

NEW CHUMS — MONTMORENCY AND MUFFIN!

Tubby Muffin has worked long and tediously to get himself in Montmorency's list of friends, and at last he attains his ambition. What accounts for this sudden change of the amazing new boy in his attitude towards a fellow he has heartily despised?



A Surprising and Exciting Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood, featuring Cecil Montmorency, the boy with a secret past.
By OWEN CONQUEST.
(Author of the well-known tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend")

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Beyond the Limit!

"OLD man, it won't do!"
"Hardly!"
"It really won't, you know!"
"Not at all, Monty, old bird!"
Jimmy Silver glanced round, with a rather amused smile.

The speakers were Townsend and Topham, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, and they were addressing Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, of the same Form.

They did not heed Jimmy Silver, who was sitting on the stone balustrade by the steps of the School House, waiting for his chums to come out. The three Nuts were standing in a little group by the steps, quite regardless of the captain of the Fourth.

"If it was anybody else——" said Topham.

"Anybody but Muffin——"
"But that fat bounder——"
"That awful outsider——"
"A fellow can't stand him——"
"In fact, a fellow won't——"
"You see, we don't see your object, Monty——"

"Drop him, old chap!"
"Or drop us!"

Towny and Topy were "going it" alternately, and Montmorency listened to their remarks, and polished his eyeglass, his face expressing nothing, but his eyes ever restless.

"Haven't you got anythin' to say, Monty?" demanded Townsend at last. "We've told you what we think."

"There's no sense in it," said Topham. "You're in the best set in the Lower School at Rookwood, an' you must take up that fat outsider, Muffin, an' chum with him, an' inflict the horrid bounder on your pals. It's too thick."

"It's the limit!" said Townsend.
"The very outside edge!" said Topham.

Jimmy Silver smiled into space. As a matter of fact, he, as well as other fellows, had been surprised by the sud-

den friendship that had arisen between Montmorency and Tubby Muffin.

Up to a couple of days ago, Montmorency had treated Tubby with the utmost scornful indifference. Tubby had never ceased attempting to inflict himself upon the wealthy youth, and Montmorency had snubbed him mercilessly.

And now, all of a sudden, there was a change. Tubby Muffin was seen walking arm-in-arm with Monty. He dropped into his study to tea; he called him "Monty" and "Old bean," and now, on this special afternoon, he was going to join him in a motor run. The celebrated Montmorency Rolls-Royce was coming to Rookwood to fetch Monty and his friends, and Monty had announced to his chums that Tubby was to be one of the party.

They had endured their chum's new friendship in a very restive way, wondering about the why and the wherefore, and hoping that Monty would drop Muffin as suddenly as he had taken him up. Instead of which, Tubby was turning out a fixture.

It was amazing, and it was extremely exasperating; and Towny and Topy agreed between themselves that Monty could pal with Tubby Muffin if he liked, but that he couldn't expect them to follow his example. They weren't snobs of course, but there was a limit, and Reginald Muffin was the limit.

"If it was anybody else," said Townsend, in a tone of thrilling indignation, "Peel, or Gower, or even Lattrey, or even Rawson—we could stand even Rawson at a pinch to please you, Monty—but that grabbin' rascal, Muffin——"

A fat figure loomed up in the doorway. Tubby Muffin rolled out of the School House with a fat smile on his face, and his best silk hat on his bullet-head. He wore his brightest necktie, and a geranium in his coat, evidently having dressed for the occasion.

"Ready, Monty?" he asked. "The car's at the gates, I think."

"Yaas."
"These fellows comin'?" asked

Tubby, with a glance at Townsend and Topham.

They were eyeing the fat Classical with great disfavour, and Tubby returned their scornful looks with interest.

"Yaas."
Tubby Muffin slipped a fat paw through Montmorency's arm.

"Come on, Monty!" he said. "Please yourselves, you two duffers. I don't want you, and I don't think Monty does. Come on, Monty."

Montmorency hesitated a moment, and then, without looking at his putty pals, he walked away with Tubby Muffin to the gates.

Townsend and Topham looked at one another, with feelings too deep for words. Lovell and Raby and Newcome came out of the School House with their bats and joined Jimmy Silver, and they all glanced after the elegant slim figure of Montmorency walking uneasily beside the fat and decidedly inelegant Muffin.

"Those two seem jolly pally the last day or two!" said Lovell.

