

The Scapegrace of Rookwood!

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.



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THE SCAPEGRACE OF ROOKWOOD!

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.



A Magnificent Complete Story of
the Chums of Rookwood, featuring
VAL MORNINGTON, the Dandy
of the Fourth.

CHAPTER 1.

Kept In!

"**S**IT down, Erroll!"

Mr. Bootles spoke rather sharply. He was sitting at his desk, with a thoughtful and moody brow, when Kit Erroll rose up in his place in the class.

Nobody was looking very cheerful that Saturday afternoon, in the Fourth Form-room at Rookwood.

The Classical Fourth were under detention. Outside, the summer sun streamed down in the quadrangle, and the rooks cawed cheerily in the thick foliage of the old beeches. From the distant cricket-ground, a shout was occasionally heard; very tantalising to the detained juniors in the dusky Form-room. As Mr. Bootles was in charge of the detained Form, he was, in point of fact, detained too; and he did not like giving up his half-holiday any more than his pupils did.

Moreover, many of the juniors were thinking about Mornington of the Fourth, shut up in the punishment-room, under sentence of expulsion from the school. That did not make them any more cheerful.

Valentine Mornington, the most independent and unruly junior at Rookwood, had overdone it at last! The Head's patience was completely exhausted, and his fiat had gone forth that Morny must go.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were working at their detention tasks, in a rather desultory way. Kit Erroll, usually one of the steadiest workers in the Fourth, had done hardly anything, so far. All his thoughts were with his chum in the punishment-room.

He rose to his feet at last, and Mr. Bootles' eye was on him at once, and he snapped, "Sit down!"

"Will you excuse me, sir—" began Erroll, in a low voice.

"No, I will not!" interrupted Mr. Bootles. "The whole Form is detained until half-past four. Certainly I shall not excuse you. You may sit down."

"But—"

Mr. Bootles waved a commanding hand.

"That will do, Erroll."

"I wish to speak to the Head, sir," said Erroll quietly.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him over his glasses.

"Indeed! And why, Erroll?"

"About—about Mornington, sir."

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Bootles, but not unkindly this time. He was touched by the trouble and distress in Erroll's face. "You can have nothing to say to Dr. Chisholm on that subject; indeed, I am assured that he would not hear you. Sit down, my boy."

Erroll sat down without speaking again.

His face was deeply clouded.

Jimmy Silver gave him a sympathetic glance.

Jimmy guessed that Erroll had some idea of making an appeal to the Head, on behalf of his chum; but there was no doubt that Mr. Bootles was right; the Head would not have given him a hearing.

In the silence of the Form-room, the clock ticked away dully. There was a faint scratching of pens. The juniors yawned, and exchanged bored looks, and whispered occasionally. Mr. Bootles glanced at the clock about every five minutes. He was probably as anxious as the juniors to see it indicate half-past four.

Erroll was listening anxiously for the sound of wheels outside. Morny's guardian was to arrive that afternoon to take him away from Rookwood; and if he came while the Classical Fourth were in the Form-room, Erroll would not even be able to say good-bye to his best chum. Jimmy Silver, who guessed his thoughts, whispered consolation.

"It's all right, Erroll; old Stacpoole can't get here yet. It was after two when the Head telephoned to him."

Erroll nodded.

"Silver," snapped Mr. Bootles irritably.

"Hem! Yes, sir!"

"You were talking!"

"W-w-w-was I, sir!"

"Were you not, Silver?" demanded Mr. Bootles.

"Ye-es, sir."

"If you talk again in class you will be detained until six o'clock."

"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver did not talk again.

And there were no more whispers. The Classical Fourth were fully "fed" with detention already; they did not want to risk any more.

At four o'clock Kit Erroll rose to his feet again.

"Mr. Bootles! Will you allow me—"

"I shall not allow you to go to the

Head," said Mr. Bootles. "You will not leave the Form-room, Erroll. Sit down."

For a moment Erroll looked rebellious, and glanced towards the door, as if the thought was in his mind of walking out, in spite of the Form-master's prohibition.

Fortunately, he restrained that impulse.

He sat down again, but he did not work. Latin conjunctions had no attraction for him just then, and he could not put his mind into deponent verbs.

The big hand of the clock crawled round slowly. Never had it seemed to crawl with such provoking slowness.

Mr. Bootles, as bored as the rest, walked to and fro, between his desk and the class, suppressing yawns.

It still wanted a few minutes to half-past four, when the master of the Fourth gave in.

