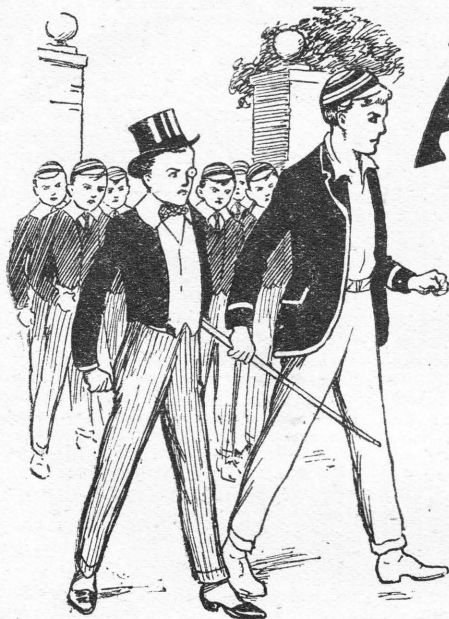


**THE MONTMORENCY MYSTERY!** Through his own foolishness, Cecil Montmorency, the snob of the school, finds himself in an unpleasant dilemma, out of which he can find only one way of escape!



# A Rank Outsider!

A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, featuring Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the mysterious new boy of the Fourth.

**BY OWEN CONQUEST.**

(Author of the famous tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every Monday.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### The Cold Shoulder!

"WHAT a fool—what a dashed fool I've been!" Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, muttered the words aloud as he stood at his study window, staring gloomily into the old quadrangle.

He was alone in the study.

He stood with his hands driven deep into his pockets, his eyeglass dangling at the end of its cord, his whole attitude one of dejection.

In the quadrangle he could see Jimmy Silver & Co. in a cheerful group, chatting under the beeches. The Fistical Four looked cheerful enough that sunny afternoon. But they hadn't the gnawing trouble that weighed upon the mind of Cecil Montmorency.

"What a dashed fool!" he muttered again. "What a thumpin' fool! If I'd weighed out the truth to begin with, most of the fellows would have thought none the worse of me. What do they care whether my name's Huggins or Montmorency? But I couldn't—I couldn't! What a rotten run of luck I've had ever since I came to Rookwood!"

His brow darkened.

He caught sight of Tom Rawson, the scholarship junior, crossing the quad, with a book under his arm.

Rawson exchanged a cheery nod with Jimmy Silver. Evidently Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, was not worried by the fact that Rawson's father was a plumber, or a carpenter, or a gasfitter, or whatever he was. And Rawson was poor; the poorest fellow at Rookwood. Who cared whether he wore his clothes twice as long as any other fellow in the school? Nobody but a few duffers like Towny and Topy and Peele.

But Rawson played the straight game, and that Cecil Cuthbert had never done. It was not in his nature to do it, apparently.

Montmorency could not help thinking, as he stared gloomily from the window,

that matters would have gone better with him if he had taken the same line as Rawson.

But it was too late to change now, even if he wanted to change. And he was not sure that he did.

To admit that a year ago his name had been Huggins—that he had carried plates and answered bells at Goby Hall, clad in a suit adorned by rows of buttons—he shuddered at the thought.

To admit that, only twelve short months since, he had been on the same footing as Tupper, the house-page at Rookwood! That his uncle, who had adopted him, had had his head turned by the success of a lucky speculation on the Stock Exchange, and had changed his name from Huggins to Montmorency—absurdly, though quite legally! The handsome, elegant youth who stared gloomily from the study window was quite fitted by Nature to live up to that grandiloquent name—but his uncle! Montmorency thought of the fat, self-important little gentleman, with his rubicund face and his flaring waistcoat—and his accent and manners that had changed little since he was a sporting publican.

Uncle Huggins had been a dashed fool, as he had been a dashed fool; he realised that only too clearly now.

But his luck had been cruel for a snob. First of all, Sergeant Kettle, who had known him years ago, turned out to be school sergeant at Rookwood, and had recognised him, and blurted out his real name before a crowd of fellows. Then Horace Lurchey, who had been his fellow-servant at Goby Hall, had turned up, and fastened on to him.

All the Lower School at Rookwood knew, or guessed, how the matter stood, to some extent at least, and his friends had begun to look coldly upon him.

Townsend and Topham, who had chummed enthusiastically with Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, were very doubtful now whether they could continue to know him. They felt that there was something shady about Cecil Cuthbert, in spite of the fact that he had more fivers than any other fellow had

half-crowns and he could telephone for his uncle's tremendous Rolls-Royce whenever he wanted to.