"They do!" agreed Jimmy Silver.
"Towny and Topy don't seem to enjoy it!" grinned Raby.

"They don't!" said Jimmy.

"It's a bit queer!" Newcome remarked thoughtfully. "Montmorency wouldn't have touched Muffin with a barge-pole till the last day or two. Now they're always together, and he's always lending Muffin money. Muffin has been rolling in ten-bob notes."

"Jolly queer!" said Jimmy.
Montmorency and his peculiar chum disappeared out of gates, and the hum of the big car was heard on the road.

"Did you ever?" said Towny to Topy, finding his voice at last.

"Never!" said Topy.

And the two nuts walked away in great disgust. Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled down to Little Side for the cricket—Jimmy with a thoughtful shade on his brow.

He was thinking of that sudden, remarkable new friendship between the
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snob of the Fourth and the fat Tubby, which had astonished all the Lower School, and he could not help wondering what it meant, and there was suspicion mingled with his wonder.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Tubby Has a Moving Job!

HAVING tea?" Reginald Muffin asked that question as he rolled into Study No. 2 in the Fourth. He asked it in a very disparaging manner, with his fat little nose turned up, as if to convey his lofty contempt for the rather frugal feed that was going on in Study No. 2.

Putty Grace and Higgs and Jones minor were there at tea. Certainly they were not feeding on the fat of the land. But as Tubby Muffin seldom stood his "whack" in the study feeds, it really was not for him to turn up his fat little nose.

But he did turn it up—more emphatically than Nature had turned it up to start with, though Nature had done a good deal in that direction.

Higgs gave him a glare.

"Yes, and there's none for you!" he grunted. "Grub's short, and you're not going to sponge this time, Muffin."

Muffin sniffed contemptuously.

"Do you think I want any of your measly feed?" he inquired.

"You generally do!" remarked Jones minor, with a grin. "This time you're not going to have any."

"Bread and marger, and radishes, and a squeeze of jam!" said Tubby Muffin, surveying the tea-table scornfully. "Not much in my line!"

"Ass!" said Putty Grace good-humouredly. "You can have some of the radishes if you like along with your bread and marger."

Another emphatic sniff.

"Catch me!" said Muffin. "No, thanks! The fact is, I've had a jolly good feed already."

"Whose study cupboard have you been robbing?" asked Higgs, with sarcasm.

"I've been out with my friend Monty and—"

"And sponged on him for a feed?" grinned Jones minor.

"Monty stood me a whacking feed at a first-class hotel," said Tubby Muffin loftily. "Monty would do anything for me."

"More fool Monty!" said Higgs.

Putty Grace regarded the fat junior curiously.

"What does this mean between you and Montmorency?" he asked. "Why has he taken you up, and why does he lend you money?"

"I'm his pal, you know. Both of us being such highly-connected chaps, we naturally pull," explained Muffin.

"Highly-connected rats!" said Jones minor. "Half Rookwood believes that Montmorency's real name is Huggins."

"Pageboy at Goby Hall before his uncle came into money, according to what we hear!" sneered Higgs.

"Well, that yarn's been knocked on the head," said Putty Grace tolerantly. "Montmorency is entitled to the benefit of the doubt, anyhow. But I'm blessed if I can see what he wants to square Muffin for!"

"Square me!" ejaculated Tubby.

Grace nodded.

"That's the word! He dislikes the mere sight of you, and he doesn't lend you money expecting to see it again. You've got some sort of a hold over the fellow."

"Anybody could see that!" grunted Higgs.

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"Oh, I say!" protested Tubby Muffin, greatly startled. "That—that's a rather rotten suspicion, Putty. If you think I've found out for certain that Montmorency's real name is Huggins and—"

"Eh?"

"If you think he's keeping me quiet about it," continued the fatuous Tubby, "you're making a big mistake—you are really."

"Well, my hat!" said Putty, with a whistle.

"The fact is," said Tubby, "I pull with him—both of us being so highly connected, you know, and of the same aristocratic tastes. As for hearing him telephone home—I-I mean—"

"You heard him telephone home?"

"Nothing of the kind—never heard a word."

"Whom was he telephoning to at home?" asked Jones minor, staring at the fat Classical.

"His uncle—I mean, nobody! He wasn't telephoning home at all, and I wasn't in the prefects' room," said Tubby Muffin. "I never heard a word, and I don't know anything about his affairs. See?"

