to bed."

Erroll bowed his head.

"Very well, sir!"

Mornington kept his arm as they went up the stairs. In the dormitory there was a scoffing chuckle from Peele, and Jimmy Silver turned upon the cad of the Fourth with fierce eyes.

"Silence!" he said between his teeth. "One word to Erroll, and I'll smash you!"

And Peele & Co. thought it better to be silent. There was no word from Kit Erroll as he turned in. But it was long ere sleep visited his eyes.

CHAPTER 40.

Kit Erroll Finds His Father!

"CAPTAIN ERROLL!"

Dr. Chisholm rose to greet the handsome, soldierly man who was shown into his study.

It was early morning, and the Head's look showed his surprise at so early a visit. Dr. Chisholm had barely breakfasted when the captain's card was brought in. He received him in his study. The captain's handsome, sunburnt face was pale, and as the Head glanced at it, the strange resemblance to Erroll of the Fourth struck him forcibly.

"I beg you to excuse this early call, Dr. Chisholm." The captain's manner was courtly, though hurried. "You are doubtless aware of the telegram I received yesterday from this school——"

"I was not aware of it!" said the Head in astonishment.

"A telegram from someone named Peele," said the captain. "A schoolboy, I presume. It was stated in this telegram that my son's friends wished me to visit Rookwood. I replied that I would come early in the morning. As I have, of course, no son at Rookwood, I should have taken the telegram for a foolish practical joke, but for one reason——" He paused.

"One moment," said the Head. "You are Captain Erroll, formerly a planter in British Honduras, later an officer in the British Army?"

"Certainly!"

"I am very glad to see you. Pray be seated," said the Head. "Your name has been used by a most conscienceless scoundrel. A month ago, Captain Erroll, a man came here, under your name, to place his son in the school. I had previously been in written communication with him, and had not the slightest

doubt that he was the man he professed to be. I have since made the discovery that this man is a criminal, and, in fact, he attempted to rob the school last night, and is now in custody here awaiting the arrival of the police."

"By gad!" said the captain in astonishment.

"The boy he called his son was the means of his being defeated in his attempt upon the school. That boy bears your name, and was—until last night—supposed to be your son, by all Rookwood."

"That explains the telegram, then," said the captain, tugging at his moustache. "I came here—foolishly enough, perhaps—with a vague hope. I have no son, Dr. Chisholm. But I had a son. He was stolen from me in early childhood, and I was never able to trace him. This telegram went to my heart like a dagger. It gave birth to a hope, foolish enough, as I see now, that perhaps something had been heard of my boy—something discovered." His voice faltered a little. "I have never given up hope, though ten years have passed since I have seen my boy. I am sorry that I have troubled you, sir."

"Not at all," said the Head. A strange expression had come over the Head's kind old face. "You might care to see the boy who has borne your name here?" He paused a moment. "It is an extraordinary coincidence that he bears a most remarkable resemblance to you. Such a likeness I have seldom or never seen. Stay, I will send for him."

The Head touched the bell, and the page was sent for Erroll. In a few minutes the junior, pale and quiet, entered the study.

The captain rose to his feet, his eyes upon the schoolboy's face.

His lips were trembling. "Good heavens!" he muttered. He started towards the junior. "Boy! What is your name? Who are you?"

"I do not know, sir," said Erroll quietly.

"You do not know!"

"This is Captain Erroll," said the Head.

The junior started, and the crimson crept into his face.

"Do not be afraid, my boy," said the captain, his eyes still upon Erroll's flushed face. "From my heart I believe that Heaven has been merciful to me at last. You say you do not know your name?"

"I never knew it, sir."

"Tell Captain Erroll your story," said the Head.

The junior obeyed. In a few words he told it, as he had told Mornington—the strange life of the son of Gentleman Jim, of the hard fight he had fought to keep from following in the criminal's footsteps, of the belief always fixed in his mind that Gentleman Jim was not his father. The captain listened without interrupting him once. Erroll's voice died away at last.

"This man, Gentleman Jim, is still here?" he asked, turning to the Head.

"Yes—I was about to telephone to the police when you came—"

"Let me see him!"

"Certainly. Remain here, Erroll."

The captain followed Dr. Chisholm from the study. Erroll remained alone—silent and pale, but his heart was beating with a strange hope.

