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is the thought Val Mornington has in mind when he sets out to lay the disturbing ghost of the Priory by the heels, and to recover the stolen Rembrandt for his generous host!

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Shown Up!

By Owen Conquest.



A GRIPPING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & CO., AND THEIR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS AT THE OLD PRIORY.

THE FIRST CHAPTER. Mornington is Mysterious!

KNOCK! Valentine Mornington awoke, and yawned. The wintry sunshine glimmered in at the windows of the Haunted Room at the Priory. The log fire had died out on the old hearth, and Mornington shivered a little as he sat up in the armchair and rubbed his eyes. Jimmy Silver, on the bed, was still sleeping.

Knock! The sharp rap was repeated at the door. Mornington, yawning again, glanced round.

"Hallo!" he called out. The doorknob rattled.

"Let me in, please!" It was the voice of Mr. Silver. Mornington whistled softly as he rose to his feet. Jimmy sat on the bed. He was awake now.

"That's the pater!" he said. "And a little waxy, to judge by his merry old voice," murmured Mornington, with a grin. "He didn't know we were keepin' watch in the jolly old Haunted Room last night. Who's told him?"

"Somebody has," said Jimmy. "Open the door, Morny!"

Knock, again. Mornington crossed to the door and turned back the big, old-fashioned key in the massive lock. He opened the door wide. Mr. Silver stepped into the room with a frowning brow.

As Valentine Mornington was a guest at the Priory for the Christmas vacation, it was a little difficult for Mr. Silver to display a "waxy" attitude towards him. So it was upon Jimmy Silver that his severe glance turned. Jimmy rolled off the bed. Neither of the juniors had undressed during the night's watch in the Haunted Room, and both of them looked rather dishevelled and tousled.

"I am surprised at this!" said Mr. Silver.

"Anythin' the matter, sir?" asked Mornington blandly.

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"I will say nothing to you, Mornington, as you are my son's guest here," said Mr. Silver. "But you, Jimmy, should have known better. After the fright your friend Lovell received in passing a night in the Haunted Room, you should not have done this." "Nothing's happened in the night, father," said Jimmy. "You see, we—"

He paused. Mornington joined in. "It was really all my fault, Mr. Silver. I fairly drove Jimmy into staying in this room with me. I should have stayed alone if he hadn't."

"You should not have done so, Mornington," said Mr. Silver. "I was very much perturbed by what happened to Lovell. He was a victim of nerves, and fancied that he saw a ghost in this room. Had I been aware of your intention, I should never have allowed you to occupy this room."

"The ghost hasn't worried us, sir!" "There is, of course, no ghost," said Mr. Silver, smiling a little. "But there are such things as nerves, which you should not have put to such a test. You know very well what happened in Lovell's case."

"But how did you know we were here, sir?" asked Mornington.

"Mr. Spencer mentioned to me when I came down that he thought the room was occupied," said Mr. Silver. "I came here to see. Now, I will say nothing on the subject further, but I must ask you not to repeat this foolhardy action. This room must not be slept in by you, Jimmy, or any of your guests."

"Very well, father!" said Jimmy. And with that Mr. Silver quitted the room. Jimmy gave the dandy of the Rookwood Fourth a rueful glance.

"I was afraid the pater would get his rag out if he found we'd camped in the Haunted Room," he said. "Of course, there was nothing to be afraid of; but Lovell made an awful fuss the other night, and after that—"

"Queer that your father's secretary should happen to know that we were here!" remarked Mornington. "This room is a good distance from his quarters."

"Yes; it's odd," said Jimmy. There were footsteps in the passage, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked in. Lovell had a serious expression, but there were grins on the faces of his companions.

"Seen anything?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Did the ghost walk?" grinned Raby. "Did the jolly old phantom prior drop in?" chuckled Newcome. "Not civil of him to miss, after calling on Lovell."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby. "Oh, cut the cackle!" said Lovell crossly. "Nothing to chortle at! Did you see anything, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver laughed. "Nothing!" he answered. "I slept pretty soundly."