Putty Grace and his study-mates did see—much more than the obtuse Tubby supposed.

That there must have been some powerful reason for the sudden friendship between Tubby and Montmorency was obvious. Montmorency had never concealed his contempt and aversion for the fat Tubby—till lately. He had, indeed, treated Muffin with more contempt than he deserved—in his snobbish way.

And now they had become inseparable, and yet any fellow could see that Montmorency almost shuddered when the fat junior took his arm in the quad, or poked him in the ribs.

"So you've found out that he's really Huggins, and you're making him chum with you to keep you quiet about it!" grinned Higgs.

"Nothing of the sort! Just the opposite, in fact! Don't I keep on telling you it isn't so?" exclaimed Muffin.

"You fat rascal!" said Putty Grace. "You sha'n't have any tea now! Roll out of this study before I kick you!"

Sniff, again, from Tubby Muffin.

"I'm jolly well going to leave this study," he answered scornfully. "I never was satisfied with you fellows—my father's often told me to be particular about the company I keep."

"What!" roared Higgs.

"I'm going to change out!" said Tubby.

"Hurrah!" ejaculated Putty Grace.

"Bravo!" said Jones minor. "I'll help you carry your things out, Muffin! My hat! I'd do anything to see the last of you!"

"Yes, rather!" grunted Higgs.

"Only I don't believe it!" went on Jones. "We're landed with you, and can't help it; but no other chap would take you in, unless he was potty."

"I'm going into Study No. 5!" said Tubby loftily.

"Montmorency's study!" exclaimed Putty.

"Yes—my pal Monty's."

"Rats!" said Higgs.

"You'll see. Just lend me a hand to carry these books along the passage," said Muffin.

"Pleased, old bean," said Jones, with alacrity. "I hope it's true, but I think it's too jolly good to be true. Monty's welcome to you."

Sniff once more. Putty and Higgs went on with their tea; but Jones minor obligingly lent Tubby a hand with his books and other portable possessions. They came out into the passage, laden,

as Jimmy Silver & Co. came in ruddy and cheery from the cricket.

"Hallo! Anybody seen a moving job?" sang Lovell.

"Breaking up the happy home?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Jones minor chuckled.

"Muffin says he's moving into Study No. 5. I'm helping him. I've told him it's too good to be true."

"Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Come on, Jones!" snapped Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical and his companion moved on with their baggage. The Fistical Four followed them up the passage. They could not help being interested and astonished. Tubby Muffin's company never was yearned for; and it was really incredible that any fellow could want the fat Classical to move into his study. Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather interested to see how the "moving job" would turn out.

Tubby threw open the door of Study No. 5 as if the room belonged to him. Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency was alone in the study. He was standing by the window, staring out into the quadrangle with a gloomy brow.

The elegant junior glanced round quickly as Tubby Muffin appeared, in the doorway. He looked at Muffin and Jones, and at the interested faces of the Fistical Four beyond. For one second his eyes glittered.

"What do you want, Muffin?" he asked.

"I've come!"

"What?"

"I told you I was going to move into this study, Monty."

"Montmorency's lip twitched.

"I—I said I—I should have to ask my study-mates!" he muttered.

"You can settle it with them," said Muffin. "Anyhow, here I am. Put the books on the table, Josey."

"Right-ho!" grinned Jones.

He thumped the dog-eared volumes down on the table, and retired chuckling from Study No. 5. It really seemed to be true, after all, although it still seemed too good to be true.

"So Muffin's going to dig with you, Montmorency?" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"If—my study-mates agree!" said Montmorency.

"They'll have to," said Tubby Muffin. "You can make them, Monty. Look here, do you want me, or don't you?"

The fat Classical's voice took on almost a bullying tone. "Yes or no, sharp!"

"Yes!" gasped Montmorency.

"Good enough, then."

Tubby Muffin closed the door in the faces of Jimmy Silver & Co. The Fistical Four stared at one another, and went on to the end study.

"Montmorency is under that fat rotter's thumb somehow," said Arthur Edward Lovell saptiently. "He'd have given quids to kick him out of the study."

"He looked like it!" said Jimmy.

"Blessed if I see—" began Raby, puzzled.

"No business of ours," said Jimmy Silver shortly. "If Montmorency's got some shady secret, and that fat cad's got hold of it, it's his own look-out. Let's get along to tea."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

No Rest for the Wicked!