And fellows whom he had mercilessly snubbed, in his snobbish loftiness, gleefully welcomed the opportunity of "getting their own back" now—they even addressed him personally as George Huggins!

Who he was, and what he was, nobody knew exactly, but everybody knew or suspected that he was not what he pretended to be.

And the falsehoods he had told had to be bolstered up by more falsehoods, and these again by more, until the hapless upstart hardly knew how many lies he had told.

The door of the study opened, and Montmorency swung round from the window.

In an instant the dejection had dropped from him—he was on his guard again, playing the part that custom had made second nature to him. He screwed his monocle into his eye, and glanced at Townsend and Topham as they came in.

Towny and Topy stopped when they saw him.

The cheery greeting they would have given him a few days before was conspicuous by its absence now.

Both of them coloured and looked uncomfortable; evidently not having expected to find him in the study just then.

"Trot in, old beans!" said Montmorency, with his aristocratic drawl, taking no notice of their very jocular manner. "I was just comin' out to look for you!"

"Oh!" said Topham.

"I—I thought you were out!" stammered Townsend.

"I'm thinkin' of 'phonin' for the car, and takin' a little run this afternoon," yawned Montmorency. "Care to come?"

In spite of his careless manner, he was watching the two nutty juniors very keenly.

Only a few days before Towny and

Topy would have jumped at that invitation; there were plenty of fellows in the Fourth who would have jumped at it now. But Towny and Topy were rather more particular than some fellows! They prided themselves on the fact that they were rather particular!

"Hem!" muttered Topham. "But we're not thinkin' of goin' out this afternoon, Montmorency."

Before the appearance of Horace Lurchey at Rookwood, Montmorency had been "Monty" to his two nutty pals.

Evidently he was Monty no longer!

A hard glitter came into his eyes.

"Doin' anything special this afternoon?" he asked.

"Just roamin' round," said Townsend carelessly. "Come on, Topy; I don't think we'll stay in."

The Nuts of the Fourth turned out of the study again. Montmorency followed them into the passage.

His heart was heavy within him; he realised that this was the "cold shoulder" with a vengeance. But his manner was quite as usual—he was determined not to see what was plain enough for the blindest to see. He wedged between Townsend and Topham, and walked down the passage with them to the stairs.

Towny and Topy exchanged an unhappy glance across him.

The dear pal they had chummed with was apparently not to be dropped so easily as he had been taken up!

The three juniors came out into the quadrangle together.

"Hallo, there's Talboys of the Fifth!" exclaimed Topham suddenly. "I've got to speak to Talboys!"

And he fairly bolted.

Montmorency's lips came hard together.

"Comin' out for a stroll, Towny?" he asked.

Townsend drew a deep breath.

He jerked his arm away.

"Excuse me!" he said curtly. "I've got somethin' to do, somethin' I'd forgotten."

And, fairly turning his back on Montmorency, Townsend walked quickly away.

## THE SECOND CHAPTER.

### Lattrey's Luck!

"HERE comes cheery old Huggins!"

"Shurrup!" whispered Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell shrugged his shoulders.

Prep was over that evening, and most of the Classical Fourth had gathered in the Common-room.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were talking cricket—the most interesting subject to them just then—when Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency appeared in the doorway.

There were at least a dozen smiles in the junior Common-room as he appeared. Townsend and Topham, who were leaning elegantly on the mantelpiece and discussing the first-class places they had visited last vac, shifted their position a little, so that they should not meet Montmorency's eye.

Higgs winked at Flynn, who grinned. Tubby Muffin, whose desperate efforts to get on a friendly footing with Montmorency had all failed, indulged in a fat chuckle. Lattrey and Peele and Gower, who were talking "horses" in a little group by themselves, smiled satirically. They had been treated to the lofty contempt of Cecil Cuthbert, and they quite enjoyed the Huggins story.

Such a reception might have made any

fellow feel downhearted, coming into a crowded room. But Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency undoubtedly had a nerve of iron.

He sauntered gracefully into the room, his eyeglass glimmering in his eye, his manner careless, at ease.

He took no notice whatever of Towny or Topy, but moved across to where Valentine Mornington sat on a sofa.

Mornington picked up a book and became immediately engrossed in its contents, though not a great reader, as a rule.

If it had been Montmorency's intention to speak to him, he changed it instantly, and without a sign.

He sauntered past the sofa, and dropped into a vacant armchair, and crossed one elegant leg over the other with every appearance of easy comfort and satisfaction.

There was another chair beside him, in which Putty Grace was seated. Grace rose after a moment or two, and strolled away.