"Dismiss!" he said.

There was a movement among the Classical Fourth, as sudden as if they had been electrified.

They jumped up, and filed past the Form-master's desk, laying their papers on the desk as they passed.

Mr. Bootles did not look at the papers.

Some of them, at least, would have merited further detention—and there had been enough detention that afternoon, Mr. Bootles thought.

He was glad to see the juniors march out of the Form-room. The moment they were outside, there was a buzz of voices.

"Oh, dear! Thank goodness!"

"Out at last! Yaw-aw-aw!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a rush for the sunny quadrangle.

With a whoop, the released schoolboys came swarming out into the open air and sunshine.

Kit Erroll remained in the passage; and Jimmy Silver stopped, to speak to him, ere he followed his chums.

"You're not going to the Head, old scout?" Jimmy asked.

"Yes," said Erroll quietly, "I can go now."

"It won't be any use, old chap."

"I'm going to try."

Erroll walked away in the direction of the Head's study. At the same time there was the long-expected sound of wheels outside. Tubby Muffin came breathlessly in.

"Old Stacpoole's come!" he announced.

"He's come for Morny! We're out in time to see him go."

Erroll hurried on, and tapped at the Head's door. He had barely time left to make his appeal—and useless as he felt that it must be, he was determined to make it. It was all he could do for his hapless chum.

CHAPTER 2.

No Pardon!

"COME in!"

Dr. Chisholm raised his eyebrows as Erroll of the Fourth entered his study.

"Well?" he said laconically.

Erroll coloured and stammered. It was borne in upon his mind that he was guilty of colossal "cheek" in coming to that dreaded apartment, and tackling the stern-browed old gentleman who ruled the destinies of Rookwood. There was little that was promising in the Head's look. Indeed, Erroll could guess from his expression that he was anxious for Sir Rupert Staepoole to arrive, and take away his troublesome nephew; his only desire was to wash his hands of Valentine Mornington for ever.

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Erroll hopelessly.

"Come, come, what is it?" asked the Head testily. "Have you anything to say to me, my boy?"

"Yes, sir!" gasped Erroll. "About—about Mornington, sir."

"Well?"

"He—he is going away, sir—"

"You are doubtless aware that Mornington is expelled from the school," answered the Head. "His guardian, I think, has just arrived. He will leave with Sir Rupert Staepoole. Mornington was, I believe, your study-mate in the Fourth Form."

"Yes, sir; my best chum, sir."

"You will have an opportunity of saying good-bye to him, if you desire to do so," said the Head. "You may go, Erroll."

Erroll did not stir.

"May I—may I speak, sir?" he stammered. "I—I wanted to—to ask you if—if you could be lenient with Morny, sir—"

"What?"

The Head's voice was like a rumble of thunder.

Having come to a decision, the headmaster was not likely to change it at the request of a junior schoolboy. The bare suggestion was astounding to him. His glance was quite terrifying as it fixed upon Erroll.

But Erroll stuck to his guns. It was his last chance of saying a word in defence of his chum, and he did not care if the Head's anger fell upon himself.

"Morny's my chum, sir," he faltered. "I—I don't know what it will be like when he's gone. If—if you could, sir—"

The distress in the schoolboy's face softened the Head a little. The vials of wrath, which had been on the point of pouring upon the junior's devoted head, was withheld. Dr. Chisholm's voice was unexpectedly kind as he answered the stammering appeal.

"I quite understand your feelings, Erroll, and, surprising as your present conduct is, I excuse you. I cannot, of course, make any change in my decision."

"Oh, sir—"

"You are aware of what Mornington has done," said the Head. "He absented himself from school against strict orders; and when he was sentenced to be flogged, he ran away and remained in hiding, for several days, until he was found by a prefect. Even now he is defiant and unrepentant. If I allowed such conduct to pass, Erroll, there would be no discipline at all in the school. Mornington must leave to-day. Say no more, my boy: I am sorry for you, but you are wasting my time. You may go!"

The Head's tone was final.

With a hopeless look, Kit Erroll quitted the study. In the passage outside he passed Sir Rupert Staepoole, who was being shown in by Tupper. The portly baronet was looking very flustered.

Erroll found Jimmy Silver waiting for him at the corner of the corridor. The captain of the Fourth was sympathetic, but not hopeful.

"Any go?" he asked.

Erroll shook his head.

"It wasn't to be expected, old son," said Jimmy. "I suppose Morny will be taken down to see his uncle now. You can speak to him when he's let out of the punishment-room."

