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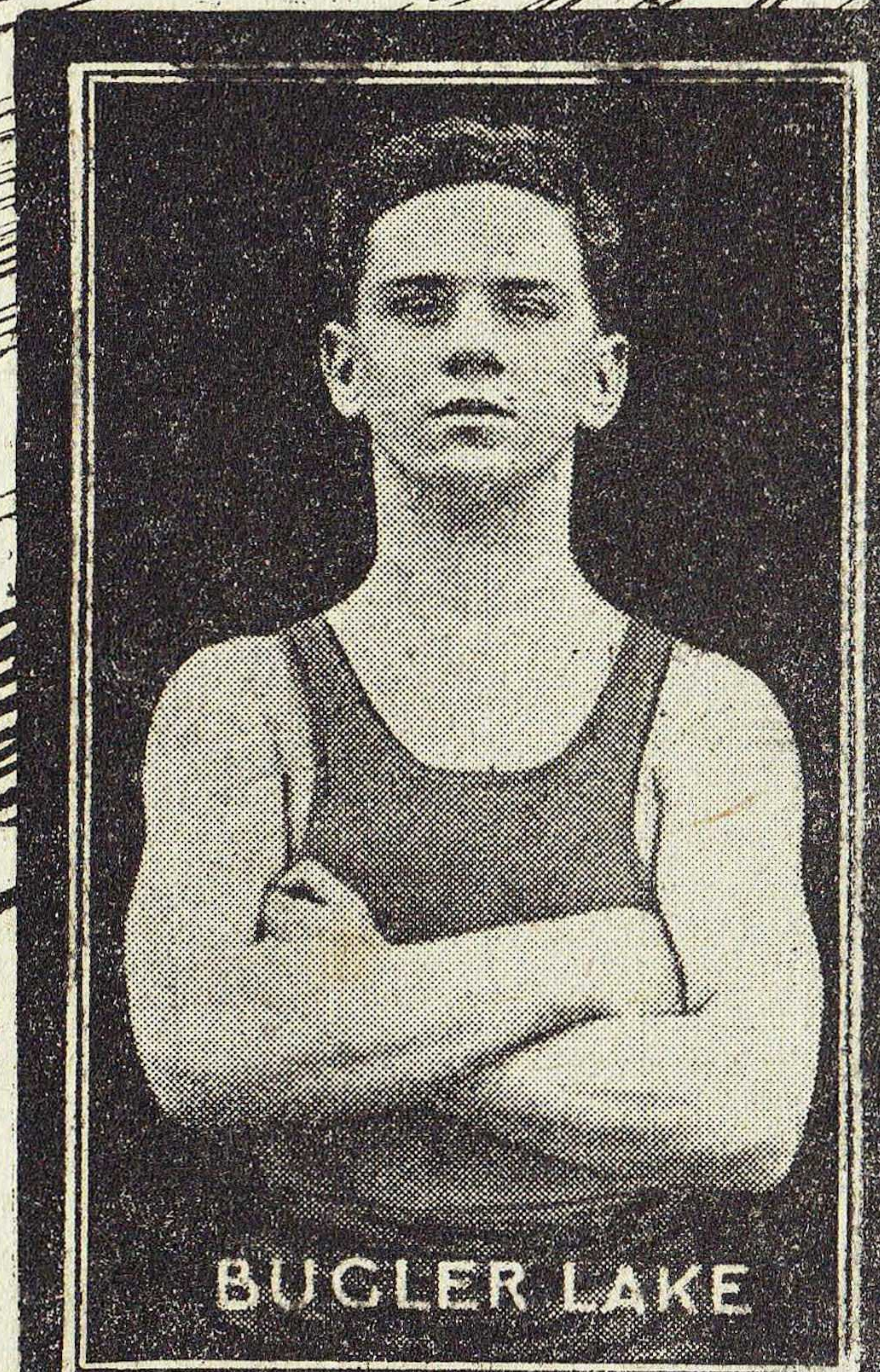
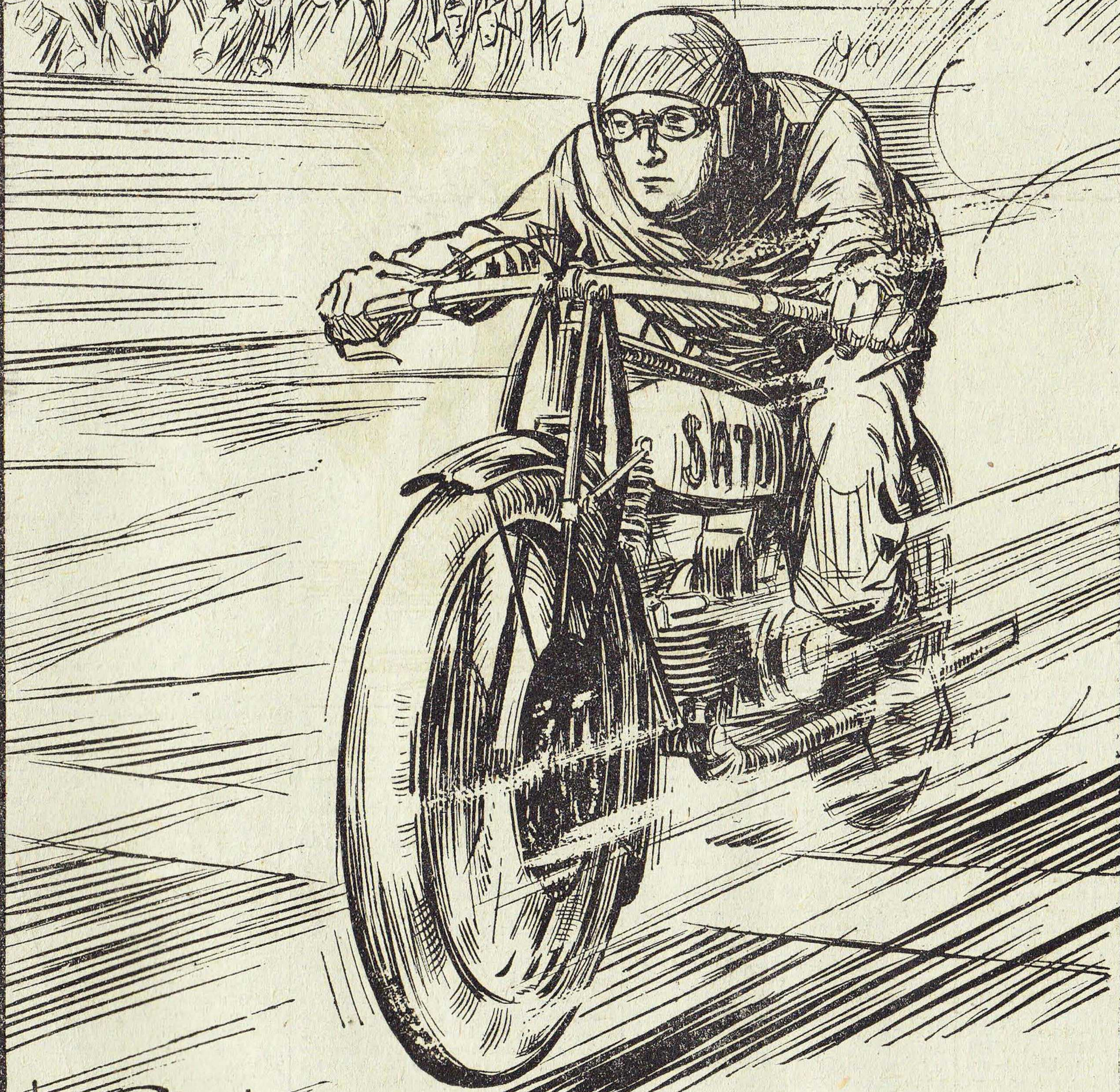
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No. 1,098.]

THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending June 24th, 1922.

The Tourist Trophy Mystery!



Rollo Dayton Wins the Tourist Trophy Race with Time to Spare!

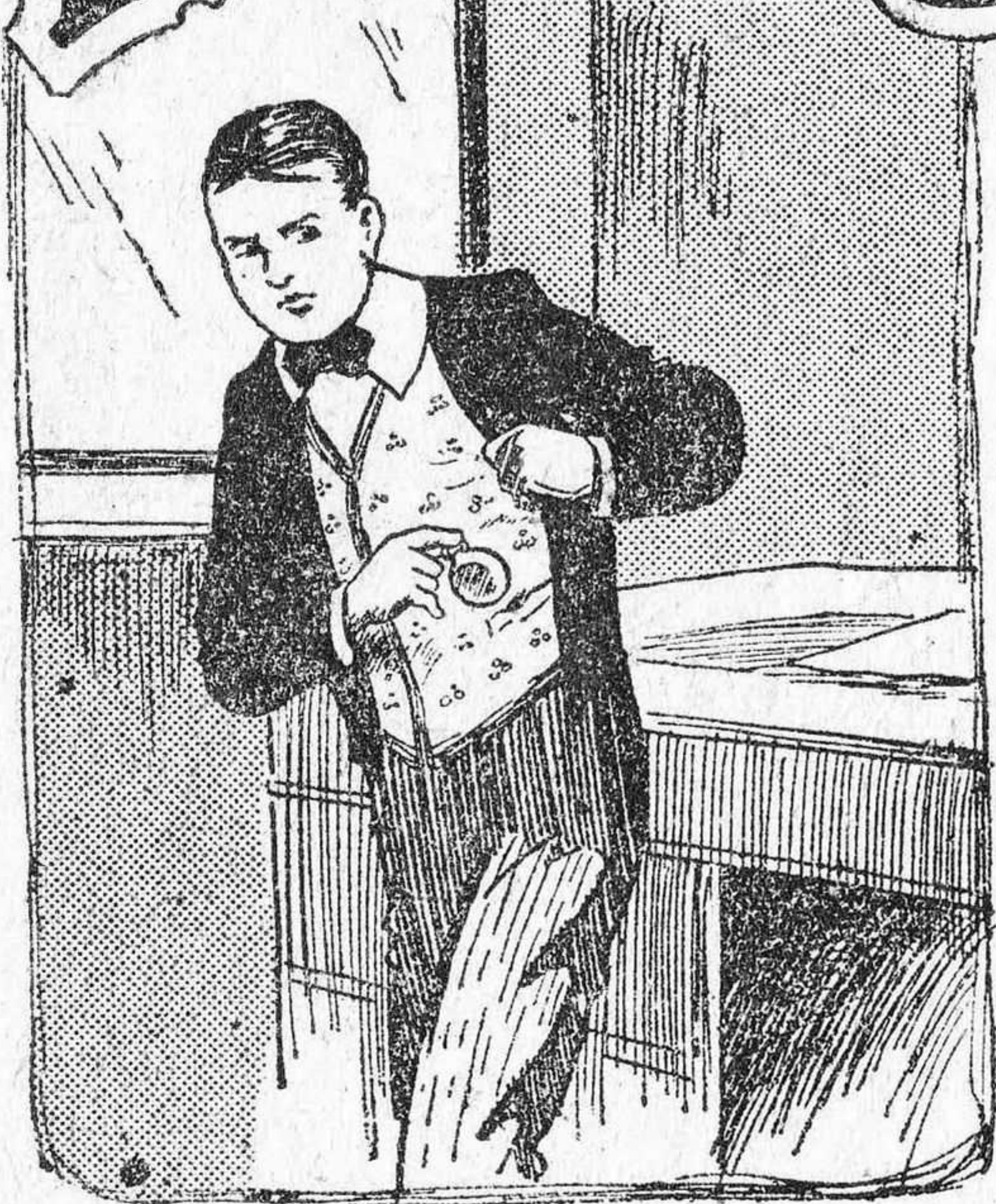
(A Thrilling Incident in This Week's Magnificent Story of the Clean-Sport Crusaders!)

Another Splendid Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. and Valentine Mornington at Rookwood School.

Mornington's Temptation!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")



The 1st Chapter. Mossoo insists!

"Silvain!" Jimmy Silver decided that he had better be deaf.

"Silvain!" Jimmy was hurrying out of the School House, with his bat under his arm, to join Lovell and Raby and Newcome on the cricket ground. The voice of Monsieur Maximilien Monceau, the French master of Rookwood, was not welcome to his ears at that moment.

For it reminded Jimmy that he had completely forgotten to hand over fifty lines of the "Henriade," due to Mossoo, in fact, long overdue. Mossoo wanted his lines, but Jimmy wanted cricket, so he accelerated his pace a little, turning a deaf ear.

Mossoo crossly. "Is it zat you have written zose lines, Silvain?"

"I—I—"

"You go to play ze cricket when you have not done zose lines, hein? You are one mauvais garcon, Silvain!"

"Oh, sir," murmured Jimmy. "You vill go to my study, Silvain, and sit you at ze table and write out zose lines," said Monsieur Monceau sternly.

"The—the chaps are expecting me on Little Side, sir—"

"I am expecting zose lines, Silvain. Go to my study and write zem out. Do not leave zat study till you have done zem. You are one bad boy, Silvain. I go to walk viz myself to have my watch mend, and perhaps I may arrive affair ze shop is close, because you make zese delays."

"Sorry, sir," murmured Jimmy. "If I find not zose lines done ven zat I am of return," said Monsieur Monceau. "I complain to ze headmaster. Take varning. Go to my study, mauvais garcon que tu es."

With a final stern frown, Monsieur Monceau jammed his shining silk hat on his shining bald spot, and walked down the steps. Jimmy Silver gave

shine and the fresh air seemed to be calling him—and the French master's study was stuffy, and the "Henriade" was a ghastly bore. Jimmy was tempted, and he fell. He tucked his bat under his arm again, and cut off to the cricket ground—to enjoy his ten minutes, at least.

Valentine Mornington looked after him curiously. He turned in at the door after a few moments; and Kit Erroll, coming out with his bat, passed him. Erroll did not look at him or speak, and Mornington passed with a face of indifference. Even the fellow who had been his best chum was against Mornington now; in all the Lower School of Rookwood, there was not one to give the outcast a friendly look or a friendly word.