If Montmorency had been touched with the plague his proximity could not have been more carefully avoided.

Yet his face still gave no sign.

He was among twenty or thirty fellows, but as severely solitary as if he had been in the middle of Coombe Heath.

But after a time Lattrey left his friends, and dropped into the vacant chair beside him.

Montmorency did not glance at him.

He had no desire to fall from the "best set" in the Fourth into the company of the black sheep. He was determined, somehow, to regain the position he had lost, and he could not do that by associating with such fellows as Lattrey & Co.

But Lattrey had come there to speak, and he spoke. He turned a grinning satirical face upon Montmorency.

"Feeling a bit down?" he asked.

Montmorency condescended to turn his eyeglass upon the junior by his side with a lofty stare.

"I don't understand you," he said icily.

"I think you do!" grinned Lattrey.

"Your friends seem to be givin' you the go-by. Towny and Topy figure it out that they've been taken in."

"I think I've mentioned before that I don't care for your company, Lattrey," said Montmorency, with deliberate calmness. "Would you mind addressin' your remarks to somebody else?"

"There isn't a fellow in the Fourth," said Lattrey, "who doesn't believe that your name's Huggins, and that you've borrowed Montmorency since your people made money. Old Kettle knew it, and that shady bounder Lurchey knows it, and I know jolly well that you've squared Lurchey not to turn up at Rookwood again, though he's still hanging on at the Bird-in-Hand, at Coombe. Dash it all, old fellow, it's no good swankin' any longer! Can't you see it's a chicken that won't fight?"

Montmorency did not reply.

His calm, impassive face gave no sign that every word uttered by the cad of the Fourth was gall and wormwood to him.

He understood what Mark Lattrey meant now. He was really offering to receive him into his own shady circle, now that the nuts of the Fourth would have nothing to do with him. But Montmorency's pride was as high as ever, whether it was the pride of a Montmorency or the insolence of the servants' hall. Only a slight curl of his lip betrayed that he was aware of Lattrey's presence.

"Still swankin'—what?" said Lattrey, with a sneer, and his eyes glittered. "By gad, this is really rich! I've heard that fellow Lurchey talkin'. You and he were servants at a place called Goby Hall, and now you're turnin' up your nose at Rookwood! Blessed if I ever heard of such a nerve! By right, you should be blackin' our boots for us here. That's what you were used to before the Hugginses made money, I fancy."

Smack!

Still quite calm, Montmorency swept out his hand, and the palm came with a smack on Lattrey's face. The concussion sounded across the room like a pistol-shot, and it made a dozen fellows look round.

"Hallo! Lattrey's been asking for it!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"And getting it!" grinned Raby.

Lattrey sprang to his feet, his face crimson. Montmorency rose calmly, facing him, evidently ready for trouble.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Lattrey.

"Do you want some more?" asked Montmorency, with a bitter smile.

"You've only got to repeat your impertinence, my good fellow."

Lattrey clenched his hands with rage.

"Go for him!" called out Peele.

"I'm not fightin' with pageboys," said Lattrey. "I'd just as soon fight with Tupper in the boot-room!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you did, I fancy Tupper would give you as much as you could carry home!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Funk!" snorted Higgs.

Montmorency came closer to Lattrey, with his fists clenched. Lattrey backed away, showing the white feather only too plainly. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"You will fight me, whether you like it or not, if I have any more of your insolence!" said Montmorency.

"I won't fight you," said Lattrey.

"You're too good a man for me in that line. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll see that the Head knows that your name is Huggins, and that there's a boozey blackguard in Coombe who used to be your fellow-servant at Goby Hall. That will bring you down off your perch, you cheeky cad!"

And Lattrey turned and walked quickly out of the Common-room.

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

All eyes were on Montmorency.

The general impression in the Common-room was that Lattrey had gone to the Head's study to give away the half-kept secret of the upstart of Rookwood.

If the fellow really was a pretender, surely it was time now for him to blench?

But, to the surprise and perplexity of the juniors, Montmorency only cast a scornful glance after his enemy, and sat down again.

He crossed one elegant leg over the other, as before, and looked quite at peace with himself and all the world. Townsend and Topham exchanged dubious glances, wondering whether they had made a mistake, after all.

"By Jove! The fellow's got a nerve!" murmured Newcome.

Undoubtedly Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency had a nerve!

It was a quarter of an hour later that Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the Common-room, to shepherd the Classical Fourth away to their dormitory. Nothing had happened in the interval. Apparently Lattrey had not, after all, gone to the Head.

"Bed-time!" said Bulkeley. "Now, then!"