Erroll nodded, and the two juniors went up the stairs together. Erroll tapped at

the strong oaken door of the punishment-room.

"Hallo!" came a voice from within—a voice that was cool and flippant in tone.

It told that Valentine Mornington, at least, was undismayed by the turn affairs had taken.

"Morny, old chap——"

"That you, Erroll?"

"Yes. Your uncle's come!"

"The old bird hasn't lost any time," answered Mornington. "Dear old uncle! How anxious he must be to have me home!"

"I think the Head must have asked him to come down at once," said Erroll. "I—I wish you weren't going, Morny. I—I say, old chap——"

"Go it!"

"It's just possible that—that if you begged the Head——"

"Catch me beggin' anybody!" answered Mornington. "Not if I were goin' to execution, old bean; and goin' home with Sir Rupert ain't unlike that, either. The Head won't get any soft sawder out of me. I can tell him."

Erroll signed.

There was no use in arguing with his obstinate and self-willed chum, as he had already learned.

"Here comes Bulkeley!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came up, with a big key in his hand. He glanced at the two juniors, but did not speak as he unlocked the door of the punishment-room.

"Mornington!"

"Hallo, old top!" said Morny, as the prefect threw open the door. "Glad to see you again, Bulkeley! I'm gettin' rather fed up with solitude."

"You are to come to the Head. Your uncle is with him," said the captain of Rookwood curtly.

"Oh. I'll come!"

"Follow me," said Bulkeley.

Valentine Mornington came out of the punishment-room. He nodded, coolly to Jimmy Silver; but his expression changed a little at the sight of Erroll's distressed face.

"Don't worry, old top!" he said, pressing Erroll's arm. "You're not goin' to see the last of me, you know."

"You're leaving Rookwood!" muttered Erroll.

"I mayn't go far."

"What?"

"Aren't you going home with your uncle, Morny?" asked Jimmy Silver, in surprise. "I thought he'd come to take you home."

"So does he; but I'm not goin', all the same," said Mornington coolly. "My uncle is a bit of a bore, you know, and my Stacpoole cousins are anythin' but entertainin'. Sir Rupert will not revel in the delights of my society so long as he thinks; and he will probably be jolly glad of it. All right, Bulkeley; I'm comin'."

And Mornington followed the Rookwood captain, with his hands in his pockets, and a cool and confident smile upon his face.

CHAPTER 2.

Kindness Unrewarded!

OUTSIDE the School House, the station cab was waiting. Sir Rupert Stacpoole had come down by train. Within a short distance of the cab a good many Rookwood juniors gathered. All the Fourth were anxious to have a last look at Valentine Mornington; and there were few who did not regret that he was going. Morny had his faults, and plenty of them; but upon the whole the Fourth were sympathetic, especially now that the "chopper" had come down so emphatically.

Mornington's stay in the Head's study was brief; there was little to be said there. Dr. Chisholm handed him over to his uncle officially, and that was all, and he hardly concealed his relief at having got Mornington off his hands. The scapegrace of Rookwood had proved a little too trying for Dr. Chisholm's taste.

Sir Rupert was in a state of ill-concealed annoyance and fluster; his position was not a gratifying one. He accepted the Head's relinquishment of his charge, for the simple reason that he had no choice in the matter. His manner to his nephew was grave and censorious, which was not to be wondered at, in the circumstances. Morny had probably given the worthy baronet more trouble than all Sir Rupert's four sons added together. A chirp from Tubby Muffin warned the little crowd outside the School House that the expelled junior was

coming, with his portly and chagrined guardian.

"Here they come, you fellows!" chirped Tubby. "Old Stacpoole is looking as waxy as anything, and Morny don't care tuppence."

That was quite a correct description of uncle and nephew, as they emerged together from the House.

Sir Rupert walked directly to the cab, evidently anxious to get away as quickly as possible with his disgraced relative.

Mornington was not in such a hurry, however.

If he was in disgrace, he did not seem to feel it; his manner was quite cool and nonchalant.

His box had been placed on the cab, and his uncle had entered the vehicle, and Morny remained chatting with two of the juniors—Erroll of the Fourth, and Mornington secundus of the Second Form.

Sir Rupert put his head out irritably.

"Valentine!" he snapped.

"Yes," drawled Mornington.

"Kindly step into the cab at once!"

"Right-ho!"

"I am waiting for you," said Sir Rupert, with asperity.

"Good-bye, you fellows," said Mornington; "or perhaps I should say au revoir! