

Captain of the Fourth!



BY Owen Conquest

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Nº 6

KING CRICKET.

Learned investigators say that cricket gets its name from a Saxon word, "cricce," which implies a crooked stick, but whether this definition is accurate or not, the game as we know it does not go further back than 180 years. Of course, there are people who hold that cricket dates much further than a mere two centuries. Such prime authorities as Messrs. Pycroft & Bolland cite references to show that the famous summer game has its origin amidst the mists of antiquity. It is declared to be closely related, anyway, to games which were played when the world was quite young, but official details are lacking.

Some writers believe the game to be identical with "club-ball," a pastime popular in the days when the trusty Genoese crossbowmen were distinguishing themselves on the battlefields of France. "Club-ball" went by the country name of "handyn and handoute."

In a very old book on the subject, we find a comparison between cricket and "double wicket tip cat," as played by the "cat" players of Lincoln's Inn Fields and a rival team from the City of Westminster, early in the nineteenth century. There were eleven players and a notcher on each side. That cricket also owes something to the old game of rounders may be readily conceded.

Few things are more fascinating than the history of cricket. It is in close association with the finest records of the old country. You can conjure with such names as Alfred Mynn, the Lion of Kent, or John Bowyer, or Fuller Fitch, or James Dean.

About the earliest mention of cricket comes in 1308, in the last years of Queen Elizabeth. In 1774 a committee, which included the Duke of Dorset and Sir Horace Mann, set to work on the rules governing the game. In 1861 the All England Eleven gained and lost games in Australia, and seven years later beat the New York Twenty-two. In 1878 an Australian Eleven visited this country, and, after gaining ten games and losing five, gained one against "Players of All England."

Australia has taken cricket very seriously for

more than a hundred years. We hear of the doings of the Australian Cricket Club as far back as January, 1827. The largest number of runs ever put together in a one-day match in Sydney was obtained in a contest between elevens from the Commercial and Australian Joint Stock Banks, on the Association Ground. The Commercial Bank Players went to the wickets first, and remained in nearly all day, scoring, with 16 sundries, exactly 500 runs. The Joint Stock Bank team scored only 65. On the same ground, King's School, Parramatta, beat this record with 532 in their only innings.

In the year 1868 the Surrey Club played an Aboriginal Team from Australia at the Oval, Kennington. This strangely assorted team was captained by Lawrence. The score read: Surrey Club, first innings, 222; Aborigines, first innings, 83. The natives from "down under" scored their first victory against an English team at Ladywell, when they met eleven gentlemen of Lewisham. In the previous year the Aboriginal team, trained by Mr. Willis, had arrived in Sydney from the wilds of Victoria.

The names of these dark-skinned champions were quaint enough—Bullocky (good at yorkers), Dick-a-Dick, Watty, Twopenny, Peter, Tarpot, and so on. Mullagh was one of their best men.

It would hardly be fair to say that cricket has had its ups and downs. It has been mainly a business of "ups" all the time. Cricket steeled the muscles in strenuous times, and could be relied upon to bring out the best in a man. The game has changed, of course, as witness the old drawings of the wicket of the by-gone, which bore a sort of family likeness to a skeleton hurdle. There have been all kinds of wickets, and the inexhaustible historian of the game, Nyren, to wit, has much to say on all that side.

But maybe we have not really much concern with all these points. The great thing is that, nowadays every village up and down the land has its cricket pitch, and that cricket clubs are humming into existence in every district. All through the off season enthusiasts are making ready for the summer game.



Captain of the Fourth!

A Magnificent, Long Complete Story of JIMMY SILVER & Co., at Rookwood.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

CHAPTER 1.

Thanks for the Tip!

JIMMY SILVER, you ass, we're waiting for you!"

"Come on, fathead!"

"Buck up!"

It was a half-holiday at Rookwood, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome were ready to go down to the cricket-ground. Jimmy Silver wasn't ready. Jimmy was in the end study, talking to Leggett of the Modern side, when his three chums looked in, and made those remarks.

Jimmy glanced round at his chums.

"Hold on a minute!" he said.

"Oh, rats!" said Lovell. "Never mind that Modern worm! Come on!"

"Leggett's just told me something——"

"Blow Leggett!"

"Look here, you can't keep us waiting while you jaw to a Modern cad," said Raby. "Leggett can go and eat coke. Come on!"

"We'll chuck him out if you like," suggested Newcome.

There was always warfare between Classics and Moderns at Rookwood. The three Classics were anxious to get down to the cricket-ground, but they were willing

to waste a few minutes "chucking out" a Modern fellow.

Leggett backed round the table in alarm. "You don't want to talk to that worm," said Lovell. "I suppose you're not borrowing money of him?"

"No, fathead!"

"Well, we'll chuck him out——"

"Hold on, I tell you, fathead!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, rats!" growled Lovell.

Lovell was wrathful. He did not like Moderns anyway; and Leggett was the least likeable of the Moderns. He was not liked even on his own side. Tommy Dodd & Co. had "scragged" him many a time for his sneaking proclivities. And Leggett, who was a very deep youth, turned a more or less honest penny sometimes by money-lending among the juniors. He was the last fellow in the world to be welcome in the end study.

Lovell came into the study with a businesslike expression. Leggett backed further round the table. He did not like Lovell's looks.

"Look here, I came here to speak to Jimmy Silver——" he began.

"Like your check!" said Lovell.

"You're going out on your neck. Don't dodge behind Silver, you worm—come and take your medicine!"

"Hold on, you ass!" said Jimmy, pushing his chum back. "Leggett came here to give me a tip."

"Rats!"

"There's a new chap coming to Rookwood this afternoon—a Classical——"

"Blow the new chap!"

"Chap named Higgs," said Leggett.

"Blow his name!"

"And those Modern bounders have gone to meet him at the station," said Jimmy Silver. "Leggett says so."

"Well, let 'em meet him, and be blowed!"

"They're going to rag him," said Leggett.

"Let 'em rag him!"

"Look here," said Jimmy Silver. "I don't know the new kid, but he's a Classical. We're not going to let the Moderns rag a Classical. It's up to us to chip in."

"What about the cricket?" demanded Raby.

"Well, it's only practice, and it can stand over for a bit," said Jimmy Silver. "Of course, the new kid doesn't matter twopence, as far as that goes, but we can't have Modern worms ragging Classical chaps."

"Something in that," agreed Lovell. "But what is that cad doing, giving his own side away?"

"I thought I'd come and give you the tip," said Leggett. "Of course, you needn't mention it to Tommy Dodd."

Lovell snorted.

"You mean that you've had a row with Tommy Dodd, and you want to get even with him, and you've come over here for a catspaw!" he growled.

"Well, you can do as you like!" snapped Leggett. "I thought Jimmy Silver would chip in as the new kid's a Classical."

"And Jimmy Silver will," said the captain of the Fourth. "We can let the cricket slide for a bit, you chaps. A walk to the station won't hurt us. If the Modern bounders are ragging a Classical chap, we'll jolly well rag them. It will make them put their ears down, anyway."

"Well, that's all right," agreed Lovell. "But Leggett's a cad to come and tell us, all the same. Where did you get that nose, Leggett?"

Leggett's nose was a little swollen, and

of a fiery hue. It looked as if it had come into violent contact with a set of knuckles.

"Find out!" growled Leggett, rubbing his nose.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Tommy Dodd's punched his nose, and he wants us to punch Tommy Dodd," he said. "Well, we're on. We're going to the rescue; but before we go, we'll bump Leggett for sneaking against his own side."

"Good egg!" said Lovell. "Now you're talking!"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and Newcome heartily.

The Fistical Four closed round Leggett, who glared at them. Jimmy Silver's decision seemed to meet the case exactly, from the Classics' point of view; but Leggett was of quite a different opinion.

"Look here, hands off!" exclaimed Leggett, in alarm. "I came to give you a friendly tip——"

"Yes, we know exactly how friendly it was," agreed Lovell. "Now we're going to show you our friendly appreciation." "Collar him!"

"You rotters! Hands off! I—I'll——Yah!"

Leggett was collared.

He wriggled in the grasp of the Fistical Four as he was swept off the floor.

Then he came down on the study carpet. Bump!

Leggett's yell ran the length of the Fourth Form passage.

"Yoooop!"

"Give him another," said Jimmy Silver. "He only gave us one tip, but we'll give him two bumps. That's cent per cent—Leggett likes that."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Yaroor!" yelled Leggett. "Oh, yah—oh! Leggo! Yoooop!"

"Now all jump on him together," said Jimmy Silver, as Leggett sprawled on the carpet. "Now, one, two——"

Leggett did not wait for "three."

He was on his feet in a twinkling, and speeding down the passage to the stairs. A yell of laughter from the end study followed him.

"Now we'll trot down to the station," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I don't think we shall ever get any more friendly tips from Leggett. But we'll put a spoke in Tommy Dodd's wheel. Come on!"

And the Fistical Four of the Fourth took

their straw hats and started for Coombe, to "chip in" very forcibly in the little game the humorous Moderns had planned for the afternoon.

CHAPTER 2.

A Slight Surprise.

"HERE'S the giddy train," said Tommy Dodd.

The three Tommies—Dodd and Doyle and Cook—were on the platform in Coombe Station.

They were looking very merry and bright that afternoon.

Tommy Dodd had heard that a new Classical fellow was coming into the Fourth Form at Rookwood, and it had been his idea to pass an hour in polite attentions to him. Not that Tommy Dodd knew anything about the new fellow, or had any dislike for him, or anything of that kind. But the new boy was a Classical, and Classicals were born to be ragged by Moderns, and a half-holiday could not possibly be better spent than in ragging a Classical. That was how Tommy Dodd looked at it; and Tommy Doyle and Tommy Cook heartily agreed with their great leader.

The three Modern juniors were waiting on the platform, ready to pounce upon the new junior as soon as he alighted from the train.

"Nail him as soon as he shows up," said Tommy Dodd. "Don't hurt the poor little beast, of course. We'll pull his leg, and stuff him up—Hallo, here he is!"

The train had stopped, and among the passengers who alighted from it was a lad in Etons. He was the only boy there, so there was no doubt that he was the new fellow for Rookwood.

The three Tommies stared at him in astonishment.

He was not quite like their expectations.

They had expected to see a small, quiet, somewhat sheepish fellow, somewhat nervous in his ways—in fact, an ordinary new kid. The new-comer was nothing at all like that.

In the first place, he was older than the Fourth-Formers, and considerably bigger. He was as big as any fellow in the Shell at Rookwood. He was powerfully-built, with a breadth of chest and shoulders remarkable for his age. His face was rugged and

curiously like that of a bulldog in expression. His jaw was square, and his look very determined.

The three Tommies exchanged a queer glance.

The new boy did not look like a fellow who could be ragged, stuffed-up, and have his leg pulled with impunity.

"H'm!" remarked Tommy Cook. "That isn't quite the merchant I expected to see. He's too old for the Fourth, I should say."

"Must be the chap!" said Tommy Dodd. "I heard Bootles say he was coming by this train, and he's the only kid here!"

"Doesn't look an easy customer," murmured Doyle. "Faith, he looks like a young prizefighter, if you ask me!"

"Hallo, he's coming to speak to us!"

The three Tommies had intended to introduce themselves. But they were staring at the new-comer instead. The new arrival came across the platform, returning their stare with interest, and addressed them.

"You fellows belong to Rookwood?" he asked.

"Yes. Are you Higgs?"

"Yes; I'm Higgs. I'm going into the Fourth. What the dickens are you staring at me for?"

The new fellow's manner was unpleasant, and his tone was dictatorial. Evidently he was not a "new kid" of the ordinary kind.

"Mustn't we stare at you?" asked Tommy Dodd, with elaborate politeness.

"No!"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tommy, in surprise.

"But I was wondering—"

"Wondering what?"

"How they came to let you out of the zoo?" said Tommy Dodd sweetly.

"I suppose that's meant for a joke," said Higgs. "I don't like jokes of that sort. One of you kids can carry this bag."

"Wha-at!"

"Deaf?" asked Higgs unpleasantly.

"Carry your bag!" ejaculated Tommy Dodd, his breath quite taken away. "Are you going into the Sixth by any chance?"

"Eh? No!"

"And you're not a new headmaster, or anything of that kind?"

"Of course not!"

"Then you can carry your bag yourself," said Tommy Dodd, "and you can be thankful that I don't bash it over your silly coconut!"

The new junior stared at him for a moment, then burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, what are you cackling at?" demanded Tommy Dodd, considerably nettled.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We came here to—to meet you," exclaimed Dodd angrily. "We thought we'd put you through your paces to begin with. I think we can't do better than take some of the cheek out of you to start with, Higgs. Collar him, you chaps! We'll teach him to cackle at us!"

"Bump the cheeky beast!" said Doyle. "We might give him the frogmarch to Rookwood afterwards. It would do him good!"

"Hear, hear!" said Cook. "Now, all together, and bump him hard!"

The three Tommies collared the new junior without ceremony.

They had intended to rag him gently, and "pull his leg," and generally extract a little harmless and necessary amusement from him. But the new boy's manner had changed all that. They felt that sterner measures were required, and they were prepared to take them.

But there was a surprise in store for Tommy Dodd & Co.

As they seized the new junior he ceased laughing, dropped his bag, and hit out. Tommy Dodd felt as if a mule had kicked him on the chin, and he went over on his back with a yell.

Then Cook and Doyle, much to their astonishment, found themselves grasped by their collars.

They were swung to and fro helplessly, and then their heads came together with a resounding concussion.

Crack!

"Oh! Ah! Ow!" gasped Cook.

"Tare an' 'ounds! Yaroo!" yelled Doyle.

Crack!

Tommy Dodd sat up. His chin felt as if it wasn't there, and he put both hands to it and blinked. It seemed like a dream to Tommy Dodd. He was sitting on the platform, knocked out—and the new fellow was grasping Cook and Doyle, and knocking their heads together!

The three Tommies were three of the most redoubtable fighting-men in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And the new fellow was handling them as if they were infants in the Second Form.

"Oh, holy smoke!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "This is a giddy nightmare! Oh, my chin! Oh, crikey!"

"Yaroo! Leggo!" roared Cook.

"Howly Moses! Hands off!" shrieked Doyle.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

With a swing of his remarkably muscular arms, the new junior sent the two Moderns spinning. They reeled across Tommy Dodd, and sat down on the platform. The new boy grinned down at them.

"Want any more?" he asked.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Wow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs. "There's a lot more where that came from. Ha, ha, ha!"

He picked up his bag and walked away, to look after his box.

The three Tommies sat up. They blinked at one another in a very uncertain way.

"We—we came here to rag that chap!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Oh, my hat! It—it looks to me as if we've woke up the wrong passenger."

"He's a blessed prizefighter in disguise!" groaned Cook. "Oh, my napper!"

"Thank goodness he's going on Classical side!" mumbled Doyle. "So they're welcome to him!"

"Oh, my chin!"

"Wow, my napper!"

"Oh, dear!"

The three Tommies picked themselves up, and limped out of the station. They had come there to rag the new Classical. But they kindly decided to let him get to Rookwood unragged. They really did not feel equal to any more ragging that afternoon.

CHAPTER 3.

Looking for Trouble.

"HERE they are!"

The Fistical Four had arrived.

They met the three Tommies at the latter came out of the station. And they lined up in the path of the Moderns with warlike looks.

Tommy Dodd gave them a feeble grin.

"Pax!" he exclaimed.

"Pax, ye spalpeens!" mumbled Doyle.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Pax, be blowed! We're on the war-

path! What have you done with the new kid? We've come to look after him!"

"You needn't have troubled!" growled Tommy Cook. "He doesn't want looking after. He can look after himself."

"What has he done with us, you mean?" groaned Doyle. "Sure, I'm bumps and lumps from me head to me feet!"

"Look at my chin!" mumbled Tommy Dodd.

The Fistical Four looked astonished.

"He's handled you?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Ye-e-s!"

"And you let him?" howled Raby.

"We—we couldn't help it!"

"But—but the three of you!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "What the merry thunder is the new merchant like, then?"

"He's loike a blessed prizefighter, bedad! I'll lick him to-morrow," said Doyle. "But 'nuff's as good as a feast for one afternoon!"

"Well, my hat!"

The three Tommies went on their weary way, the Classics gazing after them in amazement.

"Well, this beats the band!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The new kid must be rather a prize-packet. Doesn't seem to need much looking after. I suppose that's the merchant!"

Higgs had come out of the station, after giving directions about his box. He had his bag in his hand, and was looking round him. The Rookwood fellows looked at him with interest. The fellow who had handled the three Tommies singlehanded was an object of great interest to them.

"Looks like a blessed mixture of bull and bulldog," commented Newcome. "He wouldn't handle us quite so easily, though."

"No jolly fear!"

"Well, we'd better speak to him," said Jimmy. "I can't say I like his looks very much, but we came here to be civil. After all, it's one up for our side, a Classical handling the Modern bounders like that."

The Fistical Four approached the new junior, who stared at them. Jimmy Silver & Co. raised their straw hats very politely.

"New chap for Rookwood?" asked Jimmy Silver.

Higgs nodded.

"You're Higgs?"

"Yes—Alfred Higgs."

"Glad to meet you, Alfred Higgs," said Jimmy Silver affably. "We came to see

that those Modern bounders didn't bother you. We're Classics."

Higgs grinned.

"Thanks; but I can look after myself. They won't handle me again in a hurry, I expect. I dare say I could lick any fellow at Rookwood!"

"Oh, could you!" said Lovell, nettled.

Higgs stared at him.

"Yes. F'rinstance, I could lick you!"

"Why, you cheeky worm——" began Lovell hotly.

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "We didn't come here to rag. Higgs, my pippin, you've got a good deal to learn, I think. I suppose you haven't come to Rookwood to start rowing with everybody you meet?"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Higgs. "If I don't get on with a chap I give him my left!"

"Your—your what?"

"My left," said Higgs—"like that!"

His left shot out suddenly, crashed on Jimmy Silver's chest, and sent him spinning along the pavement. The captain of the Fourth sat down violently. Higgs burst into a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver was up in a twinkling.

"You silly ass!" he shouted. "What do you mean by bowling me over like that? I've a jolly good mind to mop up the ground with you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Higgs. "You couldn't mop up one side of me!"

"Give him a hiding, Jimmy!" said Lovell—"or I'll do it for you, if you like. The cad wants teaching manners!"

All the benevolent intentions of the Fistical Four had vanished now.

They had come there prepared to be friendly and obliging in a way. But the discovery that the new fellow was pugnacious, overbearing, bullying, and quarrelsome, changed all that at once.

Jimmy Silver compressed his lips. He was very angry.

"It looks to me as if you're a rotten, howling cad!" he said. "I won't thump you on your first day at Rookwood. But you'd better be a bit more careful!"

"You won't thump me at all!" said Higgs. "I'd knock you across the street as soon as look at you!"

"Then you can jolly well try it!" exclaimed Jimmy, blazing out. "Come along to a bit quieter place, and I'll give you a chance!"

"I'm your man!"

Jimmy Silver led the way. As a matter of fact, even the redoubtable Jimmy had his doubts about being able to lick the new junior. But the chief of the Fistical Four, the champion fighting-man of the Lower School at Rookwood, was bound to think of his prestige. He was going to lick this bullying "bounder," or else be licked by him.

They passed out of the old High Street of Coombe, and stopped in the lane that led to Rookwood.

"This will do!" said Jimmy, stopping on a grassy patch by the wayside under the trees.

Higgs threw down his bag.

"Go ahead!" he said carelessly.

"I'll tell you what I think of you first!" said Jimmy. "You're a rotten, snarling, quarrelsome cad and bounder! Now, come on!"

Jimmy threw his hat and jacket on the ground, and stood up to his enemy. Higgs was half a head taller, much broader and longer in the reach, and it could be seen that he was a mass of muscle. If he knew anything about boxing, it looked as if Jimmy had little chance.

But Jimmy was hard as nails, and in perfect condition, and he was a boxer of renown in the Fourth Form at Rookwood. And his pluck was unlimited.

"Fair play, you know!" said Higgs, looking round.

"Do you think we won't give you fair play, you rotter?" snorted Lovell.

"I'll lick you all, one after another, if you like," said Higgs. "For the matter of that, I'll take you two together, if you like!"

"Oh, shut up, you swanking cad!" growled Raby.

"Ready!" said Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Oh, come on!"

Jimmy Silver came on, and the next moment they were fighting hammer-and-tongs.

CHAPTER 4.

A Fight to a Finish.

LOVELL and Raby and Newcome looked on anxiously.

They would each have given a term's pocket-money to see Jimmy Silver knock out this bullying, swanking new-comer.

But, great as was their faith in their redoubtable leader, they could not help having their doubts. They could not help acknowledging that even Jimmy Silver looked as if he had met his match at last.

And their doubts were soon justified.

If Higgs had had only his strength and weight to depend upon, the captain of the Fourth could have beaten him by science. But Alfred Higgs quickly showed that he knew something of boxing as well.

Jimmy's attack was hard and fast, and his blows came home on Higgs' rugged face with effect; but the new junior did not seem to mind his punishment. He drove home heavy blows in return, and he had a way of using his left that was a new thing in Jimmy Silver's experience, varied as that was.

That heavy left came on Jimmy Silver's chin before the contest had lasted two minutes, and the captain of the Fourth went to grass.

Higgs grinned down at him.

"Had enough?" he chuckled.

Jimmy Silver panted. Every tooth in his head seemed to have been jarred by that terrific drive.

"I'll show you whether I've had enough!" he gasped.

Lovell ran to help him up, but Jimmy did not need assistance. He bounded to his feet, and rushed on again.

He was very careful of Higgs' left after that.

His teeth were set, and his eyes were gleaming. Jimmy put into that fight all the strength and skill he was possessed of.

And the Co. gave a chirrup of joy and satisfaction as a drive fairly between the eyes sent Higgs spinning into the road.

The burly junior crashed down, fairly rolling in the dust, and gasping.

"Hurray!"

"Man down!" chuckled Lovell. "Good old Jimmy! You'll lick him!"

Higgs staggered to his feet. Burly and powerful as he was, that blow told on him. He blinked rather uncertainly at Jimmy for a moment or two. Then he came on like a bull.

His rugged face was crimson now with anger and exertion, and he put all his "beef" into it.

Jimmy Silver fought hard, but he was driven back by a rain of blows. His guard seemed helpless against the force of the

driving, and blow after blow came home on his face and chest.

Down went Jimmy again with a bump. This time he was not in such a hurry to rise.

He lay gasping, almost exhausted by his efforts and the hammering he had received.

Higgs glared down at him. He was not grinning now. Jimmy Silver, though apparently not a match for his burly antagonist, was a hard nut to crack, and Higgs had paid dearly for his success so far.

"Well, have you had enough?" growled Higgs.

Jimmy panted for breath.

"Wait a tick, and I'll come on!" he said. "The next time I tackle you, we'll have rounds."

"There won't be any next time!" said Higgs. "I'm going to make you sick of it this time! Get up, or I'll stir you with my boot!"

Lovell & Co. made a movement forward, their faces grim and savage. But Jimmy Silver scrambled up, and waved them back.

"I'm ready!" he said, between his teeth. And they closed again, hammer-and-tongs. Lovell and Raby and Newcome looked on with bitter feelings. The new fellow, bully as he was, was entitled to fair play, and they could not interfere.

But it was bitter to them to see their leader being knocked out before their eyes by a brutal and ungenerous opponent.

Jimmy Silver stood up gamely to his enemy, giving as well as receiving punishment. But it was only too clear now that he was outclassed.

Again he went down under Higgs' terrific left, and this time he struggled in vain to get on his feet.

"I fancy that's the finish!" grinned Higgs.

Jimmy made another effort to rise, but he rolled on his side. Both his eyes were closed, his nose was streaming red, and his face was cut and bruised. He was aching in every limb, and his strength was gone.

"I'm done!" he gasped. "I give you best!"

"I thought you would," said Higgs grimly. "Any of you fellows want a turn?"

He glared at the Co.

"No," said Lovell quietly. "You've licked Jimmy, and that means that you

could lick any chap in the Fourth or the Shell. Now you can clear off!"

"One of you pick up that bag!"

"What!"

"And carry it to Rookwood for me," said Higgs.

"My hat!" said Raby.

"Are you off your rocker?" said Lovell, his voice trembling with rage. "Do you think you can fag us?"

"You're going to carry my bag," said Higgs, in a bullying tone; "and sharp's the word!"

Jimmy Silver strove to rise again, but he seemed glued to the ground. It was as much as he could do to suppress a groan. Lovell & Co. exchanged glances. Lovell pointed up the road to the school.

"You've been given best, Higgs," he said, very quietly. "That's enough. Now, the best thing you can do is to clear off!"

"Take up that bag!"

"I give you one minute to clear off, bag and all," said Lovell. "If you're not gone then, we'll rag you till you can't crawl, and be glad of the chance!"

"I give you one minute to take up that bag," said Higgs; "and if you've not started by then, I'll mop up the road with the lot of you!"

"Then here goes!"

The three rushed at the new junior, and collared him.

Higgs hit out furiously, and Raby dropped in the grass as if he had been shot.

But Lovell and Newcome swept the new junior off his feet, and he came down on the ground with a crash.

Raby was up in a second, his grasp on the new boy.

"Bump him!" shouted Lovell.

Bump—bump—bump!

Higgs roared as he came into violent contact with the hard road.

He struggled furiously; but, powerful as he was, he could not quite deal with the three, though he gave them a tussle.

Bump—bump—bump!

"Now will you get off quietly?" asked Lovell, panting.

"I'll smash you!"

Bump—bump—bump—bump!

"Yow-ow!" roared Higgs. "Leave off! I'll go!"

The trio released him, leaving him sprawling in the dusty road. Higgs' face

was crimson with rage as he struggled up.

"I'll lick you all for that!" he gasped.

"Do you want some more?" asked Lovell. "If you're not gone before I count three, we'll shove you in the ditch!"

"Shove him in, anyway!" said Newcome.

Higgs picked up the bag, and started for Rookwood. He paused only a moment to shake a big fist at the chums of the Fourth, and tramped away.

Lovell drew a deep breath.

"Of all the unspeakable rotters!" he muttered. "The frabjous beast thinks he can bully us—us!"

"Lend me a hand," mumbled Jimmy Silver.

"Poor old Jimmy!"

The three raised him up. Jimmy leaned heavily on Lovell's shoulder. He was utterly spent.

"You put up a jolly good fight, Jimmy," said Raby comfortingly.

Jimmy Silver grinned a twisted grin.

"I did my best," he said. "I'll go into training, and tackle him again as soon as I can. The thing can't stop here. We shall have a merry time in the Fourth until somebody has licked that beast!"

"I—I say, you do look a picture!" said Lovell, in dismay. "There'll be a row about this, Jimmy. Bootles will spot your chivvy at once!"

"Can't be helped."

"Come and bathe it in the pond."

For the next quarter of an hour Jimmy and his chums were busy removing the marks of the combat, as far as they could. But they had little success.

Both Jimmy's eyes were darkening rapidly, and his nose was swollen and crimson, and there were half a dozen blue bruises on his face.

"The chap's a giddy prizefighter," said Newcome. "It was jolly plucky to stand up to him, Jimmy; but—"

"I'm not sorry I did it. Better luck next time," said Jimmy, with determined cheerfulness.

The Fistical Four took their way slowly to Rookwood in a grim humour. The defeat was bitter enough. And they had the future to think of.

The Fistical Four had been cock of the walk in the Classical Fourth, though they had never dreamed of using their fistical prowess for swanking or bullying. They had fallen from their high estate now.

Bitterest of all was the knowledge that they had not been beaten by a fellow like themselves, who knew how to play the game.

Higgs was evidently determined to use his personal prowess in a way the Classical chums would never have dreamed of—for bullying, overbearing, and hectoring—and they did not quite see how he was to be stopped.