"Did you see anything, Morny?"

"Yes!" "What!" exclaimed four voices together.

Mornington nodded coolly. "Jimmy was asleep," he said. "But I was keepin' awake. I was wide-awake when the ghost came in."

"The ghost!" yelled Raby. "Yes!"

"Are you pulling our legs?" demanded Newcome.

"Not at all."

"What was the ghost like, then?" "Ghastly figure in white—just as Lovell described," answered Mornington.

"Bosh!"

"Honest injun!" said Morny.

"And what did you do?"

"Bunged a cushion at it!"

"And what did the ghost do?" demanded Newcome.

"Tumbled over when the cushion cushioned, and yelped. Then he bolted as if he'd been sent for suddenly."

"What utter rot!" said Raby.

"Look here, Morny, what are you driving at?" demanded Jimmy Silver, eyeing the dandy of the Fourth in amazement. "I heard some row and woke up, but I saw nothing—"

"The ghost had vanished then," explained Mornington. "He would have vanished the other night if Lovell had biffed a pillow at him. Pity you didn't think of that, Lovell."

Arthur Edward blinked at Mornington.

"It really happened?" he asked.

"Really!" Mornington yawned. "I sha'n't be able to biff him again, when he walks to-night; Mr. Silver won't let us snooze in the Haunted Room again. The Spencer bird felt it his duty to give us away, and Jimmy's pater came down on us like a wolf on the fold. I dare say the Spencer bird had his reasons. Jimmy's pater is a bit waxy—but I am

going to make him a present and set that right."

"What on earth do you mean by that?" asked Jimmy.

"I'm going to give him a picture, to replace his jolly old Rembrandt that was stolen the other day," said Mornny.

"You ass! That Rembrandt was worth two thousand pounds."

"I'm going to produce one just as good."

"Fathead!"

"Well, I'm going down to brekker," said Raby. "You fellows can hang on and listen to Mornny talking out of the back of his silly neck."

And Raby walked away, followed by Newcome and Lovell.

Mornington laughed.

"Blessed if I can make head or tail of your chatter, Mornny," said Jimmy Silver. "Not getting loose in the top story, I hope?"

"I hope not!"

"Then what the thump do you mean?"

"Nothing at present, But lots presently," answered Mornington; and he strolled out of the Haunted Room whistling.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Puzzled!

"JIMMY!"

Jimmy Silver was coming down to a rather late breakfast, refreshed after his night in the Haunted Room by a cold bath, when Mornington met him on the stairs. He stopped.

"They're all at brekker," said Mornington. "I want you, Jimmy."

"I want brekker," remarked Jimmy.

"That can wait. The telephone's in the library, I think?"

"Yes."

"I suppose I can use it?"

"Of course. Trunk call?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, no, local!"

"Well, you don't want me to help you telephone, do you?" asked Jimmy in astonishment.

"No; I want you to keep watch."

Jimmy jumped.

"You're getting jolly mysterious, Mornny," he said, with a faint touch of impatience. "Who the thump do you think would listen to what you say on the telephone? What rot!"

But Mornington passed his arm through Jimmy Silver's and led him away to the library. The lofty room, with its book-lined walls and cheery log fire, was deserted just then. From the direction of the breakfast-room a buzz of merry voices could be heard faintly.

Mornny closed the door.

"Now keep your hoof against the door," he said. "You can listen to what I say, Jimmy—it's goin' to be an interestin' talk. But it's understood that you keep it dark."

"Oh, all right!" granted Jimmy.

Mornington crossed to the telephone and picked the receiver off the hooks. He gave the number—Denewood 10.

Jimmy glanced across at him.

"That's Inspector Stenson's number," he said—"the inspector who has the case of the stolen Rembrandt in hand!"

Mornny nodded. He spoke into the transmitter.

"Inspector Stenson? Good! My name's Mornington—a guest at the Priory. I dare say you saw me when you called yesterday, Mr. Stenson. I have some information for you."

Jimmy simply stared.