TOWNSEND and Topham, of the Classical Fourth, came along the passage with frowning faces.

They were discontented and dissatisfied.

For the second or third time they had

broken with their aristocratic study-mate, Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency; and this time it looked as if the breach would not be healed.

For they were determined not to stand Muffin; they would not stand him at any price. Fully they were agreed upon that. Almost any other fellow in the Fourth they could have stood with more equanimity. But the fat, the fatuous, the greedy and grabbing Muffin—not at any price should he be allowed to wedge into their select circle!

On the other hand, they did not want to break with Monty. He was flowing with wealth, he was lofty and snobbish, and expensively dressed, he had a Rolls-Royce car at his beck and call; in fact, he was in every way suited to be their very particular friend.

So they were worried and dissatisfied; but none the less determined. And when Towny opened the study door, and they came in and found Tubby Muffin sprawling in the most comfortable armchair, their looks were very expressive.

"Out of this, you fat cad!" snapped Towny.

"Yah!" was Muffin's extremely elegant reply.

"Let him alone!" muttered Montmorency.

"We don't want him here!" shouted Topham.

"Monty wants me!" grinned Tubby Muffin.

Townsend set his teeth. But he remembered that Montmorency, with all his dandy ways, was one of the heftiest fighting-men in the Rookwood Fourth. There really was no comprehending Monty; but Towny did not want to quarrel with him if he could help it.

Tubby blinked at the two disgusted nuts, and grinned.

"I may as well tell you fellows right out!" he said.

"Monty wants me to change into this study, and I'm here for keeps."

"What?" yelled Townsend.

"You fellows needn't mind him here," muttered the wretched Montmorency.

"Mind him!" said Townsend furiously. "You can pal with the fat cad if you like, and be hanged to you; but you can't plant him on us in our study."

"Look here——"

"Outside, Muffin!" exclaimed Topham. "Are these books yours? Well, there they go!"

Topham picked up an armful of books and hurled them into the passage.

Tubby Muffin gave a roar of wrath.

"Monty, if you don't stop him——"

Townsend grasped the fat Classical by the collar.

"Get out!" he snapped.

Montmorency stood looking on moodily. Tubby struggled as Townsend jerked him towards the door.

"Rescue!" he howled. "Monty, if you don't help me, I'll——"

Montmorency strode forward.

"Let him alone!" he muttered thickly.

"Hands off, you rotter!" shouted Townsend, quite reckless now. "He's going out on his neck!"

"Let him alone, I tell you!"

"I won't!"

There was a fight the next moment. Topham rushed to his comrade's aid. But the two nuts of the Fourth together were no match for Montmorency. Whether he descended from the noble line of Montmorency, or whether he was a simple Huggins, there was no doubt that the elegant junior was a "good man with his hands." Townsend found himself reposing on one corner of the study carpet; Topham discovered himself sitting in the doorway—both in a dazed condition.

Montmorency looked at them glowering. He was in a bitter and savage temper, though his inward rage was directed against the fat junior who held him under a merciless thumb. But he was not sorry to wreak his fury upon somebody.

"Do you want any more, dash you?" he snapped.

"Oh gad!" gasped Towny.

"Oh crumbs!" moaned Topham.

Tubby Muffin chuckled gleefully.

"That's the stuff to give 'em!" he said. "Good old Monty! You stand by your pal, and your pal will stand by you!"

Townsend and Topham rose to their feet, blinking. They did not seek to renew the conflict, but they gave Muffin and his pal deadly looks. It was just then that Tom Rawson came into the study.

He glanced round in surprise.

"You fellows rowing?" he asked. As a rule, Towny and Topy did not

deign to speak to the scholarship junior; but in their rage they forgot all about their snobbish dislike of the sturdy Rawson.

"Montmorency's asked that fat cad to dig in this study!" said Townsend, in a choking voice. "We're not standin' it!"

"You'll have to!" grinned Muffin.

Rawson gave Montmorency a quiet look. Rawson had been the only fellow at Rookwood who knew the hapless upstart's secret; he had learned it by chance, and his lips had been sealed on the subject. But Tubby's proceedings during the last few days had made Rawson realise that Tubby, too, had somehow discovered the facts of the case.

Rawson would never have dreamed of making any use of his knowledge that Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the snob of Rookwood, had once been George Huggins, pageboy at Goby Hall. But Tubby evidently was not so particular. He had made a very good thing out of his knowledge, so far; and he was bent upon making more.

