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# The BOYS' FRIEND 1d.

OUR MOTTO IS: "PLAY THE GAME!"

No. 837, Vol. XVI. New Series.]

ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending June 23rd, 1917.



P.J. HAYWARD

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## LIGHT AT LAST!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, dealing with the Adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Morny's New Pal.

Look at them!"

Cyril Peele, of the Fourth Form, contracted his brows savagely as he peered out of the window of Study 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 kid-

napped," 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 inter-ferin' cad's wheel. But—but a fellow can't lick him."

"That's so," said Gower. "I've tried, an' I know."

"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 cracksman. 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 kidnapers, and he feels called upon to be grateful," sneered Peele.

"But Erroll knocked the yarn on the head," said Townsend

(Continued on the next page.)





## LIGHT AT LAST!

(Continued from the previous page.)

the man well, according to your account."

The fag did not answer. "Do you hear me?" shouted Peele angrily.

"I hear 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!" panted '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 cracksmen, 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— Oh!"

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 feel-

ing 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's 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.

### The 3rd Chapter. 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 gathered 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 feeling 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

when he joined up. 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! 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 home to British Honduras after being wounded."

Peele yawned.

"Erroll must know," grinned Topham. "Ask Erroll."

"He may have been stopped by the submarines or 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.

"Hullo! 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 their 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 disoblighing 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 Fistical Four read it together:

"Among the passengers landed from the S.S. Ceiba, recently sunk by a German submarine, is Captain Erroll. The gallant captain, who was a planter in British Honduras before the war, was severely wounded in the Somme offensive, and on leaving hos-

pital intended to return to his col home. Captain Erroll's many friends will not regret that the activity of Hun pirates compels him to remain somewhat longer in his native land.

The Fistical Four looked at one another.

"I suppose Erroll knows!"

Raby. "I—I suppose, so," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyway, I'm going to this paper to him. If he hasn't from his pater he'll be glad to get that he's safe."

And Jimmy Silver hurried off to school-house with the newspaper in his hand.

### The 4th Chapter. Under the Shadow.

"What's the trouble?"

Mornington asked the question, was lounging in the window-seat of Erroll's study. Higgs and minor, Erroll's study-mates, were of doors.

Mornington had just come in, and had found Erroll with a moody look 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 Morny."

"You've seen the last of the letter," said Mornington. "You've seen me you are sure that he is not father—and I feel sure of it too. Bother about him?"

"I am sure he is not my father though he has always called him that," said Erroll quietly. "I am the son of a cracksmen. But—by the other fellows knew all you know, they would believe—"

"They don't know, and they will know."

"I'm not so sure," said Erroll. "I haven't finished with that man, Morny. Since I told you my story you've palled with me, and I'm glad of it—but the others would look at it as you do. If it came that the man who brought me here and called himself Captain Erroll was in reality Gentleman Jim, cracksmen—"

He paused—under a name that does not belong to me—"

"But you don't know your name," said Mornington. "You are as much entitled to that as any other."

"That's true—I must be called something," said the junior, with a slight smile. "I may as well called Erroll as anything else. But—"

"Why did Gentleman Jim pick 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 Copy 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 again.

"There's nothin' to worry you give it a rest."

"But it does worry me," said Erroll quietly. "I'm not doing wrong 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. It didn't you tell me that Captain Erroll went back to British Honduras and leavin' the army?"

"Yes, Gentleman Jim told me so. Well, it won't hurt a man in America to be supposed to have a father at Rookwood," said Mornington laughing. "Besides, you'll do credit."

Erroll smiled.

"I can't quite square it with my conscience," he said. "I don't know what I ought to do—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 a term, and you're going in for a scholarship to pay your own expenses 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 to you. By gad," exclaimed Mornington, "you're not thinking of telling your head!"

"I've been thinking whether I ought to."

"It means clearin' out of school."

Erroll nodded.

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 fag. He had gone to join Mornington on the cricket-ground.

'Erbert of the Second came into the study, and Peele closed the door.

### The 2nd Chapter. Mornington Chips In!

'Erbert looked round the study puzzled. He had evidently expected to see Mornington there.

"Master Topham told me Mornington wanted me 'ere," 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 Rookwood 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 Rookwood 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 cracksmen called Gentleman Jim, a cracksmen 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, Morny. 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



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.

Mornington knew the whole of Erroll's dark story—of his boyhood passed in seclusion and shadow—of his determined and successful resistance to the cracksman's efforts to draw him from the path of honour and honesty. Erroll had told him all.

He believed, as Erroll firmly believed, that Gentleman Jim was not the junior's father, as he claimed.

Now that Erroll had broken for ever with the cracksman, the shadow had lifted from his life—if only Gentleman Jim left him in peace.

Erroll was clever and a hard worker, and there was every chance of his gaining a scholarship to enable him to remain at Rookwood by his own efforts. But if the truth had come out—if the defeated cracksman, in revenge, betrayed him—what then?

That was the worst that was to be feared. Gentleman Jim had placed the boy at the school, intending to use him for his own purposes—to rob the school, in the first place. That alone meant a haul that would be a small fortune to the cracksman. And Erroll had refused, fiercely, and had repudiated the rascal who called himself his father, for ever.

"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 sunk by a Hun submarine, 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, Morny, 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

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 Flanders, 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 cracksman has planted his son here under a false name, as Morny used to declare!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You needn't mind, Erroll," said Jimmy Silver. "No harm done if

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

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.

## The 6th Chapter.

### 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 outcast.

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!"



"My son," said Captain Erroll, "it was your own name that scoundrel gave you when he brought you here. He believed that I had gone back to Honduras, and it was safe to use my name—it is by chance that I was still in England—and have found my son!"

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.

## The 5th Chapter.

### 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'

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.

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





# LIGHT AT LAST!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"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 tomorrow, 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.

### The 7th Chapter.

#### Dick 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 school-boy, 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—"

"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 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 cracksman 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 a thief. That was his revenge upon me. I sought him for years in vain—till I lost all hope, and went out to the colonies, giving up hope at last. 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 fact was bright—years of age seemed to have dropped away from him. It was the call of duty that had brought him home from a distant colony to fight for the old flag—and it was so that he had found his son! 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 how, 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.

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