CHAPTER 5.

Higgs of the Fourth.

"GREAT Scott!"

"What's the matter, Jimmy?"

"Had an accident?"

The Classical juniors stared at Jimmy as he came in. Jimmy's face burned under his bruises. He never thought of trying to conceal his defeat, if it had been possible; but this was not pleasant.

"What on earth's happened, old chap?" asked Dick Oswald, with real concern.

"Been scrapping with a bargee?"

"Or wrestlin' with a motor-car?" grinned Townsend, the dandy of the Fourth.

"By gad, that face is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever!" simpered Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

"I've been in a fight, and I've been licked!" growled Jimmy. "That's all!"

"We could guess that!" chuckled Top-ham. "By gad! The great and one-and-only has been licked at last!"

"Shut up, you cad!" growled Lovell.

"Licked!" exclaimed Oswald. "But—but who did it, Jimmy? Not one of the Bag-shot chaps, surely?"

"No; a new fellow here."

"Oh, my hat! That chap in Bootles' study?" exclaimed Rawson.

"Chap named Higgs."

"You must have been off yer form intirely," said Flynn. "But phwat did ye quarrel wid a new kid for, Jimmy?"

"Twasn't polite, me boy!"

"I didn't quarrel with him—he quarrelled with me," said Jimmy.

"The baste! I'll look for him and give him a tanning when Bootles is done with him!"

"Better not," said Jimmy, with a faint grin.

"Look out, here's Bootles!"

Mr. Bootles' study-door opened and

Higgs came out. The Fourth Form-master glanced out into the passage.

Jimmy was hurrying for the stairs, anxious to get his face out of sight; but Mr. Bootles saw it.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Jimmy.

"Come here!"

Jimmy Silver reluctantly came up. Mr. Bootles scanned his face with horror and indignation. Higgs looked on with a grin. Higgs' face showed signs of combat, but not nearly so noticeably as Jimmy's.

"You have been fighting, Silver?" said Mr. Bootles sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"Without gloves, I presume, to judge by the state of your face?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You have done wrong, Silver, and you are well aware of it!" said Mr. Bootles severely. "You are in a disgraceful state! Bless my soul, your eyes are quite black! Is that a proper state for a boy belonging to a respectable school, Silver?"

"Nunno, sir."

"You will be a disgraceful sight for a week or more. I am inexpressibly shocked, Silver!"

"I—I'm sorry, sir."

"As you apparently spend your half-holiday in disgracing your school, Silver, you will be detained for the next two half-holidays!" said Mr. Bootles angrily. "I am ashamed of you! You may go!"

"Yes, sir," groaned Jimmy.

His chums glared at Higgs. Higgs had been the aggressor, and if he had owned up to it, Mr. Bootles would have taken a more lenient view of the case; but Higgs did not speak.

Mr. Bootles went back to his study, and the Fistical Four went upstairs. Jimmy Silver threw himself into the armchair in the end study.

"Gated for two half-holidays, because of that cad!" snorted Lovell.

"Can't be helped! Keep smiling!"

"The rotter ought to have spoken up!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders.

"He's a rotter all through," he said. "Never mind! Gating doesn't matter much. I don't feel inclined to take two black eyes for a walk."

"Well, that's so," agreed Lovell.

"You'll have to lie low for a bit. You do look a picture, and no mistake!"

"Coming down to the cricket, Jimmy?" asked Jones minor, putting his head in at the door. Then he jumped. "Great Kit-chener! What's wrong with your face?"

"Oh, clear off, and don't worry!"

But Jimmy Silver was not to be left in peace.

He had to pay the penalty of being a prominent personage in the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

The news spread like wildfire that Jimmy Silver had been licked, and fellows came from far and near to look at him, and pass remarks.

His friends were quite concerned; but there were a good many fellows who were distinctly pleased.

Smythe & Co., the nuts of Rookwood, rejoiced.

Their old enemy was down at last, and that was a cause of great rejoicing among the nuts. Townsend and Topham and Peele came in to sympathise sarcastically, till Lovell caught up a cricket-stump and drove them out.

Towny and his friends dodged the stump, and went chuckling down the passage.

"This is a giddy stroke of luck—what?" chortled Towny. "Jimmy Silver's down off his perch at last. He won't be quite so ready to chip in and worry a chap now when he's havin' a smoke or a game of banker. But, I say, that new chap must be a holy terror, if he can handle Jimmy Silver like that!"

"Better pal with him!" said Topham sagely. "I don't want a face like Jimmy Silver's."

"Must be a regular prizefighter," said Peele. "Let's ask him to tea in the study, and butter him up a bit."

"Good! May be able to set him right against the end study, and keep those cheeky rotters in their place for good!" chuckled Towny.

And the cheery nuts looked for Higgs.

They soon found him.

Higgs had come up to the Fourth-Form passage, the recipient of a good many curious glances. Flynn had looked at him, and decided not to give him the tanning he had mentioned. Higgs swaggered along the passage, quite conscious of the sensation he had made. There was none of the sheepishness of a new boy about Master Higgs.

"Hallo!" said Townsend, with great affability. "I've been lookin' for a chance to speak to you, Higgs. Glad to see you here!"

"Jolly glad!" chimed in Topham. "How do you do, dear boy?"

"Got your study yet?" asked Peele.

Higgs shook his head.

"No; I'm looking for one. Which is the best study in the Fourth?"

"Oh, the end study!" said Peele.

"Then that's going to be mine!"

"Oh!"

The nuts were a little taken aback. They wanted to get on the best of terms with the terrible new junior; but his insolence had the effect of putting their backs up, in spite of themselves. But they had no intention of quarrelling with him, if he put their backs up to any extent.

"Been to school before?" asked Peele.

"Of course I have! I was at St. Wode's before I came here."

"Oh, you know all the ropes, then?"

"Of course I do! You won't find any green in my eye!" said Higgs. "I did what I liked in the Fourth at St. Wode's. I'm going to do the same here!"

"Oh!"

"Got anything to say against it?" asked Higgs truculently.

"Nunno!"

Peele changed his mind on the spot about asking the new junior to share his study. Higgs was not likely to be a pleasant study-mate.

"Where's that study you were speaking of?" asked Higgs. "The Form-master told me he would find me a study, but he said I could go into any of them if the fellows there asked me to—I asked him that, you see. The chaps in the best study are going to ask me—see?"

And Higgs grinned at his own astuteness.

"The chaps in the end study won't," said Townsend.

"Won't they? We'll see about that! Who are they?"

"The chap you licked, and his pals."

Higgs chuckled.

"I don't suppose that chap wants any more," he remarked. "I'll look at the study, and decide whether I want it. That'll settle the point."

"Well, there it is," said Townsend.

Higgs strode along the passage to the end study. Townsend & Co. grinned at one

another, and followed him. There was more trouble for Jimmy Silver, and that was a prospect at which the nuts of Rookwood rejoiced.

CHAPTER 6.

A Warm Reception.

CRASH!

The door of the end study flew open, propelled by Alfred Higgs' heavy boot.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sitting down to tea. Jimmy did not feel equal to any cricket after his terrific combat with the new junior.

The Fistical Four started up as the door flew violently open. Higgs of the Fourth strode in.

Outside, Townsend & Co. watched, grinning, and a good many more fellows gathered to watch. There was much curiosity in the Fourth as to how the captain of the Form would deal with the truculent intruder.

The Fistical Four fixed their eyes upon Higgs with a deadly glare.

"Is that how you usually come into a study, you pig?" asked Lovell, in a sulphurous tone.

Higgs did not reply. He looked round the study, scanning it, and evidently calculating upon the advantages it offered.

The end study was certainly the best room in the passage. It was larger than the others, and had two windows, one of which commanded a view of the playing-fields.

Higgs nodded with satisfaction.

"This will suit me," he said.

"Do you mean to say that Bootles has sent you here?" exclaimed Raby. "Why, he can't! We're four, and there's never more than four to a study!"

"There's only two in Peele's study," said Newcome. "You'd better go along and dig with Peele, Higgs!"

"Bootles hasn't sent me here," said Higgs coolly. "I've come on my own. I can go into any study where the fellows ask for me to come!"

"Well, we're jolly well not likely to ask you!" growled Lovell.

"No jolly fear!"

"Clear out!"

"I take it for granted that you ask me!" said Higgs. "That's near enough for

bootles! But we can't have five in a study; there's no room!"

"Exactly! So you can clear out!"

"Three in a study is quite enough," said Higgs. "Two of you fellows will have to clear out!"

"What!"

"My hat!"

"You can't suit yourselves about the two, but two will have to go! I can't be crowded out by a gang of you!"

"Look here!" bawled Lovell. "Do you think you're coming into this study when we don't want you?"

"I know I am!"

"You can't do it, Higgs!" said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I recommend you to go along the passage and look for other quarters!"

"I'm staying here! I'll have tea with you as it's ready! You can all stay till after tea!" said Higgs magnanimously. "After tea two of you will have to go, and you can take your traps with you!"

The Fistical Four could scarcely believe their eyes. The egregious Higgs evidently regarded himself as monarch of all he surveyed by right of the strong hand. But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not exactly the kind of fellows to be bullied out of their study.

"You won't have tea with us!" said Jimmy calmly. "And you won't stay here! Clear off, and close the door after you, please!"

"Do you want another licking?"

"It isn't a question of that. I'm going to tackle you again when I feel fit. At present I don't feel fit."

"Then you'd better dry up!" said Higgs.

"Fit or not, you'll get another hiding if I have any of your cheek!"

"Are you going out of this study?" asked Jimmy.

"No fear!"

"Then pile in, you fellows!"

The Fistical Four piled in.

"Here, one at a time!" roared Higgs.

"Two at a time, if you like!"

The chums of the Fourth did not heed.

They grasped Higgs on all sides, and, struggling desperately and hitting out, he was borne to the floor.

Lovell held him with an arm round his neck, and Raby grasped his wrists and imprisoned them, and Newcome stood on his legs.

Higgs struggled in vain

Jimmy Silver picked up the bowl of treacle that adorned the table.

"Are you going out quietly?" he asked.

"I'll smash you!" roared Higgs, struggling furiously.

Jimmy up-ended the bowl over his face. The treacle came swamping down in a sticky stream.

"Oh, my hat! Oh, crumbs! Grooooooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came in a roar from the passage.

Higgs' rugged, furious face disappeared under a flood of treacle. Jimmy Silver calmly rubbed it into his hair and neck.

Higgs gasped and stuttered and spluttered.

"Yurrgh! Gurgggh! Yow-ow-oooog!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Faith, give the spalpeen beans!"

"Rub it in!"

"Are you going now?" asked Jimmy Silver, with cheery calmness.

"Groogh! Gerrogh! Yah! I'll smash you!"

"Keep him there," said Jimmy.

"What-ho!" chuckled the Co.

Higgs made terrific efforts to rise. Lovell cheerfully banged his head on the floor till the bully of the Fourth roared with anguish. When one of his legs got loose, Newcome stamped on it again and captured it. The unfortunate Higgs was considerably hurt in the process, but he was reduced to reason. He ceased to resist at last.

Jimmy Silver scraped a shovelful of soot from the chimney. Higgs eyed him with apprehension as he brought it along.

"If you put that on me!" he hooted

"If— Yooooo—yooop—groooooh!"

The soot joined the treacle.

Wild and weird sounds came from Higgs as Jimmy Silver kneaded up the soot and the treacle into his face and neck and ears and hair. The juniors in the passage were shrieking. Bullying did not seem to prosper in the end study.

"Is that enough, Higgs?" asked Jimmy.

"Gerroooooh!"

"Are you going quietly?"

"Groogh! I'll smash you! Yooooogh!"

"Obstinate beast!" said Lovell. "That would have satisfied anybody else. The hog don't know when he's had enough!"

"Roll him over," said Jimmy.

Higgs, struggling frantically, was rolled over, his nose grinding into the study

carpet. Lovell sat on the back of his head, to an accompaniment of horrid gurgles from Higgs.

Jimmy Silver wielded the shovel.

The flat part of the weapon of punishment descended upon Higgs, who was beautifully placed to receive it.

Whack, whack, whack!

Gurgle, gurgle!

Whack, whack, whack, whack!

Jimmy Silver was putting his beef into it

"Have you had enough now, Higgs?" he asked, when his arm was tired.

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"He can't speak while I'm sitting on his head," said Lovell. "Give him some more, anyway."

"No, let him speak. I'm tired."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell removed himself from Higgs' head, grasping his ears. He turned Higgs' crimson and dusty face up into view.

"Are you going quietly now, Higgs, or do you want some more?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Wow, wow, wow! I'll go!" stuttered Higgs.

"Good! Kick him out!" said Jimmy.

Higgs was dragged to his feet and whirled to the door. Four boots were planted behind him at the same moment, and he fairly flew into the passage. The juniors crowded back to give him room to fall, and he went to the floor with a crash.

"You can come back when you want some more," said Jimmy Silver, as he closed the door of the study.

Alfred Higgs did not come back. Truculent as he was, he had had enough, and he did not come back for more.

CHAPTER 7.

Drastic Measures.

JIMMY SILVER was feeling decidedly "groggy" when he came into the Fourth-Form dormitory that night.

His head was aching, and he had half a dozen aches all over him. His eyes were a beautiful black by this time, and his nose looked twice its natural size. The Fourth-Formers could not help grinning when they looked at him. Even his own chums smiled. Jimmy did not feel like smiling himself.

Higgs of the Fourth came into the dormitory with a swagger. Apparently he had quite recovered from his rough handling in the end study.

The other fellows had not tackled Higgs in the manner of the Fistical Four. Higgs had decided on Peele's study, after all, and Peele and Gower, to whom it belonged, had not ventured to say him nay; Peele & Co. had been willing, in fact, to "pal" with the newcomer, and to rejoice in his success if he downed Jimmy Silver & Co. But Higgs was not an agreeable fellow to pal with. He was ready to receive the friendly advances of the nuts, and tolerate them, but nothing could prevent him from bullying and overbearing.

Gower brought a thick ear into the dormitory, the result of a slight argument in the study. Peele was looking savage. He had objected to making toast for Higgs, and his nose had been rubbed in the fender. Then he had made the toast. Evidently Higgs was a difficult fellow to pal with.

Flynn was looking the worse for wear, too. The Irish junior had fallen foul of Higgs, and had stood up to him pluckily in the Common-room. But Patrick O'Donovan Flynn had been knocked out in a couple of rounds, and he was feeling very sore. Tubby Muffin had been cuffed, and Dickinson minor had been kicked. His hard usage in the end study only seemed to make the truculent Higgs more determined to show the rest of the Form that he was monarch of all he surveyed.

He burst into a laugh as he looked at Jimmy Silver's disfigured face. Jimmy's ears burned, but he took no notice. Jimmy could have taken a licking as cheerily as he would have given one—from a decent fellow. But to be crowed over was not pleasant, and to be bullied was not to be thought of.

"Well, you'll be a beauty for a week or two, you cheeky cad!" remarked Higgs.

"You'll know better next time—what?"

"Next time I'll try to lick you," said Jimmy.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, shut up, you swanking rotter!" growled Rawson. "Yaroo!"

A back-hander from Higgs sent Rawson spinning. He rolled over a bed with a roar.

"Got any more to say?" asked Higgs, grinning at him.

Rawson was up in a flash, and rushing at him.

He knew that he had no chance, but that made no difference. He attacked hotly, and Higgs received a blow fairly on the nose; but poor Rawson went to the floor the next moment. He lay quite dazed.

"Up you get!" grinned Higgs. "You haven't had enough yet!"

"Let him alone!" said Jimmy Silver, as the bully stirred Rawson with his boot—not gently.

Higgs glared round.

"Do you want some more?" he demanded.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came into the dormitory to see lights out. Rawson was staggering up.

The captain of Rookwood frowned.

"Hallo, fighting in the dormitory!" he exclaimed. "A hundred lines each! Now get into bed."

Rawson went to bed without a word. Higgs gave the Rookwood captain a rather truculent look.

"Do you hear me?" said Bulkeley quietly.

"All right," said Higgs.

And he turned in.

Lights were put out, and the captain of Rookwood left the dormitory. His footsteps had scarcely died away when Higgs was out of bed again.

"Up with you, Rawson, if that's your name!" he called out.

Rawson did not reply.

"Do you hear me?"

"I'm not getting up," said Rawson quietly.

"You jolly well are!" said Higgs, with a chuckle. "I haven't half licked you yet. You called me a rotter!"

"You are a rotter!" said Rawson.

There was a bump on the floor. Rawson, bedclothes and all, landed out of bed, in Higgs' powerful grasp.

A match glimmered out.

"Anybody got a candle?" asked Higgs, as Rawson struggled in his tangled bedclothes. "Now, then, buck up, some of you!"

Tubby Muffin squirmed out of bed as Higgs' eye rested on him, and brought a candle-end. Higgs lighted it, and stuck it on a washstand. Rawson was on his feet now, his eyes gleaming.

"You can all sit up and watch," said

Higgs. "Now, my pippin, you're going through it!"

Jimmy Silver sat up in bed.

"Go back to bed, Rawson," he said very quietly. "You can't stand up to that fellow. Higgs, if you touch Rawson, you're booked for trouble."

Higgs chuckled.

"I'll show you how I used to run things in the Fourth at St. Wode's!" he said. "I used to make 'em toe the line, you can bet your hat! This chap has called me a rotter. I'm going to lay into him with a slipper. Get across that bed, Rawson!"

Higgs picked up a slipper.

Rawson's reply was a rush at him. They closed, and Rawson went across the bed with a crash, and then the slipper rose and fell.

Jimmy Silver was out of bed with a bound.

"Back up, Fourth!" he shouted.

The juniors hardly needed the bidding.

Whatever Higgs had done in the Fourth Form at St. Wode's, he was not likely to "run things" quite as he wished in the Fourth Form at Rookwood, so long as Jimmy Silver & Co. were members of that Form.

Jimmy was upon him with a spring.

The bully of the Fourth turned and grappled with him. Lovell and Raby and Newcome collared him at the same moment. Flynn and Oswald and Gower fastened on him, and he went down with a crash, with the juniors sprawling over him.

"Pin him!" gasped Jimmy.

Higgs struggled furiously.

"Leggo!" he gasped. "I'll lick any chap here—any two of you—three if you like!"

"This isn't a fight—this is a ragging," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "Lay him face down on the bed."

Higgs crashed on the bed.

"Give me that slipper, Jones."

Jones minor grinned and handed over the slipper.

Then Jimmy repeated the performance of the fire-shovel in the end study, but considerably harder; and as Higgs was protected only by his pyjamas, his sufferings were considerably greater.

With half a dozen angry fellows pinning him down on the bed, he struggled and wriggled in vain, while the slipper rose and fell.

For a few minutes he bore it with gritted teeth, and then his yells rang out.

"You'll have the prefects here," said Townsend.

"Shove his jaws into a pillow."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Muffled yells came from the pillow that was jammed over Higgs' extensive mouth. Jimmy Silver lashed with the slipper till his arm ached.

Then he tossed it aside.

"Let him get up!"

Higgs squirmed off the bed, breathless with pain and fury. He choked, unable to find his voice for the moment.

"That's a beginning," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "You're a rotten bully, Higgs. You can lick any chap in the Fourth, and that's admitted. But you won't be allowed to bully any chap in the Fourth—that's a dead cert. Bullying isn't allowed in the Fourth Form at Rookwood."

"I'll—I'll——"

"Are you going to bed quietly?"

"I'm going to smash you!" roared Higgs, and he made a furious rush at Jimmy Silver.

"Collar him!"

"Down him!"

And the Fourth-Formers closed on Higgs again. He was hitting out savagely, and two or three juniors rolled on the floor. But he went down.

"Put him on the bed, spread-eagled, and hold him there, face up this time," said Jimmy Silver. "Whacking's no good for the brute. He's going to stay quietly in bed."

"I won't!" roared Higgs.

"We shall see!"

A dozen pairs of hands jammed Higgs on his back on the bed. Jimmy Silver went to his box and took out a coil of cord. He cut off four lengths with his penknife, the other fellows watching him curiously.

With cheerful coolness, Jimmy Silver knotted a cord round Higgs' ankles and wrists, and tied them to the bedposts.

Then he was released. He wriggled convulsively in his bonds. But Jimmy had done his work well, and he had no chance of getting loose.

"Bed!" said Jimmy.

"You're going to leave him like that?" chortled Lovell.

"Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors turned in, and Jimmy Silver blew out the candle, and followed their example. Higgs wriggled and gasped on his bed. Jimmy had thrown the bedclothes over him. But he was far from comfortable.

"Come and let me loose," hissed Higgs sulphurously.

"You're staying like that till morning," said Jimmy calmly. "That's the only way to keep you quiet."

"Till morning!" yelled Higgs. "Do you think I can sleep like this, you idiot?"

"I don't care twopence whether you can sleep or not."

"I'll yell and wake the house!" spluttered Higgs.

Jimmy yawned.

"You can suit yourself about that. If you bring a master here, he will want to know why you're tied up. It will mean a licking for you from Bootles; and another licking from us after Bootles is gone—and another tying up with a gag in your mouth. I mean business. You can yell if you like."

Higgs did not yell.

He had already learned that Jimmy Silver was a fellow of his word.

"Look here, I—I'm not going to stay like this!" he growled.

"Good-night!"

"Come and let me loose, and—and I'll go to sleep quietly," mumbled the bully of the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver did not answer. He settled down to sleep.

"Will you let me loose!" hissed Higgs.

"No!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver——"

No reply.

"Peele, come and let me loose, or I'll lick you to-morrow."

Silence!

"Muffin—Muffin, you fat beast, come here!"

Snore!

The bully of the Fourth had to make the best of it. The Classical Fourth, chuckling, settled themselves to sleep. But it was a long time before Higgs could sleep.

Jimmy Silver turned out of bed as the rising-bell clanged out over Rookwood in the summer morning. An imploring look was cast at him from Alfred Higgs' bed.

"Come and loosen me!" Higgs' voice

was pleading. "I'm stiff—I'm cramped—I've hardly slept a wink. Let a chap loose!"

Jimmy Silver cheerfully cut the cords. Higgs rolled off the bed, stiffly and painfully. He was quite subdued. He did not speak a word till he left the dormitory, followed by the chuckles of the Fourth-Formers. For the present, at least, there was an end to the truculence of Alfred Higgs!

CHAPTER 8. In Training.

BIFF! Bash! Bump!
Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, was busy when Lovell and Raby and Newcome came into the study.

The punching-ball was suspended midway between ceiling and floor, and Jimmy Silver, in his shirt-sleeves, with the gloves on, was pounding at it with terrific energy.

Jimmy was in great form.

At every "biff" it looked as if the punch-ball would be torn away from the hook either in the floor or the ceiling. He did not pause as his chums looked in at the open doorway.

"I say, Jimmy——" began Lovell.

Biff!

"There's news," said Raby.

Bash!

"Mornington's coming back," said Newcome.

Crash!

"Do you hear, fathead?" demanded Lovell. "That cad Mornington's coming back. I've just heard it from Topham. He's coming this afternoon, too."

Biff!

"What do you think of this one with the left?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, blow!"

"Suppose that punch-ball were Bully Higgs!" said Jimmy. "And suppose I got in the left like this——"

Crash!

Jimmy Silver got in the blow with terrific vim, and with the effect of tearing the punch-ball away from its fastenings.

There was a roar from Lovell & Co. as the detached ball smashed upon them. Lovell caught it with his nose, and staggered back, throwing out his hands wildly, and his elbow caught Raby under the chin,

and the back of his hand on the other side smote Newcome fairly in the eye.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Jarooop!"

"Oh, you ass! My nose——"

"My eye! Yoooooh!"

"Ha, ha! You shouldn't stand in the way, you duffers! You never know when a punch-ball's going," said Jimmy Silver chidingly. "What do you chaps think of that one with the left? Suppose Higgs got it fairly on the chivvy——"

The Co. did not tell Jimmy Silver what they thought of his straight left. They rushed into the study, and hurled themselves upon him.

"Here, I say, hold on! Leggo! Wharrer you at? Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy Silver descended on the study carpet with a concussion that caused the dust to rise.

The yell that rose from Jimmy Silver could have been heard at the end of the passage.

"Yah! You silly asses! What the thunder——"

"Look at my nose!" roared Lovell. "Give him another."

"Look at my eye!" shrieked Newcome. Bump! Bump!

Jimmy Silver struggled desperately in the grasp of his incensed chums. Accidents would happen, and could not be helped; and that accident had appeared quite comical to Jimmy Silver, until the wrathful Co. collared him.

"Leggo! I'll give you my left that I'm keeping for Higgs!" he yelled.

"Give him another!"

Jimmy Silver hit out. Lovell caught the left with his chest, and sat down. Then Raby caught the right, and sat down, too. Newcome was pitched over them, and Jimmy Silver made a jump for the grate, and collared the poker. Three wrathful juniors jumped up, and rushed at him, and jumped back again just in time from the brandished poker.

"Keep off, you asses!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What are you going for an old pal for, you chumps?"

"Look at my nose——"

"Well, it is a picture," agreed Jimmy Silver. "I dare say Higgs' nose will be like that when I've done with him. You ought to be glad."

"Glad!" hooted Lovell. "Put that poker down!"

"Not till you make it pax," grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Look at my eye——"

"Oh, don't be an ass, Newcome! Higgs' eye is going to be worse than that."

"You—you fathead!"

"Blessed if it's worth a chap's while to stand up for his study," said Jimmy Silver indignantly. "Here am I training like a Trojan, to get into form and lick Higgs, and that's the way you back me up!"

"You dangerous ass——"

"Here's a new fellow come to Rookwood, too big for any chap in the Fourth to tackle, and starting as a bully and an all-round beast," pursued Jimmy Silver. "I'm cultivating a straight left for his special benefit. You ought to back me up like pals. Blow your silly nose!"

"Groogh! You lunatic——"

Lovell dabbed his nose. It was very red. For the moment he was quite incapable of appreciating the beauties of the Jimmy Silver left, even if that left was destined to knock out the bully of the Fourth.

"Now help me fix up that punch-ball again," said Jimmy Silver.

"You fix it up again, and we'll brain you!" said Raby, in concentrated tones.

"You can play the giddy ox in the gym."

Jimmy Silver snorted.

"Look here, do you want me to lick Higgs, or don't you?"

"I'd rather he licked you at the present moment, you chump!" growled Newcome.

"I'd give a bob to lick you, you ass!"

"Keep smiling," said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Think of the state I shall be in after I've licked Higgs."

The argument was not without its effect upon the Co. If Jimmy Silver did succeed in licking the redoubtable Higgs, there was no doubt that he would be in a very parlous condition when he had finished.

"Do you think you can do it?" said Lovell.

"I'm going to try. Somebody's got to put the beast in his place, and the fellows all say it's up to me, as captain of the Fourth."

"Well, so it is."

"Quite right."

"Well, then, back a fellow up, instead of grousing because you happen to get a

thick nose," said Jimmy Silver warmly. "I mayn't have any nose left at all when I'm through with Higgs."

"Very likely!" grinned Raby.

"If you chaps were really keen about it, you'd back me up no end. Suppose you stand up to my left, Raby, and see how it goes——"

"Yes—I don't think!" said Raby.

"Lemme try it on you, Lovell."

"I'll try the tongs on you, if you do!"

"And that's what you call backing a fellow up!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "I've been cultivating that left for a week, and I've got to try it on somebody. I don't want to tackle Higgs and get licked again. Whom shall I try it on—that's the question?"

"Mornington's coming back this afternoon," said Lovell. "We came here to tell you. I thought the cad had left Rookwood for good. Try it on him when he comes. It will do him good."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

Valentine Mornington was an overbearing and purse-proud junior who, from the moment that he came into the Fourth Form had made a "dead set" at Jimmy Silver. For, as Form captain Jimmy inevitably had not a few enemies, mostly among the slackers and "nuts" like Peele and Gower and Townsend and Topham.