Rawson was silent for a minute or two, thinking the matter out in his slow, stolid way. Then he spoke.

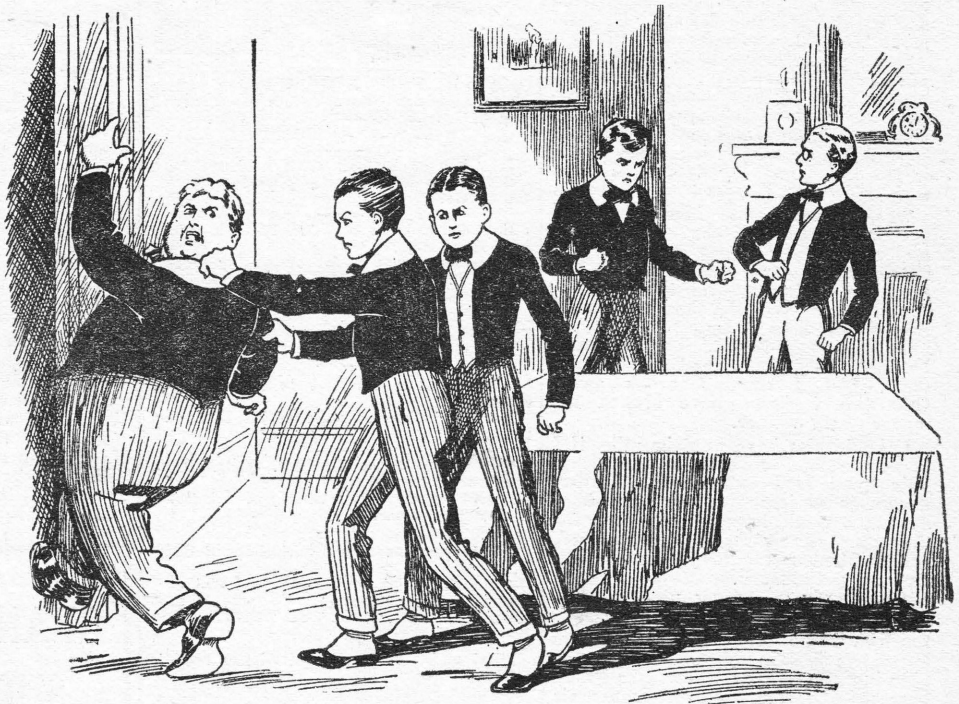
"You can't ask a fellow to share the study without your study-mates agreeing, Montmorency," he said.

"Towny and Topy will agree," said Montmorency with a sour smile.

"I don't agree," said Rawson quietly; "and you can't lick me as you can Towny and Topy. You can try it if you like; but Muffin isn't going to dig in this study."

"Look here——" blustered Tubby. He had not expected any opposition from the scholarship junior, to whom Tubby felt himself immensely superior. Tubby was of opinion that Rawson was highly honoured by having him,

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TUBBY IS NOT WANTED! "Rescue!" yelled Tubby Muffin as Townsend took him by the collar and pushed him through the door. "If Montmorency chips in I'll soon stop him," said Tom Rawson, and he took up his stand before the new boy. There was no rescue for Tubby. Rawson was too big a handful for Montmorency to tackle. (See Chapter 3.)

"MONTY'S NEW CHUM!"

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Reginald Muffin, for a study-mate. Apparently Tom Rawson was of a different opinion.

"Outside!" said Rawson tersely.

"Monty—"

"Montmorency can't help you," said Rawson quietly. "Townsend, kick that fat cad out, and I'll jolly soon stop Montmorency if he chips in."

Townsend grinned.

"Rawson, old bean, you're a good sort, an' I haven't treated you well!" he said. "I'm sorry! Now then, Muffin—"

"Monty!" yelled Muffin, as Towny laid ready hands on him.

Montmorency stepped irresolutely forward. Tom Rawson faced him, with his hands up.

"Rescue!" yelled Tubby.

But there was no rescue for Tubby Muffin; Rawson was a lion in the path. The fat Classical descended with a bump in the passage. Townsend and Topham followed him out. With vigour and enjoyment, they kicked Tubby Muffin along the passage to Study No. 2. Townsend threw open the door of Study No. 2, and a fresh series of kicks landed Tubby in his old study.