The look of indifference seemed to fall from Mornington's face like a mask, as he found himself alone in the dusky corridor. His haughty pride kept up appearances before the school; he was bitterly determined that no one should see him wince. But it was a hard game to play. Even Erroll had turned against him—Erroll, whose loyal friendship and patience had once seemed inexhaustible. But it was Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, to whom Mornington attributed his downfall—

On the study table, glimmering in the sunlight from the window, lay a big, old-fashioned gold watch.

Mossoo had gone down to Coombe to have his watch repaired, and while polishing his silk hat, and giving the final touches to his neatly-trimmed beard and waxed moustaches, the little gentleman had completely overlooked the watch in question.

No doubt he supposed that it was safe in his watch-pocket; whereas, he had left it on the study table behind him. It was just like the absent-minded Mossoo, and Morny grinned as he thought of Mossoo arriving at the watchmaker's—minus the time-keeper that was to be repaired.

Mornington came into the study and closed the door.

He stood for some moments staring at the watch. Strange thoughts were working in Morny's brain.

He knew that Jimmy Silver was safe on the cricket-field for a little while at least. He had come to the study, in his angry bitterness, with the intention of playing some "jape" there, which Mossoo, when he discovered it, would naturally attribute to Jimmy. Jimmy would be in the study, dismally writing out lines from the "Henriade," when Mossoo returned. And if Mossoo found his slippers full of gum, or his clock full of ink, there was little doubt that his wrath would fall upon the detained junior. It was a miserable trick to play, of which Morny would have been, at one time, incapable. But although he deserved the punishment the Rookwood juniors had meted out to him, that punishment was having a deteriorating effect upon Mornington's nature. In silence and solitude, bitterness grew in his breast, banishing any thought of repentance, banishing everything but a desire to retaliate in any way that came to his hand.

when he came in—where would his suspicions fall?

It was a hideous thought; it drove the colour from Mornington's cheeks as it came into his mind, like a whisper from the Evil One.

He shivered, and laid down the watch, and turned quickly to the door, as if to flee from temptation. But he turned back.

No one knew he was anywhere near the French master's study; he had taken care that the coast was clear before he ventured there. It was safe—safe—and Jimmy Silver, who had led the Lower School in holding him to scorn, would be pointed at himself with the finger of scorn. What Mornington suffered, in disgrace and contempt, Jimmy would suffer in his turn, and more bitterly. Mornington had sent a false telegram to call the junior captain away on the eve of a cricket-match; but that, wretched trick as it was, was not so bad as theft. And Jimmy would be judged a thief!

Morny's heart beat quickly.

He would let the watch be found later—after Jimmy Silver had tasted of the bitterness he had tasted so deeply. That should be the worst that he would do. He slipped the watch into his pocket, and turned to the door again.

There he hesitated. His better nature was not dead; he hesitated in doubt with the beginning of remorse. But the thought assailed him that Jimmy Silver might arrive at any minute now; and if he found him there—He hesitated no longer, but opened the study door, peered into the passage, and stepped out. With assumed carelessness he walked away. The house seemed deserted after lessons that fine afternoon; Mornington did not meet a single soul as he went to his study in the Fourth Form passage.

There—with the gold watch in his pocket—a revulsion of feeling came over him. But even as he was thinking of hurrying back to the French master's study with the watch, a glance from the window showed him Jimmy Silver coming towards the School House.

It was too late.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders with reckless resignation. After all, it would serve Jimmy Silver right; let him have a taste of public scorn and avoidance!

But it was evidently unsafe to keep the watch about him; certainly it would be searched for. After some troubled thought, Mornington went to the box-room at the end of the Fourth Form passage, and after a glance round the dusky room, he slipped the watch into the chimney. The grate was never used, and the watch was safe enough from damage there.

Then he left the box-room, and the School House. He walked down to Little Side, where most of the Fourth were at cricket practice.

"Here comes that rotter!" It was Lovell's voice he heard. "If he butts into the cricket again there'll be more trouble."

And Arthur Edward Lovell bestowed a glare upon the ostracised junior. Raby and Newcome did not even glance at him; Conroy, Putty Grace, Oswald, and the rest, took no heed of his existence.

Mornington stood looking on at the practice with a bitter smile on his lips. Erroll was bowling, and when he left off he passed quite close to Morny, without looking at his whilom chum.

Mornington leaned on the pavilion, watching, with bitterness in his heart. The thought of the trick he had played in the French master's study no longer weighed on his mind. The finger of scorn was pointed at him; and his repentance, if he repented of his wrong-doing, would make no difference, and Valentine Mornington, like Pharaoh of old, hardened his heart.



THE SPY! As Monsieur Monceau proceeded to search Jimmy Silver, Mr. Dalton, the Fourth Form master, caught sight of Tubby Muffin standing in the partly open doorway. "How dare you stand staring into this room, Muffin?" thundered Mr. Dalton. "Go away at once!"

a grunt. So far as the Fourth-Former could see, there was nothing pressing in a French imposition—and cricket was very pressing. Cricket always was pressing on a sunny afternoon, and Jimmy would have been satisfied to leave French impositions until the Greek Kalends, or a further date, if possible.

"Rotten!" growled Jimmy Silver. He frowned as he caught a mocking grin on Mornington's face. The barred junior was lounging by the steps again, idly; and he was evidently enjoying the discomfiture of the captain of the Fourth.

"Can I take a message from you to your pals, old bean?" asked Mornington. "If they're expecting you—"

Jimmy looked round without answering. Monsieur Monceau was disappearing out of gates; and Jimmy reflected. If the French master was going to Coombe to have his watch mended, he could scarcely be back under half an hour. There was time to get down to Little Side and join the cricketers for ten minutes or so, and still get well on with the lines in Mossoo's study before he returned.

Jimmy certainly ought to have obeyed the French master's injunctions without delay. But his chums were expecting him—and the sun-

it was against Jimmy Silver that all his bitterness was directed. Jimmy had presided at the Form trial, when Mornington had been sentenced to Coventry. Jimmy was at the bottom of it all, in Morny's perverse thoughts. In his heart of hearts, Morny well knew that he deserved what had befallen him, or more; but he would not admit it, even in his thoughts. He was conscious only of a bitter desire to inflict as much upon his enemy as he suffered himself—and it was Jimmy whom he chose to regard as his enemy.

The 2nd Chapter Mornington's Temptation!

"By gad!" Mornington's dark and gloomy face broke into a grin, as he looked into Monsieur Monceau's study.

NEXT MONDAY'S FREE BOXING PHOTO IS OF SOLDIER JONES (A Coming Champion.)

He picked up the watch at last, and looked at it. It was a heavy, old-fashioned timekeeper, winding with a key. It was stopped now, and it did not tick as it was moved. Something was wrong with the works. Morny clicked open the outer case, and read on the inner plate the name and style of a Parisian firm, "Goezman et Cie, Rue Royale." On the outer case was engraved, "Mon ami Maximilien." Apparently the watch was a present to Mossoo from some ancient friend. Heavy and old-fashioned as it was, it was very valuable from the quantity of precious metal it contained—twenty guineas at the least.

Mornington turned the watch over in his hand. His handsome face was quite pale.

Strange and dark thoughts were in his disturbed mind. He was struggling with the black temptation that had assailed him—a temptation that would never have occurred to his mind in normal moments. But now all Mornington's nature seemed "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh."

