



# MORNINGTON'S CHALLENGE!

## By OWEN CONQUEST.

A MAGNIFICENT LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.

### THE FIRST CHAPTER. Not Wanted!

**M**ORNINGTON of the Fourth Form at Rookwood knocked at the door of the end study, and went in. There were seven juniors crowded in the study, and there was a loud buzz of voices raised in heated argument. Mornington entered unnoticed.

Jimmy Silver, Lovell, Raby, and Newcome, the owners of the study, were all speaking at once; and so were Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle, their visitors from the Modern side. The four Classics and the three Moderns were apparently trying to carry conviction by putting on steam in argument, but none of them looked like being convinced.

The subject was cricket—cricket in general, and the St. Jim's match in particular. Jimmy Silver, as junior captain, was monarch of all he surveyed when it came to making up the team for that great match. But Jimmy was scrupulously fair. His own side—the Classical side—was represented in the eleven by six places. Five Modern juniors were in.

Tommy Dodd's opinion was that five Classics would have been enough, if not too much, and that the sixth place belonged, almost by the laws of Nature, to a Modern. To this contention the Fistical Four replied, with emphasis:

- "Fathcad!"
- "Modern ass!"
- "Duffer!"
- "Chump!"

And the three Tommies simultaneously delivered their opinion of the Fistical Four.

- "Silly cuckoos!"
- "Silly chumps!"
- "Yah!"

Mornington frowned impatiently. Not the slightest notice had been taken of his entrance. The Rookwood juniors were too busy slanging one another. Mornington was not accustomed to being passed unnoticed—at all events, he had not been accustomed to it before he came to Rookwood. Since coming there he had had a good many experiences that he was not accustomed to.

His frowns passed as unnoticed as his entering. Neither Classics nor Moderns had any eyes for him.

"I don't mind you four being in the eleven," said Tommy Dodd. "I admit you can play."

"Thank you for nothing!" said Jimmy Silver.

"And Oswald, he's a good man; and so is Rawson. But you can't put in both Oswald and Rawson. The sixth place belongs to the Modern side."

"Rats!"

"Of course, you're captain," said Tommy Dodd.

"Just remembered that?" asked Jimmy Silver sarcastically.

"But a cricket captain ought to have some sense," said Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, he ought!" said Tommy Doyle. "And a skipper with the sense of a bunny-rabbit would play six Moderns out of eleven. You see, we want to bate St. Jim's."

"That's it," said Tommy Cook. "If it wasn't an important match, it wouldn't

matter so much. But we want to beat St. Jim's, and how're we to do that with Classical duffers crowding good players out of the team?"

"Silly ass!"

"Look here——"

"I'm putting in you three, and Towle and Lacy," said Jimmy Silver. "Can't do better than that, and you can go and eat coke, you Modern duffers!"

"Look here, you chump——"

"I am waitin' to speak to you!" rapped out Mornington, quite losing his patience at last.

"Wait, then, you Classical ass!" snapped Tommy Dodd, without looking round.

"Oh, join in the chorus, Mornington!" said Jimmy Silver. "Go ahead, kid! I sha'n't hear a word you say, with these duffers burbling. But go ahead!"

"It's about the cricket."

"What the thump do you know about cricket?" exclaimed Lovell, in astonishment. "I am takin' up cricket."

"How good of you to come and tell us!" said Raby. "Good-bye!"

"Don't give me any impertinence!"

"Ha, ha! I'd give you a thick ear for two pins!" chuckled Raby. "Buzz off, you young ass, and don't play the giddy ox!"

"I want to speak to you, Silver. It is important," said Mornington, taking no further notice of Raby.

"Go ahead!"

"Yes, let's hear your views on cricket," said Tommy Dodd sarcastically. "They're bound to be interesting."

The Rookwood juniors all looked at Mornington, and grinned. He had not shown any predilection for cricket before. He was a slacker, and much given to swank, and about the last fellow at Rookwood to make a good cricketer. This new departure rather amused Jimmy Silver & Co.

"I have had a letter from my guardian," explained Mornington. "You may be aware that my guardian, Sir Rupert Staepoole, is a governor of Rookwood."

"Can't say I was aware of it," yawned Jimmy Silver; "and I don't care twopence, anyway."

"You may be made to care!" growled Mornington.

"By gum!" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Go ahead!" said Tommy Dodd encouragingly. "I'll have a bob each way on Sir Rupert Staepoole!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My guardian wishes me to take up cricket."

"Well, that shows his sense. Better than hanging about smoking cigarettes and betting on geegees—your usual game."