Valentine Mornington had attempted to ride roughshod over everyone in a most lordly way, but the Fourth Form led by Jimmy Silver made it clear that they were not having any! As a result, Mornington became so unpopular that his guardian thought it best to take him away from Rookwood for a time. Jimmy Silver was not particularly pleased to hear that Mornington was now coming back. But he was prepared to let bygones be bygones, and to give the overbearing fellow another chance; so he shook his head at Lovell's valuable suggestion.

"Mornington couldn't stand up to me for two seconds. And I can lick any chap in the Fourth excepting Higgs."

"Try Smythe of the Shell."

"Pooh! It would nearly kill him!" sniffed Jimmy Silver. "Look here, I've got to put it to the test before I tackle Higgs. What about having a row with a senior?"

"Eh?"

"Not the Sixth, of course; I couldn't whop a Sixth-Former——"

"But a chap in the Fifth," said Jimmy

Silver seriously. "If I could lick a Fifth-Form chap, I can take it that I'm able to lick Higgs."

"Why, you ass—" exclaimed Lovell.

"I've got to put it to the test, somehow."

"A Fifth-Form chap wouldn't fight a kid in the Fourth. More likely to lay into you with a cricket-stump if you cheeked him."

"Well, suppose I pulled his nose in the quad—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"There's a good many chaps in the Fifth who try to fag the Fourth," said Jimmy.

"Of course, I wouldn't quarrel with a chap about nothing. You know I'm peaceable. It's for the sake of peace that I'm going to lick Higgs. I'm really a pacifist. Now, which of the Fifth has been making himself most obnoxious?"

"Look here, Jimmy—"

"There's Jobson," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "But he's rather an ass. There's Bailey—he's a bit too tough, perhaps. What about Bingham?"

"Bingham could eat you, you ass!"

"I don't know. Bingham walloped young Muffin with a cricket-stump yesterday, because he burnt his toast. He fags the kids who'll let him. It ought to be stopped, oughtn't it? Well, I'm going to stop it, and practice my left on Bingham!"

"You silly ass!" roared Lovell. "I tell you—"

Jimmy Silver slipped on his jacket.

"Come on!" he said briskly.

"Where?"

"To look for Bingham."

"You thumping ass—"

"Bow-wow!"

Jimmy Silver left the study, and headed for the Fifth-Form passage; and his chums, in dismay, followed him.

Jimmy Silver was evidently in deadly earnest, and the Co. were prepared to back him up—to the extent of carrying him away from Bingham of the Fifth had done with him.

CHAPTER 9.

Put to the Test!

HIGGS of the Fourth was in the passage, and he scowled at the Fistical Four as they passed.

"I hear your going into training?" Higgs remarked, with a sneer, as the Fistical Four came along.

Jimmy nodded cheerily.

"Yes, that's so."

"Thinking of tackling me—what?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I'm ready to lick you any time you like," said Higgs, "and I may as well begin now. Put 'em up!"

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Not quite ready yet," he said calmly. "I'll let you know the date of your licking. You're not in a hurry, I suppose?"

"I'm jolly well going to knock some of the cheek out of you!" said Higgs, in his most bullying tone.

Jimmy backed away a pace.

"I'll give you the date, if you like," he said amicably. "Next Wednesday, if that will suit you."

"Next Wednesday, or any time you like!" jeered Higgs. "But I'll give you a thick ear now to go on with!"

"Hands off, you silly ass!" growled Lovell.

Higgs was advancing with his big fists up. But the Fistical Four did not stand on ceremony with Higgs. They collared him together, and bumped him on the floor.

They went on their way, leaving the bully of the Fourth sprawling.

Jimmy Silver led the way cheerily to the Fifth-Form passage.

Outside Bingham's study door he paused, and his chums attempted to reason with him once more; but they reasoned in vain.

Jimmy had thought the matter out.

Bingham was a senior of the Fifth, and a powerful fellow. By the kind of stand he could make against Bingham, Jimmy expected to judge his own form in the coming encounter with Higgs. Even the burly Higgs was no match for the Fifth-Former.

Jimmy was in the pink of condition, and extremely pleased with his left. He hoped to give a good account of himself with Bingham; and once his mind was made up, wild horses could not have stopped him.

He thumped at the door, and threw it open.

Bingham of the Fifth was in his study, and Muffin of the Fourth was also there.

Muffin was on his knees, making toast at the fire. The Fistical Four frowned at the sight. For the Fifth to fag the Fourth was an unparalleled "cheek," and only timid fellows like Muffin would have endured it for a moment.

There was a smell of burning in the study, and Bingham was assisting Muffin in the art of making toast with the business end of a cricket-stump.

"You clumsy, silly young ass!" Bingham was remarking, as the door opened. "Don't you know how to make toast?"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What are you making that row for, you fat beast?"

"Yow! That stump hurts! Yow!"

"Well, I mean it to hurt!" grinned Bingham. "I ain't poking you for fun! I'll puncture your fat carcass if you burn the toast again!"

"Yow-wow!"

"Stop that!" said Jimmy Silver authoritatively.

The Fifth-Former swung round.

"What do you fags want here?" he snapped. "Get out of my study!"

The Fistical Four came right in. Lovell, at a sign from Jimmy Silver, closed the door. Bingham stared at them.

"What's the little game?" he demanded.

"You're the little game," said Jimmy Silver calmly. "You've been fagging the Fourth, Bingham!"

"You cheeky young ass——"

"It's got to stop!"

"Got to?"

"Yes."

"And who's going to stop it?" grinned the Fifth-Former.

"I am."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bingham. "And how are you going to stop it, you cheeky, scrubby, inky little beast?"

"I'm going to lick you!" said Jimmy cheerily.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Put that toast in the fire, Muffin!" said the captain of the Fourth.

Muffin blinked at him.

"Oh, I say, Jimmy Silver——"

"I'll skin you if you do!" roared Bingham.

"No; on second thoughts, don't," said Jimmy. "Mustn't waste bread. Take it away for your own tea, Muffin. And get out of the study!"

"Oh, dear! I—I say——"

"Put him outside, Lovell!"

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell. "Come on, Muffin!"

"Bingham——" stammered Tubby Muffin.

"Never mind, Bingham," said Jimmy.

"I'm looking after Bingham. Get out, and take that toast with you!"

Lovell took Tubby Muffin by the ear, and led him to the door. Muffin had no choice about going.

Bingham jumped forward. Jimmy Silver jumped in his way.

"Take the toast, Muffin!"

Lovell shoved the toast into Muffin's grubby hands, and pushed him out of the study, slamming the door after him.

Bingham had no chance to interfere. He was already struggling with Jimmy Silver.

The Fifth-Former was a head taller than Jimmy, and in a struggle even the hardy and athletic captain of the Fourth did not have much chance; but his chums promptly piled in, and dragged Bingham off.

"That isn't the game," said Jimmy, a little breathlessly. "If you're looking for a fight, I'm your man. No bear-hugs, please!"

"Why, I—I—I'll smash you!" spluttered the Fifth-Former, crimson with rage. "I'll smash you into smithereens!"

"Go ahead!"

The enraged senior went ahead at once. He rushed on Jimmy Silver, hitting out with both fists.

Jimmy had to give ground before the heavy rush; but his hands were up, and he guarded well.

The Fifth-Former drove him right round the study table, without, however, getting a single blow home upon his face.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome stood with their backs to the door, looking on with breathless interest.

Pluck and science were holding their own against brute strength, and the chums of the Fourth watched the combat eagerly, wondering whether Jimmy had, after all, a ghost of a chance of licking the Fifth-Former. If that amazing thing came to pass, it would be a cause of endless rejoicing and triumph in the Fourth.

"You little beast!" gasped Bingham, pausing from sheer want of breath.

"Go it, Jimmy!" sang out the Co. "He's got bellows to mend."

Jimmy "went it."

He made a sudden onslaught as the senior paused breathlessly, and Bingham, much to his astonishment, found himself driven back.

Jimmy's right caught him under the chin, and he staggered. He hurled himself forward furiously, and then the famous "left"

came into play. It seemed to Bingham of the Fifth that a mule's hind leg had struck him. With a terrific crash, the Fifth-Former went down on his back.

"Bravo!" roared Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Jimmy!"

Jimmy Silver stood panting a little, waiting for his formidable adversary to rise. Bingham was not in a hurry to rise. He lay on the carpet, gasping and blinking dazedly at Jimmy Silver. His chin felt as if it were no longer there. He seemed unable to realise at first that he had been knocked down by a Fourth-Former.

"Googh!" he gasped, at last. "Ow, ow! Why, you cheeky little beast——"

"Get up and have some more," chortled Raby. "This is what comes of fagging the Fourth."

Bingham sat up dazedly.

"You little rotter, I don't fight with kids in the Fourth!" he spluttered. "I'll jolly well lick you with a cricket-stump for your confounded cheek!"

He scrambled up at last, and plunged at the cricket-stump. Jimmy backed to the door.

"If you've had enough, I'll go," he said. "Mind, no more fagging the Fourth after this. The end study doesn't allow it."

"Get out!" roared Bingham.

He flourished the stump, and the Fistical Four got out. They did not want to argue with the stump at close quarters. But they went in a gleeful mood, and Lovell slammed the door with terrific force, to show the whole of the Fifth Form at Rookwood how much the end study cared for them generally.

The Co. thumped Jimmy Silver delightedly on the back as they returned to their own quarters. They found half the Classical Fourth waiting for them; Tubby Muffin had spread the news.

"Here he comes!" exclaimed Oswald. "My hat! He can still walk!"

"Didn't Bingham smash ye intirely?" demanded Flynn.

"Do I look-like it?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Faith, and ye don't! Tare an' 'ounds, ye don't mean to say that ye've licked Bingham of the Fifth!" roared Flynn.

"Not exactly licked," said Jimmy modestly. "But he had enough."

"Quite enough," chuckled Raby. "Good

old Jimmy! It will be Higgs' turn next Wednesday. Hurrah!"

And, in gleeful mood, the Fistical Four went in to tea in the end study. Matters were looking up for that famous study.

CHAPTER 10.

The Return of Mornington.

MORNINGTON stepped from a big motor-car at the gates of Rookwood. And there was a rush of Townsend, Topham, Peele, and Gower to meet him. The nuts of Rookwood had not forgotten Mornington, and they were glad to welcome him back to the school.

Mornington shook hands with them.

"Jolly glad you're back!" said Townsend.

"Rippin' to see you again!" said Peele. "Come in, old scout! We've got rather a good spread in the study."

"We thought you were gone for good," remarked Gower.

"I've had a holiday," said Mornington, as he sauntered across the quadrangle with his dear pals. "But I decided to come back to Rookwood. My guardian wanted me to, and he's not a bad sort. I decided to come."

"Hear, hear!" grinned Topham.

"I've got to report to Bootles," said Mornington. "I'll join you in the study when I've finished with him."

"Right you are! We'll have tea ready."

Mornington tapped at the door of Mr. Bootles' study, the master of the Fourth, and entered.

Mr. Bootles laid down his book.

"Ah! You have returned, Mornington," he said.

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Bootles shook hands with the junior. "I hope, Mornington, that you have come back to Rookwood with good resolutions," he said.

Mornington's lips curled a little.

"I hope so, sir," he said.

"During your stay here you gave general dissatisfaction. The Head had occasion to administer severe punishment more than once. You made yourself very unpopular in your Form by what is, I believe, called 'swank' by the juniors," said Mr. Bootles. "I trust you have learned the lesson, Mornington, that a boy should value himself for his own qualities, and

not for such an accidental gift of fortune as a large wealth."

"I shall be more careful than I was, sir."

"I am glad to hear you say so. Let me see. You will share Peele's study. I believe Peele is a friend of yours."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. You may go. I trust there will be no more of the unpleasantness that marked your career here on a previous occasion. You have my best wishes, Mornington."

"Thank you, sir!"

Mornington left the study. His manner to Mr. Bootles had been very respectful, and the Form-master felt relieved. Mornington seemed to have changed considerably, and for the better, and Mr. Bootles was very glad to see it. Mornington had given him trouble enough.

Outside, in the passage, a bitter sneer crossed Mornington's lips as he walked away.

He had certainly changed. He had learned that he could not have matters all his own way at Rookwood. That there were fellows there who did not care twopence for his wealth, and that so far as the masters were concerned he was simply a junior schoolboy who was expected to toe the line with the rest. Mornington was no fool, and he had learned his lesson. But the change was only outward; at heart he was still the insolent and overbearing, purse-proud "bouncer" who had put up the backs of the Rookwood Fourth.

There was a chorus of welcome as he entered Peele's study. The nuts of the Fourth had found in Mornington a natural leader. He was wealthier than any of them, a bigger blackguard than any of them, and had more courage and determination than all of them put together. If anybody could enable them to "keep their end up" against Jimmy Silver & Co., Mornington was the man.

There was a handsome spread on the table, and Townsend and Topham were in the study with Peele and Gower. Higgs, who also shared the study, was not present, and the nuts were glad of it. They did not pull well with the truculent Higgs.

"Welcome home, dear boy!" said Townsend. "How did you get on with Bootles?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I've had a lecture," he said.

"You didn't cheek him?" asked Topham.

"No fear. I've learned some things," said Mornington coolly. "I know now what I can do, and what I can't do. I'm goin' to have exactly the same kind of time as I did before, but I'm goin' to be more careful about it. What's the good of cheekin' a Form-master and gettin' licked?"

"No good at all," said Peele. "But you didn't seem quite to see it before."

"I can see it now. Is Jimmy Silver still cock of the walk in the Fourth?"

"No jolly fear," said Townsend. "There's a new chap here—chap named Higgs—a regular prize-fightin' beast! He's licked Silver."

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

"My hat! That's good news."

"Still up against that crowd, what?" asked Peele, with a grin.

"More than ever. I'm goin' to have a try for captain of the Fourth."

"Oh, great Scott!"

"Not much in your line," said Topham.

"You'd have to grind at cricket."

"I'm goin' to grind at cricket, and beat Jimmy Silver at his own game."

"Ahem!"

"You think I can't do it?"

"Ahem!"

"Well, you'll see," said Mornington.

"I've got some surprises in store for the Fourth, I can tell you. That's one of them."

"Well, we'd all like to see Jimmy Silver downed," said Gower. "A chap can't smoke a cigarette in peace, or have a little game of banker."

"What's this fellow Higgs like?" asked Mornington, as he sat at the tea-table, assiduously looked after by the devoted nuts.

"A rotten, beastly bully!" growled Peele. "He shares this study, too! You'll have to be rather civil to him."

"If he's up against Jimmy Silver, he's on our side."

"Ye-e-s; but he's a regular beast, you know. He expects a fellow to fag for him in his own study. I shouldn't wonder if he wants to fag you."

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

The door was thrown open, and Higgs of the Fourth came in. The tea-party exchanged uneasy glances.

"Hallo! Tea ready?" said Higgs. "Well, I'm ready, too! Make room for a chap!"

Peele & Co. had hoped to be free of Higgs while the little party was on. But

they did not venture to dispute the lordly will of the Form bully.

"Haven't you got a chair for a fellow?" grunted Higgs. "Didn't expect me to tea—what? Hallo, you're Mornington, I suppose?"

"I'm Mornington."

"A big pot—what?"

"Yes."

"Well, you won't put on any airs in this study," said Higgs. "You'll make my toast at tea-time same as the others—see?"

"I shall do nothin' of the sort!"

"You won't, by gum! Give me that chair, to begin with."

"Go and eat coke!"

"You can have my chair, Higgs," said Peele.

Higgs snorted.

"I didn't ask you for your chair. I asked this cheeky young cad for his chair. Now, then, up you get, Mornington!"

Mornington did not move.

"Did you hear me?" roared Higgs.

"Yes."

"Are you getting up?"

"No."

"Then here goes!" grinned Higgs, and he grasped the back of the chair and swung it away, and Mornington went with a crash to the floor.

CHAPTER 11.

Turned Out.

THE tea-party in Peele's study were all on their feet now—with the exception of Mornington. Mornington was on his back. Higgs looked down at him with a grin. Mornington's face was thunderous as he sprawled on the study carpet.

"Up you get," continued Higgs. "No slacking in this study!"

"Look here, Higgs—" began Townsend.

The bully of the Fourth turned upon him truculently.

"Have you got anything to say?" he demanded.

"N-unno!"

"Then shut up!"

Townsend shut up. The rest of the nuts were savage and silent. Higgs was too tough for them. There was certainly enough of them to have "downed" him, but there would have been a terrific scrap first, and

the elegant slackers of Rookwood did not feel equal to it.

But Mornington was made of different stuff. Mornington picked himself up with his lips hard set, and his eyes glittering. Higgs took the chair he had vacated, and sat in it at the table.

"Now then, where's the toast?" said Higgs. "You can make me some toast, Mornington. It will teach you to know your place in this study. Now, sharp's the word!"

Mornington sprang to the fender.

Higgs, under the impression that he was in a hurry to make the toast, chuckled. But it was not toast that Mornington was thinking of.

He clutched up the tongs from the fender, and whirled round on Higgs.

"Here, look out!" yelled Peele.

Right at the bully of the Fourth the enraged Mornington rushed, with the heavy tongs brandished over his head. The nuts watched him in terror.

Higgs' chuckle died away.

"Put those tongs down!" he roared. "Oh, my hat! Jiminy!"

Higgs dodged out of the chair just in time as the tongs came down. If the blow had reached him, he would have been stunned. The tongs crashed on the chair, and split it. Higgs' face was pale as he backed away.

"You mad young idiot!" he gasped.

"Morny!" gasped Topham.

"Hold on, old chap—"

"Stop it!" yelled Higgs. For Mornington, unheeding his alarmed pals, was still making for him with the tongs. Higgs dodged round the table, and the tongs came down with a crash among the crockery.

"Put those tongs down!" shrieked Higgs. "I'll smash you!"

Crash!

The tongs swept the clock from the mantelpiece as a third blow missed.

Higgs was dodging wildly about the study now. The rage and fury in Mornington's face startled and terrified him. The nuts crowded back out of the way, still more terrified than Higgs. The heavy weapon reached Higgs at the fourth swipe, catching him across the shoulders. The burly Fourth-Former reeled to the floor, and crashed down on his hands and knees.

Mornington was upon him the next second.

He grasped Higgs by the collar with his left hand, and whirled him over, and bran-

dished the tongs over his terrified face. Higgs put his hands before his eyes involuntarily.

"Don't!" he shrieked. "Don't!"

"You hound!" said Mornington.

"Don't, you fool! Do you want to brain me?"

"I'd brain you as soon as look at you," said Mornington, between his teeth. "Lie there, you hound! I'll smash you if you move!"

Higgs did not move. He dared not.

"Morny, old man—" said Townsend feebly.

"Bring a cricket-stump here, Peele!"

"I—I say—" stammered Peele.

"Do as I tell you!"

Peele obeyed.

"Now thrash that hound till he can't yelp!" said Mornington savagely. "I'll see that he doesn't resist. If he moves a finger, his skull goes!"

"I—I say—chuck it!" stuttered Higgs. "I—I'll make it pax! I—I— Look here, you wild beast—"

"Let's make it pax, Morny!" said Peele, with very lively fears of what would result afterwards if he carried out Mornington's instructions.

Mornington paused. His fury was passing, and he was calming down. He tossed the tongs into the grate with a crash.

"Pax, then," he said. "But understand, Higgs, that if there's any more of your rot in this study, you'll get hurt!"

He sat down at the table breathing hard.

Higgs rose slowly to his feet.

He had been terrified to his very soul by Mornington's outbreak of savage temper. But his terror had passed now, and rage had taken its place. He had made it "pax," which ought to have been sacred. But Higgs was too enraged to think of that. The dangerous tongs were in the grate now, and Mornington was weaponless. Higgs advanced on him furiously.

"You blessed wild beast!" he snarled. "I'll give you something for your temper. I'll teach you!"

"You've made it pax, Higgs," said Peele.

Smack! The back of Higgs' heavy hand hurled Peele out of the way. Then he sprang upon Mornington, and grasped him. Mornington's teeth came together hard. As he was swept out of his chair, he caught the teapot from the table. The teapot crashed on Higgs' head and smashed there, and Higgs reeled back with a fearful yell.

He was not prepared for desperate measures like that.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Peele.

Higgs staggered back, his hands to his head. His head was cut, and tea drenched his hair and face. He blinked dazedly at Mornington. The latter had caught up a jug, ready to repeat the blow.

"My—my—my hat!" stuttered Higgs. "You rotten hooligan, you—you ought to be in a reformatory!"

"Do you want any more?" asked Mornington, between his teeth. "Lay your paws on me again, if you dare!"

Higgs clenched his hands hard. But it was only too evident that if he made an attack, the heavy jug would smash on his head. Higgs' head was hard, but not quite hard enough to stand that.

He dabbed his forehead with his handkerchief.

"You rotten wild beast!" he gasped.

Mornington laughed.

"I'm not quite big enough to lick you," he said, "but you'll keep your paws to yourself in this study. No bullying here! Now get out!"

"What!"

"Get out, or I'll start on you with this jug!"

"I'm going to have tea!" roared Higgs.

"You're not going to have tea here! You're going to get out of this study, if you don't want your thick skull cracked!"

Mornington advanced as he spoke, and Higgs read savage determination in his face. He backed to the door.

"Look here—" He dodged out of the study. "I say—"

The door slammed on him.

Higgs did not reopen it. He was fed up with Mornington.

Mornington returned to the tea-table. The nuts of Rookwood looked at him, half in admiration, half in disgust.

"There won't be any more fagging or bullying in this study," said Mornington. "Why didn't you fellows handle the brute like that?"

"Well, we don't want to be sent to a reformatory for cracking a fellow's skull," said Gower tartly. "You may like to chance that. I don't."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I'd rather chance that than be bullied in my own study!"

"Well, Higgs will give us a rest now," said Townsend. "Blessed if the brute

wasn't fairly cowed. But he'll have his knife into you, Mornny."

Mornington shook his head.

"That's all right! I'm going to make friends with Higgs now I've taught him a lesson," he said coolly. "I had to begin that way."

"By gad, he won't feel very friendly to you, after that lick on the head."

"Oh, he'll come round! If he can lick Jimmy Silver, he's the kind of chap I want to pal with," said Mornington. "I'm going to be captain of the Fourth before the term's out, and Higgs is going to help me."

"Hear, hear!" said Peele & Co., though they doubted it.

The tea-party finished without any interruption from Higgs. And after tea the young rascals gathered round the table to play nap and smoke cigarettes. Evidently Mornington had not changed.

CHAPTER 12.

Mornington's Little Game.

JIMMY SILVER looked rather curiously at Mornington when he encountered him in the dormitory that evening.

Mornington had been on the worst of terms with the captain of the Fourth. But Jimmy was quite prepared to let bygones be bygones. So long as Mornington behaved himself now, Jimmy did not want to rake up old troubles.

He had heard of the "row" in Mornington's study, and all the Fourth had stared at the big bump on Higgs' head. The bully of the Fourth certainly did not deserve to be gently handled, but few were found to approve of Mornington's wild beast tactics.

Whether approved or disapproved, those tactics had had their desired effect. The Fourth-Form bully let Mornington severely alone. Mornington certainly had risked expulsion from the school, and perhaps a term in a reformatory. But Higgs did not wish to risk having his skull cracked, whatever might happen to Mornington afterwards. He feared Mornington's savage temper far more than Mornington feared his big fists.

Jimmy Silver nodded pleasantly enough to Mornington in the dormitory. Mornington returned his nod.

"Here you are again!" said Jimmy cheerily. "I hope you'll like Rookwood a bit better this time, Mornington."

"Thanks!" said Mornington. "I intend to get on a bit better this time."

"I hear you're going to be captain of the Fourth this term!" grinned Lovell. The boast had already made its rounds in the Fourth.

Mornington nodded.

"Exactly!" he said.

"Well, you are a funny ass!" commented Lovell.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came in to see lights out, and his eyes fell on Alfred Higgs at once. His brows contracted.

"What's the matter with your head, Higgs?" he exclaimed. "Your forehead's cut. How did you get that bruise?"

There was a hush in the dormitory. The fact that Higgs had been bullying would not have saved Mornington from condign punishment, if the incident of the teapot broken on Higgs' head had transpired.

"I got a knock, Bulkeley," said Higgs surlily. With all his faults the bully of the Fourth was not a sneak.

"It must have been a pretty hard knock," said Bulkeley.

"Yes; but it's all right."

Bulkeley gave him a sharp look, but he said no more, and lights were put out, and the captain of Rookwood left the dormitory. The general opinion of the Fourth was that on the morrow Higgs would "smash" Mornington.

But when the Fourth turned out in the morning the bully of the Fourth took no notice of Mornington.

Still more surprising, after lessons they were seen walking together in the quadrangle.

And when tea-time came round, Higgs joined the festive board in the study in quite good humour.

Peele and Gower could not understand it. But they were glad to see their truculent study-mate in such a subdued humour.

Mornington appeared to have quite forgotten his trouble with Higgs. He was quite civil and friendly with him. But the savage temper was there, all ready to break out again if provoked, and Higgs knew it. There was no more bullying or hectoring in the study, and Peele and Gower felt the relief very keenly. But the bully of the Fourth found that friendship with Mornington was quite worth while. Higgs was not wealthy, while Mornington had much

more money than was good for him. The study was a land of plenty now that Mornington had come, and tea there was like unto the most prosperous spread of the most prosperous times in any other study. And for that combination of reasons Higgs of the Fourth found it expedient to be on pally terms with Mornington.

Mornington's announced intention ofousting Jimmy Silver from the captaincy of the Fourth excited a good deal of curiosity. Most of the fellows laughed at the idea. The only fellow who had a chance of competing with Jimmy was Tommy Dodd, of the Modern side. Mornington was one of the most unpopular fellows in the Lower School. As for Jimmy Silver, he simply shrugged his shoulders and dismissed Mornington and his boasts from his mind.

By fair play Mornington certainly never could accomplish his object; and as for foul play, though he was none too good for it, Jimmy did not see what he could do. Mornington's party in the Fourth consisted, so far, only of the "nuts" and Higgs. And a captain of the Rookwood Fourth had to be, before everything else, great at games. Mornington's cricket was a joke. But it was soon discovered that there was a change in that respect. Mornington began to be assiduous at the nets, and even in a few days he showed quality as a cricketer.

Jimmy Silver looked on the change with an approving eye. He would gladly have rendered Mornington assistance in his new ambition to become a cricketer. But Mornington's dislike was too bitter to be overcome. He had not forgotten a single one of his "rubs" with Jimmy during his former stay at Rookwood.

On Saturday afternoon he dropped into the end study when the Fistical Four were about to go down to the cricket.

"You're playing the Moderns this afternoon?" he remarked.

"That's so," assented Jimmy.

"My friend Higgs would like a place in the team."

"Your friend Higgs can go and eat coke!" said Jimmy tersely.

"You mean you won't play him?"

"Of course I won't! He's no good at cricket!"

"Quite as good as Oswald or Jones minor, I think!"

"You're welcome to think so," yawned Jimmy Silver. "But it's what I think that

matters, as I happen to be cricket captain. You're not skipper yet, you know."

"Cheeky ass!" growled Lovell.

"If you refuse to do Higgs justice I shall advise him to give you a hiding," said Mornington.

"Oh, that's the little game, is it?" said Jimmy disdainfully. "That's why you've palled with Higgs, after nearly cracking his silly skull with a teapot."

"As a matter of fact, I've a message for you from Higgs. Where will you meet him?"

"Next Wednesday, behind the barn near Coombe," said Jimmy Silver. "It's going to be a real scrap, and we can't have it in the gym—the prefects would interfere."

"You will meet him to-day."

"Buzz off!"