"Quite valuable information, Mr. Stenson. I can point out the man who stole the Rembrandt, if you want to make his acquaintance."

"Mornny!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"And I hope to point out the stolen picture, too, Mr. Stenson. Will you come over for your bird?"

"Mornny!" yelled Jimmy.

Mornington put up the receiver and rejoined Jimmy, with a smile on his handsome face. He seemed in great spirits.

"Now for brekker," he said.

"Is Inspector Stenson coming over?" demanded Jimmy.

"Yes; he'll be here by the time we've finished brekker. He's coming right over in his car."

"What on earth do you mean by pulling the police-inspector's leg like this?" gasped Jimmy.

"Dear man! I'm not pullin' his leg!"

"But—"

"What about brekker?" asked Mornington. "There'll be excitin' times when the inspector arrives. Let's get some grub first."

"It's all utter rot!" said Jimmy uneasily. "I begin to believe that you've really got a screw loose somewhere, Mornny."

Mornington laughed lightly, and left the library.

Jimmy went down into the breakfast-room, where a merry party was assembled. Mornington followed him in a minute later, and Jimmy noticed that the dandy of the Fourth had put on his overcoat. Why Mornington should don an overcoat to come into a well-warmed room to breakfast was a mystery—unless Mornny was going out of his senses.

The breakfast-table at the Priory was crowded with merry faces. Breakfast was an informal meal in holiday-time, and the guests arrived at what time they pleased. Lovell and Raby and Newcome had already finished, and so had Cousin Phyllis, but they were still at the table chatting in cheery tones. Mr. Silver was a little grave; at the back of the old gentleman's mind there was always the thought of his lost masterpiece—the Rembrandt that had been stolen a few days before, and which the police had, so far, been utterly unable to trace. But Mrs. Silver was smiling sweetly, and there was an expansive smile on the fat face of Eustace Spencer, the secretary, whose eyes blinked cheerily through his big spectacles.

Arthur Edward Lovell seemed chiefly interested in Cousin Phyllis; while Raby and Newcome were finding much interest in Marjorie Hazeldene and Clara Trevlyn.

"Hallo, slackers!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, as the two late-comers dropped in. "Feeling cold, Mornny?"

"Didn't I tell you yesterday I had a slight cold?" said Mornington.

"Must be more than slight, if you have to wear an overcoat indoors," said Lovell, with a stare.

"Pass the merry provender, old fellow, and don't worry!"

Mornington turned to Eustace Spencer.

"I hope your cold is better, Mr. Spencer?"

"Thank you—almost gone!" said the secretary.

His eyes, through his glasses, lingered curiously on Mornington for a moment.

"Too bad that you should have to put off going on your Christmas holiday!" said Mornington. "I hope you'll be able to travel to-day."

"To-morrow, probably," said the secretary.

Mornington's eyes were lingering on the fat face of the secretary. There was a mocking glimmer in their depths.

"You've had an accident, sir," he said, with an air of concern. "Skating—what? Tumble on the ice?"

Mr. Spencer passed his podgy hand for a moment over his forehead, where a slight bruise showed on the skin.

"No," he answered; "I do not skate, Master Mornington. I had the ill-luck to knock my head, entering my room in the dark."

"Not painful, I hope?" asked Mornington.

"A mere nothing."

The secretary turned his head to address a remark to Mrs. Silver, having apparently had enough of Mornington's conversation. Valentine Mornington devoted his attention to his breakfast. He ate with an exceedingly good appetite and a smiling, good-humoured face. It was long since Mornny had been seen in such excellent spirits.

"Well, let's get a move on!" said Lovell. "No good waiting for those slackers to finish! The ice is a treat this morning!"

And Lovell and Raby and Newcome and the three girls made a move. Mrs. Silver followed. Mr. Silver and the secretary were engaged in a discussion upon politics, a topic that was as dry as dust to the Rookwood juniors.