Gentleman Jim, in the locked cellar, turned savagely as he heard the key grate in the lock. His hands were bound. He rose from a stool as the door opened, and Dr. Chisholm rustled in. Then he started, and his desperate face grew white as Captain Erroll strode in. His eyes gleamed like a hunted animal's as he backed away.

Captain Erroll strode to him, and scanned his face in grim silence. He spoke at last.

"James Stanton!" he said.

The cracksmán shrugged his shoulders.

"Gentleman Jim, at your service," he said.

"I have found you at last," said the captain quietly. He turned to the Head. "Ten years ago, Dr. Chisholm, I was a

young lieutenant, and this man—James Stanton—was in my regiment. He was discovered selling military information to a German agent, and it was I who exposed him. He fled, a ruined man, and a month later I received a letter from him. He had revenged himself by stealing my little son. He told me in his letter that the boy was to be placed in the hands of thieves to be brought up as a thief. That was his revenge upon me. I sought him for years in vain—till I lost all hope. And this is the man who brought that lad to the school."

"This is the man!"

"It is enough!" said Captain Erroll. "James Stanton, I can almost forgive you now—now that I have found my son!"

"You have found him!" muttered the cracksman. "You have found him—but beware! You have not done with Gentleman Jim yet!"

The captain quitted him without replying. His face was bright—years of age seemed to have dropped away from him. Erroll, in the Head's study, was waiting when the captain came in. He held out his hand to the boy.

"My son!" he said softly.

Erroll stood with catching breath.

"It was your own name that the scoundrel gave you, my boy, when he brought you here," said the captain, as he took the junior's hands. "Your own name! He believed that I had gone back to Honduras, and it was safe to use my name. It is by chance, or rather by Heaven's mercy, that I was still in

England and have found my son! My son!"

Only one word fell from Erroll's trembling lips!

"Father!"

It was a nine days' wonder at Rookwood.

Jimmy Silver & Co, rejoiced when they heard the news—and Mornington almost danced with satisfaction.

Only Peele of the Fourth looked glum.

Gentleman Jim was taken away by men in blue; and in the strong grip of the law he was not likely to give more trouble to the gallant soldier whom he had so cruelly wronged, or to the boy who had suffered so much from his revengeful rascality. He was gone from Erroll's life.

Erroll of the Fourth, as even the nuts had to admit now, was not the son of a cracksman—he was the son of Captain Erroll, the brave soldier to whom he had been so strangely restored. There was no more thought of his leaving Rookwood. The shadow of the past had been lifted—the future lay before him bright and sunny—the reward of the long struggle he had made for honour and right. And in his happiness he fully forgave those who had schemed against him—and, indeed, he could afford to forgive Peele of the Fourth—for it was due to Peele's cunning scheme that he had, at last, found his father, and that from the shadows of the past he had come into the light at last.

THE END



FREAK FEATS

AT the mention of the word records perhaps your mind pictures Sir Malcolm Campbell in his Blue-bird, rushing over the sands at Daytona in his successful attempt to establish a world's land speed record. Or you may think of the marvellous speed attained by the world's best flyers; but for queer records or record attempts, the following are hard to beat.

Pole-Squatters.

Shipwreck Kelly, the famous flagpole squatter, had to exercise his skill to the full in placing the National Recovery Act flag on the upper wing of an aeroplane and squatting on the flagpole while the plane was in flight, alighting in the same position without a mishap.

The man who beat Kelly at flagpole squatting was one named Voltaire. His record was fifty-two days—some time to sit on a flagpole!—beating Kelly's record by six days. He squatted on top of the pole on Carter's Pier at Miami Beach.

A bridegroom's nerve is sometimes affected by the wedding; but this was not so in the case of a Mr. Myrtle, who, to celebrate the ceremony, was suspended head downwards over a car by means of a special frame attached to the top of the car for the occasion, and in this position he travelled from Paris to Berlin.

Mr. Bill Williams, an American, having lost a wager, paid it in a peculiar way and quite unconsciously he set up a record. He pushed a peanut for eleven miles with his nose; but for the last few miles he was compelled to use a length of wire which was fastened round his neck for the pushing, as his nose had become "damaged in transit."

Dancing is attractive to most people; but its charm ceases when carried to excess, as was the case recently in France. A so-called marathon took

place in the Circus Modrano, and for twenty-one days twelve indefatigable couples rotated, until at last they were beaten by sheer exhaustion.

Dare-devil Dancers.