"That is my business!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Quite so! It's all your business, if you come to that, and I'm bothered if I can see what you're telling me about it for."

"I have come to you because you are junior cricket captain. I desire to play in the eleven."

"Go hon!"

"I wish to play against St. Jim's in the next match."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Classical and Moderns roared.

Mornington stared angrily at the merry juniors. Apparently he did not see anything extraordinary in his request.

"I have told you what I wish," he said angrily. "I am not used to havin' my remarks treated in this way."

"You'll get used to it in time," said Jimmy Silver blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Will you play me, or will you not?"

"Not!" said Jimmy promptly.

"Sir Rupert Staepoole wishes it," said Mornington, evidently under the impression that the mere wish of a member of the governing body would clinch the matter, and that Jimmy Silver had nothing left but to bow down and obey, with proper meekness.

But Jimmy Silver only chortled.

"Lemme see," he remarked. "I believe this chap Staepoole is a member of the House of Commons, isn't he? A rather prominent politician?"

"Yes."

"Well, drop him a line, and tell him——"

"Yes!" said Mornington.

"Tell him to stick to politics, and not to bother about things he doesn't understand, like cricket."

"What!"

"That's all," said Jimmy. "Give him my kind regards when you write. Good-bye!"

Mornington glared at the captain of the Fourth. He made a stride towards Jimmy Silver with his hands clenched. But he paused. He had tried that kind of thing with Jimmy before, with painful results to himself.

"You will not play me?" he exclaimed.

"Nix!"

"You dare to disregard a governor of the school?"

"Yes. I think I can screw up enough courage for that if the governor's ass enough to meddle in our cricket affairs," said Jimmy.

"I shall ask him to speak to the Head."

"Right-ho!"

"You will be punished."

"Ha, ha!"

The juniors laughed merrily. Mornington's idea that he could "carry on" in the Fourth Form at Rookwood as he had done at home never ceased to tickle them.

"This chap ought to be on the cinema," said Tommy Dodd. "He's wasted at Rookwood."

"He was born to be a funny merchant," admitted Jimmy Silver. "He gets richer every day. Run away and play, Mornington!"

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"Then you will not let me enter the cricket!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, yes! I'd be glad to see you turn up at practice," said Jimmy Silver good-naturedly. "I'd give you some coaching, if you liked."

"You can do that when I ask it," said Mornington arrogantly.

"Very well, I'll leave it till then," said Jimmy, unmoved.

"You will not play me?"

"No, you ass! If you show on the cricket—"



him a hiding, Silver! I was only offering to play cricket for the cad, and he went for me like a Prussian! Groooh!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Mornington, struggling furiously.

Jimmy's strong grip pinned him down to the table.

"Not just yet," said Jimmy. "You've got to learn not to bully little chaps like Tubby, my son. Tubby, take hold of his ears and twist them. Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander!"

"Won't I just!" grinned Tubby.

"Oh! Ah! Yaroooh!" roared Mornington, as Tubby grasped his ears, one in either hand, and twisted them with great vim.

"How do you like it yourself, you beast?" chuckled Tubby.

"Go it, Tubby!"

"I'm going it!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Stop it! Oh, dear! How dare you touch me! Let me go!"

"That's enough, Tubby!"

"Hadn't I better give him some more?" asked Tubby anxiously. "I ain't tired yet, Jimmy Silver."

"Ha, ha! No, that will do."

"Well, just one more twist!"

"Yaroooop!"

"Chuck it!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now cut off, Tubby, before I let him go!"

"Oh, rather!" said Tubby promptly; and he vanished.

Jimmy whirled Mornington off the table, pitched him into a corner, and walked out of the study.

He left him panting with rage and rubbing his ears. His ears had been pulled!

Mornington was almost more astonished than enraged. It seemed really like a bad dream. It was scarcely credible that his ears had really been pulled! But they had!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Tommy Dodd's Reply.

**T**OMMY DODD & CO. were chatting in the quadrangle, after morning lessons the next day, when Mornington came up.

The three Tommies greeted him with a smile.

They had heard all about his notice on the board, and they were greatly interested in the progress of his new eleven.

"Getting on rippingly with the cricket?" asked Tommy Dodd affably. "Is the new eleven blooming like a rose?"

"I should like you fellows to play for me," said Mornington, constraining himself to speak civilly.

Tommy Dodd shook his head sadly.

"We're booked," he said, in a sorrowful tone, "otherwise we should jump at the chance—simply jump at it—I don't think!"

"I know you're in Silver's eleven now. I want you to leave him!"

"Not exactly Silver's eleven. It's the School Junior Eleven, and Silver happens to be the skipper!"