"I shall advise Higgs to tweak your nose in the quad, if you funk it," said Mornington.

"Like that?" asked Jimmy Silver affably, taking Mornington's somewhat prominent nose between finger and thumb.

"Groogh!"

Tweak!

"Is that how you mean?" asked Jimmy calmly, while his chums roared with laughter.

"Yoow-ow! Led go by dose!" stuttered Mornington. "Yoooww!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington dragged his nose away. It was crimson. He shook his fist savagely at Jimmy Silver, and strode out of the study, leaving the Fistical Four howling with laughter.

"Jolly lucky I'm in training for Higgs," grinned Jimmy Silver. "Now that cad's come back I shall have trouble with the beast every day. Mornington's going to use him to give this study the kybosh, if he can. Come on!"

The Fistical Four took their bats and left the study. They found Higgs of the Fourth in the passage, with Mornington & Co. Higgs barred the way.

"You're not going to play cricket just yet, Jimmy Silver!" he exclaimed.

"You're going to settle with me first!"

"Certainly!" said Jimmy. "Where will you have it?"

Without waiting for a reply, he jammed his bat against Higgs' broad chest, and the bully of the Fourth backed away with a howl.

Three more bats prodded him energetically, and Higgs fairly fled.

The Fistical Four smiled and went on their way. And the match with the Moderns was played without any interruption from Alfred Higgs.

CHAPTER 13.

The Great Fight.

WEDNESDAY was a great day in the Lower School at Rookwood.

The great fight between Jimmy Silver and Higgs of the Fourth was coming off that afternoon, and it created immense interest in the Lower Forms.

Jimmy had tackled Higgs before, and had been hopelessly outclassed. But he had been in steady training since then. He was not over-confident, but he hoped to be victorious, and he had the best wishes of most of the Fourth.

Higgs was brimming with confidence, and Mornington & Co. backed him up heartily.

Smythe of the Shell offered two to one on Higgs in quids, but he found no takers.

The burly Higgs was so much bigger and heavier than even Jimmy Silver's own chums were doubtful of the result. But Jimmy's celebrated "left" showed great promise, and the result of his encounter with Bingham of the Fifth was encouraging. He had not exactly licked Bingham; but the Fifth-Former had had enough, that was certain. And Higgs, powerful as he was, was hardly on a level with Bingham of the Fifth.

During the morning Mr. Bootles could not help observing a certain restiveness in the Fourth Form.

The thoughts of the juniors were turned more upon the coming battle behind the barn than upon those ancient encounters in Gaul which ought to have wholly occupied their minds just then.

There was a liberal distribution of lines for whispering in class. But morning lessons were over at last, and the Fourth Form were free for the day.

After dinner the Fistical Four strolled out of the School House in a careless sort of way. It was important to keep the matter from the knowledge of the powers.

Most of the fistical encounters of the Rookwooders were fought out in the gym with the gloves on. But this special fight was to be a record in the way of fights. It was understood that it was to be a fight to

a finish, and interruptions from prefects or masters were not desired.

Outside the gates of Rookwood Jimmy Silver & Co. were joined by a crowd of friends and sympathisers. Tommy Dodd & Co. of the Modern side were conspicuous among them. Tommy Dodd's sympathies were all with Jimmy Silver on this occasion. Moderns as well as Classics yearned to see the bully of the Form taken down a peg, and put in his proper place. Tommy Dodd had tried it valiantly himself, but he had tried in vain. And Tommy was almost prepared to admit that the Classics were "top side" of Rookwood, if Jimmy Silver succeeded in licking the bully of the Fourth.

Oswald and Jones minor, Flynn and Rawson and Dickinson minor, and a crowd of other Classics joined the crowd. It was easy to see how feeling ran in the Fourth.

When Higgs left Rookwood he was accompanied by Mornington, Peele, and the rest of the nuts, and Smythe & Co. of the Shell—all the old enemies of the Fistical Four. But they were not a dozen all told. There were thirty or forty fellows with Jimmy Silver when he arrived at the rendezvous.

The old barn near Coombe lay well back from the road, and there was a stretch of level ground behind it. Several large trees shut it off from view. It was quite an ideal spot for the peculiar purpose of the Rookwooders.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were first on the ground. Lovell opened his bag, and produced the gloves, a sponge, and a basin. The basin was filled at the pond, and all was ready for the fray.

"Here they come!" said Oswald, as the burly form of Higgs was seen crossing the field, accompanied by Mornington & Co.

Jimmy sedately peeled off his jacket, and rolled back his shirt-sleeves. Higgs grinned at him as he came up. Not the slightest doubt did Higgs entertain of the result.

"Ready to be smashed?" he asked politely.

"Quite ready, thanks!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Two to one on Higgs, in quids!" sang out Adolphus Smythe. "Now, then, you sportin' fags, play up!"

"I'll give you two to one on the boko, if you don't shut up!" growled Lovell. "None of your rotten blackguardism here!"

"I'll take you, Smythey!" said Leggett of the Fourth.

"Money down!" said Adolphus, with a supercilious look at Leggett.

The Modern junior produced a currency note, and Mornington held the stakes. Jimmy Silver observed the proceedings with a frown, but he did not interfere. As a matter of fact, Leggett's proceeding was encouraging. Leggett of the Fourth was an extremely keen and acute youth, and his backing Jimmy Silver was a good omen, though Jimmy was greatly inclined to kick him for doing so.

Lovell was Jimmy's second, and Mornington acted for the bully of the Fourth. There was a grim smile on Mornington's face. It was evident that he fully believed that the captain of the Fourth would be hopelessly knocked out. It was the first step in his campaign for "downing" Jimmy Silver.

"I'll keep time," remarked Peele, taking out his gold watch.

"No, you won't!" said Lovell promptly. "We'll have a neutral to keep time."

"Look here, Lovell——"

"Bow-wow! Tommy Dodd will do it."

"I'm your man!" said Tommy Dodd at once, and Jimmy Silver nodded assent.

Tommy Dodd could be relied on for the fairest of fair play.

"You agree to Duddy, Higgs?"

"I don't care twopence!" said Higgs.

"Right, then!"

Tommy Dodd took out his watch.

"Seconds out of the ring!" he said impressively. "Now, shake hands, you two. Time!"

Higgs grinned as he shook hands with Jimmy Silver. Then the mill started.

Round the field of combat the Rookwood juniors formed a ring that was growing thicker every minute as more fellows arrived from the school. And there was a buzz of encouraging shouts to the captain of the Fourth.

"Go it, Jimmy!"

Higgs began with a bull-like rush, which he fully expected to sweep Jimmy Silver away like chaff before the wind. Jimmy was not heavy enough to stop the weight, and he gave ground, backing nimbly, followed up by Higgs with lunging fists. They went right round the ring, amid loud laughter from Higgs' party. But Jimmy did not turn a hair. He was guarding like clockwork, and not a single of Higgs' heavy drives reached him.

Higgs paused at last, almost out of breath. Then Jimmy came on, and the

breathless Alfred was being hammered prettily when Tommy Dodd called "Time!"

Jimmy joined Lovell in his corner.

"He's got bellows to mend!" said Lovell jubilantly. "The thundering asses were keeping it up in the study last night—smoking like furnaces, you know! Higgs' wind is no good to-day."

Jimmy nodded.

"If he doesn't knock me out in the first two or three rounds, I think I've got him," he remarked.

"Stall him off, you know."

"You bet!"

"Time!"

Jimmy entered the ring again, and Higgs recommenced his bull-like tactics. This time Jimmy Silver did not give ground. He side-stepped quickly as the rush came, and before Higgs knew what was happening Jimmy's right came crashing on the side of his head. Higgs spun sideways, and crashed to the ground.

There was a roar:

"Well hit!"

Tommy Dodd grinned and counted.

"One, two, three, four——"

Higgs was up again, looking dazed and furious. He came for Jimmy Silver again, but he was not rushing. The rush had been taken out of him.

Hammer-and-tongs they went now, and Jimmy began to receive some hard punishment. But he kept his bulky adversary well at arm's-length, and gave as good as he received.

"Time!"

Lovell sponged Jimmy Silver's heated face as Jimmy rested on Raby's knee. The captain of the Fourth was breathing hard; but he was as sound as a bell. On the other side of the ring Higgs was breathing in gulps.

"Get closer to him, and pound him!" was Mornington's advice to his principal. "If you let him stall you off, he'll tire you out and win!"

Higgs glared at his second.

"Do you think you know more about it than I do?" he snorted. "He won't stand up for another round; I can tell you that!"

"Time!"

Higgs toed the line angrily and savagely. He was hurt, and he was angry, and his second's remarks had irritated him. He resolved to finish Jimmy Silver in that round with a whirlwind attack.

The whirlwind attack came, but it did not finish Jimmy Silver.

With all the skill at his command Jimmy kept his burly enemy off, giving ground where necessary, and side-stepping briskly to escape being cornered. Higgs followed him up fast, breathing jerkily, till he had fairly pumped himself to a stop. Then came a lightning attack from the captain of the Fourth, and Higgs reeled and staggered blindly under a shower of blows.

The call of "Time!" came very fortunately for Higgs. He was reeling as he sank on his second's knee in the corner.

"You haven't given him the left, Jimmy," murmured Lovell, as he fanned his principal.

Jimmy smiled.

"I'm keeping that in reserve."

"How do you feel, old man?"

"As if I'd been under a lawn-mower!" grinned Jimmy. "But I'm good for a dozen rounds yet!"

The fourth round commenced, and was fought through, then the fifth, with much less energy on Higgs' part. The burly Fourth-Former had bellows to mend now with a vengeance, and he no longer rushed.

Both the combatants were showing signs of wear and tear, in spite of the gloves. Jimmy Silver's nose had a very bulbous look, and his left eye persisted in winking. Higgs had one eye closed.

"Time!"

The crowd was in a buzz when the fifth round closed. Jimmy had stood up to his burly enemy for five rounds, and certainly had had no more punishment than Higgs.

With delighted anticipation, the juniors realised that Jimmy had a chance, after all, and a good chance.

"Time!"

There were eager eyes watching the combatants as they closed in the sixth round.

Higgs made a hot attack, and "petered out," as before; but when Jimmy closed in on him, he met with a surprise. Higgs' heavy right came crashing on his jaw, followed by his left, which caught Jimmy under the chin.

Higgs was winded, but not so winded as he had made out, and Jimmy had been taken in. The captain of the Fourth went to the ground with a heavy bump.

"Bravo!" yelled Mornington, in great delight.

Jimmy Silver lay gasping, and Tommy Dodd counted steadily.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight—"

Jimmy was up at "eight." Higgs rushed

down on him; but Jimmy, with herculean efforts, stalled him off till "Time!" was called. His head was reeling, his eyes swimming, and he took blow after blow, hardly able to guard; but somehow he lived through the round by sheer pluck and determination. But he was at his last gasp when Tommy Dodd called "Time!" and he sank on Lovell's knee.

Lovell sponged his face, his own face showing only too plainly his anxiety. Jimmy gave him a feeble grin.

"Bad business!" he gasped.

"You'll lick him yet," said Lovell hopefully.

But his look was not so hopeful as his words. But a minute's rest had a wonderful effect on Jimmy Silver. At the call of "Time!" he stepped up again quite steadily, if not briskly. Higgs lounged forward, grinning. He had had a momentary doubt; but it was gone now. He was quite convinced that Jimmy Silver would not survive the seventh round.

But he did. He devoted himself to defence, and, by sheer skill and determination, he held his own, while his strength came back. He was feeling better at the end of the round than at the beginning.

"Eighth round, bedad!" said Flynn. "Sure, Jimmy's stickin' to him, and he's a broth av a boy! Go it, Jimmy!"

Hammer-and-tongs again! Rookwood junior "scraps" seldom lasted into eight rounds. It was a historic fight. Higgs was attacking again, but in that round came Jimmy's famous left, which he had practised on the punch-ball and Bingham of the Fifth.

It came on the point of Higgs' jaw with a terrific force, and Higgs' feet seemed torn from the ground as he received it.

"Hooray!" yelled Lovell.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—"

Higgs staggered up. According to the rules of the ring, Jimmy would have been justified in knocking him out; but he did not. Higgs could not have stood up against a fag of the Second Form at that moment. Jimmy let him alone till the call of "Time!"

"Ass!" said Lovell, at the end of the round.

Jimmy grinned.

"Time!"

Higgs came up to the scratch, but he was evidently "done." He was staggering as he faced Jimmy Silver. The fighting was

all on one side now. The Rookwood crowd buzzed with excitement.

Higgs of the Fourth—the bully of the Lower School—was on his last legs! Jimmy Silver was winning—winning hands down!

Ninth round, and last. It was pretty plain that Higgs would not last into a tenth. Only dogged determination kept him on his feet now. Jimmy Silver was very nearly spent, but he was fit for another two rounds at least.

The gloves came home again and again upon Alfred Higgs as he fought savagely and wildly, and at last he went down—under the Silver “left,” which he could not stop. He lay groaning on the grass.

“One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—out!” said Tommy Dodd; and he closed his watch with a snap.

Higgs sat up dazedly. Mornington gave him a scowl, and turned his back and strode savagely away. His champion had been licked; it was a triumph, instead of a downfall for Jimmy Silver.

“Lend me a hand, somebody!” gasped Higgs. “I—I—oh!”

It was Raby who lent him a hand; his own second was gone. Leggett grinned, and hurried after Mornington to claim his stakes. The rest of the fellows were cheering loudly. Higgs blinked at Jimmy Silver. He had put up a dogged fight, and he could not stand without assistance.

“You’ve licked me—me!” he stuttered. Jimmy grinned cheerily.

“You licked me once,” he said. “Give us your fist on it!”

He held out his hand.

Higgs hesitated for a moment; then, with a feeble grin, he shook hands with the captain of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 14.

At the Nets.

“WELL bowled, Mornington!”

Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, shouted with great heartiness.

A crowd of juniors joined in the shout.

There was practice on Big Side.

As a rule, practice on Big Side did not draw much attention from the juniors, excepting the fellows who were called upon to fag at bowling for the seniors.

But there was quite a crowd looking on now.

Mornington of the Fourth was bowling. He had offered his services as a fag at the nets, and Bulkeley of the Sixth had accepted them. And, to the astonishment of all observers—and of Bulkeley himself—the junior had taken the captain of Rookwood’s wicket.

Bulkeley stared at the wicket.

It was down; there was no doubt about that. Even Jimmy Silver had never taken Bulkeley’s wicket when bowling to the captain at Rookwood.

And Mornington, who was a slacker and a dandy, and supposed to be no cricketer—Mornington had taken it!

“Well, my hat!” said Bulkeley.

There was quite a roar from the juniors. For old Bulkeley’s wicket to be taken by a fellow in the Fourth was amazing. Mornington was not popular in his Form, but he was cheered loudly just then.

Jimmy Silver shouted as loudly as any, quite forgetful of the fact that he was on the worst of terms personally with Mornington.

“Must have been a fluke,” said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

“No; it was jolly good bowling!” he said. “I’m a bowler, and I know. Wonders will never cease! That slacking ass has picked up wonderfully since he took to cricket!”

“Best bowler in the Fourth, by gad!” said Townsend. “Rather puts your nose out of joint, Silver—what!”

Jimmy took no notice of that remark.

Flynn fielded the ball, and tossed it back to Mornington. The junior caught it smartly.

“Well bowled, young ‘un!” Bulkeley called along the pitch. “Let’s see if you can do that again!”

“Certainly,” said Mornington.

The juniors watched him eagerly. For the slacker of the Fourth, the smoker and “Giddy Goat,” to be showing form at cricket like this was astonishing. Nobody had ever expected it of Mornington.

Mornington was the cynosure of all eyes as he bowled again. Bulkeley was watching for that ball. He liked a keen bowler for batting practice, but it was not wholly gratifying to have his wicket taken by a fag.

The ball came down like a bullet, and Raby murmured:

“Wide!”

Bulkeley had the same impression, till the ball broke in at an unexpected angle.

and knocked his leg stump out of the ground.

Then there was a roar.

"Bravo! Good man!"

Knowles of the Sixth, who was looking on from the pavilion, burst into an unpleasant chuckle.

"You're doing the Sixth credit, Bulkeley!" he called out.

"That kid's hot stuff!" said the captain of Rookwood. "You can try him yourself if you like, Knowles!"

Knowles shrugged his shoulders.

"He wouldn't take my wicket!" he said.

"Take the bat, then."

"Oh, I don't mind!"

Knowles came to the wicket as the ball was tossed back to the junior bowler.

In spite of his careless tone, Knowles was very much on his guard, and he looked out carefully for that ball which looked like a wide, and wasn't. But it was quite a different ball that came down this time, and before the Modern prefect knew what was happening, his middle stump lay on its back, and there was a chirrup round the field.

"How's that?"

Knowles scowled. He did not take a defeat so good-humouredly as Bulkeley.

"Like another?" said Mornington coolly.

The dandy of the Fourth was evidently enjoying his triumph over the seniors.

"You can try again!" growled Knowles.

This time the wicket did not fall; but after three more balls the stumps were over again. Knowles walked off the pitch, and Bulkeley grinned as he took back the bat.

"Hot stuff—what!" he said.

"Cheeky little beast!" growled Knowles.

"He'll be swanking all over the school about that!"

Bulkeley laughed.

"Well, it isn't every kid who can take your wicket, or mine," he remarked. "He will come in jolly useful for the practice!"

Knowles growled.

Bulkeley went back to the wicket, and Mornington resumed bowling. The Rookwood captain's wicket did not fall again, but the bowling continued very good, and Bulkeley had all his work cut out to stop it.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on with undiminished interest.

Since Mornington had come back to Rookwood he had surprised Jimmy by taking up cricket with the greatest keenness.

He had shown that he had the makings of a good player in him, though otherwise he was not much given to "playing the game." But Jimmy was astonished by the progress he had made.

"He would make a jolly good recruit for the junior eleven!" Jimmy remarked.

"Only—only——"

He paused.

"Only he's a swanking cad, and a decent fellow can't get on with him!" growled Lovell.

"Yes, exactly."

"No room for that rotter in the junior eleven!" said Newcome decidedly. "Besides, he would want to run the whole show! You know his way!"

Jimmy nodded.

"It's a pity, though," he remarked. "We want bowlers. He would be a rod in pickle for the Moderns to-morrow, if we could play him. But I suppose it wouldn't be any use!"

"No fear!"

The practice ended, and Mornington came away. Townsend and Topham and

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Peele, the nuts of the Fourth, gathered round to congratulate him.

Mornington was the only member of that select circle who was worth his salt on the playing-fields, and it was quite a new departure for him.

Jimmy Silver gave him a cordial slap on the shoulder.

"Jolly good, Mornington!" he said. "Blessed if I ever expected you to turn out a cricketer like that!"

Mornington gave him a supercilious smile.

"There may be some more surprises in store for you," he remarked.

"I hope so—may see you batting like Hobbs next," said Jimmy Silver good-naturedly. "Your bowling's first-rate, anyway!"

"I didn't expect you to admit it."

"Why not?" demanded Jimmy warmly.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Morny's toppin'—simply toppin'!" said Townsend. "He will go into the eleven now, of course!"

"Oh, of course!" said Peele.

Mornington looked at the captain of the Fourth with a mocking smile.

"Well, what do you say to that?" he asked.

Jimmy hesitated.

"I'd like to play you," he said; "but I don't think it would do. We don't pull together, you know!"

"You mean that you're goin' to leave me out of the team because we don't agree personally?"

"No, I don't!" growled Jimmy, turning red. "Nothing of the kind! I mean, if you want it in plain English, that you're a smoky, gambling, blackguardly rotter, and that isn't the kind of fellow for Rookwood juniors!"

And Jimmy Silver walked away, frowning.

"Nice manners!" smiled Townsend.

"I'm goin' into the team, all the same," said Mornington coolly. "I'm goin' to appeal to the committee!"

"Good egg!" said Townsend heartily. "Dashed if I thought you cared so much for cricket, Morny!"

"I don't care twopence for it!"

"By gad! You've been faggin' at it ever since you came back to Rookwood," said Townsend in astonishment.

"I'm goin' to be a cricketer, because I'm

goin' to be captain of the Fourth, and knock Jimmy Silver right out!" said Mornington. "Gettin' into the eleven is the first step. By the end of the term I shall be captain of the Fourth, and that gang will be nowhere!"

"Blessed if I don't half think you'll do it, too," said Peele admiringly. "Anyway, Silver can't leave you out of the team, after the way you've shown up to-day."

"I'll see that he doesn't," said Mornington.

And the nuts of Rookwood went in to tea in great spirits. It really looked as if at last the "Giddy Goats" had a chance of keeping their end up against Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 15.

Jimmy Silver Gives In.

JIMMY SILVER wore a thoughtful look that evening.

He was feeling a little worried.

Mornington's new devotion to cricket, and the form he had shown, had come as a surprise to most of the Classical Fourth, and to Jimmy most of all. If Mornington had chosen to make the best of himself he would have become a man of mark in the Lower School. But, good cricketer as he had become, he was still the same insolent, supercilious "bounder"—still the same young blackguard who smoked cigarettes in his study, and laid bets on "geegees" with Joey Hook of Coombe. He was not the kind of fellow Jimmy Silver could have pulled with, even if Mornington had wanted to pull with Jimmy, which he evidently did not.

But personal likes and dislikes could not count in such a matter as selecting members of the junior eleven.

Mornington was fully entitled to go into the team on his form; in fact, now he had turned out so good a bowler, he was wanted there. Lovell and Raby, Rawson and Oswald and Flynn, were all good bats; but Jimmy was the only first-class bowler the Classical junior eleven possessed. Newcome was a good change bowler, and Raby could bowl; but in that department there was no doubt that the eleven was weak. Mornington, if he chose to toe the line and do his best, would be a tower of strength to the side.

And Jimmy was considering whether he couldn't play him, after all.

Mornington's unpleasant manner could be put up with to some extent. True, Mornington would regard his inclusion in the team as a triumph over Jimmy Silver—which would not be a gratifying reward for putting him in. But that need not worry Jimmy, he considered—the ass could swank as much as he liked, so long as he played a good game on the cricket-field.

The question was: Would Mornington keep his insolence within bounds, to the extent of playing a good game and taking orders from his captain, or would his ugly temper break out at an unpropitious moment?

Jimmy Silver, after careful thought, felt that it would not do. There would be friction at once, and friction in the team was fatal to good play. And Mornington would be quite capable of deliberately playing a "rotten" game if he were not allowed to have everything his own way and to act as cock of the walk.

So, after very careful consideration, the captain of the Fourth decided that it would not do, and he dismissed the matter from his mind.

It was brought back to his mind, however, before long.

Oswald and Flynn, who were on the cricket committee, looked into the end study during the evening when the Fistical Four were doing their prep.

Jimmy Silver paused in his work to give them a friendly nod.

"Busy?" asked Oswald.

"Yes; but I'll take a rest. What is it?"

"About the cricket."

"You're in the team to-morrow. I've put the list up downstairs," said Jimmy.

Oswald nodded.

"What about Mornington?" he asked.

"Can't be did!"

"Sure, he's a good bowler, and we want bowlers," said Flynn. "I've licked him several toimes for bein' a cheeky spalpeen. But he can bowl, intoirely!"

"Do you mean to say that you've come here to ask me to put him into the team?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"What utter rot!" growled Lovell.

Oswald hesitated.

"The fact is, Mornington's been round talking to the members of the committee, Jimmy. And—and if it could be agreed, I

think it would be a good idea to play him. We want to beat the Moderns."

"That's my idea, intoirely!" said Flynn. Jimmy Silver frowned a little and looked at his chums.

"What do you fellows think?" he asked.

"Rot!" said Lovell.

"Well," remarked Raby slowly, "you see, Jimmy, he's a topping bowler. There's no denying that."

"I don't want to deny it!" said Jimmy gruffly.

"Of course not. I don't mean that. But the eleven wants bowlers. In a school match you can pick out Modern fellows for the team; but in a Classical match we've only got Classicals, and we're not strong in bowlers."

"I know not. But——"

Townsend of the Fourth lounged into the study.

"Is Morny goin' in?" he asked.

"Oh, go and chop chips!" said Jimmy Silver crossly.

He was not inclined to argue the matter with Townsend.

"Well, if he's kept out the Fourth will have somethin' to say about it!" said Townsend. "It's all very well to be jealous of a chap's bowlin'——"

Jimmy Silver started to his feet.

"What's that?"

"Oh, keep your wool on! I'm only repeatin' what all the Form are sayin'!"

"That's not true!" said Jimmy directly.

"And, anyway, you needn't repeat it in this study! Buzz off!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver——"

"Buzz off, I tell you! Hand me that cushion, Raby!"

Townsend did not wait for the cushion. He sneered, and lounged out of the study.

Oswald and Flynn looked uncomfortable.

"I suppose the fellows are not really saying anything of that kind, Oswald?" asked Jimmy, rather gruffly.

"I don't believe so, but if you don't play Mornington after the form he's shown some of them might," said Oswald. "I don't want to persuade you—I don't like the fellow any more than you do—but he is a good bowler, and we want bowlers. If you don't play him it will be put down as personal dislike."

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"I don't like him, but that's not the reason," he said. "I never thought he

CHAPTER 16.

The Traitor.

would make a cricketer; but he can play cricket. I own that. But he's an insolent cad, and he would want to be cock of the walk on the field."

"You could soon put a stopper on that."

"Of course I could, but I don't want to be doing it in the middle of a match with the Moderns."

"But he may behave himself, intaiely," said Flynn. "He seems to be awfully keen on cricket now. And we do want to beat the Moderns, Jimmy!"

"Might give him a chance," suggested Newcome. "You're not bound to speak to the cad off the cricket-field, you know. No need to be chummy with him."

"I haven't any confidence in him!" growled Jimmy Silver. "He's as full of tricks as a monkey! But if the whole committee thinks he ought to be given a chance I'll give him one. It's a go!"

"Not against your own judgment," said Oswald.

"Oh, that's all right! I'll give him a chance. If he knows how to behave himself, he will be worth while. If he doesn't, it may lose us the match. Still, it's worth a bit of risk to get a bowler like that in the team."

And the matter dropped.

After his prep. was over Jimmy Silver made a change in the list that was posted up in the hall. Hooker's name was crossed out, and that of Mornington written over it, somewhat to Hooker's wrath. But Jimmy was nowhere near Mornington's form, and the change met with general approval.

Mornington came along as Jimmy stepped back from the board, and he smiled as he saw what the captain of the Fourth had written.

"So you've made up your mind to do the decent thing!" he remarked.

Jimmy looked at him steadily.

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Mornington," he said, "but if you make another remark like that I'll punch your silly head!"

Mornington sneered.

Jimmy walked away with a clouded brow. He had yielded against his better judgment in putting Mornington into the team, and he felt that trouble would come of it. And in that Jimmy was quite correct.

"YOU fellows comin' to watch the game?"

Mornington asked that question as he came out of the dining-room the next day after dinner with his nutty friends.

Townsend and Topham and Peele yawned in chorus. They did not care for cricket.

"Oh, yaas, we'll come!" said Townsend.

"Means wastin' an afternoon," remarked Topham. "We might have had a four at bridge in the study."

"So we might," said Peele. "This is rather a rotten wheeze of yours, takin' up cricket, Morny. Of course, we all want to see Jimmy Silver done in the eye. But —"

"But it's a bore," said Townsend.

"Horrid bore!" yawned Topham.

"It's the only way of putting that cad Silver in his place," said Mornington, "and the only way of gettin' him down off his perch. Things will be a bit better for our set all round when I'm captain of the Form."

"When?" murmured Peele.

"Besides, it's a good game," said Mornington. "Why don't you fellows take it up, too?"

"No jolly fear!"

"We could get the whole thing in our hands then."