There was the hoot of a car on the drive. Jimmy Silver glanced at Mornington, who smiled. Jimmy guessed that this was the inspector arriving from Denewood in response to Mornny's amazing message on the telephone. What was to happen now, Jimmy simply couldn't imagine. Mornny's jape—for Jimmy could only think that it was a jape—was likely to cause something like a sensation.

Mornny rose from the table.

"Inspector Stenson!" he remarked, glancing from the window.

Mr. Silver started.

"The inspector!" he exclaimed. His face lightened. "News, perhaps—"

He quitted the room.

"News of the missing picture—what?" asked Mornington. "Think it likely, Jimmy?"

"I hope so!" said Jimmy Silver.

"What do you think, Mr. Spencer?"

"I think it very probable," said the secretary. "Perhaps my opinion is coloured by my wishes and my regard for my employer, who feels his loss so deeply. But certainly I have every confidence that the police will succeed in tracing the rascal who robbed Mr. Silver."

"That's good!" said Mornington. "My belief is that you are quite right."

The secretary gave him a quick look over his glasses.

"We must hope so!" he said.

"Now look out for squalls, Mornny, you awful ass!" murmured Jimmy, as his father reappeared in the doorway with the burly figure of the inspector by his side.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rather a Surprise!

MR. SILVER'S face was dark and stern. Evidently Inspector Stenson had explained the reason of his morning call, and the host of the Priory had learned of what he could only regard as an utterly reckless practical joke.

"Mornington!" exclaimed Mr. Silver. "Here I am, sir!"

"Inspector Stenson tells me—"

"Quite so, sir! Good-mornin', inspector!" said Mornington smoothly. "Glad you came over so soon. Don't go, Mr. Spencer! I want you to corroborate some things I have to tell Mr. Stenson."

The secretary blinked at him.

"I cannot imagine what you have to

tell the inspector, Master Mornington," he said. "But certainly, whatever it is, I have no knowledge of it."

"Your mistake, sir," said Mornington, with icy coolness. "I shall be able to refresh your memory, I think."

"What?"

"Kindly tell me what this means, Mornington!" said Mr. Silver sternly. "You have brought Inspector Stenson here with a statement that you can point out the thief who took away my picture!"

"Yes, sir."

"You know nothing of the matter at—"

"Lots, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"Let the boy speak, sir," said Inspector Stenson, with a curious look at the dandy of Rookwood. "If he has any information, it is his duty to pass it on to me."

"That's what I'm goin' to do, sir. But will you see that Mr. Spencer remains here? He will be able to corroborate some of my statements, though just at present he doesn't remember."

"Upon my word! Mr. Spencer, kindly remain for the present."

The secretary was breathing hard.

"As you wish, Mr. Silver," he said.

"Now, Mornington," said Mr. Silver warmly, "kindly tell the inspector what you know, if you know anything."

"Ready and willin', sir! Shall I spin the yarn from the beginnin'?" drawled Mornington. "You may recall, sir, that when we arrived here we offered to help to look for the thief and the missin' picture. It was Lovell's idea, but I thought it a good one."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Silver brusquely.

"Come to the point, Morny!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Comin', dear boy! Inspector Stenson made an examination of the place," resumed Mornington. "He found that the electric burglar-alarm had not worked. It had been disconnected—the wire cut from outside, perhaps, by the thief after he had cut through the glass. I thought the thief was very lucky in hittin' on the wire in that way. In fact, I've no doubt that Inspector Stenson turned over in his mind the possibility that somebody inside the house had had a hand in the robbery."

The inspector did not speak.

But he was regarding Mornington with a quiet attention that somewhat surprised Jimmy Silver and his father. Apparently, the inspector did not conclude that the dandy of Rookwood was talking "through his hat."

"Well, I had that idea, and I thought it out," resumed Mornington lazily. "I figured it out that the thief, if inside the house, wouldn't bolt and draw suspicion on himself at once. There was a far better dodge ready to his hand. Christmas bein' close, he could leave for a Christmas holiday, an' take the plunder with him, without excitin' any suspicion."

"Nobody has left the house for a Christmas holiday!" said Mr. Silver, with a glance at the inspector.