"Well, will you leave it and play for my team?" said Mornington. "I'll make it worth your while!"

"You'll shed the light of yer countenance on us, and allow us to call you Morny?" asked Tommy Doyle, with great seriousness.

"You'll let us swank about knowing you?" asked Tommy Cook.

Mornington scowled. He was no fool, and he knew when his leg was being pulled.

"Look here, come to business. You don't make anythin' out of cricket. I'm offerin' you a chance to make somethin' decent out of it!"

"Money, of course?" said Tommy Dodd.

"Yaas."

Cook and Doyle made a movement, but Tommy Dodd signed to them to be quiet.

"How much?" he asked blandly.

"Five shillins a week regular, and a guinea for each match."

"That's jolly generous!"

"I can afford to be generous," said Mornington loftily. "I've plenty of tin!"

"Yes, I've noticed that," assented Tommy Dodd. "You don't hide your light under a bushel where money's concerned."

"Well, will you accept the offer?"

Tommy Dodd smiled at his chums.

"Will we accept it, dear boys?" he asked.

"Will we? It's so ripping of him to offer to pay us for our services!"

"The rotten cad—!" began Cook.

"Look here, give me your answer—yes or no!" snapped Mornington. "I've no time to waste on you!"

"That's where we differ," said Tommy Dodd cheerily. "We've got some time to waste on you, just to teach you not to be a howling cad, dear boy. Collar him!"

"Hands off!"

"Duck him in the fountain!" said Tommy Dodd. "A ducking will cool him. He looks rather heated!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

In the grasp of the three laughing Moderns, Mornington was rushed to the fountain in Little Quad, his arms and legs flying wildly in the air.

Splash!

"Gerrrooogh!"

The three Tommies sauntered away, leaving him to wriggle out of the big granite basin.

He wriggled out, streaming with water, puffing and blowing, and red with rage.

He shook a dripping fist after the three Tommies, and dashed away towards the School House. Townsend and Topham met him in full career, and stared at him.

"Ye gods!" said Topham.

He glared at the Fistical Four, and went on rubbing.

Jimmy Silver gave him a quiet look.

"I hear you're going to Bootles to sneak about the Modern chaps, Mornington?" he said.

"Mind your own business!"

"This is the business of all the Fourth. You insulted the Modern kids, though you're too utter a cad to understand that, and you deserve all you've got! You won't sneak about them!"

"I shall do as I choose!" panted Mornington.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"That's so. I can't prevent you from sneaking, if you choose. But I promise you, honour bright, a Form licking if you do! You've had that once before, and you know what it's like!"



Mr. Bootles jumped up in amazement as Mornington dashed into his study drenched and dripping with water. "Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "What does this mean boy?" (See Chapter 4.)

"Been getting wet?" said Townsend—rather a superfluous question.

Mornington was drenched.

"It's those Modern cads!" gasped Mornington. "I'm goin' to Bottles about it!"

"Yes, do," said Townsend.

Mornington rushed into the House, leaving his dear friends grinning.

He never received much sympathy from his dear friends in his little mishaps. Indeed, they might have been suspected of enjoying them.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, jumped up in amazement as Mornington dashed into his study, drenched and dripping.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"What—what does this mean? What—what?"

"I—I—"

"Go and change your clothes at once! You will catch cold! You careless boy, you are spoiling my carpet!"

"I tell you, sir—"

"Go and change your clothes!"

"But I—"

"Will you obey me?" thundered Mr. Bootles. "Change your clothes immediately, and take a hundred lines for coming into my study in that state! Go!"

The Form-master pushed the drenched junior out of the study.

Mornington, panting with rage, hurried away to the Fourth Form dormitory. He was beginning to shiver, and his teeth were chattering.

In the dormitory he tore off his drenched clothes, and rubbed himself down with a towel furiously. Four faces looked in at the doorway while he was so engaged.

"You rotter!"

"Nuff said! If Tommy Dodd is called up on the carpet, you get a Form licking! Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away without another word.

Mornington finished rubbing himself dry, changed his clothes, and left the dormitory. But he did not go to Mr. Bootles' study. He knew by painful experience what a Form licking was like, and he didn't want to repeat the experience.

The three Tommies were not called "on the carpet," neither were they approached with any more of Mornington's generous offers. Places in his eleven were no longer open to those three humorous youths.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Challenge Not Accepted.

**D**URING the next few days Jimmy Silver noted, with a humorous eye, the progress of Mornington as a cricket captain.

Mornington was at least in deadly earnest. Unfortunately for him, the fellows who could play cricket were generally fellows who were inclined to knock him down for offering them money for their services.