Jimmy Silver would be in the study; and Mossoo would return knowing that he had left his watch on the table there! If it were missing

The 3rd Chapter. Black Suspicion!

"Je chante de ce heros qui— Oh dear! Both the 'Henriade,' and blow Henri, and bless Mossoo!" growned Jimmy Silver.

The captain of the Fourth had torn himself away from the cricket-ground, leaving the fresh air and sunshine behind him. Never had Monsieur Monceau's study seemed so stuffy. Mossoo hated open windows, like most of his nation; even on summer days his study was almost hermetically sealed. Apparently he breathed the same air over and over again, and liked it with a ripe flavour of age. Jimmy Silver did not like it the least little bit. He would have preferred his own study, but Mossoo's order had been strict. He did not mean to give the delinquent junior a

chance of forgetting the lines again. They had been overdue for several days now, and perhaps it was not surprising that the little gentleman had lost patience.

That did not alter the fact that the study was stuffy, and that there were fresh air and sunshine outside, and that Jimmy Silver wanted to be at the cricket. However, as it could not be helped, Jimmy Silver remembered his own special motto, and tried to "keep smiling."

He dipped Mossoo's pen into Mossoo's ink, and began to write out his lines—worrying lines, as he had to put in the accents. Mossoo was very particular about accents. He would not even permit a vertical jab which might pass muster for either an acute or a grave accent. If it did not slope the right way, Mossoo wanted to know the reason why, which had a very exasperating effect upon Mossoo's pupils, who declined to see that there was any importance at all in such nice distinctions.

Jimmy had had rather more than ten minutes with the cricketers, and he could scarcely hope to get his fifty lines completed—accents and all—by the time of Mossoo's probable return. As a matter of fact, he was not half through the imposition when he heard Mossoo's boots creaking in the corridor. Mossoo had returned unexpectedly soon; which was accounted for by the fact that his conversation with the watchmaker had been very brief, as he found that he had forgotten to bring the watch.

Jimmy Silver rose respectfully as Monsieur Monceau entered the study, looking warm and flustered after a walk in the sunshine.

"Ah, you are here, Silvair!" said Monsieur Monceau. "Mon garçon, I have had ze walk for nozzings. I have ze departure of ze brain."

"The—the what, sir?" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"I go to vatchmaker to repair vatch, and I leave my vatch," explained Monsieur Monceau. "I remember trop tard zat I take him out of my pocket to see if he will go if I shall shake him, and I lay him on ze table, and zen he go out of my pauvre tete—my poor head, isn't it. Zat is vat you call ze departure of ze brain, n'est-ce-pas?"

"Oh, absence of mind!" said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Zat is it—ze absence of ze mind," said Mossoo. "Zere is a difference zere, you say absence of ze mind, not departure of ze brain. Oh, yes! You have find zat watch on ze table, isn't it?"

Monsieur Monceau was looking round for the watch while he was speaking. Naturally, he did not see it.

"No, sir," said Jimmy. "I didn't see it when I came in."

"You have put some papairs over him, perhaps. Look for zat vatch, mon garçon!"

"Certainly!"

Jimmy moved everything on the table, looking for the watch. But it was not to be discovered.

Monsieur Monceau looked annoyed.

"Perhaps you put it into the wrong pocket, sir," suggested Jimmy Silver.

"Zis vill not do, Silvair! Tell me at vunce vere zat vatch is!"

"I haven't seen it, sir."

"Pouf! You have hidden zat vatch because I do give you some lines—isn't it? You play me a choke! I varn you, Silvair, zat you sall not choke me!"

"But I'm not playing a joke, sir," said Jimmy. "I give you my word that I have not seen the watch."

"It was on ze table—I remembair perfectly vere I lay him! Zere, vere you vere sitting, Silvair! You could not have come to ze table vizout seeing him!"

"It wasn't there, sir."

"Nonsense! Vere is zat vatch?" exclaimed Monsieur Monceau angrily.

Mossoo's wrath was not without reason. The watch certainly had been there, and Jimmy, as Mossoo supposed, had come to the study directly its owner had gone out, and nobody else could be supposed to have had any reason for entering the room. Mossoo's belief was that the detained junior was playing a "choke," as he called it, and Mossoo had had enough of the joke. He fixed his little black, twinkling eyes on Jimmy Silver, with angry impatience.

"I haven't seen the watch, sir. I can't say more than that. I give you my word, sir."

"Has somevun else come into ze room and take him?"

"Not that I know of, sir."

"Silvair, if you do not give up zat vatch at vunce I sall begin to zink zat you steal him!"

Jimmy's eyes flashed.

"Silvair, give me zat vatch!"

"How can I, when I haven't it?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Ozzervise I call in your Form-master to deal viz you!"

"I don't mind, sir! Mr. Dalton will take my word, I'm sure!"

"You will remain here, zen, while I call Monsieur Dalton!"

And to make sure that Jimmy Silver did not leave, Monsieur Monceau locked the door on the outside when he went to look for Mr. Dalton, the master of the Fourth Form.

Jimmy remained in the study, as angry now as Mossoo himself. That gentleman's absence of mind was well known at Rookwood—indeed, it sometimes amounted almost to "departure of the brain," as he called it himself. Jimmy had no doubt that he had placed the watch somewhere and forgotten it—possibly in one of his pockets. The junior was tempted to drop from the study window and clear off while Mossoo was gone for the Form-master; but, fortunately, prudence restrained him. If the watch was really missing, such an action would look suspicious, as Jimmy realised. Besides, his lines were not yet finished. With a worried brow, Jimmy sat down at the table and worked at his imposition, and it was finished just as footsteps halted outside the study door.

The key turned in the lock, and Monsieur Monceau ushered Mr. Dalton into the study. Jimmy turned a flushed face to his Form-master.

"Silver, if you have hidden Monsieur Monceau's watch—"

"I haven't, sir! I haven't even seen it!"

"Monsieur Monceau is positive that he left it on the table, just where your papers are lying, Silver."

"It was not there when I came in, sir."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Mossoo angrily. "It was zere! I remembair parfaitement!"

Mr. Dalton looked very searchingly at the captain of the Fourth. That the junior might have pulled Mossoo's leg on the subject of his beloved

"That is true," said Mr. Dalton, knitting his brows. "Yet some boy may have entered the study—tricks upon an absent master are not unknown. Silver, have you left the study since you came to write your lines?"

"Monsieur Monceau locked me in, sir."

"I mean previous to Monsieur Monceau's return from Coombe?"

"No, sir. I was doing lines all the time."

"Very good. Have you any objection to turning out your pockets?"

"Not if you think I should, sir," answered Jimmy Silver, though his face crimsoned.

"You had better do so, I think."

"Vrai—and now we see ze vatch!" said Mossoo.

In silence Jimmy Silver turned all his pockets inside out. Certainly there was no sign of a watch, excepting Jimmy's own silver one.

"It is hide!" said Monsieur Monceau. "Perhaps in ze souliers, or in ze gilet—vat you call veskit—"

"Do you think I am a thief?" burst out Jimmy Silver savagely.

"If you not give up zat vatch, you are one teef!"

"Mr. Dalton—"

"Calm yourself, Silver. This investigation is for your own sake," said the Fourth Form master. "You do not object to Monsieur Monceau searching you before you leave the study?"