"No; Mr. Spencer was goin' on Christmas Eve, but he was held up by a slight cold," said Mornington. "Looks as if there's nothin' in my idea; but let's see it through. That nobby idea was workin' in my powerful brain, but nothin' much seemed likely to come of it; only then it happened that Lovell was put up in the Haunted Room for the night."

"That has nothing to do with the matter."

"Lots, sir! You see, durin' the night

in the Haunted Room Lovell saw a ghost."

"Nonsense!"

"The fellows thought it was nerves," drawled Mornington. "Now, though old Lovell is a bit of an ass, he really isn't ass enough to rouse a whole household on account of silly nerves. Lovell saw somethin' that night in the Haunted Room."

"I knew nothing of this!" said the inspector, with a very keen look.

Mornington smiled.

"Now you know it, sir, you're beginnin' to draw conclusions from it, same as I did," he said. "Lovell's stunt of sleepin' in the Haunted Room came as a surprise to everybody—it was a thing that couldn't possibly have been foreseen by the thief. And a ghost appearin' to frighten Lovell off seemed to indicate to my feeble intellect that somebody had a very deep interest in keepin' the Haunted Room unoccupied."

"I see nothing in all this," said Mr. Silver.

"Inspector Stenson does!" said Mornington dryly.

"Pray allow the boy to proceed," said Inspector Stenson. "You concluded, Master Mornington, that the thief was in the house, that he had hidden the picture in some safe, remote place until the time came when he could leave without exciting suspicion; and the ghostly visitation to the Haunted Room made you suspect that that room was the actual hiding-place of the stolen picture?"

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. Mr. Silver started violently.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I thought it possible," smiled Mornington. "And after Lovell's ghost. I had a jolly keen eye on the giddy Haunted Room. My idea was that the thief dropped in to procure his plunder, hidden in that room, and got himself up as a jolly old ghost in case Lovell woke up—as he did. Lovell roused the house, and the rascal had to give it up for that night. And, with that little theory in mind, I took to haunting the Haunted Room myself. Slight colds bein' in fashion, I caught one myself, and nursed it in the Haunted Room, to make sure that the jolly old thief didn't collar the picture in the daytime."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Catchin' on, old top?" grinned Mornington. "I wasn't wanderin' in my mind, old bean. Quite sane an' sober, I assure you."

"This is absurd," said Mr. Silver. "You may recall, Mornington, that the room door was locked when Lovell saw, as he supposed, a ghost. You do not suggest that a thief, playing ghost, could pass through a locked door?"

"That beat me at first, sir, until I examined the key."

"The—the key!"

Mornington slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out a heavy old-fashioned key. He handed it to the inspector.

"What do those marks on the top end of the key mean, Mr. Stenson?" he asked.

The inspector's eyes gleamed.

"They mean that the key has been turned from the outside of the door, by means of a pair of steel nippers, such as burglars use," he answered.

"Just so."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mr. Silver, quite taken aback.

"That's the key of the Haunted Room," said Morny; "and now you know how the ghost got in."

Mr. Silver caught his breath.

"Mornington, if there is anything in this amazing statement, my picture—

the Rembrandt—is now in the house, hidden in the Haunted Room!" he exclaimed.

"In the house, sir," said Mornington. "But not now in the Haunted Room!"

"Then where—what—"

"Here, sir!"

Mornington threw open his overcoat; Jimmy Silver understood now why the dandy of the Fourth had donned it. From under the coat Morny drew out a roll of thick canvas. He held it up.

"The giddy Rembrandt!" he drawled.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

A Fight at the Finish!

"MORNY!" gasped Jimmy.

Mr. Silver did not speak. He made a spring at the canvas and grasped it from

Mornington. With trembling hands he unrolled it.

Mr. Spencer was moving in a careless way towards the door. Inspector Stenson stepped back, till his burly figure filled the doorway. Then the secretary strolled towards the window. But Mr. Silver did not notice that little by-play. His eyes were glued upon the famous picture—the Rembrandt which he had hardly dared to dream of seeing again.