It soon became clear, even to him, that if he raised an eleven at all, it would be an eleven "of sorts."

But he did not give in.

He had said that he would raise an eleven, and he was determined to carry out his words. And there were fellows on both sides of Rookwood who were amenable to the cash



And he's asking us to play them! Well, I'm standing out!"

"Quite so!" said Jimmy, unmoved. "I'm leaving you out, Lovell!"

"You can leave me out too!" growled Raby.

"Me, too!" said Newcome.

"I'm going to," said Jimmy.

"Make a clean sweep and leave us all out," said Rawson sarcastically.

"Just what I'm going to do!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I'm playing Tommy Dodd—it was his idea."

"And who are playing besides Tommy Dodd?" demanded Oswald.

Jimmy Silver smiled.

"Nobody!" he said serenely.

His chums stared blankly for a moment. Then the "wheeze" burst upon them, and they yelled.

### THE SEVENTH CHAPTER. A Remarkable Match.

MORNINGTON led his merry men to the cricket-ground on Saturday afternoon with a lofty stride.

He was in high feather.

He had forced Jimmy Silver to accept his challenge—or he believed he had—and with his marvellous powers of leadership he was going to lead his scratch eleven to distinguished victory. That was how he looked at it. His team looked at it in a rather different light. They felt that they were being led like lambs to the slaughter.

Stumps were pitched at two o'clock. Mornington & Co. were quite ready. Promptly as two rang out from the clock tower on the Modern side, Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd came down the field in flannels, with their bats under their arms.

Lovell and Raby and the rest came after them, but not in flannels. They gathered with the other spectators on the ground. There were a good many spectators. The Rookwood juniors took the affair humorously, and they did not wish to miss the entertaining sight of Mornington's eleven playing cricket.

"Ready?" asked Mornington, as Jimmy Silver came up, smiling.

"Your team isn't here," said Townsend.

"Yes, it is!"

"Where?"

"Here," said Jimmy Silver, tapping Tommy Dodd on the shoulder. "Here's my team!"

"Dodd! But the rest?" asked Mornington puzzled.

"There isn't any rest," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "I'm playing nine men short!"

"Nine men short!" yelled Mornington.

"Yes."

"You silly ass, you can't—you sha'n't—"

"I can please myself, I suppose?" said Jimmy Silver. "All my other men are crooked. They saw you playing cricket yesterday, and it was too much for them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, if you're going to play the fool—"

began Mornington furiously.

"Exactly—or, to be more correct, eleven fools!" said Jimmy Silver agreeably.

Some of the new eleven grinned sheepishly. Some of them, at least, knew that Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd could have played the heads off the whole team, twice over.

Mornington was red with anger.

The crowd had caught on now, and there was a roar of laughter all round the cricket-field. The idea of a team of two playing a cricket match struck the Rookwood fellows as comic.

"I won't play you on those terms!" shouted Mornington.

Jimmy shrugged his shoulders.

"You play us on those terms or not at all," he said. "I can bring any team I choose into the field, I suppose? If you beat my team, you're the Junior Eleven of Rookwood."

"Certainly!" said Tommy Dodd, with a grin. "Beat us, and you can swank no end. There's a temptation for you, Morny!"

Townsend pressed Mornington's arm.

"Play them, you ass!" he whispered. "We might pull it off, and lick them—we might, on those terms. If they're licked, they're licked!"

Mornington calmed down. He realised that a victory was a victory, and would count as such, even though brought about simply by Jimmy Silver's sense of humour.

"Mind you stick to that!" he said. "You can play any team you like; but when you're beaten, you're beaten!"

"Right as rain!"

"And then we're the acknowledged junior team of Rookwood?"

"Certainly, so far as I'm concerned—when you've beaten us!" said Jimmy Silver sweetly.

"Then it's a go!"

"Good! We're ready to begin when you are!"

The two skippers tossed for innings. Mornington had the luck, and he elected to bat first.

He opened the innings with Selwyn of the Shell. Jimmy Silver went on to bowl against Mornington. Tommy Dodd went into the field. The sight of a single fieldsman doing all the fielding on his own made the Rookwooders roar.

But Mornington's team were looking on with revived hopes. That they could have beaten Jimmy Silver's Eleven they did not think for a moment; but they believed they had a chance of beating a team of two. At all events, they hoped so.

"Go it, Jimmy!" sang out Lovell.

Jimmy Silver, the champion junior bowler of Rookwood, could have caused anxiety even to such bats as Bulkeley and Neville of the Sixth. It was child's play to him to mow down wickets like Mornington's.