"You're welcome to my share, dear boy. But we'll come an' watch you with pleasure. Jimmy Silver's face will be worth watching," chuckled Townsend. "It goes against the grain with him to put you in at all. What sort of a game are you goin' to play?"

"That depends. I'm goin' to show the school that Jimmy Silver isn't the only pebble on the beach, anyway."

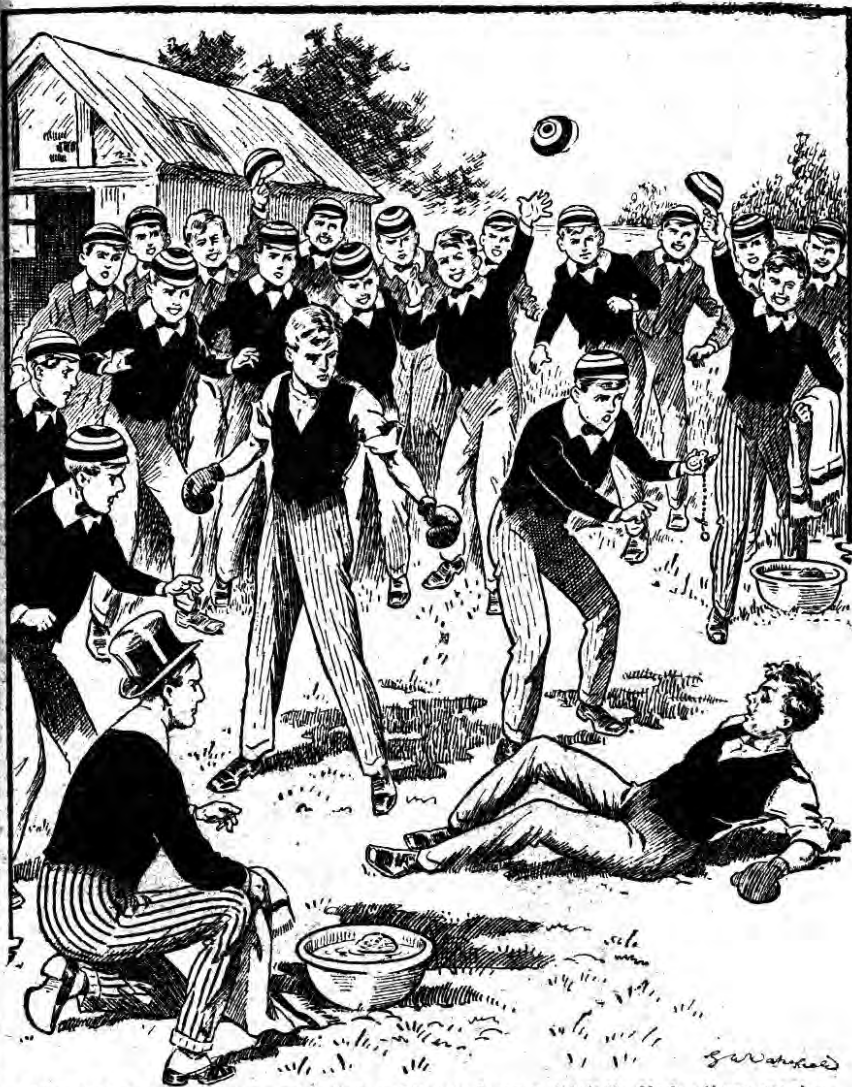
Peele chortled.

"Don't stand any of his cheek," he said. "If he jaws you, old man, give him as good as he sends. Make him sing small."

"I mean to."

The nuts decided that they would watch the match after all. The amiable Mornington evidently meant to give his captain all the trouble he could, and Townsend & Co. expected to see some fun.

They walked down to Little Side with Mornington, the latter in Samuels, with his handsome, expensive bat under his arm.



At last Higgs went down under Jimmy Silver's famous "left." He lay there gasping.
"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine — out!" counted Tommy Dodd.
"Silver wins!" (See page 28.)

Jimmy Silver was already there, and he gave Mornington a curt nod. Mornington was the last of the team on the ground.

Jimmy tossed with Tommy Dodd, the Modern skipper, and won the toss. He elected to take the first innings.

"Lovell and Oswald!" he called out, while the Moderns went into the field.

Mornington tapped Jimmy on the shoulder.

"I suppose you're openin' the innings with me?" he remarked. And Townsend & Co. grinned at this first evidence that Morny was "goin' it."

Jimmy stared at him.

"Of course I'm not," he said. "You're last man in."

"Last man in--me!"

"Yes."

"I object!"

"Oh, cheese it!" Jimmy Silver turned his back on Mornington. He had no politeness to waste upon the junior.

Mornington gritted his teeth. His swank had met with a deserved rebuff. But Mornington was not the fellow to take it quietly if he could help it.

Lovell and Oswald went in to open the innings, and Tommy Dodd went on to bowl. Mornington stood watching, with a scowling brow.

He loved the limelight, and he wanted to open the innings. It did not please his mind at all to come on with the tail of the team.

Oswald was down for 6 in the second over, and as he came off Mornington addressed Jimmy Silver again:

"I'm goin' in now," he said.

"Raby!" called out Jimmy.

"Look here, I tell you I'm not standin' here watchin' those duffers losin' their wickets!" said Mornington angrily.

"Shut up!"

Raby went to the wickets, grinning. Mornington was inclined to march on, in spite of his captain's orders; but Jimmy's look showed plainly enough that if he did that the lofty Morny would be yanked off by his neck. That was not the kind of exhibition Mornington wished to bestow on the Rookwood crowd, so he restrained himself.

He rejoined the nuts, with a scowling brow.

"Too bad!" said Townsend sympathetically. "Of course, you can't expect Silver to give you a chance, really."

"It's goin' to cost him a wicket in the innings," muttered Mornington savagely.

Townsend whistled.

"Better not let any of the fellows hear you say that," he observed.

"Well, you'll see."

The Classical innings lasted nearly an hour. Jimmy Silver was fourth man in, and he forgot all about Mornington. Jimmy knocked up 30 runs before he was bowled by Tommy Doyle, the total for the innings being 70 when the word came, "Last man in!"

Flynn was at the wickets when Mornington--last man in--was called upon to join him there.

"Buck up and do your best," said Jimmy as Mornington was going in. "Leave the batting to Flynn all you can. Keep the innings alive, you know."

"I'm not likely to do anythin' of the sort," said Mornington. "You'd better tell Flynn to keep the innings alive for me."

He walked on the field before Jimmy could reply, and the captain of the Fourth suppressed his feelings the best he could. Mornington had proved himself a good bowler, but he was not remarkable with the bat, and if he had chosen to devote himself to keeping the innings alive there was a good chance for Flynn to add to the score. But that was not the kind of game that suited Mornington. As a matter of fact, Mornington's wicket went down to the first ball.

Jimmy Silver gave a snort.

"The only duck's egg in the innings!"

"He will come out strong in the bowling," said Oswald.

Mornington came off, smiling, and paused to speak to Jimmy Silver in a low voice.

"I warned you not to send me in last, you know."

Jimmy started.

There was only one possible construction to be placed on Mornington's words.

"Do you mean to say that you threw your wicket away?" he ejaculated.

"I don't mean to say anythin' except that I warned you not to send me in last."

And Mornington walked on.

Jimmy Silver clenched his hands, and unclenched them again. That was not the moment for dealing with his very peculiar recruit. But Jimmy Silver made up his mind, then and there, that this was the last time, as well as the first, that Mornington should play for Rookwood.

CHAPTER 17.

Mornington in the Limelight.

TOMMY DODD and Towle opened the innings for the Moderns. Jimmy Silver placed his men in the field, and went on to bowl the first over.

Tommy Dodd cut the ball away, and the batsmen ran. And a sudden shout rang over the cricket-field:

"Well caught!"

"Bravo, Mornington!"

The ball was in Mornington's hand, and he was holding it up. It was a very smart catch.

"How's that, umpire?"

"Out!"

"My only aunt!" said Tommy Dodd.

The Modern skipper carried out his bat with a lugubrious face, his innings cut short in the first over.

There were loud cheers for Mornington, especially from his friends the nuts. Adolphus Smythe of the Shell clapped his hands loudly. All the Giddy Goats of Rookwood were backing Mornington heartily. They hoped fervently that he would succeed in putting Jimmy Silver's nose out of joint, as they expressed it.

Mornington had been no use at the wickets, but evidently he was a valuable recruit in the field. And he meant to show his value as much as he could, and make it difficult for Jimmy Silver to turn him out of the eleven. Jimmy knew that he had thrown his wicket away in the Classical innings, but the other fellows were not likely to believe it.

Tommy Cook came in, and the over finished. Mornington called to Jimmy as the field crossed over.

"Am I goin' to bowl?"

Jimmy tossed him the ball without a word. He was strongly inclined to throw it at his head.

There was a buzz in the Classical crowd as Mornington went on to bowl. After the form he had shown against the seniors the previous day, the fellows expected great things of him.

And the dandy of the Fourth intended to do his very best. He had a chance of the limelight now, and he was on his mettle.

Towle received the bowling, and he was very much on the look-out. But at the third ball his stumps were down, and there was a loud cheer for Mornington.

"Jolly good, isn't he?" Oswald remarked to Jimmy Silver.

"He's a good bowler," said Jimmy grimly.

"I shouldn't wonder if he does the hat-trick."

"Quite likely."

"He will be a rod in pickle for Greyfriars and St. Jim's," said Oswald, with rather a curious look at Jimmy's clouded face.

"He won't!"

"But after this, you'll play him?"

Jimmy shook his head, but there was no time for more talk. Tommy Doyle came in to take Towle's place.

All eyes were fixed on Mornington.

The ball came down like a shot, and Tommy Doyle swiped for the place where he was certain it was. But it wasn't there, as the crash of the wicket warned Tommy the next moment.

"Tare an' 'ounds!" ejaculated Doyle.

"Out!"

"Bravo, Morny! Well bowled!"

The Moderns were looking rather grim. This bowling was as good as Jimmy Silver's at his best. And two bowlers like Jimmy Silver in the Classical team made matters look very dubious for the Moderns.

Lacy was next man in, and Lacy faced that deadly bowler with some nervousness. His nervousness was justified, for the first ball knocked his bails off. Then there was a roar.

"The hat-trick!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Morny!"

Mornington shot a triumphant glance at his skipper. His idea was that, after that, Jimmy Silver would find it very difficult to refuse him a regular place in the eleven. Jimmy thought so, too, though it made no difference to his resolve. There was no room for traitors in Jimmy Silver's team.

"Bravo!" chortled Smythe of the Shell. "Rippin'! Toppin'! Hurrah!"

"My hat, they've got a good man there!" murmured Tommy Dodd. "Fancy that rotten slacker turning out like this! Man in."

The Moderns were four down for nil, which was a bad beginning. But matters looked up in the next over, and the runs began to mount up. But the Moderns' luck was out. Jimmy Silver accounted for two more wickets, and made a catch in the field, and Mornington took two with his bowling.

The expressive face of Tommy Dodd grew longer and longer as he watched the procession to and from the wickets.

"All down for 30!" he said at last. "My only hat! What a score! You will have to buck up in the second innings, my sons!"

So far as the first innings was concerned, the Moderns were beaten to the wide. And everybody knew that it was largely due to Mornington's bowling. Mornington had jumped into something like popularity with the Classical juniors. There was something in the fellow, after all, slacker and smoker and blackguard as he was. And the fellows who had over-persuaded Jimmy Silver to put him in the team felt extremely satisfied with themselves.

They did not know what Jimmy knew—that Mornington regarded the whole game as something centred about himself, and that he had never even dreamed of loyalty to his side. He aimed at putting Jimmy in the shade; but for the game itself he did not care twopence. He had thrown his wicket away, out of pettish spite, careless of the result to his side. And it was quite probable that the loss of that wicket might mean the loss of the match.

"Am I goin' in last again?" Mornington asked, when the Classics were ready to begin their second innings.

Jimmy Silver nodded without speaking.

"You don't want to give me a chance to score—what?" sneered Mornington. "Is this a cricket-match, or is it got up to provide you with limelight, Silver?"

"Do you think that's the way to speak to your skipper on the cricket-field?" asked Jimmy.

"I'm askin' you a question."

"Well, I'll answer it. It's a cricket-match, and the last one you'll play in so long as I'm junior captain!"

There was a buzz from the cricketers, and Mornington raised his eyebrows.

"This is what comes of takin' wickets, and puttin' one's giddy skipper into the shade," he remarked.

"Dash it all, Jimmy, Mornington's done jolly well," said Oswald, in surprise.

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"Mornington threw his wicket away in the first innings because I put him on last," he said.

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Jones minor incredulously.

"He told me so."

"Oh, my hat!"

Mornington burst into a scoffing laugh.

"Anybody who likes to believe that, can believe it!" he said scornfully. "It's hardly worth the trouble of denyin'!"

"You lying cad! Do you mean to deny it?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, his temper breaking out.

"I did nothin' of the sort, an' you know it! I said nothin' of the sort, and you know that!" said Mornington deliberately.

"You must be mistaken, Jimmy," murmured Raby.

"He said so, I tell you, though he took care not to let anybody else hear," said Jimmy Silver; "and you all know he's cad enough!"

"Liar!" said Mornington calmly.

Jimmy Silver made a spring forward, but Lovell caught him by the shoulder.

"For goodness' sake, Jimmy, don't begin slogging now! The Moderns are waiting in the field!"

"Man in," said Jimmy, in a choking voice. "Lovell and Raby."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. Jimmy Silver stared at the field with a gloomy look.

Mornington had succeeded in putting him in the wrong.

Even his own chums hesitated to believe his statement—they were sure that he was mistaken. Why should Mornington say a thing one moment, and deny it the next? Jimmy Silver knew. It was because the rascal of Rookwood intended to cause trouble for him. After Mornington's admission that he had thrown away his wicket, Jimmy could not play him in the team again—that was certain. But Mornington denied making any such admission, and the rest concluded that Jimmy had mistaken him.

If Mornington was left out after the splendid form he had shown as a bowler, there would not be wanting many fellows to attribute it to one thing—that Jimmy, hitherto the champion bowler, was jealous of Mornington's form, and unwilling to give him a chance of outclassing the captain. And that, of course, was exactly what Mornington intended fellows should think.

Jimmy Silver was no fool—he was keen and alert, and had all his wits about him. But he felt a sense of helplessness in dealing with cunning of this kind. His brow was gloomy as he looked on.

CHAPTER 18.

Ordered Off the Field.

"MAN in!"

The Modern bowling was looking up. Three were down for 7 runs when Jimmy Silver went to the wicket. Jimmy made an effort, and dismissed troublesome thoughts from his mind.

His batting was first-class, and there were loud cheers for him. Mornington looked on with a sneering smile.

Batsmen came and went, and Jimmy Silver was still at the wicket. Tommy Dodd's bowling accounted for three, but Jimmy was still going strong, and piling up runs. And when the call came for last man, Jimmy was still at the wickets, and in great form.

Last man in was Mornington, as before.

Jimmy's brows contracted as Mornington passed him on the way in. He caught the mocking gleam in Mornington's eyes.

Jimmy was in splendid form, and with a reliable bat at the other end, he might have gone on scoring indefinitely. The Modern bowling could not touch him, and he gave no chances to the field.

Mornington was not a brilliant bat, but he could have kept the innings open for Jimmy if he had liked. So long as he kept his end up, Jimmy could have piled on runs. But it was useless to ask Mornington to do anything of the kind. Jimmy would be only too thankful if he did not throw his wicket away as he had done in the first innings. Mornington was quite capable of it, if only for the purpose of bringing Jimmy's brilliant innings to a sudden end.

Mornington's look as he passed him told of intended mischief.

Jimmy gritted his teeth.

This was the kind of thing he had to expect, so long as Mornington was allowed to play in the junior eleven. He could hardly be expected to go through it a second time. And yet to turn the traitor out of the team was to expose himself to general misunderstanding, and to cause general dissatisfaction. Mornington had him in a cleft-stick, as it were, and it was not a pleasant position.

There were 40 runs for the second innings, and after that mocking look from Mornington, Jimmy did not expect the number to be added to before the close.

But he had not yet divined Mornington's real intentions. The dandy of the Fourth kept his wicket up till the end of the over, and, to Jimmy's relief, the bowling came to him again.

Apparently, Mornington did not wish to turn his duck's egg into a pair of spectacles.

Jimmy concluded that "swank" had overcome malevolence in Mornington's breast; and he was glad of that, at least. He was safe for another over—or, at least, he believed he was.

The ball came down from Tommy Doyle, and Jimmy let himself go at it. The leather whizzed away, and Jimmy ran.

Mornington did not stir from his wicket.

Jimmy Silver was a third of the distance down the pitch before he realised that the other batsman did not intend to run.

"Run, you idiot!" he shouted.

"No chance!" called back Mornington coolly. "Get back to your wicket!"

Jimmy stopped, in helpless anger.

Then he turned and raced back to his wicket.

But that pause, short as it was, had been fatal. The ball was coming in from Tommy Dodd's hand, straight as a die.

Jimmy's bat touched the crease a second too late.

Crash!

"How's that?" sang out Tommy Dodd jubilantly.

"Out!"

It was out, there was no doubt about that. Jimmy Silver stood simply panting with rage for some moments. He knew that Mornington had deliberately allowed him to run himself out. He was tempted to lay his bat about the cool, calculating young rascal, who was grinning at him from the other end of the pitch.

"All down for 40!" grunted Lovell. "I hoped you'd put on another dozen yet, Jimmy!" He glanced curiously at Jimmy's face as the captain came off. "What's the matter?"

"That rotter—that cad——" panted Jimmy.

Lovell nodded.

"Yes, my idea is that there was time for the run if he had taken it," he said.

"He thought there wasn't, I suppose."

"He knew there was."

"Oh, I say, Jimmy——"

"He threw my wicket away, just as he threw his own away in the first innings. That was his game."

"Oh, draw it mild, old chap!" murmured Lovell uneasily. "Even Mornington isn't such a rotten cad as that."

"Sure, it's off-side ye are, Jimmy!" said Flynn soothingly. "Keep yer temper. Morry isn't much of a bat, but——"

"He did it, I tell you."

Flynn shrugged his shoulders.

But Jimmy was too angry to care for the general disbelief. He knew what he knew, and he had had enough of Mornington's treachery. He strode up to him as he came lounging off the field.

"You can clear off!" he said.

Mornington looked at him, with an air of mild surprise.

"Clear off!" he repeated.

"Yes!"

"But the game isn't over yet," drawled Mornington. "The Moderns have another innings, you know."

"What the dickens——" began Oswald.

"Clear off, Mornington!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "I'm not playing you for the rest of the match! I'm fed up with you! I'll ask Dodd to let me put in a substitute for the rest."

Mornington's face became quite pale.

He had not expected that. Whatever Jimmy Silver thought, he had no proof, and Mornington had not dreamed that he would proceed to this length.

"You—you—you're ordering me off the field?" he stammered.

"Yes! Get out!"

"I say, Jimmy——" began Lovell, in dismay.

Jimmy Silver turned on him fiercely.

"You saw what he did. He threw away his own wicket in one innings, and mine in the next. I've had enough of his trickery!"

"But I don't believe——"

"It's all rot!" said Jones minor. "You're in a temper, and that's the trouble."

"I'm not going to argue about it!" bawled out Jimmy Silver. "If the Form wants a new cricket captain, I'm ready to resign. But so long as I'm captain that sneaking cad doesn't play for Rookwood again!"

Mornington's lips curved in a bitter smile.

"I'm not goin' off," he said. "My bowlin' wanted, and I'm goin' to bowl."

"You won't go?" said Jimmy between his teeth.

"No, I won't!"

"Then I'll see that you do!"

Jimmy Silver was hitting out the next moment. He had controlled his temper with great effort all through the match, but it boiled over now. Mornington yelled as he caught Jimmy's left with his nose, and his right with his chin. He put up his hands and fought savagely.

With all his faults, the dandy of the Fourth did not want for pluck.

The rest of the cricketers looked on in dismay. The Moderns stared and grinned. It was rather a new thing on the Rookwood ground to see the captain at fisticuffs with a member of his team.

"Shame!" howled Townsend. "Let him alone!"

"Order!"

"Shame!"

Crash!

Mornington went down on his back, and lay gasping. Jimmy Silver glared down at him.

"Will you go now?" he panted.

"No," gasped Mornington, "I won't!"

"Then I'll take you!"

Jimmy grasped the fallen junior by the collar, and, exerting his strength, fairly dragged him away, and pitched him outside the ropes. He returned to the pavilion with a flushed face and glittering eyes.

There was general disapproval in the faces round him. But no one ventured upon a remark. Jimmy was in a mood to have quarrelled with his best chums just then.

Townsend picked up Mornington, and the latter limped away, in the midst of the nuts. He was not feeling inclined for any further fighting. Jimmy Silver was a hard hitter, and Mornington was looking and feeling considerably damaged.

In the study he bathed his eye, and blinked at the nuts, who were dutifully trying not to smile.

"So that's the end of my cricketin'!" he said.

"Rotten!" said Townsend.

"More rotten for Jimmy Silver than for me, though, I think!" said Mornington. "They'll lose the match."

"I hope so," said Peele charitably.

"And the other fellows will have somethin' to say about it, too," said Mornington between his teeth. "I fancy Jimmy Silver will find he is up against somethin' bigger than he can tackle! Ow! My eye!"

CHAPTER 19.

A Riff in the Lute.

JIMMY SILVER & CO. went into the field, Jimmy still looking flushed and disturbed.

The second innings of the Moderns opened. The Classical score was so far ahead that they had looked for a sweeping victory, but the prospect was considerably changed now. With Mornington gone from the field, there was no doubt that the Moderns had a much better chance of equalising, and they were determined to make the most of it. Neither did Jimmy Silver himself seem in his best form when he went on to bowl.

The angry scene outside the pavilion had had its effect on Jimmy as well as the mute disapproval of his followers.

Jimmy did his best; but Tommy Dodd's wicket was too strong for him, and there was no other bowler in the team who could touch it without great luck.

Mornington might have had the luck if he had been there. But the dandy of the Fourth was not there.

The wickets went down much more slowly than in the first innings, and the runs were piling up.

Tommy Dodd & Co. had a great deal of leeway to make up, and they grinned with glee as they made it up hand over fist.

Tommy Dodd's wicket went down at last from a smart throw-in from the field by Patrick O'Donovan Flynn. But the great Tommy had knocked up 40 runs off his own bat, while another 40 had been added by his successive partners. And the scores had tied.

The Classics had given up the idea of a victory now.

With the scores level, and three more Modern wickets to fall, there was no chance of a win for Jimmy Silver's team.

But the finish was very close.

Jimmy Silver was bowling again, and two wickets fell in succession to Jimmy, who seemed at his best once more. "Last man in!" was the word.

There could be no win, but the Classics hoped for a draw now. The Moderns wanted only 1 run to win, and if Jimmy Silver had been still bowling probably they would never have obtained it. But the over was finished, and Oswald went on for the next, and Towle knocked the ball away for a single. And a roar from the Moderns announced the victory.

Jimmy Silver was a good loser, as a rule, but on this occasion his brow was gloomy as he came off the field.

After the first prospect of an overwhelming victory, the match had been lost. Mornington in the field would have made all the difference—Jimmy knew that, and all the team knew it. Jimmy did not blame himself for sending the traitor off, but he knew that his followers blamed him.

The Moderns were cheering gleefully.

Jimmy Silver walked away, with his bat under his arm, when all was over. It was late for tea, for the match had been hard and long. The Fistical Four gathered in the end study for a less cheery meal than usual.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome made no reference to what was evidently in their thoughts.

They were loyal to their leader, and they were quite prepared to back him up against the rest of the Fourth, if necessary; but it was with inward misgivings.

They disliked the slacker of the Fourth as much as Jimmy did, or more; but their view was that likes and dislikes had nothing to do with cricket, and they believed that Jimmy had allowed his aversion and contempt for Mornington to lead him into a serious fault.

It was Jimmy who referred to the matter first.

"You fellows think I was wrong to kick Mornington out?" he said abruptly.

"Ahem!" said Lovell.

"Oh, speak out!"

"Well, yes, I do think so," said Lovell. "The chap's a cad, but he can play cricket. We were licked because you sent him off!"

"We should have won hands down," said Raby. "The fellow's a rank rotter, personally, but there's no getting out of that, Jimmy!"

"Of course, you don't like him," remarked Newcome. "Nobody could. Even his own pals don't like him; but that's got nothing to do with cricket!"

Jimmy smiled rather bitterly.

"You're letting him lead you by the nose, like all the rest," he said. "That's exactly what he wants the fellows to think—that I threw away the match simply because I don't like him!"

"Well, you see—"

"You're a set of silly asses!" growled Jimmy. "What would you do, Lovell, if

you were cricket captain, and a man threw away his wicket because he was put last in and wasn't allowed to swank?"

"Kick him out, of course!"

"Well, that's what I did!"

"But Mornington says——"

"You know the fellow's a liar, don't you?"

"Well, yes. All the same, there's no proof that he chucked his wicket away!"

"He told me so as he came off."

"He says he didn't."

"Can't you take my word?"

"Yes, yes; don't get ratty! But Mornington says he didn't say so, and you might very easily have misunderstood him!"

"And he ran me out in the second innings on purpose."

"He says he didn't. He's not much of a bat, anyway, and it might have been simply fatheadedness!"

"I knew he was going to play a dirty trick when he went in. I could tell that by his look!"

"Well, I don't see how you could tell by his look!" said Lovell, rather tartly. "You're not a thought-reader or a wizard, I suppose?"

"The fact is," said Raby, after a pause, "it looks like trouble. Mornington will expect to be played in the Greyfriars match next week, after the form he's shown, and all the club will expect it. And really, Jimmy, with a bowler like that we shall make hay of Greyfriars!"

Jimmy set his lips.

"He won't play!" he said.

"Well, if you put it like that——"

"I put it like this," said Jimmy quietly.

"If Mornington plays, he will have to be allowed to have his own way in everything. If he isn't allowed to open the innings, he may throw away his wicket out of spite. If he's wanted to stonewall, and give a better bat a chance to score, he won't do it. If he's got a down on any batsman, he will try to run him out. Even his bowling will depend on the humour he happens to be in; and if he's taken offence at anything, he will very likely bowl rottenly, and let Greyfriars score. That's not the kind of fellow we want in the Rookwood team!"

"Not if you've got it right, certainly. But I can't believe that even Mornington is such a howling cad as that!"

"I know he is."

"Well, I don't agree with you."

"Then you're an ass!"

"Same to you!" said Lovell gruffly.

Jimmy controlled his temper with an effort. Disagreement in the end study was what the amiable Mornington was aiming at, as much as anything else. In that, at least, he should not be successful, if Jimmy could help it.

"Well, we'll call the cricket committee together after tea," said Jimmy. "This matter had better be thrashed out. I know most of the fellows think that Mornington ought to be a fixture in the junior eleven. I don't mean him to play for Rookwood at all so long as I'm skipper. I don't want to over-rule the committee!"

"That's all right, then," said Newcome.

"Let the committee decide!"

"I mean to. Only if they decide in Mornington's favour, I shall resign, as a matter of course."

"Look here, Jimmy——"

"I shan't captain the team if Mornington plays in it," said Jimmy quietly. "I'll play as a member, if the new skipper chooses me. That's all. I can't undertake to captain a team with a traitor in the ranks. Tommy Dodd will make a good skipper!"

"A rotten Modern!" growled Lovell.

"Well, perhaps the club would like to select Mornington," said Jimmy sarcastically. "That's really the only position that would suit him. I suppose he could be depended on not to play the traitor if he captained the team! But he would leave out all the fellows he had a down on—that's the sort of fellow he is. It wouldn't be much of a team then!"

"Of course, that's all rot!" said Lovell. "It's between you and Tommy Dodd. And I think you're an ass, Jimmy!"