Montmorency rose to his feet with a slight yawn.

"I say, Bulkeley—"

"Hallo!" said the captain of Rookwood, glancing at him curiously.

"Do you mind if I detain you a minute? There's a fellow in the village—a fellow who calls himself Lurchey—"

Every eye was on Montmorency again. The Fourth-Formers waited with almost bated breath for what was to follow.

"I've seen him," said Bulkeley curtly. "You mean that low blackguard who came here claiming to know you—"

"Yaas. He thinks he knows me, and he doesn't," said Montmorency easily. "It's rather a rotten position for me. He spoke to me in the village the other day, and I don't like to get mixed up in a row with such a character, or I'd have knocked him down. As head prefect, I'm askin' you what I ought to do in the matter."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley.

"It's really amountin' to a sort of persecution," continued Montmorency, while the juniors stared blankly. "The fellow takes me for some sort of a rank outsider he knows named Huggins."

"I know that."

"It can't go on," said Montmorency. "Would you advise me to go to the police-station about it, Bulkeley?"

"I don't know that that would do any good," said Bulkeley. "But if the fellow persists in speaking to you—"

"He does."

"And you don't really know him?"

"I've said I don't!" said Montmorency, raising his eyebrows.

"Very good," said Bulkeley quietly. "In that case, the fellow must certainly be stopped from persecuting you. I will see him to-morrow, if you like, and warn him off."

"You're awfully good!" said Montmorency. "That's exactly what I should like, if you'd take the trouble."

"Then I'll do it. Get off to the dormitory now," said Bulkeley.

And the Classical Fourth marched away to their dormitory in a state of wonder. Even Arthur Edward Lovell was beginning to doubt whether he had been too hasty in condemning the pretender. As for Townsend and Topham, they were in a most unhappy state of doubt. Was Montmorency the "real goods," after all? And had they displayed the cold shoulder to a genuine scion of a blue-blooded house, who was also rolling in money and expensive motor-cars? It was really a most painful state of dubiety for Towny and Topy. And in the dormitory they melted towards their former chum, and bade him good-night in cordial tones, with a vague idea of being on the safe side, as it were.

But Montmorency was not to be so easily placated. He answered

their good-night with a cool, steady stare, and turned his back on them.

At which Towny and Topy coloured uncomfortably, and felt more than ever that they had made a mistake.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### A Very Interesting Occasion!

"YOU coming, Jimmy?"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Nearly all the Fourth's going!" grinned Lovell.

"More asses the Fourth!" said Jimmy.

"Well, dash it all, it's interesting, isn't it?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I'm blessed if I can make the fellow out at all! If he's a spoofer, where does he get the nerve to call Bulkeley into the matter?"

"Perhaps he isn't a spoofer," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyhow, it's not the bizney of the end study. Let him rip!"

"But we're interested," argued Newcome. "If the fellow's a spoofer, he's got no end of a nerve! I want to see Bulkeley tackle Lurchey."

"I'm going," said Lovell decidedly. "Nearly all the Form's going. You come, too, Jimmy. We may hear the whole history of the noble Montmorency, who was once a boy in buttons."

"Lurchey is sure to shout it out if Bulkeley tackles him!" chuckled Newcome. "I'm going!"

"What about the cricket?" said Jimmy.