The ball came down to Mornington, who swiped at it, intending it to be a "sixer."

"It wasn't a "sixer." For his bat did not touch the ball at all, but described a circle in the air, and he very nearly sat down on the wicket. But the wicket was already down, the baits scattered far and wide.

"How's that?" chirruped Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha! Out!"

"What price ducks' eggs?" shrieked Snooks of the Second.

Mornington glared at his wretched wicket, and glared along the pitch at the smiling Jimmy. He gripped the cane handle of the bat, as if he would have liked to lay it about the captain of the Fourth—as was indeed the case. Then he walked off with a black brow, and Townsend came in.

Townsend meant to do his best. Only a little luck was required to beat a team of two.

But there was no luck for Towney. A ball, hot as a bullet from a rifle, knocked his wicket to pieces in a twinkling. There was a laugh from the crowd, and Townsend went out with pink cheeks.

After Townsend came Topham, Wegg, Chesney, and Leggett in turn. Each of them stayed long enough at the wicket to have his stumps knocked over.

"The double hat trick!" grinned Lovell.

"Oh, my hat! Good old Jimmy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tommy Dodd, in the field, had his hands in his pockets. His hands were not wanted. He knew that the duffers would never score a hit against Jimmy Silver's bowling. Indeed, he was laughing too heartily to make catches, even if they had come his way.

"Over!" grinned the umpire.

The "field" crossed over.

Tommy Dodd took the ball at the other end, and Jimmy Silver went into the field, smiling serenely.

Mornington, with a face which Raby likened to that of a demon in a pantomime, stood looking on from the pavilion. It was a single-innings match, so his chances of distinguishing

himself as a batsman were gone for ever. The victory he had promised himself was gone from his gaze like a beautiful dream. His feelings were Hunnish as he looked on.

Tommy Dodd gave Selwyn a fast ball, which Selwyn played in vain. It curled under his bat, and knocked his middle stump out of the ground.

"Next man in!" chortled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby Muffin came in. His leg-stump was nearly lifted away by the next ball, and Tubby grinned and rolled away. He had earned his guinea easily, and that was all the cheerful Tubby cared about.

Peele was the next victim, clean bowled. Then came Dickinson minor, sharing his fate, leaving Hooker at the bowler's end, not out.

The innings was over.

"All down for nix!" chuckled Lovell, as the score went up—a big round 0.

Mornington's face was a study.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd came off the field, lounging carelessly and smiling sweetly.

"Nothing wanted to lie, and one to win!" grinned Oswald. "Poor old Mornington! Look at his chivvy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're ready for our innings, Mornington, when you're ready to go into the field!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Buck up! You may make a draw of it yet, if we do no better than you've done!"

Tommy Dodd exploded into a cachinnation at the idea of such a "draw."

Mornington clenched his fist; but he unclenched it again, and nodded sullenly, and led his merry men into the field.

Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd went to the wickets, watched with great glee by a grinning crowd. More than half Rookwood had gathered to watch that amazing match, and there were loud chortles on all sides.

Townsend was put on to bowl, against Tommy Dodd. Towney did his best—his very best.

But a dozen Townies could not have taken Tommy Dodd's wicket.

The Modern junior smiled, and knocked away the ball. The field went racing, and the two batsmen crossed the pitch.

The ball came in seconds too late. The batsmen could have taken another run if they had wanted it. But they didn't want it.

The match was won.

There was a roar of laughter over the victory. Mornington shook his fist at Jimmy Silver, and strode off the field, followed by yells of merriment. Jimmy Silver and Tommy Dodd strolled off, after that very brief innings.

"Looks like a win for us—what!" smiled Jimmy Silver. "Terrific game—what!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington strode away, his brow black and his eyes glinting. Even he had never been made to look so utterly ridiculous before. After him went his team. There was a guinea due to each of that remarkable collection of cricketers, and they meant that Mornington should pay up. There was a sound of loud voices and scuffling in Mornington's study shortly afterwards, which looked as if he had some intention of "biking" his cricketers. If so, he was persuaded to do otherwise—for the players came away with their cash, and Mornington was left to sort himself out, in a very dusty and breathless state.

It was the first and last appearance of Mornington's Eleven in the field. Only on that solitary occasion did it dawn, in all its glory, upon Rookwood. Then, laughed out of existence, it disappeared.

But it was a long while before Rookwood ceased to chuckle over the result of Mornington's Challenge.

THE END.

## "FOR THE GOOD OF THE TEAM!"

Is the title of next week's grand, long complete story of JIMMY SILVER & CO., at Rookwood School.

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