"I think it's rotten!" exclaimed Jimmy. "But if Mossoo wants to search me, let him! There's nothing for him to find, I know that!"

A fat face peered in at the open doorway, and Jimmy gave it a black look. The fat face belonged to Tubby Muffin. Tubby had scented out trouble like a war-horse that scents the battle from afar. His ears were pricked up, and his little round eyes fairly blazed with excitement. Jimmy realised that the fat Classical must have

and he has taken it away before I am of return. Vrai! Mais si! Zat ze vicked boy tell me vere is zat montre."

"Silver, you give me your word, for the last time, that you know nothing about the watch?" asked Mr. Dalton, deeply troubled.

"I give you my word, sir," said Jimmy steadily.

"Pas vra.—pas vrai—"

"Calm yourself, please, Monsieur Monceau. The watch certainly seems to have been taken away; but it is quite possible that some boy came in here before Silver, and that the whole affair is nothing but a stupid joke. Silver, you may go for the present."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy. And in a dismal mood, the usually cheery captain of the Fourth quitted the French master's study.

The 4th Chapter.

Trouble in the Fourth!

"Watches were made to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"First it was a gold watch, and now it's a Silver one," continued Higgs of the Fourth, who was apparently bent upon being humorous.

And there was a laugh in the junior Common-room.

Which was all decidedly unpleasant to the ears of Uncle James of Rookwood, as he came in with his chums.

The story of the missing watch was all over the school now.

Monsieur Monceau was crying his terrible loss from the house-tops as it were. He mourned, like Rachel of old, for what was lost, and would not be comforted.

He refused to believe for one moment that the affair was a "choke." His watch—that magnificent gold timekeeper which had been given him by a valued old friend who was now "mort"—had been feloniously stolen, and Mossoo wanted to discover the thief. Indeed, it was only a sharp remonstrance from the

Common-room while Higgs was going strong. Peele and Gower and Latreux burst into a loud laugh as he came in; and Higgs, encouraged by applause, rattled on.

"Watches were made to go—and Mossoo's had gone! He shouldn't leave watches about on study tables to tempt thoughtless youngsters. But, you see, he thought it had stopped. After Silver came into the study, it didn't stop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele & Co. Jimmy Silver's eyes glittered. He came over towards Higgs, and the laughter died away. The expression on Uncle James' face was not provocative of mirth.

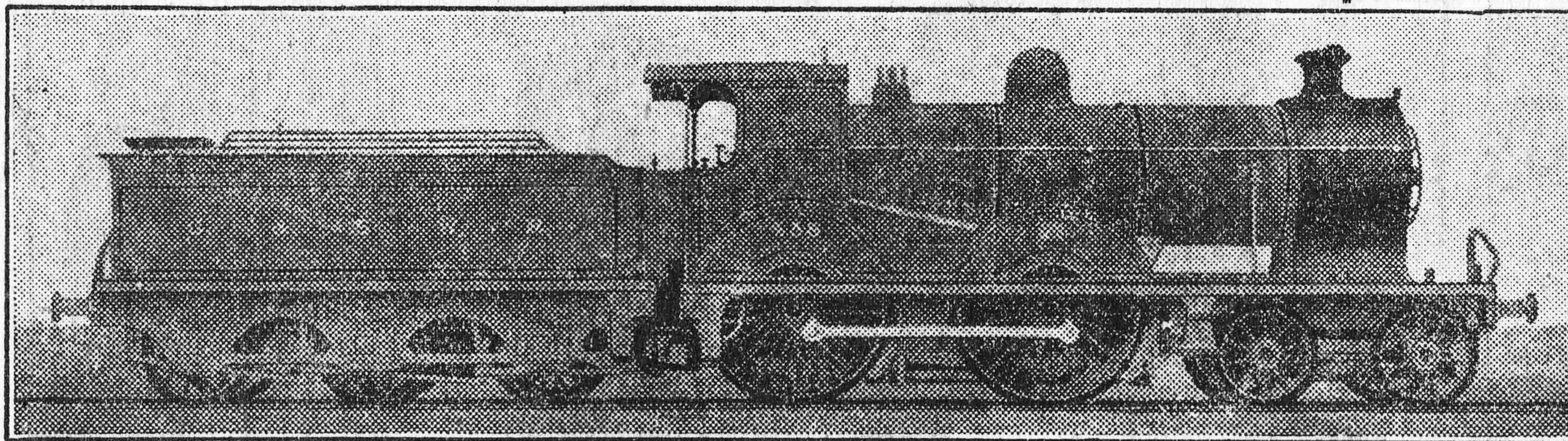
Mornington, lounging in an arm-chair, watched Jimmy Silver with cool curiosity. Even in the excited discussion no one had spoken to Mornington; he was barred as sedulously as ever. But there was a faint smile on his handsome face; a wicked amusement in his eyes. The purloined watch was still hidden in the box-room chimney. Later on, he intended to take it back to Mossoo's study, and leave it on the table there, to be found by the French master, who would know then that the whole thing was only a practical joke. But not yet—not until Jimmy Silver had tasted something of the cup of bitterness of which Mornington had had to drink deep.

That Jimmy was already feeling his position acutely was easily to be seen. Less keen eyes than Mornington's could see it. The shame of the suspicion, the humiliation of the search, had hit Jimmy hard, and his face was clouded, his temper less equable than of old, and he was much quicker to take offence. Higgs' foolish words had roused his ire, and Higgs did not like his look at all.

But Higgs did not intend to "back down" at a frown from Jimmy Silver. He faced him with an air of bluster.

"Want something?" he asked. "I've locked up my watch!"

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ancient watch was probable enough, but it was not probable that he would lie about it. If he lied, it was not to hide a practical joke, but to hide something much more serious than that.

"You are aware, Silver, that the watch is a valuable one?" said Mr. Dalton, after a pause.

"I know it's a gold one, sir. I've seen it sometimes," said Jimmy.

"It is a very serious matter if it is not found."

"I—I suppose it is, sir."

"Zen you give him to me—isn't it?" exclaimed Mossoo excitedly.

"Zat montre—zat vatch, he is one present from my old friend zat is now mort. I vill not lose him for zousands of francs!"

"Patience, monsieur!" said Mr. Dalton. "It does not seem possible, Silver, that anyone else can have played this trick. You came to the study immediately after Monsieur Monceau left it—"

"No, sir!" said Jimmy quickly.

"Monsieur Monceau tells me that he directed you to do so, as you had not done your lines."

"I—I went down to the cricket-ground to—to speak to the fellows first. I—I came in in about ten minutes afterwards—or perhaps a quarter of an hour."

"Nonsense!"

"Patience, Monsieur Monceau! Silver's statement can be verified, if true, by reference to the boys on the cricket-ground."

"You can ask Lovell or Raby or Newcome or Conroy or anybody," said Jimmy. "Twenty fellows at least can tell you."

"We will take that point as settled. So the study was left empty for about ten minutes?"

"I suppose so, sir."