In which opinion Raby and Newcome concurred.

CHAPTER 20.

Mornington Wins.

JIMMY SILVER smiled satirically as he came into the Common-room that evening.

The looks of the other fellows showed what was in their thoughts.

Even his most devoted followers, like Oswald and Rawson, could not help thinking that Jimmy had taken up a very unreasonable stand. They were ready to back him up, like the Co., but they wished he would be a bit more reasonable.

Mornington and his friends were in the room, and they seemed to be in high feather.

They felt truly that they had Jimmy Silver at a disadvantage at last.

Either he had to play Mornington in the matches—at the cost of doubt and discomfort and constant worry to himself—or he had to leave him out, against the opinion of the whole club and the fellows generally, and pose as a fellow who was excluding a first-rate player from motives of personal antipathy.

In either case, Mornington & Co. felt that they scored, and they congratulated themselves that Jimmy Silver's star was on the wane.

The loss of the match, which had been so near to victory, exasperated the Classics, and the defeat was wholly attributed to Jimmy Silver and his high-handed methods.

Jimmy had, in fact, played into Mornington's hands in the line he had taken, though when he reflected on it he could not see anything else that he could have done.

Mornington had a darkened eye, and his nose looked very swollen; but he was in high good-humour that evening.

He gave Jimmy Silver a triumphant look as the captain of the Fourth came into the Common-room.

There was a meeting of the cricket committee fixed for nine in the end study, and the three Tommies, who were members of the committee, came over from the Modern side to attend it.

Tommy Dodd was looking very thoughtful, and he spoke quietly to Jimmy in the Common-room.

"About Mornington," he said.

To which Jimmy replied gruffly:

"Blow Mornington!"

"The fact is, that was a jolly queer proceeding on Little Side this afternoon!" said Tommy. "Not to put too fine a point on it, you'd have beaten us if you hadn't turned Mornington off the field."

"Perhaps."

"Not much perhaps about it. Now, as a rule, we don't want too many Classics in the eleven; it would be improved by a few more Moderns."

"Rats!"

"But we want to beat Greyfriars next week. If you like to put Mornington into the Junior School Eleven, Jimmy, we shan't raise any objection to your leaving

a Modern chap out to make room for him, if you feel that way. I can't say fairer than that."

"I don't feel that way," said Jimmy Silver grinning. "I shan't play Mornington at any price!"

"Why the dickens not, when he's as good a man as any chap in the Lower Forms?"

"Because he would give the match away if the humour took him to do it! Because he's a disloyal rascal!"

"Well, I suppose you Classics know one another pretty well!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "But that's rather steep, you know! The fact is, if you leave Mornington out, after the ripping form he's shown, you'll have trouble with the committee!"

"I know that."

"Better give him a chance," urged Tommy Dodd. "I don't like the fellow—he's a swanking cad—but he bowls like a county champion!"

"And bats like a swindling scoundrel!"

"Oh, draw it mild!"

"Well, that's my opinion. Would you play a fellow you thought that of?"

"Of course not. But I think you're mistaken."

"You'll have a chance of seeing for yourself in the Greyfriars match, Tommy. If the committee don't agree with me, I'm going to resign, and you'll captain the team next Wednesday!"

"I should play Mornington, I warn you!"

"I wish you joy of him!"

"Come along, you fellows!" called out Lovell.

And the members of the committee proceeded to the end study for the meeting.

Mornington grinned as they left the Common-room.

"Looks like trouble for the magnificent Jimmy!" he remarked to his friends. "I fancy there's goin' to be a row!"

"Silver will have to play you or resign, old chap!" grinned Townsend.

Mornington nodded.

"Exactly my idea. I don't care which he does. I suppose it wouldn't be much use my puttin' up for captain yet?"

"Hardly," said Peele, laughing. "Besides, Silver won't resign as junior captain—only so far as the cricket's concerned. Tommy Dodd will be made cricket skipper in his place. He'll play you next week against Greyfriars. I hope you won't run him out."

And the nuts chuckled. They had a pretty clear idea of the true state of affairs, and they greatly admired the astuteness of the dandy of the Fourth.

Many of the fellows waited anxiously to hear the results of the deliberations in the end study, Tubby Muffin even scouted along the passage, and came back with the news that they were "going it" in the committee. Fellows in the passage could hear the murmur of voices, and could easily tell that there was disagreement.

When the door opened and the committee came away, some of them were looking red and angry.

"Well, what's the verdict?" sang out Higgs of the Fourth.

"Silver's resigned!"

"Oh, good!" said Townsend.

"It isn't good, you silly ass!" said Tommy Dodd angrily. "Silver's an obstinate ass, but—"

"Who's going to skipper the team?" asked Rawson.

"I am."

"Well, that's second best," remarked Rawson.

Tommy Dodd grinned.

"Thanks! But Jimmy's going to play for Rookwood, so there's no harm done. Where's Mornington?"

"Here I am!" said Mornington. "What's wanted?"

Tommy Dodd looked at him rather curiously.

"I'm captaining the junior team next Wednesday. I shall want you to play for Rookwood."

"I'm your man!"

"You'll turn up for regular practice with the team," said Tommy Dodd.

"I'll stick to it like a leech!" assured Mornington.

"Well, that's all right, then!"

And Tommy Dodd went his way, not dissatisfied. Jimmy Silver was a good skipper, but Tommy's opinion was that a Modern chap was a little better, especially if he—Tommy Dodd—was the Modern chap.

In the end study the Fistical Four were left alone after the departure of the rest of the committee.

Jimmy Silver was very quiet and calm, but his chums looked morose and dissatisfied. They were not at all pleased at the cricket captaincy passing into the hands of a Modern.

"Do you want to know what I think, Jimmy?" deniaded Lovell.

"Not particularly."

"I'll tell you, all the same! You're a thumping ass!"

"Thanks!"

"There's a rotten Modern skipper now—"

"Tommy Dodd's a good skipper."

"I know that; but it's a Classical job. And if Tommy beats Greyfriars next week, and if he chose to call a new election for Form captain he'd beat you all along the line!"

"Let him!"

"Oh, it's no good talking to you!" said Lovell, exasperated. "I've a jolly good mind to punch your silly nose!"

"Same here!" said Raby. "If ever a silly ass wanted his nose punched—"

"It's a come-down for this study!" growled Newcome. "You might have thought of the study, Jimmy!"

"No good arguing," said Jimmy Silver, "and no good rowing! Mornington would be as pleased as Punch if we started rowing one another. That's what he wants, only you duffers can't see it!"

"Oh, confound Mornington!" growled Lovell.

"Hear, hear!" said Jimmy.

And the matter dropped.

Jimmy Silver was no longer junior cricket captain of Rookwood, and all the Classics agreed that it was rotten, and that Jimmy Silver was a silly ass and an obstinate mule. But on the Modern side there was considerable satisfaction. All the Moderns agreed that the chances of beating Greyfriars were considerably enhanced. And among the Classics Mornington & Co., at least, were jubilant. Mornington had won the first round in his campaign against the captain of the Fourth!

CHAPTER 21.

Off to Greyfriars.

ZIP-ZIP!

"Here comes the giddy bus!" called out Lovell.

And there was a laugh.

It was not exactly a bus; but it was certainly the largest and most luxurious motor-car that had ever been seen at Rookwood.

It rolled up the drive to the School House, and stopped. The chauffeur jumped down. Mornington of the Fourth Form gave him a nod.

A crowd gathered round the car. Bulkeley of the Sixth, coming out of the School House with his bat under his arm, stopped to stare at it.

"Hallo! Where did that come from?" he asked.

Lovell grinned.

"It came from Rookham, and it's come for us," he said. "Mornington is standing a car to get over to Greyfriars this afternoon. The junior eleven's going over, you know."

"Might be a junior twenty-two by the size of the car," grinned Raby.

"Oh, we can take half Rookwood along with us," said Jimmy Silver.

Bulkeley frowned.

He signed to Mornington to approach. The dandy of the Fourth lounged carelessly towards the Rookwood captain.

"You've hired that car, Mornington?"

"Yaas."

"To take the cricket team over to Greyfriars?"

"Yaas."

"And how much is it going to cost you?" demanded Bulkeley.

Mornington shook his head.

"I really don't know! I think they charge by the mile, and somethin' for waitin' and somethin' for the chauffeur, and somethin' for somethin' else. They'll send in a bill, I think."

"It won't be less than twenty pounds," said the captain of Rookwood.

"Twice as much, very likely," said Mornington.

"And you can pay it?"

"Yaas."

"Then your guardian ought to be spoken to about allowing you so much money!" snapped Bulkeley. "Do you happen to know extravagance is bad form?"

"Yaas, I believe I heard somewhere that it was," said Mornington calmly.

Some of the juniors grinned. Mornington was blessed with unusual nerve and coolness, but it was a risky proceeding to "cheek" the head of the Sixth and captain of the school. Bulkeley made a movement as if to take Mornington by the ear, and Mornington backed away hastily.

"I'm surprised at your doing this, Silver,"

said Bulkeley, addressing the captain of the Fourth. "You ought to have taken your team over by train."

Jimmy Silver coloured.

"I'm not captain to-day, Bulkeley," he replied. "Tommy Dodd's captaining the team this afternoon. I couldn't agree with the fellows about playing Mornington, so I left it in Dodd's hands."

"Where's Dodd?"

"Here they come," said Newcome.

Dodd and Doyle and Cook, the three Tommies, were coming over from Mr. Manders' house on the Modern side.

"You're wanted, Dodd!" called out Lovell.

"Hallo! What's wrong?" asked Tommy Dodd, pitching his cricket-bag into the car, and then turning to Bulkeley.

"You ought not to be taking your team over in a motor-car," said the captain of Rookwood sternly.

"Well, Mornington offered to stand the car," said Tommy Dodd uncomfortably. "It's better than crawling on the railway, with three changes of trains and a wait or two."

"Yes, that's all right in ordinary times," said Bulkeley. "But with so much unemployment about it is jolly bad form to spend all this money on a pure luxury. Do you know that about half the workers in Coombe are out of a job, and all but on their uppers?"

"Oh, my hat!" said Tommy Dodd. "I didn't think, Bulkeley. I—I say, it's too late to send the car back now. We've lost the train."

"You'd better go, then, as you've ordered the car. But don't let it occur again, or I shall have something to say to you."

"All right, Bulkeley."

The Sixth-Former went on towards the cricket-ground, and the juniors trooped into the car.

The chauffeur toolled the big automobile down the drive, and it turned out of the gates of Rookwood.

The junior eleven had started for the match at Greyfriars, but they had not started in their usual good spirits.

There was disunion in the team.

Mornington sat in a corner, and a few miles from Rookwood he produced a cigarette-case.

Tommy Dodd's expression grew almost

terrific as he saw the junior strike a match and light a cigarette.

Jimmy Silver said nothing.

He was in Mornington's car, and he was tired of bickering with the cad of the Fourth. It was not his business now that he was no longer skipper.

But Tommy Dodd was prompt to take action.

"What the thunder are you doing, Mornington?" he exclaimed.

"Smokin'."

"Throw it away!"

"Go and eat coke."

"Do you understand that I'm skipper of this team?"

"Oh, rats!"

"Throw that cigarette out of the window."

"I won't!"

"I can't turn you out of the team," said Tommy Dodd quietly. "If you'd played the goat like this before we started I'd have done so. It's too late now. I've got to play you in the match at Greyfriars. You're going to be in form for it, too—you're not going to smoke. Throw it away!"

"Bah!"

Tommy Dodd rose and grasped Mornington without another word. He jerked the cigarette from his lips and threw it away!

"Now give me the case."

"I won't!" yelled Mornington.

"Won't you?"

Mornington was down on the floor again the next minute, with Tommy Dodd's knee on his chest.

His furious face glared up at the Modern junior.

"I'll make you sorry for this!" he hissed between his teeth.

"Going to lick me?" asked Tommy contemptuously. "I'll give you a chance after the match."

He groped in Mornington's pocket for the cigarette-case. He opened it and tossed the cigarettes into the road.

Then he threw the case back to Mornington.

"Now you can get up," he said.

Mornington got up.

He simply hurled himself at Tommy Dodd, striking out furiously with both fists. But at that game he had no chance with the redoubtable Tommy.

The Modern junior knocked his blows aside, and let out his right, which Morn-

ington caught with his nose. Mornington was hurled back into his seat like a sack of coke.

He sat there panting.

"Like a little more?" asked Tommy Dodd cheerily.

"Hang you! Hang you!" stuttered Mornington. "I'll make you smart for this somehow!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Sure, it's a thafe of the worrld ye are, Mornington," said Flynn. "If I were skipper, I'd drop ye out of the car, and chance it!"

"We can't play a man short," said Tommy Dodd. "If I didn't want him to play, I'd chuck him out fast enough."

"And suppose I don't choose to play?" sneered Mornington.

"You can suit yourself. Greyfriars will lend us a man if we want one. In fact, I've half a mind not to play you, anyway."

Mornington grunted, and relapsed into silence.

"I owe you an apology, Silver," said Tommy Dodd. "I understand now why you wouldn't play that howling cad. You were right, and we were wrong."

"I thought you'd come to see it in time," said Jimmy Silver. "The rotter is simply impossible."

"Blessed if I don't think so," said Lovell.

"One thing's jolly certain—he doesn't play for me again," said Tommy Dodd grimly. "I'm fed up with the cad. I'd rather play a fag out of the Second Form."

Mornington's eyes glinted.

"You mean that?" he exclaimed.

"Yes—I mean it, every word."

"You'll be sorry for it."

"Oh, dry up!"

Jimmy Silver was silent.

He had stood alone in his determination not to play Mornington, good cricketer as the slacker of the Fourth had proved himself to be. But the rest of the eleven had come round to his way of thinking now. Tommy Dodd heartily regretted that Mornington was in his team. And he made up his mind that if he captained Rookwood juniors again, Mornington most certainly would not be a member of the eleven. He was quite fed up with the cad.

Mornington sat in sullen silence during the remainder of the drive.

The rest of the cricketers chatted, but they were not in a cheery humour. The

incidents of that drive had not conduced to cheerfulness.

When Mornington's eyes turned upon Tommy Dodd, they gleamed malice and hatred. The bitterness he had felt towards Jimmy Silver seemed to be turned upon Tommy Dodd now.

He had forced himself into the eleven, in spite of Jimmy Silver, but by his own obstinacy and insolence he had lost all that he had gained. Whoever captained the eleven after that, he was not likely to have any use for Mornington in it.

Jimmy Silver thought he understood Mornington's looks.

The rascal of Rookwood was thinking of one thing, and of one thing only, and that was revenge upon Tommy Dodd for handling him, and for his threat of turning him out of the eleven.

That threat, he knew, would be carried out; and so the young rascal had nothing to lose by wreaking his grudge in the first way that came to hand. And Jimmy guessed what way that would be. The Rookwooders set great store by the Greyfriars match, and a licking at Greyfriars would be a blow to them. Unless Jimmy was mistaken, there would be a traitor in the ranks. He tried to put the thought out of his mind—he did not want to do even Mornington an injustice.

But his hopes of a win in that long-expected match at Greyfriars were not high. Mornington would play good cricket—none better—so long as he was allowed to have his own way, and received a due quantity of "kow-towing." Otherwise, there was no rascality he would stop at.

Jimmy did not utter his thoughts.

He was no longer skipper of the team, and it was for Tommy Dodd to think that matter out and decide. But the Modern junior had no suspicion of what was in Mornington's mind. He did not know the cad of the Fourth quite so well as Jimmy Silver did.

Courtfield came in sight at last, and then the car buzzed along a leafy lane to Greyfriars School.

A fat junior, whose plump nose was adorned with a large pair of glasses, was lounging in the gateway as the car stopped.

He blinked at the Rookwood cricketers. "I say, you fellows! My hat! So you've come in a car!"

"Hallo, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter, of the Greyfriars Remove, chuckled.

"He, he, he!"

"Well, where does the cackle come in?" asked Tommy Dodd rather gruffly.

"He, he, he! Wharton's gone in the brake to meet you at the station," said Bunter. "Cherry and Nugent and Squiff have gone with him, and Linley and Brown and Bull—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"You see, they expected you to come by train," grinned Bunter. "They'll be waiting at the station for you! He, he, he!"

"Well, there's nothing to cackle at, you fat duffer!" growled Lovell.

But Billy Bunter seemed to think there was. He continued to cackle.

Tommy Dodd compressed his lips.

This mischance added to his annoyance. Mornington's swank had not finished causing trouble yet. Harry Wharton & Co. had naturally expected Rookwood to arrive by the usual train. Thirty or forty pounds for a motor-car, naturally, did not occur to them.

"Well, it can't be helped!" growled Tommy. "I suppose somebody can bike along and tell them we've come!"

"They'll wait for the next train!" chuckled Bunter. "He, he, he!"

"It won't take long to run down to the station in the car," suggested Jimmy Silver. "We can bring Wharton and the rest back with us!"

"Good egg!"

Tommy Dodd stepped back into the car, and the chauffeur drove on to Friardale.

CHAPTER 22.

At Greyfriars.

HARRY WHARTON & CO. were waiting at Friardale Station.

The train by which they had expected the Rookwood party had come and gone, but the Rookwooders had not appeared.

"Lost their train, by Jove!" said Bob Cherry. "Missed the connection at Courtfield, perhaps."

"They'll be late," said Wharton. "I suppose we'd better wait!"

"Silly asses!" growled Johnny Bull.

The Greyfriars fellows waited. The next local train crawled in from Courtfield, but it did not bring the expected cricketers.

The juniors watched it come in, and then left the station, puzzled and perplexed. The brake was waiting outside, with some of the Greyfriars juniors in it.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "Here they come!"

The car dashed up to the station, and stopped.

Wharton ran to it.

"My hat! We came here for you, and you seem to have come here for us!" he exclaimed. "We didn't know you were coming by car!"

He shook hands with Jimmy Silver as he spoke.

"We didn't know till this morning," said Jimmy. "We've got a tame millionaire who does these things. Sorry you had the trouble of getting a brake here for nothing!"

"Oh, that's all right!"

"No harm done," said Bob Cherry.

"Jump in here, and we'll whisk you back to Greyfriars," said Tommy Dodd.

"Right-ho!"

Wharton stopped to tell the driver of the brake to take it home, and then entered the car with his companions. The chauffeur turned back to Greyfriars.

The car, big as it was, was somewhat crowded now. Jimmy Silver & Co. knew that the Greyfriars fellows were thinking it extraordinary that so much money should have been spent on a car, though, of course, they made no remark on the subject. It made the Rookwood fellows feel uncomfortable.

Swank of any kind was not in their line; but purse-proud swank was worst of all. At that moment they wished Mornington and his endless supply of cash at the ends of the earth. The waste of so much money was in the most execrable taste.

The car covered the distance to Greyfriars in a few minutes, and turned in at the gates of the school. Wharton had learned by that time that the Rookwood team had a new captain, and he had been introduced to Mornington, the new member of the eleven. The Greyfriars fellows could not help observing Mornington's sullen looks, and wondered a little.

Billy Bunter had spread the story of the big car, and there was quite a crowd of Greyfriars fellows to see the cricketers alight.

Wharton and Tommy Dodd tossed the coin, and it fell to Rookwood to bat first.

Jimmy Silver spoke to Tommy in a low voice.

"You're opening with Mornington?" he asked.

Dodd stared.

"Certainly not! Why?"

"It would keep him in a good humour!"

"Hang his humour!"

"Certainly! I hanged his humour when I was playing him," said Jimmy, "and he threw away a wicket to get level with me. But we want to beat Greyfriars if we can; and as you've got the cad in the team——"

Tommy Dodd snorted.

"I've said that I think you were mistaken about that," he answered. "I can't believe the chap would be such a rotter. Anyway, he goes in last. He's a ripping bowler, but he's the poorest bat here!"

Jimmy Silver said no more. As skipper, he never made any concession himself to Mornington's swank, and Tommy Dodd could hardly be expected to do so. But unless Mornington was kept in a good humour, Jimmy knew that no good play was to be looked for from him.

Mornington was already putting on his gloves, as if he took it as a matter of course that he would go in first.

"Silver and Cook!" called out Tommy Dodd.

Mornington's eyes glinted.

"Where do I come in?" he asked.

"Last!" said Tommy Dodd curtly.

And he turned his back on Mornington, giving him no time to make any rejoinder.

The Rookwood innings opened with Jimmy Silver and Tommy Cook.

CHAPTER 21.

The Match.

HURREE JAMSET RAM SINGH, the Greyfriars Indian junior, went on to bowl the first over.

Jimmy Silver received the bowling, and he soon showed that he was in great form. It was as a bowler that Jimmy shone; but he was a very good bat, and he stood up well to the Indian's bowling.

The innings began with runs for Rookwood, and Tommy Dodd's face, which had been clouded, heightened up considerably as he watched that good beginning.

Jimmy Silver was 25 to the good when he was caught out by Tom Brown of Greyfriars. Cook and Doyle and Baby had

fallen victims to the bowling during that time, with a handful of runs each. Then Tommy Dodd went in, to face the bowling from Tom Brown. The New Zealand junior of Greyfriars was a good bowler, and at the third ball Tommy's sticks were down.

"Rotten luck!" said Jimmy Silver sympathetically as he came off.

"Lucky you did better!" grunted Tommy Dodd. "They've got jolly good bowlers! But we've got something in that line to surprise 'em a bit, I think!"

The wickets went down as the runs went up. The score stood at 50 when "Last man in" was called.

"Mornington!" called out Dodd.

Mornington was not to be seen.

"Where's that silly ass got to?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd irritably. "Why isn't he here? He's keeping the field waiting!"

"Mornington! Mornny!"

"Where are you, you duffer?"

"He, he, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter.

"Your man's gone to the tuckshop!"

"The silly dunny! Cut off and tell him we're waiting! There's a good chap!"

Billy Bunter rolled away. He came back in a few minutes, grinning. Meanwhile, the Greyfriars fieldsmen were waiting.

"Well, where is he?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd, as the fat junior came back alone.

"He, he, he! He says he'll come when he's finished his ginger-pop!"

Tommy Dodd's jaw looked very square as he started for the school shop behind the elms in a corner of the old Close.

He found Mornington seated on a high stool at the counter, imbibing ginger-pop in a leisurely manner and chatting with Skinner and Snoop of the Remove.

"You silly duffer!" roared Tommy Dodd, putting his head into the shop. "Do you know we're waiting for you?"

Mornington looked round carelessly.

"Well, wait!" he said.

"What?"

"I haven't finished my ginger-pop! You've left me late enough! A little later won't hurt!"

Tommy Dodd crimsoned with anger.

"Come with me!" he shouted.

"Oh, rats!"

Tommy Dodd wasted no more time in words. He rushed at Mornington, grasped him by the collar, and yanked him off the high stool. The stool went flying, and

Mornington came to the floor with a heavy bump.

"Leggo!" he roared.

"Come on!"

"You rotter! Let go! Oh—ah—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Skinner and Snoop as Mornington was rushed out of the tuckshop, with a iron grip on his collar.

Mornington, struggling wildly in Tommy Dodd's powerful grasp, was rushed down to the cricket-ground at top speed. The Greyfriars fellows looked on in blank astonishment, and Vernon-Smith burst into a laugh.

"Now get on, you booby!" growled Tommy Dodd, thrusting Mornington's bat into his hand. "Buck up!"

Mornington grasped the cane handle of the bat with convulsive fingers, as if he would fell his skipper to the earth with it. But he controlled himself, and strode sullenly on the pitch.

"My word!" Bob Cherry murmured to Wharton. "What sort of a merchant is that?"

Wharton laughed.

The ball was tossed to Tom Brown as Mornington went savagely to the wicket.

The New Zealand junior glanced along the pitch at the sullen, savage face and gleaming eyes of the batsman curiously. He sent down the ball.

Mornington hardly moved his bat.

Crash!

"How's that?" sang out the New Zealander.

And there was a laugh.

"Out!"

Jimmy Silver shrugged his shoulders. He had expected it. But Tommy Dodd's eyes almost started from his head. Even Tommy Dodd could scarcely doubt that Mornington had deliberately thrown away his wicket.

He strode to meet the batsman as he came off. The glitter in his eyes daunted Mornington, and he backed a little.

"Did you do that on purpose, you unspeakable cad?" stuttered Tommy.

"No!" Mornington muttered sullenly.

It had been on his lips to admit it, and taunt his skipper; but he realised that it was not safe. At a word Tommy Dodd would have knocked him spinning.

"I'll give you the benefit of the doubt," said Tommy Dodd. "But, by Jove, you'd better be careful, Mornington!"

Rockwood were all down for 50.

Vernon-Smith joined Mornington as the latter stood sullenly alone near the pavilion. The Bounder eyed him very curiously.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Nothin'!"

"Your wicket went jolly easily," said the Bounder.

Mornington's lip curled.

"It will go just as easily in the next innings!" he said coolly.

"You mean to say—"

"I don't agree with my skipper. I'm a dangerous fellow to rag!" said Mornington, his eyes glittering.

"Dash it all, that isn't playing the game, you know!"

"You were always such a fellow for playing the game, weren't you?" sneered Mornington.

The Bounder flushed and turned away without speaking. At his very worst, the Bounder of Greyfriars had never been such a real "rotter" as this. Vernon-Smith was called to open the innings with Harry Wharton for Greyfriars, and Mornington followed the Rookwooders into the field.

CHAPTER 24.

Turned Out of the Team.

JIMMY SILVER bowled the first over for Rookwood.

The Rookwood score was not what

Tommy Dodd had hoped to see it, but he pinned his faith to the Rookwood bowling. With two such bowlers as Jimmy and Mornington, he felt certain that the Greyfriars score was pretty certain to be kept low. And Jimmy's first over showed great promise. The Bounder of Greyfriars received it, and after taking 4 runs on the first two balls, he was clean bowled with the third, and he went out, looking somewhat grim.

Bob Cherry followed him in, and was dismissed for 2. Then came Frank Nugent, who went out with a duck's egg for the last ball of the over.

It was a good beginning for Rookwood.

The field crossed over, and Mornington received the ball to bowl against Harry Wharton.

"Put in the best you can," said Tommy Dodd. "Wharton's the best bat on the Greyfriars side. If you can get him out, you can play with the rest."

Mornington smiled.

There was a peculiar glimmer in his eyes as he went to the bowler's crease. The Rookwood field looked on keenly.

Mornington had shown wonderful quality as a bowler, equalling even Jimmy Silver. In practice at Rookwood he had taken Bulkeley's wicket, and Bulkeley was a mighty man at the wicket. The Rookwooders cheerfully expected him to make hay of the Greyfriars wickets.

But they were disappointed.

Harry Wharton received an easy ball—a ball that a fag in the Second Form could have played with ease.

He cut it away to the boundary, and the batsmen did not trouble to run. Johnny Bull grinned at him along the pitch. Both the batsmen wondered what on earth that rank duffer had been put on to bowl for.

The next ball was just as easy, and it went to the boundary again. Tommy Dodd looked on in amazement.

This was the champion bowler who was to have kept down the Greyfriars runs. A third boundary followed, and the Greyfriars crowd began to laugh and cheer.

"Well bowled!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington smiled grimly. He knew what he was about. He was able to play into the batsman's hands if he chose, and he did choose.

Wharton was a hard hitter, and that kind of bowling was child's play to him. It looked as if he would not have to stir from his wicket during the over, while adding runs at a great rate.

A fourth boundary hit was greeted with yells of laughter from the crowd. Tommy Dodd's face was a picture by this time.

The fifth ball of the over gave the batsmen 3, and Johnny Bull faced the bowling. And Johnny slugged at the easy ball, and it swept past the boundary amid a roar of laughter.

Twenty-three runs for the over was enough to make the Greyfriars fellows roar.

"Give the ball to Raby!" said Tommy Dodd, in choking tones, as Mornington came off the pitch.

Mornington smiled.

"I don't seem to be in great form yet," he remarked carelessly. "Draggin' a chap about by the collar doesn't improve his form!"

"You rotten cad! Are you giving the game away?" muttered Tommy Dodd.

Mornington raised his eyebrows.

"What a question!" he drawled. "You should really have let me have my smoke in the car, Dodd! I warned you you'd be sorry for it, didn't I?"

Tommy Dodd clenched his hands hard.

"Then you've let us down on purpose, you cad!" he said.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

But for Tommy's natural repugnance to making a startling scene before the Greyfriars fellows, Mornington would have gone down on his back at that moment. Tommy Dodd restrained his anger with an effort.

Raby went on to bowl the next over.

Then Jimmy Silver bowled again, and Wharton's wicket went down, and the Rookwooders cheered up a little.

"Are you trying Morny again?" Cook whispered to his skipper when the field crossed over.

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"You think he was giving the game away?"

"I know he was."

"Well, it looks like it," agreed Tommy Cook. "Jimmy Silver was right about the cad after all. I say, this looks bad for us!"

"Can't be helped! I'll have something to say to Mornington afterwards."

"That won't save the match," said Cook ruefully.

The bowling was chiefly in the hands of Jimmy Silver and Raby after that, with Tommy Cook for an occasional change. Dodd did not intend to trust the ball into Mornington's hands again.

Mornington contented himself with fielding and he fielded very badly. He had proved himself a good catch, but his skill had deserted him now. Squiff, of the Remove, gave him a good chance, but the ball dropped untouched, and Squiff added 20 runs to his credit before he was bowled by Jimmy Silver. Tommy Dodd gritted his teeth in helpless anger. He understood now Jimmy Silver's feelings when he had found that he had a traitor in the ranks on the one occasion when Jimmy had, against his better judgment, played Mornington in a match.

Mornington had no further opportunity of treachery on the bowling-crease. But the loss of the first-rate bowling they had depended on was a heavy one to the Rookwood team. Jimmy Silver was first-rate, but the change bowlers were very ordinary,

and Mornington's bowling was sadly missed.

The Greyfriars innings ended for 95 runs—almost double the Rookwood score.

They owed at least half the score to Mornington's bowling, and to the fact that he had not bowled, as Tommy Dodd well knew.

When the field came off, dark looks were cast at Mornington by the rest of the team. Only the fact that they were on the Greyfriars ground saved him from a ragging.

There was an early tea under the trees before Rookwood batted a second time.

When they prepared for their second innings, Mornington lounged up to Tommy Dodd, with a smile on his face.

"Like to open the innings with me?" he asked.

Tommy's eyes blazed.

"No, you cad!"

"You'd better!"

Tommy clenched his hands. It was as much as he could do to keep them off the cad of the Fourth at that moment.

"You'll go in last," he said, between his teeth, "and if you lose your wicket for

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a duck's egg, I'll kick you out of the team on the spot, whatever the Greyfriars fellows may think!"

Mornington gave a shrug.

Dodd and Cook opened the innings. They had little hope of a win now, but they played their hardest. First-rate bowling from Hurree Singh, Tom Brown, and Peter Todd accounted for the wickets.

Tommy Dodd knocked up 30, and Jimmy Silver equalled his score, but the rest of the batsmen had little luck. There were no duck's eggs; but Oswald was dismissed for 2, Lovell for 3 and Raby for 1. Flynn accounted for 6, and Cook and Doyle for 7 each. The score stood at 90 when Mornington came in.

Tommy Dodd spoke to him as he put on his gloves. There was a chance yet if every run was added that could be added. It made Tommy simply wild to think that he had to ask a batsman not to betray the side. But a defeat loomed darkly ahead, and Tommy Dodd put his temper in his pocket, so to speak, and addressed Mornington with all the civility he could muster.

"Do your best, Mornington. There's a chance of pulling the game out of the fire. Every run counts now."

Mornington smiled sneeringly.

"Are you goin' to keep me in the team after this?" he asked.

"No!" said Tommy, with blazing eyes.

"Sure of that?"

"Yes, you cad!"

"Enough said!"

Mornington went to the wickets, and Tommy Dodd's hopes sank to zero. He knew what to expect, and what he expected was not long in arriving.

The first ball from Squiff knocked Mornington's bails off. Rookwood all down for 90.

"Oh, the thafe of the worruld!" gasped Tommy Doyle, as Mornington came lounging off. "Sure, I can't kape me hands off him, Tommy!"

"Leave him to me!" said Tommy Dodd grimly.

Mornington came up to the pavilion, and Tommy Dodd met him with a blaze in his eyes. Jimmy Silver & Co., guessing what was coming, stood round to screen the scene as much as possible from Greyfriars' eyes.

"You rotten cad!" said Tommy Dodd,

in low, furious tones. "You haven't decency enough to know what a cowardly hound you are! Take that!"

"Oh!" yelled Mornington.

Crash!

The cad of the Fourth rolled at Tommy Dodd's feet.

"Now get off the field!" said Tommy Dodd savagely. "If you're still here in one minute, I'll pitch into you, and give you the biggest hiding you ever had in your life!"

The Greyfriars fellows exchanged glances, and politely looked another way, and apparently remained in ignorance of what was going on. Mornington staggered to his feet, his face crimson, his eyes glinting.

Without a word he turned and left the field.

"Good riddance!" muttered Cook. "Better play a man short than have a traitor in the team!"

CHAPTER 25.

Rough Justice.

GREYFRIARS wanted 46 to win, and there was ample light for double that number of runs to be scored if the batsmen could do it. And there was little doubt that they could do it. Jimmy Silver was as keen as ever, and the "bat trick" from Jimmy cheered up his comrades. But the bat trick could not win the match. A good catch by Newcome in the slips helped. But the Greyfriars Remove had four wickets yet in hand when 45 runs had been scored, and they tied. Then Harry Wharton knocked the ball away for a single, and the match was won.

The Rookwooders took their defeat as cheerfully as they could.

They had come to Greyfriars expecting to do great things. Tommy Dodd had congratulated himself on having two first-class bowlers in his eleven. The disappointment was bitter—all the more so because it was due to treachery, and not to bad luck.

Most of the team intended to have something to say to Mornington when they returned to Rookwood—indeed, it was likely that Mornington would have some very painful experiences in the car home.

Billy Bunter was grimacing outside the pavilion as the Rookwooders came out ready to depart.

"Looking for the car?" grinned Bunter.

"He, he, he!"

"I suppose the car's ready?" said Jimmy Silver.

"He, he, he! It's gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed all the cricketers together.

"He, he, he!"

"What do you mean, you fat duffer?" exclaimed Tommy Dodd. "The car's not gone with us, I suppose?"

Harry Wharton came up.

"I'm sorry to say your car's gone off," he said, rather awkwardly. "Bob has gone on his bike for the brake. It will be here in two ticks."

"Oh, my hat!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Has Mornington gone?" asked Lovell.

"Ahem! From what I've heard I fancy your man went off in the car while we were batting," said Wharton.

"Well, it was his car," said Tommy Dodd. "I'd rather go home by train, really. I suppose there is a train?"

"Yes; lots of time for that!"

The Rookwooders waited, with all the patience they could muster, till the brake arrived, and they were glad to get into it and start for the station.

"I wonder what the Greyfriars fellows are thinking about the scene on the field?" grunted Lovell.

"I wonder!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd gave the captain of the Fourth a glare.

"Why don't you say 'I told you so'?" he asked bitterly.

"No good jawing," said Jimmy Silver.

"I did tell you so, as a matter of fact, Tommy. Mornington's only served you as he served me. The fellow can't get on with anybody who won't kowtow to his rotten money!"

"Well, you were right!" said Tommy Dodd more amiably. "I suppose all the fellows will admit that now. The rotter chucked the game away, because I wouldn't let him smoke in the car coming over. I was wrong about him, and I own up. After this, you're skipper again, Jimmy Silver."

"I haven't said anything about that——"

"I know you haven't! But you resigned because you wouldn't play Mornington, and we were asses enough to want him. I wouldn't play him now for his weight in

gold. I hand the captaincy back to you—that's only cricket!"

"Hear, hear!" said Lovell.

The brake stopped at Friardale Station, in good time for the train, fortunately. The Rookwood cricketers piled into the train. During the journey home most of the cricketers were thinking of the things they would say to Mornington when they arrived. They reached Coombe at last, whence they had to walk through the night-fall to Rookwood.

The school gates were closed when they arrived, and old Mack came out to open them.

Inside, a group of elegant youths were standing, evidently waiting for the cricketers. Townsend and Topham and Peele and Smythe and Mornington chuckled in chorus as the tired juniors came tramping in.

"So you've got home?" grinned Smythe.

"By gad! You look fagged."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chorussed the nuts.

Tommy Dodd strode up to Mornington.

"You cad!" he said, between his teeth. Mornington smiled insolently.

"You told me you didn't want my blessed car, more than once," he remarked.

"I took you at your word, you see. I assure you, the run home was much pleasanter without your company."

"I don't mind your taking the car, you swanking rotter," he said. "What I'm going to speak to you about is selling out the match."

"Oh, draw it mild!" said Smythe.

"We've had all that from Jimmy Silver for a week past, you know!"

"You'll have it from me now. Mornington played like a Hun. He gave away the match out of rotten spite. Now he's going to put his hands up!"

"Oh, I'll do that!" said Mornington.

"If you're looking for a lickin', you Modern cad, I'll give you one!"

"Go it, Morny!" chorussed his friends.

"Come on!" said Tommy Dodd grimly.

Tommy Dodd was not in good trim for a fight, after a hard cricket-match and a long railway journey. Perhaps Mornington counted on that, and believed that there was a chance for a little cheap glory. If so, he was mistaken.

Tommy Dodd "piled in" with grim determination, the cricketers standing round in a ring.

There were no rounds in that fight; it was hammer-and-tongs from start to finish.

Mornington did his best, and he came on with plenty of pluck, and still more savage temper. A good many of his fierce blows came home on Tommy Dodd's flushed face.

But Dodd did not heed them.

Mornington was knocked right and left, amid cheers from the cricketers, and at the end of five minutes he was lying in the quad, gasping, and unable to rise.

Tommy Dodd looked down at him with gleaming eyes.

"Is that enough?" he snapped.

"Ow—ow—wow!" groaned Mornington.

Tommy Dodd gave him a glance of contempt, and walked on. Townsend & Co. gathered round Mornington, and helped him up, and helped him away. The dandy of the Fourth was looking a wreck in the dormitory that night; but there was no sympathy for him from the Classical Fourth.

CHAPTER 26.

Jimmy Silver's Little Dodge.

"**W**HEREFORE that frown, O chief?"

Raby of the Fourth asked the question.

Jimmy Silver certainly was frowning. The captain of the Fourth looked decidedly exasperated. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were doing their preparation in the end study, but Jimmy Silver had not settled down to work. Apparently he had some other matter on his mind.

"What's the row, Jimmy?" demanded Lovell.

"Better get on with your prep," advised Newcome. "Are you looking for a row with Bootles in the morning?"

Jimmy Silver grunted.

"It's rotten!" he growled.

"Prep is? Can't be helped, old chap."

"Not prep, fathead. Do you know what's going on in Mornington's study?"

Lovell yawned.

"Blessed if I know, or care," he answered.

"Tain't our business," suggested Raby.

"That's all very well. Who's captain of the Fourth?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "A Form-captain oughtn't to let a set of wasters disgrace the Form. Mornington's got a card-party in his study—there's Morny, Peel,

Higgs, Topham, and Townsend. They're playing nap, and smoking."

"Let 'em!"

"They've got the door locked," went on Jimmy Silver. "Pretty disgrace it would be for all of us if a prefect dropped on them. The Modern cads chip us already about having a crowd of blackguards on the Classical side."

"My dear chap, we can't help it," said Lovell. "Besides, they won't interrupt prep, and the cads are supposed to be doing their prep. Let 'em rip."

"I've been thinking—"

"Bow-wow! We're not going to raid Morny's study because he's playing the giddy ox. Besides, if the door's locked, we can't get in. If we make a row there, it will bring up Bulkeley, or Neville, or Beaumont, and all the fat will be in the fire. Morny ought to be sacked, but we don't want to bring it about."

"And we don't want to set up as Good Little Georgies!" murmured Raby. "Let 'em rip, and get on with your prep, Jimmy."

"I've got an idea."

"Go and bury it, and get your prep done."

"I don't know whether I ought to chip in," said Jimmy. "A chap doesn't want to take up the line of being superior to his neighbours. All the same, it oughtn't to be allowed to go on. That crew were bad enough before Mornington came, but he's making them worse. I think a bit of a fright would do them good. Suppose they heard Bootles at the door while they're going strong—what?"

The Co. chuckled.

"It would scare them out of their wits," grinned Lovell. "But we're jolly well not going to bring Mr. Bootles down on them. This study bars sneaking."

"Who's talking about sneaking, you ass?"

"Well, Bootles won't come of his own accord. Bootles never suspects anybody of anything."

"You know Bootles' voice?"

"Eh! I suppose so."

"I've been practising it," said Jimmy Silver. "Bootle has a voice that anybody could imitate—a cross between the bark of a dog and the toot of a frog. I can do it a treat."

"Yes, I've heard you. Better not let Bootles hear you. He wouldn't be flattered

if he heard what you thought his toot was really like."

"I'm not going to let Bootles hear me, fathead. I'm going to let those cads in Morny's study hear me—through the door."

"Oh!"

"That's the idea," said Jimmy Silver, with considerable satisfaction. "I rather think they will take me for our respected Form-master, as they can't see through the door. And it will give them a hint of what they'd feel like if they were really bowled out—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver rose from the study table.

"Come on!" he said.

"What about prep?" asked Raby doubtfully.

"Blow prep!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Bless prep! Bust prep! Isn't this a first-class jape, you howling ass?"

"Oh, all right! Keep your wool on!"

Jimmy Silver led the way, and the Fistic Four left the study. At the other end of the passage, near the stairs, several grinning juniors were collected. The door of Mornington's study was closed and locked, but the Fourth-Formers seemed interested in what was going on in that study. From within there was an occasional clink of coin, and an occasional remark could be heard.

"Your deal, Peele."

"Hand me the matches!"

"Nap!"

"Silly asses!" growled Lovell, in disgust. "Anybody passing might hear that. That silly idiot Mornington is simply hunting for trouble."

"Looking for the sack, bedad," said Flynn of the Fourth. "You can smell the smoke outside the study."

"They ought to be stopped," said Dick Oswald.

"What a goey study!" chuckled Newcome. "Morny & Co. will go the pace—till they go out of Rookwood on their necks."

"Sure, we could get the dure open with a chisel, and mop up the silly blaggards," said Flynn.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Leave them to me," he said.

"The door's locked."

"All the better for the little game. Mind, not a word."

"What's the game?" asked Jones minor.

"You'll see."

Jimmy Silver advanced to the door of the study and tapped.

"Oh, clear off!" came Mornington's voice from within. "Don't bother, you asses! We're not opening the door."

"Mornington!"

There was a gasp of merriment from the juniors in the passage. For Jimmy Silver, in uttering that word, had imitated exactly the somewhat wheezy voice of Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth. Had not the Fourth-Formers seen him with their own eyes, they would have supposed that it was Mr. Bootles who was speaking. And the juniors chuckled gleefully as they heard an exclamation of utter dismay inside the locked study.

CHAPTER 27.

Something Like a Scare!

THE card players in Mornington's study sat frozen. Only Mornington seemed to have energy enough to move.

Tap, tap!

The blades of the Fourth stared at the door as if mesmerised.

They had supposed that they were quite safe in the study. Mr. Bootles seldom or never visited the junior studies, and prefects were not likely to come along at an hour when the juniors were supposed to be hard at work upon their preparation. The nuts of Rookwood had locked themselves in the study for a high old time—according to their peculiar ideas.

There were cards on the table, and cigarettes, and little heaps of money, cigarette-ends on the floor, and cigarette-ash on all sides. The atmosphere of the room was heavy with smoke.

And outside came that imperative tapping at the door, and the voice of Mr. Bootles demanding entrance. The voice was going on sternly.

"Mornington! Peele! Townsend! Open this door at once—at once, I say! I am perfectly aware of what is going on in this study—perfectly! You hear me, Mornington? What—what?"

Mornington's face was furious.

He was the only fellow in the study who did not look scared to desperation.

"Oh, by gad!" groaned Townsend. "Oh, crumbs! Caught at last!"

"Fairly caught!" mumbled Peele.

"A flogging from the Head!" muttered Higgs. "That's what it means—a flogging from the Head!"

"You fool, Morny!"

"Open this door!" went on the voice outside. "Why is this door locked? Bless my soul, I can actually smell tobacco! Mornington, I am shocked, astounded! Will you open this door at once? What—what?"

"B-b-better open the door!" mumbled Topham. "We—we—we can't keep Bootles out."

Mornington gritted his teeth.

"Get the study tidy, you fools!" he whispered. "Don't sit there like a set of moulting fowls! Get the smokes out of sight, open the window, hide the cards! Get a move on!"

"But—but Bootles——"

"Quick, I tell you!"

Tap, tap!

"One moment, sir!" called out Mornington. "I can't find the key, sir. It's dropped out of the lock."

"Mornington, I fear that you are prevaricating. There is smoking going on in this study—— What—what?"

"Oh, no, sir! Nothing of the kind!"

"Mornington, I can smell the tobacco!"

"It's some cigarettes I've been burnin', sir. I took them from a bag. I thought they ought to be destroyed."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Peele.

Mornington's ready wit had not forsaken him, and he was not hampered by any scrupulous regard for the truth. While Mornington was talking, the nuts of the Fourth were busy. Cigarettes were hidden, cards hurried out of sight, flag-ends picked up and tossed into the grate. Peele opened the window wide, and Higgs and Topham waved newspapers about to clear off the smoke. Mr. Bootles could not be kept out for long. But under Morny's able lead, the blades of Rookwood hoped yet to escape the consequences of their recklessness.

Tap, tap, tap!

"Have you not found that key, Mornington?" rapped out the voice outside.

"I—I'm lookin' for it, sir."

"I fear you are prevaricating, Mornington."

"Oh, sir!"

"I have every reason to believe that smoking and card-playing is going on in this study."

"Oh, sir! I assure you I am quite incapable of anything of the sort!"

Three or four boxes of cigarettes were piled in the fender, and Mornington was setting a heap of matches to them. The boxes and the cigarettes burned and smouldered.

"The smell of tobacco is very distinct," came the voice from without. "I am sure I am not mistaken!"

"It's those cigarettes I've been burnin', sir."

"Is that the truth, Mornington?"

"Yaas, sir. I felt they ought to be destroyed. Pernicious things, sir!"

"Oh, crumbs!" murmured Topham.

"I trust you are speaking with veracity, Mornington. Have you not found that key yet?"

"I—I can see it now, sir."

Five minutes had been gained by the young rascals owing to Mornington's presence of mind. In five minutes the nuts of the Fourth had done wonders. There was not a glimmer of a card, the money had vanished, no cigarettes were to be seen save those burning in the fender, which would account for the smoke-laden atmosphere. The admiration of the nuts for their leader was deep and breathless. Truly, Mornington was a leader worthy of their admiration.

Mornington turned to the door, and rattled the key as if he were putting it into the lock. Then he turned it.

The door was thrown open.

The nuts of Rookwood stood respectfully for their Form-master to enter. The next moment they gasped.

In the doorway, wide open now, there was nothing to be seen of Mr. Bootles.

Jimmy Silver was standing there.

Behind him was a crowd of the Fourth, almost in paroxysms of mirth, and as the nuts stared at them blankly the long-held laughter burst out in a roar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER 28.

Straight From the Shoulder.

"H A. ha, ha!"

"Howly Moses! Ha, ha, ha!"
The Classical juniors roared, and howled and shrieked. The sight of the nuts in the study was irresistible.

Mornington & Co. could scarcely believe their eyes.

They had had the scare of their lives; they had laboured under the wild excitement and terror for five mortal minutes. And now that the door was open they saw nothing more dangerous than a swarm of yelling juniors.

"I—I say—" stuttered Townsend.

"Where's Bootles?" shrieked Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Has he gone?" gasped Higgs. "Where's he gone? What's he gone for?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spoofed!" yelled Lovell. "Can't you see you're spoofed, you smokey rotters?"

"Wha-a-at!"

"I am convinced," said Jimmy Silver, once more adopting Mr. Bootles' tones—"I am convinced that smoking has been going on in this study."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I fear that you have prevaricated, Mornington."

The juniors yelled.

"I am shocked—astounded! You were a long time finding that key, Mornington. What—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You spoofin' rotter!" yelled Townsend.

"It was you all the time!"

"Jimmy Silver!" gasped Peele.

"Oh, you spoofin' beast!"

"You—you awful rotter!"

Mornington's brow became as black as thunder as he realised how the humorous Jimmy had pulled his leg. The cigarettes—five shillings' worth of them—were smouldering away merrily in the fender.

"So you were trickin' me?" yelled Mornington, advancing upon the captain of the Fourth with his fists clenched and his eyes glittering.

Jimmy Silver nodded coolly.

"Exactly," he replied.

"You rotten cad!"

"Haven't I done you good?" grinned Jimmy. "You know now exactly what you'd feel like if Bootles dropped on your little game."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out!" yelled Lovell.

But Jimmy Silver was looking out. Mornington, almost blind with rage, sprang at the captain of the Fourth like a tiger.

Jimmy closed with him at once.

Mornington's hands were forced down, and his arms were pinned to his sides by Jimmy's iron grasp.

He struggled in that grasp with savage fury, but he could not break it. Jimmy's sinewy arms had closed round him like a vice.

His furious face looked into Jimmy's cool and smiling one as he struggled in vain, painting for breath.

"Keep smiling!" said Jimmy soothingly.

"Let me go, you bound!" yelled Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lend me a hand, you funks!" Mornington howled. "Pile on him!"

"Yes, pile on, and we'll all pile on," said Lovell invitingly. "I'll look after you, Toway, if you like."

Towny did not accept the invitation.

"Let me go! I'll—I'll——"

"You'll sit down," said Jimmy Silver cheerfully; and he released Mornington so suddenly that the junior plumped on the study carpet with a resounding bump.

There was a fresh howl of laughter from the crowded passage as Mornington sat blinking and panting. It was not much use for the slacker of the Fourth to tackle Jimmy Silver, the most redoubtable fighting-man in the Lower School at Rookwood.

"Get up and have some more, Morny, darling," chuckled Flynn. "Sure it's entertainin' ye are."

Mornington staggered to his feet.

His savage temper was quite out of control now. He made a swing at the table, and grasped a heavy inkstand. He swung round on Jimmy Silver with the inkstand in the air.

"Look out!" shrieked Townsend.

"Morny, you mad idiot——"

Crash!

Before Mornington could strike the intended blow, which would certainly have done serious injury, Jimmy Silver was upon him. His right fist crashed into the face of the Dandy of the Fourth. The inkstand fell with a crash to the floor, and Mornington crashed into the fender.

He lay there gasping, on the smouldering cigarettes.

The blow had been a terrific one, straight from the shoulder. Jimmy Silver looked down on him with blazing eyes.

"Is that enough for you, you cad?" he exclaimed.

Mornington only groaned in response.

"You get out of our study," growled Peele.

Jimmy's flashing eyes turned on the nuts. "Now listen to me," he exclaimed. "I've given you a fright, and if that isn't a lesson to you, you'll get something stronger. This kind of blackguardism isn't going on in the Fourth Form of Rookwood. It's not good enough. I warn you to look out. If there's any more of it, you'll all get handled—and pretty severely, too!"

And with that, Jimmy Silver strode out of the study.

Peele closed the door.

"Hurt, Morny?" he asked.

Mornington sat up dazedly in the fender.

"Hurt? Yes, you fool!" he mumbled.

"Well, it serves you right," grunted Higgs. "Suppose you'd stunned Silver with that inkstand? You'd have been sacked from the school."

"Mind your own business!"

Mornington staggered to his feet.

He was pale with rage, and a stream of crimson from his nose stained his chin, and ran over his collar. He dabbed at it savagely with a cambric handkerchief.

"You do look a sight, and no mistake," grinned Higgs.

"Oh, shut up!"

"I—I suppose we're not goin' on?" asked Townsend doubtfully.

Mornington laughed savagely.

"No; I'm not goin' on playin' cards now. I don't feel up to it. I'm goin' to get level with Jimmy Silver."

"Not much use tacklin' him," said Townsend, shrugging his shoulders. "He can lick any chap here—even Higgs."

"I'm not goin' to tackle him."

"Better leave him alone," remarked Peele. "After all, it was only a jape. You needn't have got into such a rotten temper, Morny."

"Leave him alone?" Mornington gritted his teeth. "Yes, I'll leave him alone—when he's been worse handled than I've been—when I see him lying without being able to move—when I see him——"

"Are you dotty?" exclaimed Townsend, in astonishment. "What the thunder are you drivin' at, Morny?"

Mornington gave him a savage look.

"There are others who can do what I can't do," he muttered.

"Thinkin' of tippin' a Sixth-Former to lick him?" sneered Topham. "There are some things you can't do with your confounded money, Morny."

"Not many. I think," said Mornington,

his lips curling sarcastically. "I've generally noticed that money buys most things that a fellow wants. But I'm not thinkin' of gettin' any Rookwood chap to smash Jimmy Silver. That wouldn't be any good."

"Blessed if I know what you're drivin' at, then."

"You needn't know," said Mornington, going to the door.

"Where are you goin', Morny?"

"I'm goin' to bathe my nose," snarled Mornington. "After that, I'm going to see Joey Hook, the bookie!"

"What for?"

"You'd better not know."

With that, the dandy of the Fourth quitted the study, his handkerchief still to his nose. Townsend & Co. looked at one another uneasily.

"What's he got in his mind now?" muttered Peele.

"Dashed if I know!" growled Townsend. "Askin' for the sack, most likely. Whatever it is, I'm not goin' to have a hand in it."

The nuts were all agreed on that. They found an able leader in Mornington. But they were almost scared, sometimes, by his passionate temper and his revengeful nature. And whatever scheme he had in his hot head, they were quite resolved to know nothing about it, and have nothing to do with it.

That Mornington had some scheme in his head for revenge upon the captain of the Fourth was quite clear. And as it was quite on the cards that it might lead to Mornington being "sacked" from Rookwood, his dear pals intended to give him a wide berth while he carried it out.

CHAPTER 29.

A Precious Pair.

"WERRY glad to see your 'Ighness!"

Joey Hook's tone and manner were very respectful. He rose from his seat in the garden of the Bird in Hand as Mornington came down the path in the sunset. Joey Hook, the bookmaker, was sunning himself in the garden, smoking a big cigar, and conning over a betting-book, when Mornington appeared.

Mr. Hook could be overbearing and bullying sometimes, as fellows who had got into

his debt discovered. But with Mornington he was always extremely respectful.

Mornington was a regular horn of plenty to Mr. Hook.

Mornington simply rolled in money, and he was a reckless gambler. Every now and then he made winnings, which Mr. Hook paid up promptly, for the sake of encouragement.

As a rule, of course, he was a loser, and Mr. Hook's dealings with him brought a new and unaccustomed affluence to the enterprising Joseph.

Mornington had so much money that he did not miss his losses, though they were sometimes very heavy. And Mr. Hook was always at his service. He would have sacrificed much rather than have quarrelled with the dandy of Rookwood. And he endured Mornington's tone of half-contemptuous, half-friendly patronage with great equanimity. Mornington paid for his insolence, and that was all Joey Hook cared about.

Mr. Hook regarded Mornington curiously as the junior sank on the bench under the trees. Very few of the most reckless fellows at Rookwood would have cared to visit the Bird in Hand in broad daylight; but it was very like Mornington to do so. Mornington's face was clouded now; his eyes gleamed, and his nose was red and swollen. Mr. Hook opined that the junior had lately been having some of the cheek knocked out of him. He was right.