"We've brought your pig home, you fellows!" said Townsend politely. And he closed the door.

Tubby Muffin sat up and roared.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Yoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs.

Putty Grace chortled.

"Yow-ow! I'll make Monty lick 'em! I—I—I'll—"

"Didn't I say it was too good to be true!" said Jones minor regretfully. "I say, Tubby, go and try it on again! Keep on trying it on! There's three fellows here who wish you luck."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Tubby Muffin was apparently not disposed to try it on again just then. For a considerable time Tubby's chief occupation was rubbing his fat limbs and groaning.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER. A Dangerous Trick!

A FIVER!" Tubby Muffin opened his round eyes wide. It was a couple of days since Muffin had made his attempt to jump the claim, as it were, in Study No. 5. During those two days Tubby had eyed his pal Monty, when he met him, with a morose eye. Tubby felt injured; and he missed the well-spread tea-table in Study No. 5, where he had fondly imagined that he would annex the lion's share every time. For Towny and Topsy, backed up by the muscular Rawson, had tabooed Tubby in that study, even as a guest; he had only to present himself there in order to get the emphatic boot. And as Montmorency, hefty as he was, could not handle Tom Rawson, there was no help for it—as even Tubby realised.

Now Muffin had run Monty down in Little Quad, with the intention of "sticking" his dear pal for a pound note. If he could not share Monty's expensive study, he could at least share his spare cash; and Tubby had no scruples whatever about doing so.

"Can you lend me a quid?" he

asked; and his tone was rather more threatening than polite.

"A fiver, if you like," said Montmorency.

Tubby's eyes almost bulged from his head as Montmorency jerked a crisp five-pound note from his pocket.

"A—a—a fiver!"

The wealthy Montmorency had fivers, and even tenners; but Tubby, unscrupulous as he was, had not dreamed of bagging them. His fat thoughts did not run beyond pound notes.

He clutched the fiver with greedy fingers.

"Thanks, old chap!" said Tubby affably. "I'll let you have this back out of—a remittance I'm expecting shortly."

Montmorency did not answer that. It pleased Master Muffin to keep up a thin pretence that he was only "borrowing" from his aristocratic pal. Even Tubby did not like to admit to himself that he was extorting money as the price of silence.

He rolled away with a gleeful face to the gates.

Obtuse as he was, Tubby realised that there had been too much talk already about his frequent loans from Montmorency; and he considered it judicious not to change the fiver in the school shop. He rolled away to Coombe to stand himself a record feed at Mrs. Wicks'.

Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency drove his hands deep into his pockets and strode away, with a glitter in his eyes.

The dandy of the Fourth strolled into Study No. 5 to tea, and found Towny and Topsy there. They eyed him grimly. The friendship of the Rookwood nuts had received a severe shock, from which it had not recovered. But Cecil Cuthbert surprised his nutty pals by nodding to them cheerily.

"I owe you fellows an apology," he said, smiling.

"You do!" grunted Townsend. "But you needn't speak to us, Montmorency—not so long as you pal with Muffin."

Montmorency laughed.

"My dear old bean, I was only pullin' your silly leg," he said. "You couldn't think I really wanted to chum with that fat cad? I was only leadin' him on to stuff him."

"Oh!" said Topham blankly.

"Gammon!" said Townsend sourly.

"Honest Injun!" said Montmorency lightly.

"All the fellows are sayin' that Muffin's got some hold over you, and you don't dare to offend him," said Townsend with a sneer. "Some of 'em say that he's got proof that your name's really Huggins, same as Lattrey said it was."

Montmorency shrugged his shoulders.

"I've pulled your leg, and I've apologised for stuffin' you," he said.

"If you want to know what I think of Muffin, wait till he puts his head into this study again. I undertake to kick him the length of the passage, if he does!"

"You mean that?" ejaculated Townsend.

"Don't I keep on tellin' you that I've only been stuffin' him, for a lark?" said Montmorency impatiently.

"Well, I can't say I see any fun in a lark like that," said Townsend. "But, if you mean it, I'm willin' to be friendly."

"Same here!" said Topham cordially. And there was peace once more in Study No. 5; and when Tom Rawson came in he was surprised to see the three nuts apparently on the best of terms. After tea, Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency strolled down to the gates and out into the road. He paced slowly

along the road, looking towards the village, evidently in expectation. A glimmer came into his eyes at the sight of Tubby Muffin's fat figure coming towards Rookwood.