"But no vun sall know zat ze vatch is left here!" exclaimed Mossoo hotly. "I do not know myself till I reaches vatchmaker's! Somevun do not come to take vatch vizout knowing zat zere is vatch!"

seen the excited Mossoo dragging Mr. Dalton off to the study, and followed, with his usual inquisitiveness to learn what was the matter. Evidently he had heard all, and it was equally certain that ere long all the Lower School would know what Reginald Muffin knew. Jimmy's ears burned as Mossoo began to search him, and Tubby Muffin peered in from the passage. The scene was humiliating enough to Jimmy Silver, and it was still more humiliating that all Rookwood would know about it and comment on it.

Monsieur Monceau made his search thoroughly. He even made Jimmy take off his shoes, to ascertain that the big watch was not concealed in one of them. He groped and fumbled and pinched, and certainly would have discovered anything larger than a pin's head that had been concealed about Jimmy. But there was nothing to discover.

"Muffin!"

Mr. Dalton suddenly caught sight of the fat Classical in the passage through the partly-open doorway.

"Ow! Yes, sir!" gasped Tubby.

"How dare you stand there staring into the room? Go away at once, and take a hundred lines!"

"Oh dear!" said Tubby.

And he rolled away at once, much dismayed by the hundred lines, but much bucked, on the other hand, by the exciting item of news he had to impart to the other fellows. On the whole, Tubby Muffin was more bucked than dismayed.

Meanwhile, Jimmy Silver stood, flushed and flustered and angry, waiting for what was to come next. The search had revealed nothing, excepting the fact that there was no gold watch concealed about him.

"Are you satisfied, Monsieur Monceau?" asked Mr. Dalton.

Mossoo gave a shriek.

"Satisfy! When my vatch he is stolen—ze vatch zat was cadeau—a present from old ami zat is mort. Jamais! Silvair has taken ze vatch,

Head which prevented Mossoo from telephoning for the police.

The Head agreed with Mr. Dalton's opinion, that some thoughtless young rascal—Silver or another—had hidden the watch for a foolish practical joke on the French master, well knowing that his excitable disposition would lead him to make an absurd scene.

The Head had issued his lofty command that whoever had taken away the watch should restore it without delay, without specifying what was to follow. As a flogging was extremely likely to follow, it did not seem probable that the practical joker would be in a hurry to get a move on. He was much more likely to understudy Brer Fox, and "lie low and say nuffin."

Meanwhile there was much excited comment on what had happened in Mossoo's study. Tubby Muffin related it breathlessly, forgetting that he would have been much better occupied in getting his hundred lines done. Tubby quite forgot the lines in his breathless interest in this startling affair. Tubby was the fellow that knew, and he was generously willing to impart his knowledge. But the fact that Jimmy Silver had been suspected first was known from other sources. Mossoo made no secret of his belief. And the general opinion in the Fourth was that Mossoo was a born idiot, and that Jimmy would have been justified in punching his nose.

But not everyone in the Fourth was a friend of Jimmy's, though most were; and those who, like Higgs, the bully of the Form, were "up against" Uncle James, did not lose this opportunity. Certainly, no one believed for a moment that Jimmy was a thief, or capable of becoming one. That was simply unthinkable about Jimmy Silver, whether a fellow liked him or not. Nevertheless, Higgs allowed himself to be humorous and sarcastic. It was a score over the captain of the Fourth, anyhow.

Jimmy Silver came into the

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Peele.

Smack! Jimmy's open palm rang on Higgs' cheek, and the bully of the Fourth staggered back.

"Why, I—I—I—" he spluttered, in breathless wrath.

"There's some more if you want it," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "A fellow's honesty isn't a subject for jokes."

"I'll smash you!" roared Higgs.

"Come on, then!"

Higgs came on fast enough. But what he came on to seemed to him like a hurricane of fists, and he was knocked right and left. Jimmy's temper was in a blaze, and never had the Fourth seen Uncle James hitting out in that style before. Higgs had badgered him at the wrong moment, and he had to pay not only for his own sins, but for those of Mossoo, and for the unpleasant circumstances generally.

It seemed to the hapless Higgs that Jimmy Silver had five or six fists, all as hard as iron, and all hammering on him at once.

There was a terrific crash when Higgs went down, and he lay gasping and sprawling, quite beaten.

"Ow, ow! Wow! I'm done!" gasped Higgs. "Yow-ow!"

"Chap doesn't prove his innocence by punching a fellow!" remarked Cyril Peele.

Jimmy turned on him.

"My innocence doesn't want proving," he said.

"That's all very well!" gasped Higgs. "But if the watch doesn't turn up, Morny isn't the only chap in the Fourth who'll be sent to Coventry."

"Do you want some more?" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"You're not going to bully me!" roared Higgs. "I'll say what I like."

An elegant form lounged out of an armchair and interposed.

"Hands off, Silver! Higgs has had enough!"

(Continued on page 600.)

POLRUAN'S QUEST.

By MAURICE EVERARD.

(Continued from page 593.)

them are spread all over the country. If one of us can only get through and strike towards Haiphong, we're bound to pick up a company of tirailleurs sooner or later, and these will come to the rescue at once."

"Yes; but who's going?" queried the engineer.

"I am," was the quiet response.

"This is my show—my idea. Soon after midnight it will get darker. It always does in the tropics. Then my name's 'Walker.' And if you'll excuse me, I've got a little job on now."

Before anyone could stop him, he had unbarred the door and slipped out into the courtyard. For the moment everything was very still, the attackers having ceased fire and drawn off to decide on their next plan of campaign.

Several minutes passed, and a score of eyes peered through the loopholes anxiously watching for Grantley's return, when there came a low scratching at the door. Joe unbolted it, and Grantley staggered in, dragging the dead body of the native who had tried to kill Tremorne.

"I wanted this chap badly," Grantley said, unfastening the fellow's red cotton streamers, by which the flat bamboo hat was secured to his chignon turban. "This brown coiffure will be useful to hide my face, and to keep the sun off the back of my neck if I'm lucky enough to get through."

"You don't mean—you're going now?" gasped Frank. Grantley busied himself in removing the native's dress, and took from his belt a heavy-bladed half-chopper, half-knife, something between a Gurka kookerie and a Manila bolo, which, he explained, was essential for cutting away the creepers and undergrowth which were sure to block his path.

"Now for a bit of native make-up," he said. "Let's have a handful of fine dust mixed with a splash of oil. I'm almost brown enough without it. And if one of you boys can work up a little candle soot to broaden my nose and darken my eyes, I'd be obliged."

"Seems to me dat dis chile am de ri' pussion for dis yere job," squeaked Pieface enviously. "Joeyman, Pie am real chief's son, b'longing to big stummick man ob de Loblegobble tlibe. Dose fellers out dar tak him for one ob demselbes, suah certain wid his black hair."

"Sorry, old bean, but it's a man's job entirely," said Grantley, laying his hand kindly on the black boy's shoulder. "I'm used to forest work; you aren't."

"Doan yo mak' no mistookums," persisted Pie. "I climb like a monkey, and mak' no noise in de woods."

"I know all that," agreed the young soldier. "But you see, laddie, it can't be done. Hark! There they go at it again. And, by Jingo, they're giving the outer stockade ginger! You'd best give 'em a teasing while I slip quietly away at the back."

"There's no chance that way," sang out Dick from above. "The blighters are all round the place! Joe, we want another couple of chaps up here to help pick 'em off."