Mornington smiled cheerily. He was enjoying the moment of his triumph. Jimmy clapped him on the shoulder.

"Good old Morny!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Quite a jolly old surprise, what?" grinned Mornington. "Didn't I tell you, Jimmy, that I was goin' to try to make it up to you and your pater for bein' so decent to me after I was sacked from Rookwood? That's why I brought my giddy intellect to bear on this little problem."

"That is your picture, sir?" asked Inspector Stenson.

Mr. Silver looked up from the precious canvas at last. There were tears in his eyes.

"It is my Rembrandt," he said. "Mornington has saved me from a loss of two thousand pounds—from a loss, indeed, that could not be computed in money; this wonderful picture is an heirloom in my family, and I could never have ceased to regret its loss. My dear, dear boy, I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Thank you, sir," said Mornington earnestly. "I treated your son badly, and you and he forgave me, like the real bricks you are. But for that I shouldn't have been here for Christmas, and I really think the rotter who stole your picture would have got away with the goods."

Mr. Silver smiled at his son.

"This is a lesson we should remember, Jimmy," he said. "We cast our bread on the waters, and it has returned after many days."

"You have something more to tell me, Master Mornington?" asked Inspector Stenson; and Jimmy Silver noticed now that the corner of his eye was upon Eustace Spencer at the window. And Jimmy Silver understood further, as he noted it.

"Yes, sir," said Mornington brightly. "Just a little more. Mr. Silver has his picture, but you'd like the thief. I made Jimmy watch with me last night in the Haunted Room. Jimmy went to sleep; I sat up. I left the door unlocked to make the way easy for the ghost. He came in, found Jimmy asleep, and found me pretending to be locked in the arms of jolly old Morpheus. So seeing the coast clear, the merry phantom went to work. I watched him with my eyes half-open."

There was a quick-drawn breath from Eustace Spencer.

"He went to a corner of the room and stooped down," said Mornington. "I caught him bending with a cushion. He pitched over, and gave quite a substantial howl for a ghost. Then he muzzled; but I did not mind that. I figured it out that I knew where the picture was hidden. This morning, while the other fellows were busy with brekker, I borrowed some tools from Jimmy's tool-box, and prised up an oak plank in a corner in the Haunted Room."

"So that was it!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Just that! The plank had been loosened before, so it came up fairly easily," said Mornington. "Under the board I found that roll of canvas tucked away—as the giddy ghost would have done, if I hadn't cannoned him with a cushion. So I lugged it out, and there it is."

"And the man?" said Inspector Stenson.

"Yes, the thief," said Mr. Silver. "You have hinted, Mornington, that the thief is a member of this household."

"Quite so."

"You stated that Mr. Spencer could corroborate what you said," said Mr. Silver. "In what way?"

"Speak up, Mr. Spencer!" said Morny encouragingly.

The secretary wetted his dry lips.

"I have nothing to say," he exclaimed. "I have not the slightest knowledge—"

"Oh, come," said Mornington in a rallying tone. "Tell the inspector why you postponed your departure on Christmas Eve. Was it because the Haunted Room was occupied, and so you couldn't take a picture with you as a souvenir?"

"Mornington!" exclaimed Mr. Silver aghast.

"Tell us all how you felt when you heard that the Haunted Room was to be occupied—with the stolen picture hidden under the floor all the time!" grinned Mornington. "It would surely be thrilling. And why you kept on dropping into the place to see whether anybody was still there! And why you told Mr. Silver about us sleeping in the Haunted Room, so as to get a clear field the next night to lift the Rembrandt. And how you banged your face on the floor when I knocked you over with the cushion and got that mark on your manly brow."

The secretary seemed scarcely to breathe.

"Where do you keep the nippers you open locked doors with?" grinned Mornington. "Somebody here is provided with burglar tools. In your pockets, or in your room—what?"

Spencer clenched his hands hard. One look at his haunted face was enough to show that either on his person or in his room was evidence in proof of Mornington's accusation.