"It's a half-holiday, and we want to play

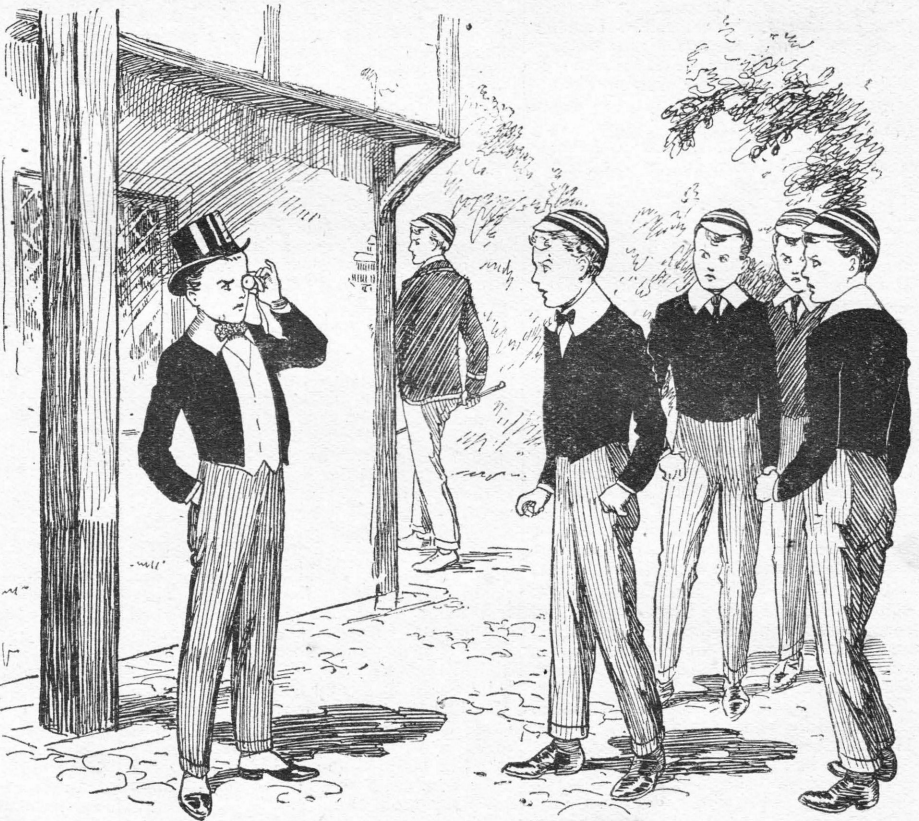
cricket. Do you want St. Jim's to beat us?"

"We can spare an hour for Huggins, and still beat St. Jim's when the match comes off. Come on, Uncle James!" grinned Lovell, catching Jimmy by the arm. "Bulkeley will be starting soon, and all the fellows are hanging round waiting for him."

And the reluctant Jimmy was marched away by his chums.

Bulkeley of the Sixth was always an important person at Rookwood, as head prefect and captain of the school. His doings were of great interest; his lightest opinion was regarded with respect. But it is safe to say that never had Bulkeley's doings excited so much interest in the Lower School of Rookwood as they did that afternoon.

Bulkeley was going down to Coombe to see the dingy blackguard who persisted in "knowing" Montmorency of the Fourth and in addressing him as "George Huggins" and "Gentleman George." Bulkeley was going to "warn him off the course," as Mornington expressed it in his slangy way. And if Lurchey was telling the truth with regard to Cecil Cuthbert, it looked as if the interview would be a very interesting one. If Lurchey was defiant or insolent, as was very probable, it was more than likely that Bulkeley would proceed to "handle" him, which would be worth watching. In any case, it was probable that interesting details with regard to Cecil Cuthbert would be made known—perhaps shouted out by the angry rascal.



**AN OUTSIDER!** Jimmy Silver crossed over to Montmorency and held out his hand. "I'm sorry," he said frankly. "I suppose you know that I believed that rotter's yarn." Montmorency put the eyeglass in his eye, and surveyed the captain of the Fourth with lofty superiority. "Thanks!" he drawled. "I may mention, however, that I don't care a dash what you believed or didn't believe." (See Chapter 4.)

## THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

## Quite a Surprise!

When Bulkeley came out of the School House, with a stick under his arm, at least twenty pairs of eyes were fixed on him from various directions.

Lovell blissfully surmised that that stick was intended for the shoulders of Mr. Lurchey—in which case the expedition could not fail to be full of interest and excitement.

Montmorency came out with Bulkeley. He held his head high, as usual, and seemed unaware of the general interest taken in him and his companion. Apparently the dandy of the Fourth was to accompany Bulkeley on his expedition, and face Mr. Lurchey in his lair, as it were.

Lattrey eyed him evilly. Lattrey believed the worst of the fellow who had smacked his face in the Common-room—the worst he could imagine. But he was staggered now. If Montmorency was a humbug, he was playing out his peculiar game with a nerve that was amazing. And Lattrey, revengeful as he was, hesitated more than ever about making his threatened communication to the Head. He determined to see this affair through first, at all events.

Bulkeley of the Sixth turned out at the gates with Montmorency, and at least twenty juniors turned out after him.

Fortunately it did not seem to occur to Bulkeley that he was followed, for he did not look back as he strode along the leafy lane towards Coombe. Nearly all the Classical Fourth, and some of the Moderns, followed him.

"We're going to be in at the death!" chuckled Lovell. "That fellow Lurchey is always leaning against a post outside the Bird-in-Hand in the afternoon. It will be an alfresco entertainment!"

"And Montmorency has got the nerve to face him in Bulkeley's company!" said Mornington. "I'm blessed if I know what to think! What do you think about it, Jimmy?"

But Uncle James of Rookwood shook his head.

"My dear chap, I'm too busy thinking about my own affairs to think about Montmorency's," he answered. "What does it matter, anyhow?"