"Hallo, old bean!" Tubby greeted him with a cheery grin. "Like some apples? I've got some in my pockets."

Tubby's pockets were bulging, and his fat face was red and shiny, and he breathed stertorously. It was evident, from his looks, that Tubby had "done himself" remarkably well at Mrs. Wicks' establishment in the village. He had done himself, in fact, not wisely but too well!

"Changed the fiver?" asked Montmorency carelessly.

The question was unnecessary. Tubby's look showed plainly enough that he had not only changed the fiver, but had expended a considerable part of it in filling up his capacious inside.

"Yes, old chap; and, I say—"Tubby looked aggrieved—"Mrs. Wicks made me pay an old account of ten bob last term. I call that rotten—a good customer like me! So I've got only thirty-five bob left!"

Montmorency smiled—a strange smile, that made Tubby Muffin start. He blinked at the dandy of Rookwood, feeling uneasy, he hardly knew why.

"I suppose you know that fivers have numbers on them, Muffin?" said Montmorency, sinking his voice, though they were alone in the lane.

"Eh? Yes, I suppose so."

"Any banknote can be traced by the police."

"Wha-at are you driving at?" asked Tubby uneasily.

"I've missed a fiver from my study!" said Montmorency, in low, steely tones. "It has been stolen. I've got the number."

Tubby Muffin stared at him.

There was a long, long silence.

Tubby's fat brain worked slowly. But Montmorency's meaning sank into it at last, and a scared, frightened look came over Tubby's face, and the colour died out of it.

"You—you mean—"

"You've changed a five-pound note at the village shop this afternoon," said Montmorency with an icy smile. "Where did you get it?"

"You—you awful rotter!" panted Tubby. "You gave it to me—you know you did."

Montmorency raised his eyebrows.

"That's not a good yarn to spin," he said coolly. "Why should I give you five pounds?"

"Because—because—" Tubby panted. "Because I know your name's Huggins, and you were a servant at Goby Hall, and you're afraid I shall tell the fellows; and if they knew you'd been employed in Sir Gilbert Goby's kitchen—"

"Can you tell the Head that?" smiled Montmorency. "Can you tell the police that?"

"The—the police!"

"As soon as I make it public that I have lost a five-pound note, the police will be called in," said Montmorency grimly. "You can confess yourself a blackmailer, if you choose, but that won't save you. You can give me away, Muffin, and then look out for yourself. A reformatory is the proper place for your sort. And if you breathe one word—one word, mind—about me, or what you think you've found out—if you ever dare to call me Monty again, or claim my acquaintance—you're going to a reformatory as a juvenile thief. Think it over, my fat tulip, and hold your tongue, if you know what's good for you!"

Tubby Muffin gasped.

Montmorency turned on his heel, and walked back to Rookwood, without giving the fat Classical another glance.

Tubby Muffin almost crawled in at the gates of Rookwood. Montmorency, Townsend, and Topham were sauntering in the quadrangle, chatting, and they all three glanced at the fat Classical. Tubby gave them a blink, and his blink, as it fell on Montmorency, was full of terror. Montmorency's eyes glittered. He called to the fat junior.

"Muffin!"
 "Yes," gasped Tubby.
 "You've taken the liberty of callin' me Monty several times," said Cecil Cuthbert icily. "It's not to occur again. If it does I shall kick you! Catch on!"
 "Yes, M-M-Monty!" stammered Muffin.

Montmorency made a stride towards Muffin, and caught him by the collar. The next moment his elegant boot thudded on Muffin's ample person.

"Yow-ow!"
 Montmorency lifted his boot again. Tubby Muffin did not wait for the second kick. He dived into the School House and vanished.

The three nuts paraded the quad arm-in-arm, in their old lofty way, on the very best of terms.

The saunter of the Rookwood nuts brought them near Little Side, where Jimmy Silver & Co., coming off from the cricket, had stopped to speak to Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth.

"It's rotten!" said Tommy Dodd. "The pater don't know what a worry a new fellow is. Just because he worries a kid's father, he's asking me to take him under my wing, you know, and see him through his troubles at Rookwood. Of course, I've got to oblige the pater; but as for this blessed new kid, Goby—"

Involuntarily Jimmy Silver's glance turned upon Montmorency. Montmorency did not meet his eyes. He dropped the arms of Towy and Topsy, and turned away, and walked quickly to the School House, with calmness in his face, but the bitterness of despair in his heart.