Mornington took a case from his pocket and selected a cigarette. The bookmaker passed him a match.

"Wot is it this time?" he asked. "I was just a wonderin' whether you'd give me a call—about the Saturday's afternoon's race."

Mornington shook his head.

"It's not racin' this time," he said. "I want you to do somethin' for me, Hook."

"Anythin' you like. I'm yours to command," said Mr. Hook. "I'd be proud to do anythin' for you."

"You know Jimmy Silver?"

Mr. Hook's fat face clouded.

"Yes, I know the young 'ound," he said.

"You don't like him?"

"No, I don't—unless he's a friend of yours," added Mr. Hook hastily. "If he's your friend, I ain't the man to bear malice."

"I hate him."

"Well, you naturally would, sir," said

Mr. Hook. "A cheeky, cocky, exasperating young varmint—not your sort."

"I want him thrashed."

"Eh?"

"I suppose we can't be heard here?" said Mornington, looking round.

"No; that's all right. But—but you said—"

"You see the state of my face?" hissed Mornington. "Well, Jimmy Silver did that."

"Cheeky young 'ound to lay 'ands on you," said Mr. Hook, suppressing a grin. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hook wondered that hands had not been laid on Mornington many times. Sometimes his insolent manner would have provoked Mr. Hook to lay his own fat hands on him, if Mr. Hook had not had such a keen eye to the side upon which his bread was buttered.

"I've tried to tackle him, and I can't," went on Mornington. "I've put a bigger fellow to lick him—a burly beast named Higgs—and he licked Higgs. But he's got to pay for what he's done. I want him thrashed!"

"My eye!" said Mr. Hook. "I'd like to lay my stick about the young rip, ready and willin'. But—but that ain't in my line."

Mornington made an impatient gesture.

"Don't be an ass, Hook! I don't want you to handle him yourself. He could knock you into a cocked hat."

"Oh, could he?" growled Mr. Hook, nettled.

"Yes, he could!" Mornington scanned the fat, flabby bookmaker with a glance that was not flattering. "I'm not thinking of that. I want you to find a couple of roughs to deal with him."

"Oh, my word!"

"I suppose you can do it?"

"I—I suppose I could," said Mr. Hook.

"Yes, I dessay I could. A couple of them stablemen from the Ship Inn on the moor—they'd do it, if it was made worth their while. They're 'ooligans."

"I don't care who they are, so long as they'll do it. You'll have to point Silver out to them, so that there'll be no mistake."

"Sartain!"

"And I'll pay for the work—anythin' in reason."

"A couple of quid each would be enough for Hinck and Strauss," said Mr. Hook.

"They ain't rolling in money. A fiver would cover it."

"I don't care if it's a tenner, if it's done as I wish."

Mr. Hook's eyes sparkled.

"You're a gentleman, you are," he said. "You 'nd me a tenner, and I'll take the matter 'nd, and if Master Silver don't get the drubbing of his life, my name ain't Joey 'ook."

"I'll send you word where to get at the cad," said Mornington. "He could be caught in the lane—some time that he goes down to the village alone. At night would be best; some time when he breaks bounds to go down to Mrs. Wicks' for tuck. They do that sometimes."

"Fust rate!" said Mr. Hook.

"Mind, he's got to be thrashed so thoroughly that he won't be able to crawl home," said Mornington. "Tell the men they're to hammer him till he's black and blue. He will put up a fight."

"I reckon his puttin' up a fight won't 'elp him much," grinned Mr. Hook. "Them two fellers I was speakin' of are reglar terrors. They'll 'andle 'im."

"Good! And if he's out of bounds there'll be trouble with the Head if he's found out; as he will be if he's licked so that he can't get home," said Mornington, with satisfaction. "I think I can work it for him to be out of bounds. I've got an idea about that."

"You send me word when and where, and I'm your man," said Joey Hook. "As fur the tenner—" He coughed.

"Here it is!"

Mornington opened his pocket-book, and detached a ten-pound note from a wad of banknotes. Joey Hook's eyes gleamed covetously as they rested on the banknotes for a moment.

Mornington quitted the inn garden, leaving Joey Hook rustling the ten-pound note in his fingers in great satisfaction. The transaction was likely to show a large profit for Mr. Hook, as well as wiping off his old grudge against Jimmy Silver.

The dandy of the Fourth strolled back to the school. Old Mack was locking the gates, and he was just in time. Peele and Higgs and Gower looked at him inquiringly when he came into the study.

"How's your nose?" grinned Higgs.

"Not so bad as Jimmy Silver's nose will be shortly," said Mornington.

"You've seen Hook?" asked Peele.

"Yes."

"Don't tell us anythin' about it," remarked Gower hastily.

Mornington sneered.

"I don't intend to," he said.

"Look here," said Higgs. "I don't know what the little game is, but if it's a dirty trick, Morny—and I suppose it is—you can leave me out of it."

"I'm leavin' you out of it."

"I don't like the idea, anyway," said Higgs uneasily.

"I'm not askin' you to like it!"

Higgs grunted, and went on with his preparation. And the matter was not discussed again in Morny's study.

CHAPTER 30.

A Night Expedition.

"W H O'LL go?"

That, as Hamlet remarked of old, was the question.

It was several days after the "row" in Mornington's study, and that matter had been generally forgotten. If Mornington remembered it, he did not speak on the subject.

Townsend & Co., indeed, were glad to think that their noble pal had forgotten it. They had been very uneasy as to what wild plans of vengeance he might have been forming.

As for Jimmy Silver, he had hardly given the matter a second thought.

Any vengeance that the dandy of the Fourth might be plotting did not worry Jimmy Silver. He despised Mornington too much to care for what he thought or what he did. He was prepared to give him another licking if he asked for it; and that was as much as the cheery Jimmy thought about it.

The question now was a dormitory spread. The Classical Fourth were in their dormitory, and lights were out. Mornington had undertaken to stand a dormitory spread that night; and the juniors, whose digestions were equal to anything, had considered it an excellent idea of Morny's. Morny's beastly money was always in evidence, certainly; but so long as it went in "spreads" to which the whole Form was invited, it was not so very objectionable.

But alas for the happy anticipations of the feasters! The huge bag of tuck had been hidden in the dormitory, under Mornington's bed; and it had been spotted there

by Beaumont of the Sixth, who saw lights-out for the Classical Fourth.

It was really Mornington's own fault. He had pulled the bag out to look at it just when the prefect was coming into the dormitory.

Naturally, Beaumont had taken the cargo away. It was a tremendous supply, and had cost Mornington two or three pounds. And Beaumont, having announced that the tuck would be confiscated, was strongly suspected of intending to confiscate it by using it at his own study table.

Lovell had proposed a raid on Beaumont's study to regain the captured tuck. But that was scarcely feasible. But Mornington had a more practical suggestion to make. He suggested that somebody should cut down to Coombe and bring in a fresh supply from Mrs. Wicks' little shop in the village. And the Fourth-Formers, who had been looking forward to that handsome spread, concurred heartily.

"You're simply full of good ideas, Morny," said Dickinson minor. "But it'll run you into a lot of tin."

"Oh, never mind that!" said Mornington. "I've lots of tin."

"Hooking in it, ain't you?" grunted Lovell.

"Oh, cheese it, Lovell, when Morny's standin' a Form feed!" said Higgs. "I think it's a jolly decent thing of Morny to offer to stand it all over again."

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Tubby Muffin. "Morny's a real nobleman—that's what I say: a genuine nobleman!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"But who's going?" said Oswald.

"Ahem!"

"Rather risky!"

"Suppose Beaumont should be suspicious—or old Bulkeley—you never know!"

"Or Bootles!" said Rawson.

Mornington laughed unpleasantly. Nearly every fellow in the Fourth regarded it as an excellent idea to fetch in the consignment of tuck from Mrs. Wicks'; but nobody seemed keen on making the venture. Breaking bounds after lights out was a serious matter.

"What about Jimmy Silver?" asked Mornington.

He was a little surprised that Jimmy had not offered.

Generally, Jimmy was well to the fore when any enterprise of unusual risk was to

be undertaken. But this time the captain of the Fourth had not spoken.

"What about you, Jimmy?" asked Tubby Muffin anxiously. "It's up to you as skipper, you know. You ain't a funk, Jimmy."

"I'm not a funk," growled Jimmy Silver. "But I don't care to feed with Mornington."

"Well, you needn't feed, so long as you fetch in the grub."

"Yes, that's the important point," chuckled Hooker. "Fetch in the grub, and please yourself about scoffing any of it."

"My opinion is, that it's up to Jimmy Silver," said Mornington. "Silver claims to be head of the Form."

"I am head of the Form!" snapped Jimmy.

"Then it's your place to go. A Form-captain's job isn't to stick safe in bed while another chap runs risks."

"I'm not thinking about the risk," said Jimmy Silver gruffly. "But it's nothing to do with me, and I don't want a hand in it. We're not friends, and never shall be, and I want to have nothing to do with you."

"Well, if you chose to bear malice, the fellows will know what to think of you. So far as our row goes, I've got more to complain of than you have."

"That's a true bill, Jimmy," chuckled Lovell. "After all, you've licked Morny, and you don't want to owe him a grudge for it."

"I don't owe him a grudge. But I don't like him, and I don't want his feed."

"Oh, rot!" said Higgs. "That's only an excuse!"

"If you want me to swipe you with my pillow, Higgs, you've only got to make the remark again."

Higgs snorted.

"Dash it all, Jimmy, you might feed with a chap!" said Lovell. "I don't believe in refusing a whack in a fellow's feed!"

"Silver's quite welcome," said Mornington. "I invite him, and all the rest. I can't say more than that."

"That's quite cricket," said Oswald. "Jimmy, old man, you're in the wrong."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Silver unasily.

"But if Silver funks it, who's going?" said Mornington. "I don't want to shove myself forward in Silver's place. But if he's afraid to go, I'll go."

Jimmy Silver sat up in bed, his eyes

gleaming in the darkness of the dormitory.

"If you want me to yank you out of bed and thump you, Mornington—"

"I don't!" said Mornington calmly. "I'm speakin' plainly, because I want the matter settled. I think you ought to go."

"Like your rotten cheek to think so!"

"If you don't choose to go, I'll go. But if you hang back, I suppose the fellows won't need telling your reason."

"Oh, cheese it!" said Lovell. "As you're standing the feed, you might as well go without all this jaw!"

"Especially as it's your own fault the grub was taken," remarked Raby. "You fairly shoved it under Beaumont's nose."

Mornington stepped from his bed.

"I'm goin'!" he said. "Jimmy Silver's afraid!"

"Shut up, you rotter!"

Jimmy Silver turned out. He was breathing hard. He knew very well what the Fourth Form would think if he did not go now. Not that he had any special objection to going. It was only that he did not care to have anything to do with the cad of the Fourth.

"I'll go," said Jimmy quietly. "I've done it before, and I can do it again. And to-morrow morning, Mornington, I'll make you answer for calling me a funk."

"If you're not a funk, I'll withdraw the word," said Mornington coolly. "As for licking me, we all know you can do that, and it's no special use braggin' of it, that I can see."

Jimmy Silver made no reply. The cad of the Fourth had succeeded in putting him into the wrong all along the line. He proceeded to dress himself in the dark. Lovell put a leg out of bed.

"I'll come with you, Jimmy, if you like," he called out.

"No; that's all right. No good two getting nailed instead of one, if there's trouble," said Jimmy. "I can carry the stuff all right. Mrs. Wicks will lend me a bag. You stay where you are."

"Here's the money!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver grunted, and took the three pound notes Mornington passed into his hand.

"Three quids?" he said.

"That's it."

"I don't suppose I can carry so much stuff as all that. Our dormitory feeds don't

run to three quids, as a rule," said Jimmy.

"Get as much as you can carry comfortably, then, and leave the rest. Mrs. Wicks can send it home to-morrow."

"Jolly good idea!" said Tubby.

"Oh, all right!"

Jimmy Silver had finished dressing. Mornington returned to bed, his eyes glimmering strangely in the gloom.

The captain of the Fourth, without a single suspicion in his mind, was walking into the trap.

Mornington had counted, as a certainty, upon being able to induce Jimmy Silver to undertake the expedition. There was little difficulty in it.

Word had been passed to Joey Hook that afternoon, and Joey had assured his noble patron that all would be in readiness.

Little did Jimmy Silver dream of the thoughts that were passing in the mind of his bitter enemy.

The whole affair annoyed him. But he was far from dreaming that Mornington had ulterior motives in thus forcing the nocturnal expedition upon him.

His opinion of Mornington was not a flattering one, but he would never have suspected him of such black treachery.

Lovell slipped from his bed to help him out of the window. It was easy for a good climber with plenty of nerve to descend by means of the old, thick ivy.

"Have the rope ready to pull up the bag when I get back," said Jimmy. "I'll whistle."

"Right you are!"

Jimmy Silver slipped quietly from the window, taking a good grip on the strong, stout tendrils of the ivy. Lovell watched him descend, hand below hand. The moon was glimmering in the sky over Rookwood, and Jimmy was dimly visible till he reached the ground.

He waved his hand to Lovell at the window, and disappeared across the quadrangle towards the school wall.

Lovell closed the window softly.

Then he made up the pillow and bolster in Jimmy's bed, to give it the appearance of containing a sleeper, in case any inquisitive eye should look into the dormitory. Then he went back to bed.

"I say, how long do you think he will be?" said Tubby Muffin anxiously. "I'm awfully hungry, you know!"

"A good hour," said Oswald.

"Oh, dear!"

"You can wake me when he comes in, some of you," yawned Townsend. "I'm going to sleep."

"Same here."

"Good-night, Morny!"

"I'm not goin' to sleep," said Mornington. He was sitting up in bed. "I—I wonder—"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothin'."

Mornington went to the window, and mounted on the chair Lovell had used, and looked out into the moonlight. There was a strange expression on his face, and he was a little pale.

Now that his dastardly plot was assured of success did the blackguard of Rookwood feel a twinge of remorse?

He hardly knew himself. He was thinking of the unsuspicious junior tramping along the dark, lonely lane—of the paid ruffian who lay in wait. Townsend blinked at him sleepily from his bed.

"Why don't you go to bed, Morny?"

"I'm goin' out!" said Mornington sleepily.

"Goin' out, by gad!"

"What the merry dickens are you goin' out for?" exclaimed Peele. "Goin' to look after Jimmy Silver? He's all right!"

Mornington did not reply. He pushed up the window and looked out. Jimmy Silver had long since vanished.

The dandy of the Fourth came back towards his bed, and dressed quickly in the darkness.

"You won't do any good by going out," said Newcome. "Jimmy Silver is safer without you. You're more likely to get spotted."

"Get to bed, and don't be an ass," said Lovell.

Mornington did not answer. Having finished dressing, he went to the window, and climbed out.

"Silly ass!" said Townsend, and he turned over and settled himself down to sleep.

"Blessed if I can make him out!" growled Lovell. "If he wanted to go, why couldn't he go without fairly shoving Jimmy into it?"

"Oh, he's a dotty duffer!" said Raby.

Heedless of what the Classical Fourth might be thinking, Mornington clambered actively down the ivy. He dropped lightly

to the ground, and hurried across the quadrangle, taking care to keep out of the radius of the lighted windows. He reached the gate, clambered over it, and dropped into the road.

There he stood, hesitating, for some moments.

Why had he come? Was it remorse, or was it a desire to see Jimmy Silver's punishment administered—to see it with his own eyes? He could hardly have answered the question. The strange uneasiness in his breast was a surprise to himself.

But his hesitation did not last long. He turned his back on Rookwood, and started down the shadowy lane at a rapid run.

CHAPTER 31.

In Deadly Peril.

JIMMY SILVER strode away cheerfully down Coombe Lane towards the village. It was a fine, clear, summer's night, and the deep lane shadowed by the trees, was rich with the scent of the hedges and the fields. Jimmy did not dislike that walk at forbidden hours in the moonlit lane; and as for any thought of danger, it never even crossed his mind. It would take him twenty minutes, quick walking, to get to Coombe, and he hoped to get back in the Fourth-Form dormitory in Rookwood under the hour. As he strode along through the keen, scented night air, he forgot his annoyance, and forgot Mornington and his gibes.

Half-way to Coombe the lane dipped, and ran in dark shadows under the overhanging trees. Jimmy Silver whistled cheerily as he swung on. The whistle died on his lips as he caught a sudden moving shadow in the gloom.

He had not expected to meet a pedestrian on the lonely road at so late an hour as half-past ten o'clock. It was dangerous to be seen outside the school walls at that hour by anyone who knew him by sight. It meant a report to the Head of Rookwood, and a severe caning.

The junior halted at once, intending to dodge back into the shadows while the pedestrian passed.

There was a patter of feet on the road, and two burly forms emerged from the deep shadows into the moonlight.

Jimmy Silver backed away.

The two men had their faces covered with handkerchiefs, tied across them below the eyes, evidently for the purpose of disguising their features. Jimmy Silver did not need telling that that meant they were footpads. And the way they were advancing upon him showed him that he was their "game."

His heart beat a little faster.

It was not a light matter to encounter a couple of ruffians on a lonely road at a late hour far from help. And he had Mornington's three pounds in his pocket.

"Old on a minute, young gentleman," said one of the roughs, in a hoarse voice.

"What do you want?" demanded Jimmy Silver, as coolly as he could.

It came into his mind that the two ruffians had been watching for him—for somebody, at least. He had had no time to dodge into cover before they were upon him. From the deep shadows where the lane dipped under the trees they had been watching the moonlit road.

"That's 'im!" said the other, peering at Jimmy's face in the moonlight.

"Look here—" began Jimmy.

He broke off as the two rascals made a rush at him.

Jimmy sprang back and eluded the rush.

"Nail 'im!" panted one of the roughs.

"Don't let him get away!"

Jimmy dodged again as he closed in on him. But it was not easy to dodge two. A savage hand dropped on his shoulder. Jimmy hit out fiercely, and his knuckles crashed on the point of a square jaw, and the ruffian reeled back with a gasp of pain.

The other rascal was on Jimmy the next moment, and the schoolboy closed with him, and struggled furiously.

What the attack meant Jimmy could not understand. But it was clear that the two rascals meant to attack him and injure him, and that he had to defend himself. Somehow or other he had made enemies of them, and they had found their opportunity now. He realised his danger; but the captain of the Rookwood Fourth was not likely to be an easy victim, even at odds of two to one.

The ruffian who had grasped him was big and powerful, and Jimmy was not much of a match for him. But as they struggled Jimmy hooked his leg, and the rascal staggered, and went backwards help-

lessly. He crashed to the ground, with Jimmy Silver on top of him, and the junior's elbow driving fiercely into his ribs. He panted with pain as he writhed under the junior.

But the other rascal was on his feet now, and springing at the schoolboy.

Jimmy felt, rather than saw, him coming, and he released the man under him, and rolled aside, barely escaping a savage blow.

He leaped to his feet.

"Out 'im!" panted the man on the ground.

"Lend me a hand, then."

Jimmy cast a longing glance up the road towards Rookwood. But there was no chance of flight. His enemies were upon him.

The junior fought gamely.

Again one of the ruffians crashed to the ground, but Jimmy was in the grasp of the other, and this time he could not feil him. A heavy fist was striking at him, and he reeled under the blows.

"Help!" yelled Jimmy. "Help, help!"

An arm was thrown round his neck from behind, dragging his head back, and stopping his cries.

He was fairly in the hands of the ruffians now!

Blows rained upon him as he struggled gamely in the grasp of the hooligans. A running figure appeared in the distance on the moonlit road, but none of the combatants observed it.

Jimmy struggled desperately, still hitting out. He had given up hopes of holding his own, but he was fighting to the last.

"Down 'im!"

Jimmy went down, still fighting, a heavy knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down in the dusty road.

Blows rained on him from above, and his senses were reeling. There was a rapid patter of footsteps on the road.

"Stop! Stop!"

"Help!" panted Jimmy.

"Look out, Strauss!"

"Stop!"

It was Mornington!

He dashed up breathless, panting. The two hooligans glared at him, relieved to find that the newcomer was only a schoolboy.

"Get away!" snarled Strauss. "Mind yer own business! Clear off!"

"Let him alone!" Mornington panted.
 "I am Mornington!"
 "I don't keer who ye are! Clear off, or you'll get some of the same!"

"Help!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Mornington set his teeth. He understood Mr. Hook had mentioned no names, and to the two ruffians the name of Mornington was unknown. They did not know who their employer was.

"Let him alone!" panted the junior. "I tell you—"

"Knock him into the ditch!"

Mornington rushed on.

"Back up, Silver!" he shouted.

In a moment more a desperate struggle was raging.

CHAPTER 32.

A Rascal's Repentance.

MORNINGTON had closed with one of the ruffians, and Jimmy Silver renewed the fight with the other.

In the lonely, moonlit lane, the fight was savage and hard. The two school-boys were no match for the roughs; but Jimmy Silver, at least, was holding his own, now that he had only one foe to tackle.

Mornington went to the ground, with a burly rascal sprawling over him. A heavy fist was beating upon him like a hammer.

But as he struggled on the ground, Mornington's hand fell upon a loose stone. In a twinkling he had grasped it and struck. The hard, heavy stone crashed full into the brutal face above him, and the ruffian uttered a shriek of agony.

He reeled aside, and as he reeled, Mornington struck again, the stone crashing on the side of the rascal's head with terrific force.

The man gave a groan, and dropped into the road, where he lay like a log. He was stunned.

Mornington staggered to his feet.

Jimmy Silver and his adversary were rolling in the dust, the Fourth-Former of Rookwood gallantly holding his own. With the heavy stone in his hand, Mornington rushed to his aid.

Crash!

There was a gasping cry from the ruffian as the stone crashed on his head, and he fell heavily. Half-stunned, and wholly knocked out, he lay gasping in the road.

Mornington grasped Jimmy's arm.

"Quick!" he panted.

The captain of the Fourth staggered up. His senses were reeling—he had been hard hit.

"Come on—quick!" panted Mornington.

"Before they—"

"Right-ho!"

The two juniors dashed up the road to wards Rookwood. Jimmy's mission to Mrs. Wicks' shop in Coombe was quite forgotten now. It was necessary to get out of reach of the two ruffians before they recovered sufficiently to renew the struggle.

Like hares the two Rookwood juniors dashed up the road.

They were close to the school walls before they stopped. There, breathless, exhausted, panting, they looked back in the moonlight.

But the road was bare. There was no patter of footsteps; they were not pursued. The two ruffians had evidently given it up.

Jimmy Silver gasped for breath. Mornington was leaning heavily against the school wall, his face white as chalk. There was blood on his face, where savage blows had fallen. One of his eyes was closed.

"Mornington!" said Jimmy at last.

Mornington laughed sardonically. He was beginning to recover himself now.

"I've surprised you?" he remarked.

"Yes, a little. You came out after me?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes."

"It was jolly lucky for me!"

"Yes, luckier for you than for me!"

"You're hurt?" said Jimmy anxiously.

"Not so much as they are," said Mornington. "Lucky I got hold of a stone. They'll remember it for some time!"

"I haven't the faintest idea who they are," said Jimmy. "They set on me, for no cause that I can understand. They didn't want to rob me—just to knock me about, so far as I could see. I suppose I've trodden on their corns at some time or other!"

Mornington laughed.

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"It was jolly plucky of you to pile in like that," said Jimmy. "I shan't forget this, Mornington. I might have been seriously injured!"

"You would have been," said Mornington.

"Well, I think they meant it. It's jolly curious that they should have piled on me like that—unless they mistook me for somebody else. They were watching the road for somebody; I'm sure of that!"

"For you," said Mornington.

"Oh, no; they couldn't have known that I was going out to-night. It wasn't decided till after Beaumont collared the tuck in the dorm," said Jimmy. "But if they could have known, I should certainly have thought they were watching for me. But let's get in. I'll help you over the wall. I'm really obliged for this, Morny. I—I hope we shall be a bit more friendly in the future, old chap!"

Mornington laughed again—that sardonic laugh that puzzled Jimmy Silver.

"You needn't trouble," he said coolly. "You're under no obligation to me, Jimmy Silver, and we shan't be friends!"

"Well, if you take it like that——"

"Can't you see what's as plain as your face?" sneered Mornington. "Those rascals were watching for you!"

"But they couldn't have known——"

"They did know."

"How did they know, then?"

"Because I sent them word."

Jimmy Silver started back.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Yes, I! But I felt I had to come and help you!"

It was a puzzle that was past Jimmy's power of solving; but he was no longer angry.

"You're not such a rotter at you set out to be," he said. "There's some decency in you somewhere!"

"Thank you!" sneered Mornington. "I'm not asking for your good opinion!"

"You've acted like a Prussian, but you played up like a Briton at the finish," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm obliged to you for that much, at all events. Let's get in!"

Mornington reeled as he tried to climb the wall. The struggle had told upon him more than upon Jimmy Silver. Jimmy's strong hand helped him, and they dropped into the quadrangle.

There was a surprise for the Classical Fourth when Jimmy Silver and Mornington returned.

"Well, what's the little game?" demanded Lovell, sitting up in bed. "Where's the tuck?"

"Haven't got it."

There was a wail from Tubby Muffin.

"Haven't got-it! Well, you must be a silly ass! What are we going to do for the feed now?"

"Go and eat coke!"

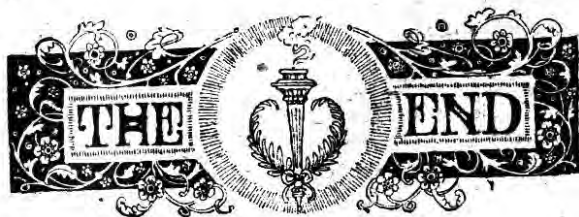
"But—what's happened?" asked Lovell, peering at his chum. "What's the matter with your face, Jimmy?"

"There's been a row—a couple of foot-pads," said Jimmy. "Mornington and I have been in a slogging match, and we've got hurt!"

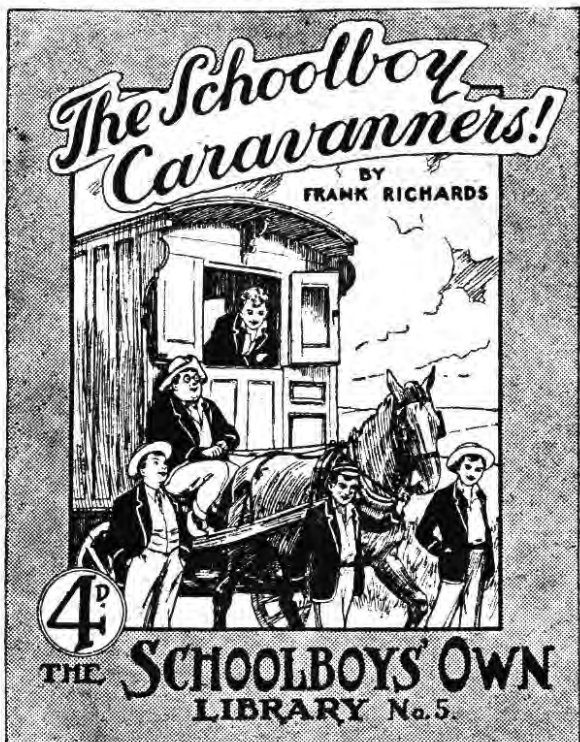
"Oh, my hat!"

"Now I'm going to turn in."

And Jimmy Silver turned in, and said no more. Not even to his chums the next day did he explain what he had learned from Mornington. The secret of Mornington's dastardly plot was safe with him, for Jimmy Silver felt that the rascal of Rookwood had atoned for it by his repentance at the eleventh hour. And that was enough for the generous-hearted Captain of the Fourth.



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