"Oh, rats!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver was the only fellow in the Fourth, apparently, who took that lofty, detached point of view.

The other fellows were frankly curious; and perhaps even Jimmy, at the bottom of his heart, was a little curious, too. Certainly it would have been interesting to know the exact facts about Montmorency.

There was quite a buzz of excitement among the Fourth Form contingent when the Bird-in-Hand Inn appeared in sight.

That disreputable establishment was out of bounds for Rookwooders, of course. The place looked very sleepy and almost deserted in the very warm summer's afternoon. An ostler sat on a fence, meditatively chewing a straw. And against a post before the inn leaned the ungainly and untidy figure of Mr. Horace Lurchey, smoking a cigar.

"There he is!" murmured Lovell.

Bulkeley of the Sixth strode up directly to the dingy loafer. Mr. Lurchey removed his cigar, and stared at him insolently. Montmorency, with his hands in his pockets, regarded the loafer through his eyeglass with perfect self-possession. And the Rookwood juniors, gathering round breathlessly within earshot, looked on with eager interest.

THE POPULAR.—No. 354.

"AFTERNOON!" said Mr. Lurchey affably, and he replaced his cigar in his mouth, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I want a word with you, my man," said Bulkeley of the Sixth quietly.

"A dozen, if you like, young feller," answered Mr. Lurchey, still affable. "I ain't no objection to a chat, I'm sure."

"Cheeky cad, talking to Bulkeley like that!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell indignantly.

"You have been making yourself objectionable, my man," said Bulkeley, still very quietly. "I'm here to tell you that it's got to stop. You have been persecuting this boy, Montmorency, who has asked me to interfere. You have been calling him by a name that is not his, and spreading yarns about him, and generally making yourself unpleasant. It's got to stop."

There was a pause, and the Rookwooders were quite breathless. Now was the moment for Mr. Lurchey to blurt out the whole story—if there was any truth in his statements.

But he did not.

He chewed his cigar meditatively for a moment or two, and his manner was quite civil when he spoke again.

"I called the young gentleman George Huggins, sir," he said. "Feller I used to know. Gentleman George we called him, such a gentleman he was, with his 'aughty airs in the servants'-all. You could 'ave knocked me down with a feather, sir, when I saw this young gent; he's so like Gentleman George. But now I've seen more of 'im I can see the difference."

Bulkeley eyed the man.

"You mean that you took Montmorency for some other person, and you understand now that you made a mistake," he asked.

Mr. Lurchey nodded.

"That's it," he assented. "I don't blame myself for the mistake, seeing as they're so alike. But I've 'eard from George since; he's got a job as boots in a public-house down Reigate way. I'm sure I beg the young gentleman's pardon for my mistake!"

"Oh!" said Bulkeley, rather nonplussed.

The captain of Rookwood had been prepared for defiance and insolence, and the stick under his arm had been intended to convey a lesson to Mr. Lurchey in that event. This complete change of face on the part of the dingy loafer was startling.

Jimmy Silver & Co., who heard every word, exchanged glances. Townsend and Topham looked quite sickly.

After Mr. Lurchey had swallowed his own statements in this way, there was no further doubt in their minds. They had made a mistake—they had turned down a pal who was well "worth knowin'." Towny and Topy could have kicked themselves.

"I really beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Lurchey, glancing rather queerly at Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency. "I jest made a mistake, sir, and I'm sorry for it. I'm lavin' Coombe this week, and I ain't troubling you any more. A man can't say more than that."

"I pardon you," said Montmorency loftily. "I simply want to hear nothin' more of your nonsense!"

"Then the matter's ended," said Bulkeley, still a little nonplussed. "I'm glad there's been no trouble."

"Same 'ere, sir," said Mr. Lurchey affably. "I'm sure that I don't want any trouble. Thinkin' the young gent

was my old pal George, a-turning his back on me, naturally riled me. But now I know he ain't George, I don't mind ownin' up as I've made a mistake, and begging his pardon."

And Mr. Lurchey, with unusual and surprising politeness, touched his rakish bowler-hat, and lurchered away into the bar of the Bird-in-Hand.

Bulkeley turned away, satisfied with the result of the interview, so far as that went, yet, somehow, not quite satisfied in his mind. He came face to face, as he turned, with a score of Rookwood juniors, of whose presence till then he had seemed unaware. Bulkeley gave them a grim look.

"Well?" he said.

"Ahem!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"What do you fags want?"

"Just—just walking around, you know, Bulkeley," stammered Lovell.