Another craze which comes from America is dancing on a platform thirty inches in diameter poised seventy-five feet above the ground. The two dancers were Betty and Benny Fox, who danced for fifty-six hours, and when they came to earth they showed no apparent fatigue. This exhibition attracted thousands of passers-by, who watched the young couple dancing all day and night while their lofty perch swayed in the wind.

Recently the people of Vienna received a shock when they saw a certain mechanic from the town of Graz walk into their city on his hands. Having no money for his fare, he took this unusual and difficult method to attract attention, and at the same time collect a little money for his pains.

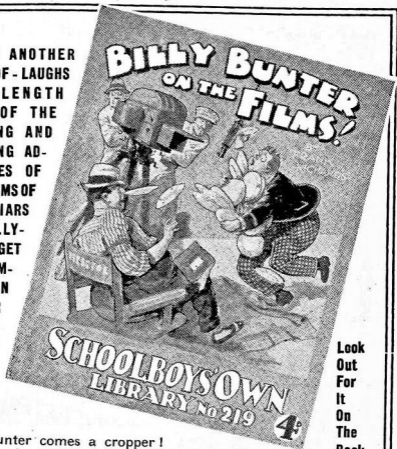
To avoid indigestion doctors advise us to eat slowly, but recently this sound advice was disregarded by an Italian speedster who ate one pound of spaghetti in fifty-six and a half seconds, to win a championship in Los Angeles. It is to be hoped that his digestion has not suffered from this severe shock.

Paderewski has frequently given lengthy piano recitals; but even he couldn't rival Billy Hajak, who recently sent the record for piano playing up to 187 hours 59 minutes, with ten minutes rest after each hour of playing.

Sixty-one and still skipping! This alone is almost a record; but Chester Levere is not content with it, for he holds the record of 15,000 skips! While training to beat this he skipped 5,000 times in forty-eight minutes in a temperature of nearly 93 degrees. This took place on the shore of Lake Michigan.

All these performances can certainly be classed as "freak" feats, but it is doubtful whether they serve any useful purpose.

HERE'S ANOTHER
FULL-OF-LAUGHS
BOOK-LENGTH
YARN OF THE
AMAZING AND
AMUSING AD-
VENTURES OF
THE CHUMS OF
GREYFRIARS
IN HOLLY-
WOOD! GET
THIS COM-
PANION
NUMBER
TO-DAY



Look
Out
For
It
On
The
Book-
stalls!

Billy Bunter comes a cropper! An unrehearsed act when William George takes up film work in Hollywood. Read all about this amusing incident and many others in the great yarn of Harry Wharton & Co. in film-land.

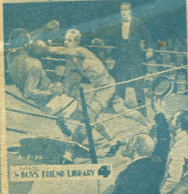
On Sale Now

Price 4d.

ASK FOR THESE POPULAR BOOKS

The FIGHTING SKIPPER

(By ERIC W. TOWNSEND)

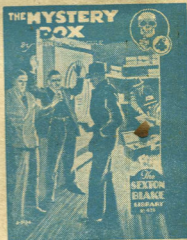


THE BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

- No. 429. **FLYERS OF THE NORTHLAND.**
A gripping yarn of flying adventure in the Canadian North-West.
By JOHN ALLAN.
- No. 430. **THE SCHOOL OF SNOBS.**
A ripping tale of fun and adventure at school.
By WALTER EDWARDS.
- No. 431. **PRINCE OF THE ARENA.**
A stirring story of the gladiators of Ancient Rome.
By MURRAY GRAYDON.
- No. 432. **THE FIGHTING SKIPPER.**
A thrilling yarn of boxing and the sea.
By ERIC W. TOWNSEND.

THE SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

- No. 429. **THE HARLEY STREET MURDER.**
A sensational story of a sinister criminal plot.
By WARWICK JARDINE.
- No. 430. **THE VILLAGE OF FEAR.**
A dramatic novel of mystery in the South of England.
By DONALD STUART.
- No. 431. **THE GREAT STORES CRIME.**
An engrossing narrative of thrilling detective adventure.
By LESTER BIDSTON.
- No. 432. **THE MYSTERY BOX.**
An amazing story of international intrigue, featuring Mlle. Julie and Granite Grant.
By PIERRE QUIROULE.



NOW ON SALE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS Price 4d. per volume (10c. in Canada)

Printed and published on the first Thursday in each month by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 5d. each. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for South Africa, Central News Agency, Limited. S.S.