THE END.

(Don't miss reading—"Caught Out!"—next week's topping tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., the chums of Rookwood.)

BOB LAWLESS' BARGAIN!
 (Continued from page 10.)

"But—but I—"
 Bob Lawless had, in the wide world, about thirty dollars to call his own. His face was the picture of dismay.

Frank pressed his arm.
 "Don't worry, Bob—"
 "But—but I can't! Oh, Jerusalem crickets!" gasped Bob.

"We can stand it between us. I've got some tin in the bank, you know."

"But—but you can't! You—you sha'n't—"

"Can't be helped now," said Frank. "You've bought the dashed thing, you ass! It's got to be paid for. Mr. Gunten, we're going along to the bank. Back in ten minutes."

"Don't be longer," said Mr. Gunten.

"But—but, Frank, old chap," gasped Bob, "you can't waste your money—your savings—"

"I dare say we can sell the blessed thing again for something," said Frank, as cheerfully as he could. "Anyhow, the bargain's made, and it's got to be paid for. Come on!"

"Oh dear!" groaned Bob. His little joke on Mr. Isaacs had come home to roost in the most unpleasant way.

But there was no help for it now. Frank Richards drew the required sum from the Thompson Bank, and the chums returned to the "Press" office. There the money was paid over, and the "splendid property" assigned to three partners—Frank Richards, Vere Beauclerc, and Bob Lawless.

Mr. A. B. Carter gladly pocketed the two hundred dollars, and shook the dust of the Thompson Valley from his feet, doubtless seeking some wider sphere where there would be more room for his genius and efficiency. Mr. Gunten, having pocketed his fee, rolled back to his store quite satisfied.

And the chums of Cedar Creek—newspaper proprietors now—sat in the deserted office and stared at one another!

THE END.

"CRUSADER AND SARACEN!"
 (Continued from page 6.)

plunged past St. Rollo, and galloped madly down the narrow street.

The assassin had vanished instantly, and Blondel supposed him to have fled into the dark shelter of the ruined house. The lad thirsted for revenge, thinking that the king was dead, and, with his lance held ready, he spurred his horse at the pile of debris, intending to charge right into the house.

But the horse swerved to one side, and before Blondel could make a second attempt, loud voices and trampling feet rang out close by. Evidently some soldiers had heard the king's cries, and were hastening to the spot.

Meanwhile, Rupert St. Rollo had dismounted, and was kneeling by the side of the king, though his eyes were turned expectantly in the direction whence the assassin had disappeared.

Now, on hearing the approach of the soldiers, he rose up, seized his lance, and made furiously at Blondel, crying in a loud voice:

"Make haste, good comrades! Richard of England hath been slain, and here stands the assassin!"

For an instant Blondel felt the weakness of despair creep over him, for he realised in a flash how foul a conspiracy had entangled him in its meshes.

Then rage lent him strength and determination, and with one hand he pressed back his horse, while with the other he poised his lance to meet St. Rollo's attack.

He struck at St. Rollo, but the latter parried the blow with his own lance. For a few seconds the clash of steel upon steel rang loudly, as each tried to get vital thrust at the other.

But just as St. Rollo's lance was sent spinning from his hand, and he stood at the mercy of his angry foe, a heavy blow on the head from behind caused Blondel to reel in the saddle.

As he tried to recover his balance, a second blow unseated him, and he fell heavily to the ground. There was a great roaring and pain in his ears, and then he remembered no more.

Blondel's return to consciousness must have been very speedy, and equally speedy was his recollection of all that had happened, and the realisation of his desperate plight.

Strong arms were holding him in an upright position. He was weak and faint, and agonising pains were shooting through the back of his head.

He was closely hemmed in by half a score of English and French Crusaders, who were clamouring loudly for his life, and whose angry faces were revealed by the glare from a couple of torches.

"Slay the assassin!" cried the soldiers, as they pressed nearer with drawn weapons.

"Kill him, kill him!"
 "One burly fellow had actually lifted his axe to strike, when Rupert St. Rollo pushed his way between.

"Hold, ye unruly knaves!" he cried. "The prisoner is mine, and I claim his life. Did I not overpower him, and strike him senseless from his horse? In due time the English headman shall lay him on the block. Till then, have patience."

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