Bulkeley passed through the crowd of juniors, and strode away up the road towards Rookwood, still strangely unsatisfied in his mind. Somehow, though Mr. Lurchey had said and done all that could possibly be expected of him, his recantation did not ring true. Bulkeley could not help feeling that there was something behind it—something he did not "catch on" to. But the matter was closed now, and he was glad of it.

"I half expected old Bulkeley to wade in with lines, for following him here," said Lovell, greatly relieved.

Mornington laughed.

"He knew we were here all the time," he said. "He expected to make Lurchey eat his words, and he was willing to let us see, so as to set Huggins right with the Form."

"Huggins?" said Lovell, with a stare. "I think it's pretty plainly proved now that Montmorency isn't Huggins."

Morny shrugged his shoulders.

"Dash it all, Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The man's withdrawn every word he said."

"I know."

"He's heard from George Huggins, who's in a job at Reigate," said Raby. "I should think that makes it clear enough."

"Almost too clear," said Mornington, with another shrug; and he walked away without explaining himself further.

Jimmy Silver looked round for Montmorency. That elegant youth was polishing his eyeglass, preparatory to putting it in his eye again. Montmorency did not seem in the least surprised by the result of the interview. Perhaps he had his reasons. Jimmy hesitated a few moments, and then crossed over to the gilt-edged youth and held out his hand.

"I'm sorry, Montmorency," he said frankly. "I suppose you know that I believed that rotter's yarn, more or less?"

Montmorency put the eyeglass in his eye, and surveyed the captain of the Fourth with lofty superiority.

"Thanks!" he drawled. "I may mention, however, that I don't care a dash what you believed or didn't believe!"

And he walked away, with his noble nose in the air.

Jimmy Silver stared after him, wrath rising in his breast. He was sorely tempted to rush after the lofty youth, and plant a kick on his elegant person, which would have put a sudden end to his lofty swagger. But Jimmy restrained himself.

"Just like Jimmy!" grinned Lovell. "Don't you know by this time that the fellow's a rank outsider, Jimmy Silver, whether he's a Huggins or not! He's the kind of chap you want to touch with a barge-pole, if you touch him at all!"



"Br-r-r!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "What the thump have we been wasting our time on the fellow at all for? Let's get back to the cricket, for goodness' sake, and get the taste out of our mouths!"

And the Co. grinned, and walked back with their great leader to the cricket. The Rookwooders took their homeward way, most of them feeling rather disappointed. The interview with Mr. Lurchey had been tame—very tame—as Putty Grace remarked. The fellow hadn't been cheeky, and Bulkeley hadn't laid into him with the stick. The juniors had really had their walk for nothing. No startling details of the career of George Huggins—Gentleman George—had come to light. Instead of that, the Huggins' story was instead of for good and all, and Montmorency stood cleared in the eyes of the Fourth of all imputations of humble origin, whatever Morny chose to think. Montmorency's little ways had not made him beloved, and there were few who rejoiced to see him "set right" with his Form.

**THE FIFTH CHAPTER.**  
All Serene!

"GET out!" Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency uttered those words quietly, but threateningly, as Lattrey looked into Study No. 5 an hour or two later.

Instead of getting out, however, Lattrey got in, and closed the door after him.

"You prefer to leave this study on your neck?" asked Montmorency, pushing back his spotless cuffs a little.

"Hold on a minute!" said Lattrey, with a bitter grin. "I've just a few words to say. I know your game. Do you think I'm blind, even if all the other fellows are? You've squared that rotter at the Bird-in-Hand, or your precious uncle's squared him. He's been paid to hold his tongue, and I fancy he's being paid regularly, or he would soon open his mouth again. It was fixed up before you asked Bulkeley to chip in, you knowing jolly well that the rogue was going to take back what he'd said, and he's being paid to go away from Coombe or—"

Lattrey watched Montmorency's face intently as he spoke, fully expecting to read there some confirmation of his surmise.

If Montmorency's heart sank at finding himself read so easily and so keenly, he gave no sign of it.

Only a smile of contemptuous amusement appeared on his face.

"I'm not finished yet," said Lattrey, with an evil look in his eyes. "You may or may not happen to know that my father is a private inquiry agent—"

"I'm sure I don't care a rap!"

"I'm going to write to him," continued Lattrey. "I'm going to ask him to let me know what he can about Goby Hall, and a servant that used to be kept there, named Huggins, and whether he changed his name to Montmorency when he came into money."

Montmorency gave a slight start.

"Ah, that touches you, does it?" sneered Lattrey.