Once more the plan of lighting the flares was tried, and during the few minutes the place was lit up, terrible execution was wrought among the attackers as they swarmed, like cats, over the double line of stakes. Now for the first time, the defenders had a close view of their enemies, and they discovered quite a number of yellow-skinned Chinese amongst them,

really bandits who had come across from Yangtse valley, and had found more money was to be made in helping to fight the soldiers of the Legion for the native Annamese and Tonkinese, than by depredations on poverty-stricken villages.

These fellows, with parchment-like skins and narrow slitted eyes, were more reckless and cunning than the natives, showing remarkable ability by climbing the walls with both hands fully occupied, one holding a gun, the other a slender-bladed knife. How they managed to surmount the bamboo, none of the defenders learned until afterwards, when they discovered that these Chinese hillmen train their feet in the art of holding things, with as much ease and security as they use their hands.

On the same principle they were able to clear the barricade much more easily than their neighbours, and to drop, fully armed, into the ditch in an incredibly short space of time. Their surprise was great when, on reaching their objective, they found no one to fight, nothing but four bare pagoda walls from which flashes of fire stabbed at them out of the dark.

More than half their number fell in this attack, the rest retreating by the way they had come. With a temporary lull in the attack Joe, like a wise commander, eased those who, like Dick and Lawless, had been posted at the loopholes. He put in their place some of the firemen, and then summoned Pieface.

"Now, my lad, you've got to get busy," he said severely. "This night fighting is a big strain on man and beast, so I suppose you feel it as much as the rest of us. We want something good and tasty got ready with as little delay as possible—savee?"

Pie's red lips expanded in a grin which threatened to slit his face.

"Doan yo' bother, ole mushroom face," laughed the black boy. "I gib yo' all one sardinum, two peanuts, a slice ob coconut shell, and one salt spoon ob condens milk, yiss!"

"Jolly fat we shall get on a diet of that sort," growled the sailor, rubbing the smoke-grime out of his eyes. "All right, do your best, inky knob. And the next time those fellows swarm into the courtyard I want my old Moorish lamp to do a bit of rick-tickling with."

Pieface struck a dramatic gesture. "De lamp am heah, sah, all de ready, nice polishum on it, and all de littlum spikes hab been sharpened so dey eat pieces out ob dem ugly fellers."

Joe followed the direction of Pie's extended hand, and there sure enough hanging from a peg on the wall, by its long stout chain of hand-carved brass links, was the heavy Moorish vessel with which more than once during his travels he had wrought terrible execution at close range.

"Give me that old head-basher before any revolver or knife ever made," Joe said excitedly to Mactavish. "Glory be to Caesar, but I wish that black lump of ebony would hurry up with some food. Suppose he's been wasting time watching the circus."

As a matter of fact, Joe was unconsciously doing Pieface a great injustice, for in the very midst of the fighting the black cook, overcoming the temptation to see all that was going on, had withdrawn to his quarters, stoked up a big fire, and in an immense iron saucapan, brought from the wrecked Enchantress, he was making a huge brew of soup.

Thick and steaming and tasty was this soup, and when at last it came to the boil, Pie set it down close to the glowing embers, and, producing a second saucapan as large as the first, prepared a second lot.

But that brew of soup was never to be eaten, for just as he was about to serve it out all piping hot there came

one of those strange and unexpected interruptions which send the best-laid plans awry.

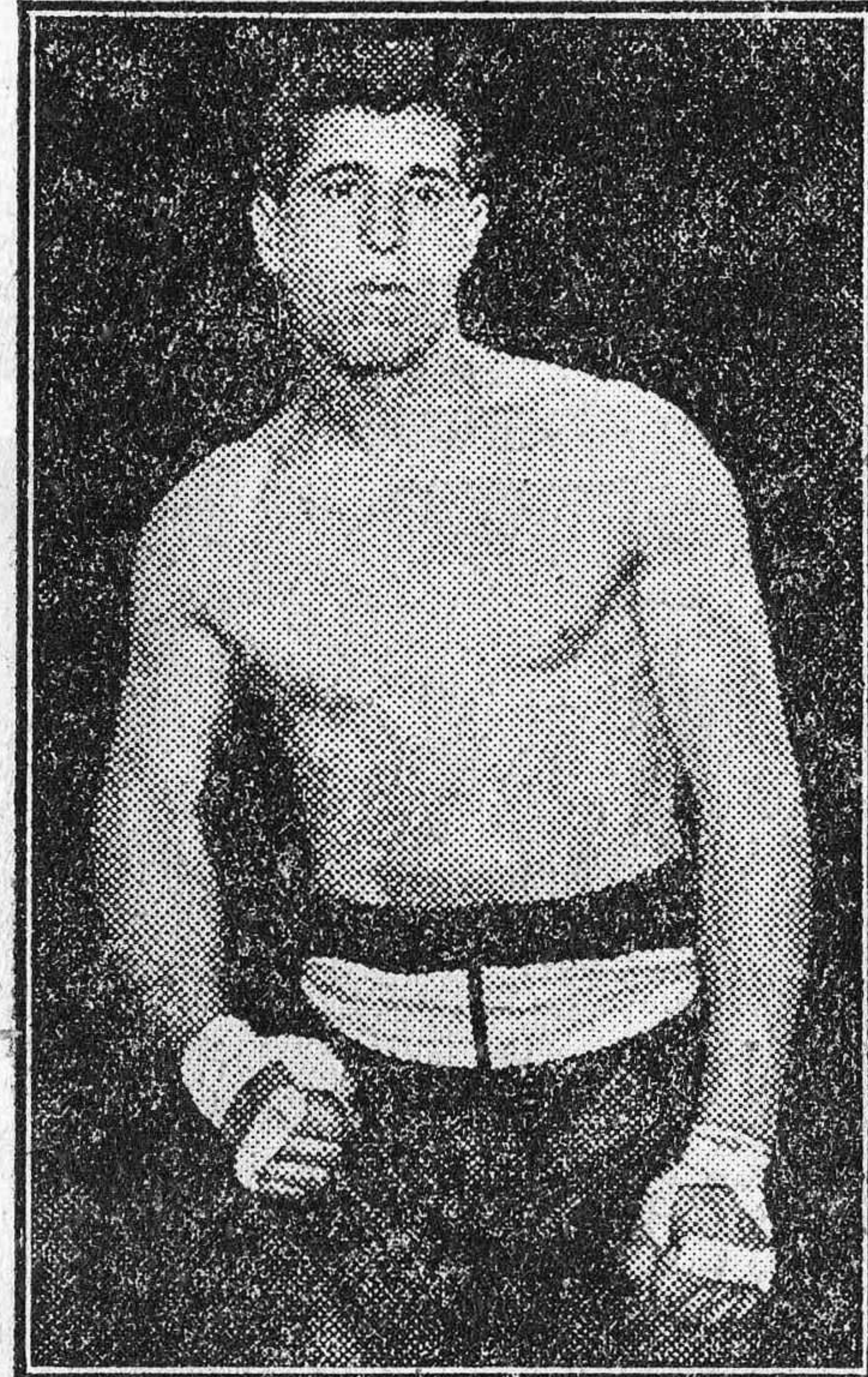
Tremorne had expected that for a time, at any rate, they would be left alone. He generally found when fighting coloured races that after one or two setbacks the vanquished would draw off to think matters over, and to decide on some fresh plan to achieve their end.