Inspector Stenson made a step towards him, his face very grim.

"You—you dare not accuse me!" panted the secretary.

"It will be my duty to detain you for the present," said the inspector. "That at least— Ah!"

Crash!

There was a terrific splintering of glass as the desperate man grasped a chair and dashed it through the window, smashing glass and sashes far and wide. A second more and Eustace Spencer had leaped out. The inspector's hurried clutch missed him by a foot.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Silver.

Even his incredulous mind needed no more proof than that.

"After him!" roared Jimmy,

The burly inspector rushed for the door. But Mornington, reckless of broken glass, sprang through the smashed window, and Jimmy Silver was after him in a second.

Morny stumbled, but recovered himself, and dashed away in pursuit of the fleeing figure. Hatless, desperate, panting, Eustace Spencer was tearing across the park, powdering the snow with hurrying feet, his plunder lost, everything lost but his liberty, and making a frantic effort to save, at least, that. But Mornington, with the speed of a deer, was close on his track, and Jimmy Silver came speeding on behind the dandy of the Fourth. Inspector Stenson

rapidly on the hunted man. He stumbled in the snow, and as he scrambled up again Morny was upon him with a swift spring.

Spencer dodged him and leaped back, snatching a revolver from his pocket. The weapon gleamed up.

"Stand back!" he yelled hoarsely. "Back, or—"

Whiz!

It was Arthur Edward Lovell who weighed in with a well-timed snowball. The snowball crashed in Spencer's face, sending him staggering backwards. The pistol dropped in the snow.

The next instant Mornington was upon the staggering man, and Spencer



THE MISSING PICTURE! "Mornington, if there is anything in this amazing statement, my picture is now in the house," said Mr. Silver. "It's here, sir!" said Mornington. He threw open his overcoat and from under it he drew a roll of canvas, and held it up. "The giddy Rembrandt!" he drawled. (See Chapter 3.)

rushed from the house, but he was hopelessly out of the chase.

"Stop him!" roared Morny.

From the frozen trees ahead two or three figures emerged. Lovell and Cousin Phyllis, Raby, Newcome. They stopped and stared in blank amazement at the wild chase.

"Stop thief!" bawled Jimmy Silver.

The running man paused a second, panting, desperate. The juniors, coming back from skating on the lake, were directly ahead of him.

Eustace Spencer gritted his teeth and swerved to the right and tore on. Mornington cut across to intercept him, gaining ground now at every stride. And Lovell & Co.—not understanding what had happened, but understanding clearly enough that the fleeing man was to be stopped—rushed at him from the other side.

The girls stood in amazement and wonder, staring after the chase. The Fistical Four and Mornington bore down

went backwards in his rush, falling heavily to the ground.

Spencer struggled desperately, and Morny alone could not have held him. But the Fistical Four rushed in at once. Hands grasped the man on all sides.

"Our game!" grinned Mornington breathlessly.

Spencer, with a groan of despair, yielded to his fate. In the grasp of five sturdy Rookwooders he could scarcely stir a limb, and the struggle was over. In the distance Inspector Stenson came tramping up through the snow, with great satisfaction in his solid face.

"But what's the chap done?" asked Lovell.

"Pinched the giddy Rembrandt—"

"What?" gasped Lovell. "This chap bagged the missing smudge?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This infant," assented Mornington. "And it may interest you to know that"

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ice. Then he legs flew apart, and he fell on his back, too, and it took him a quarter of an hour's real hard work, during which he cut the most idiotic capers, to regain dry land.

Then he looked for the jackdaw. It was still snowing hard, and things were anything but easy to see; but the old rook had marvellously sharp eyes, and quickly spotted the other black bird under a tuft of grass by the pool's edge.

He was a wounded jackdaw, over-looked by some gunner. The rook knew that well enough, because the bird had shown fear of him. The thing was how to make him a dead jackdaw.

The rook sidled up and viewed the enemy, first with one eye, then with the other. And the jackdaw turned over on his back, with claws and beak ready for the worst.