"Not at all," drawled Cecil Cuthbert. "You're quite amusin', old bean. But I'm tired of your peculiar brand of conversation. Will you get out?"

"Not yet. I—"

"You will!"

Montmorency threw the study door open, and strode towards Lattrey. A moment more, and the cad of the Fourth was grasped in a pair of hands that,

though white and exceedingly well-kept, were very powerful. There was a yell from Lattrey as he went spinning through the doorway.

Crash!  
"By gad!"

Townsend and Topham were coming to the study, and they jumped back as Lattrey crashed at their feet.

Lattrey picked himself up, his eyes gleaming. For a moment he seemed about to rush furiously at the handsome, disdainful junior standing in the study doorway. But he changed his mind, and with a black brow strode away down the passage.

Towny and Topy came into the room, and Towny coughed. Montmorency took no heed of the two nuts.

"Monty, old man—" murmured Townsend.

"Monty, old top—" breathed Topham.

"Comin' out for a stroll before tea, old fellow!"

"Do, Monty!"

And Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency relented, and deigned to receive his nutty pals into favour again. And once more Rookwood School was treated to the gratifying sight of three elegant and lofty youths strolling arm-in-arm in the quadrangle.

But the outward serenity of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the aristocratic calm which he carefully maintained in public, went no deeper than his skin. The threat of Mark Lattrey still rang in his ears, and within the skin of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency George Huggins quaked. For one danger had only been averted to give place to another, and his footsteps were still upon slippery paths. Outwardly all was serene, but inwardly there was doubt and dark foreboding for the upstart who was living a lie.

*(What is the mystery of Montmorency? You will learn this secret in next week's grand, long, complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. of Rookwood, entitled: "The Impostor's Secret!")*

**LOOK!**

**THIS TOPPING CAMERA IS ONE OF THE MANY**



**PRIZES OFFERED IN A SIMPLE COMPETITION IN THIS WEEK'S**

**MAGNET LIBRARY.**

**"AN EDITORIAL STUNT!"**  
*(Continued from page 6.)*

nothing of such a thing being a rotten swindle!"

"Cut it out!"

"Anyhow, it's not possible!" exclaimed Frank. "Why, if the prize isn't given, you'll have your office pulled down about your ears!"

Mr. Penrose winked.

"Tread soft!" he answered. "You don't tumble. There's going to be a prize-winner all O.K. Name and address in the paper next week. Letter of thanks for the thousand-dollar bill. Fixed up, you know."

"But—" stuttered Frank.

"And you're the antelope."

"I!" yelled Frank Richards.

"Come off! This is business—cold business from the word go. You're my staff, ain't you? I couldn't trust any galoot outside my staff. Your name goes in as prize-winner. First opened—see? Easy as rolling off a log. After, you'll be interviewed by a crowd of galoots. You tell 'em all about the way you worked out the puzzle with a wet towel round your head, what you're going to do with the thousand-dollar bill, and so on. Catch on? Of course, there won't be any thousand-dollar bill. I guess there probably isn't one in the Thompson Valley at all. I know I've not got one, anyway. Have you?"

"Eh? Of course not."

"Well, then, don't argue. I thought I'd just mention it to you that you're going to be the prize-winner, so that you'd be up to snuff—see? That's all. Good-night!"

"But—" howled Frank Richards.

"Good-night! I've got to see a man at the Red Dog about some business. Can't wait!"

"I'm afraid the man at the Red Dog will have to wait a few minutes," said Frank Richards grimly. "I've got a few words to say. You're a swindler, Mr. Penrose!"

"Is that all?"

"You're not going to make me a party to a swindle."

"Why, I relied on you. I took it for granted!" exclaimed Mr. Penrose indignantly. "Don't you understand what business is?"

"Better than you do, I think," said Frank. "Swindling isn't business, and it does no good. But if it did I wouldn't have a hand in it. I'm going to keep an eye on this precious competition of yours, and if you try to spoof the folk, I shall show you up. Keep that in mind."

"Why, I—I—I'll—" gasped the unhappy stunt merchant. "I shall be ruined. Look here, young Richards—"

"Go and eat coke!"

Frank strode out of the office and mounted his horse, which Bob was holding in readiness for him.

"Been having a row with Penrose?" asked Bob curiously.

"Yes. Let's get off."

The three chums rode away in the darkness.

In his office Mr. Penrose sat, and gasped for breath, the most completely dismayed gentleman that could have been found just then in the whole length of the Thompson Valley.

*(Another rollicking, long, complete story of Frank Richards & Co. of Cedar Creek, entitled: "A Trickster Tricked!" in next week's issue. Do not miss it.)*