He had not allowed for the Chinese element among their enemies—that Celestial cunning before which the foresight of the average Englishman is but the reasoning of a child. And among the natives was an old soldier who had fought years before in the Boxer rebellion. He—Hoang Li by name—was among those who escaped from the second attack on the palisades, but the few minutes' grace given him in the courtyard had shown him a weakness in the defence which so far neither Joe nor Mactavish had made provision against.

Just what this weakness was they were not to learn until later.

Joe was most annoyed to think that neither he nor his men were to be allowed to eat their long-overdue meal in peace, and he said many uncomplimentary things about everybody in general and no one in particular when Harris, stationed at the

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loophole previously occupied by Dick, called down:

"There's some new stunt coming off, skipper. I don't know what it is, but there are scores of the beggars creeping down the glades."

"Well, fire at 'em and keep 'em off!" replied Joe irritably. "This business annoys me. For two pins I'd lead the hull lot of you into the open, and go in for a real stand-up scrap. What do you think they're after, Bill?"

Harris discharged a couple of shots, which were followed by a strange noise—the sound of metal rasping against hard wood.

"I've got it! They're sawing through the bamboo poles with those jagged-edged swords of theirs!" he said.

(Another instalment of this wonderful adventure story will appear in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. The free boxing photo will be of Soldier Jones!)

THE PHANTOM AEROPLANE

By EDMUND BURTON.

(Continued from the previous page.)

nor was it very far to the ground, since the wing was not so high as the rest of the mansion. Without hesitation Grant swung himself over, gripping the stout tendrils, and slowly descending hand over hand.

Half way down he suddenly paused, as a faint sound struck his ear, and, experienced as he was in such matters, he instantly recognised it as the steady hum of an aeroplane engine with some effective silencer fitted. And—yes!—there, to the left, a solitary light showed through the trees—at about the spot where the sound seemed to come from.

Grant dropped the last few feet and sprinted across the grass. Since he had entered Barkford Hall a strange sultriness had replaced the previous crispness of the air, whilst the sky, instead of being clear, was now as black as ink. Evidently there was a thunderstorm brewing, and if further proof were needed, it was presently supplied by a vivid flash of lightning which lit up the surroundings as brightly as by day, showing Fred the humped outlines of a large hangar only a few yards off.

It was from a small square window in the rear wall of this that the light came, and a few seconds later Grant was peering through the glass. The shed was empty, but half a dozen powerful electric bulbs still glowed there, revealing the fact that the two big double-doors stood ajar, whilst, in the open just beyond these, a man in flying kit was even then mounting the pilot's seat of a swift-looking monoplane—a machine that seemed strangely dim in outline, and in shape suggested a larger copy of the model which Fred had seen in Barkford Hall.

Realising with a groan that he was just too late, yet game to the last, Fred dashed round the end of the hangar, tripped over some tangled cordage, and fell heavily, but scrambled up next instant. Then he paused hopelessly, for the monoplane was already moving swiftly across the short grass, presently disappearing in a most uncanny fashion before she had quite got beyond range of the light from the shed. Indeed, had Grant not witnessed that demonstration by means of the model, he would scarcely have credited the evidence of his own eyes and ears, for not only was the machine quite invisible now, but not the slightest sound came from her engine. She had vanished like a ghost, nor did a further flash of lightning which occurred just then reveal her presence to the baffled watcher below.

But Martin Brooke's attempt on the cathedral was not destined to succeed, after all, and, in order to understand why, it would be well to leave the finish of this story to the inhabitants of Barchester.

When the storm was at its height, and the deafening thunder rolling intermittently, something that was not a thunderclap burst with a roar in the vicinity of the cathedral's west front—a heavy bomb that struck the pavement close by, tearing up the flagstones, and scattering fragments in all directions.

The crash brought crowds hurrying to the neighbourhood, thinking that the church had been struck by lightning, and as they congregated at a safe distance another report was heard—this time muffled, for the second bomb had buried itself in one of the flower-beds in the grounds surrounding the cathedral.

The startled onlookers had just begun to hazily realise that Barchester was being visited by the mysterious invisible plane which everyone had read about, when a vivid zig-zag flash flickered across the sky, leaving something that blazed redly staggering wildly in its track—something that continued to flame and drop swiftly towards the earth. It fell with a heavy crash somewhere on the far side of the square, and lay there—a burning, tangled mass of white-hot metal, wood, and silk, which none dared approach within yards of, so fierce was the heat. By morning little remained but a heap of grey ashes that had once been a monoplane and its pilot!

THE END.

"Bulldog" Holdfast will make his reappearance in another splendid adventure next Monday. Look out for it! Also a free boxing photo of Soldier Jones!

MORNINGTON'S TEMPTATION.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Continued from page 596.)

It was Mornington. Jimmy Silver stopped, and stared at the dandy of the Fourth.

"Get out of the way, Mornington!"

Mornington did not move. "I don't want your help, Mornington!" growled Higgs. "And if you come to that, I don't believe Silver knows anything about the watch, so there."

Mornington laughed. "Dear me! You're speakin' to me, too, Higgs. This will never do. I'm in Coventry, you know, though I'm not a thief, at least."

And he grinned mockingly at Jimmy Silver.

"Do you dare to say that I am a thief, Mornington?" said Jimmy Silver, almost choking.

"Mayn't I have my own opinion?" smiled Mornington. "Mayn't I put two and two together, and assume that when a gold watch vanishes with only one person present, that person probably knows somethin' about the curious incident? The Form found me guilty of sendin' a spoof telegram on much less evidence than that."

"Oh!" murmured several voices. Some of the juniors looked at one another oddly. Mornington had scored a point.

Jimmy Silver panted.

"I know your game!" he said savagely. "You want to throw suspicion on me if you can, because you're cut by the Form for playing a dirty trick. Put up your hands, you rotter!"

"With pleasure. Leave me my watch, though," said Mornington.

Jimmy, pale with anger, made a spring forward. But Arthur Edward Lovell caught him by the shoulder and dragged him back.

"You've had one fight," he exclaimed. "That's enough! What that cad wants is a ragging for his dirty insinuations, and that's what he's going to get!"

"Let go, Lovell—"

"Rats! Collar that grinning cad, you fellows!" shouted Lovell. "Give him a jolly good bumping and chuck him out!"

"Hear, hear!"

Raby and Newcome, and four or five of the juniors collared Mornington without ceremony. The dandy of the Fourth resisted fiercely, but he resisted in vain. Thrice he was bumped on the floor of the Common-room, and then he went spinning through the doorway into the corridor outside.

He scrambled to his feet and turned away, choking with rage. Lovell slammed the door.

Valentine Mornington, his face white, his eyes glinting strangely, crept quietly into the box-room, and then into the end study in the Fourth, now dark and deserted. He was a few minutes in that study—Jimmy Silver's study—and when he came out he was breathing hard, and his hands were trembling.

The missing watch was no longer hidden in the chimney of the box-room. What Mornington had never intended to do he had now, in his rage and resentment. The die was cast!

THE END.

"At the Eleventh Hour?" is the title of next week's magnificent story of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School. There will also be a boxing photo of Soldier Jones!

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