Then the old rook hopped in, delivered a quick peck, and hopped out again. He continued to do this as quickly as he could.

Jackdaws are, however, not bad fighters themselves. This one gave as many pecks as he took.

At the end of half an hour, more than one of the rook's fine black plumes lay around on the snow, but the jackdaw was little, if any, nearer being dead.

"Ca-a-aa!" said the rook, and sat back on his tail for the ninth time, the jackdaw hanging on to the feathers of his breast, and—they were as still as death, looking up in terror at a bird which seemed about to alight right on them.

The bird was a short-eared owl which hunts by day, and which usually hunts in the vicinity of the marshes.

When the rook at length got back his courage, he scrambled to his feet and fled precipitately, every moment expecting the new foe to drop and slay him. But, as a matter of fact, unless he had been wounded, I do not think he had much to fear, for short-eared owls are not over-gifted with such reckless courage, in spite of their size. This one, anyway, preferred to leave the rook alone and settle with the jackdaw.

It was when he hurried to rejoin his companions that the old rook found, what he would have noticed before had he not been so busily engaged, that these same companions were, for once, silent, and when he topped the sea-wall he realised why. They were no longer there.

The reason for this sudden departure of his friends was not at first apparent, probably because all earth and air was white, and that which had driven them away was white also. It was a terrible bird known as the Greenland falcon. He was nearly white, and the old rook did not at first notice him.

The Greenland falcon saw the rook's black form, though, and instantly rose on his fine, long wings, not seeming to be troubled by the wind much, for he was a wonderful flier. Then the old rook let out an amazed caw, and fled.

It was an exciting chase. The falcon circled aloft, easily master of the other on the wing, and ready to swoop down upon him at any moment. So did the old rook try to circle aloft; but the wind would not let him, and if he wished to reach the shelter of the trees, where he knew he would be safe, he saw at once that he must "hug" the ground, which he did, and, oddly enough, it was this very wind that saved him. The big falcon whirled along, above him, but dared not swoop, for fear of dashing himself to pieces on the ground beneath.

As for the old black bird, although he strained every muscle, he could not get ahead of his terrible pursuer, who kept up with him easily. He did not, of course, appear to realise that so long as he "hugged" the ground he was safe, and he must have strained himself too much. Anyway, all at once there was a sudden gush of blood from his beak, and without a sound he turned over and fell headlong in the snow. Foolish old bird! He had burst his heart with over-exertion, and the Greenland falcon, who would not otherwise have been able to touch him, even if he flew quite slowly, so long as he "hugged" the ground, dined off of his black and not too tender carcass, after all.

"SHOWN UP!"

(Continued from page 11.)

he's also the jolly old spook that made you jump the other night!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Lovell. Inspector Stenson came up breathlessly. The handcuffs were in his hand; they clicked on the wrists of the captured thief.

In Spencer's room ample evidence was found, as the inspector had anticipated, after the man's desperate attempt at escape. It transpired that Spencer had been employed by the unscrupulous collector in America who desired to possess the Rembrandt, and who had sought in vain to purchase it from its owner. A reward equivalent to the value of the picture had been promised to Spencer in the event of success; and how near he had come to success was only too clear. The wretched man confessed before his trial, and told how he had cut the picture from its frame, and tampered with the electric alarm, and forced the window, to give an impression that the burglary had taken place from without. He had felt perfectly secure in concealing the plunder in the Haunted Room—a room never used and seldom visited.

But Lovell's stunt of sleeping in the Haunted Room had spoiled his plans. After scaring Lovell in the guise of the Prior's ghost, he would certainly have found the room unoccupied, but for Mornington.

Lovell by chance, and Mornington by design, had completely baffled the rascal.

In Mr. Silver's library the Rembrandt adorned its old place, none the worse for its adventures, and affording infinite satisfaction to its owner. And at the Priory Valentine Mornington was a much-distinguished guest during the remainder of the Christmas holidays.

THE END.

(There will be another topping story of the Rookwood chums next week, entitled: "Coping With Coker!")

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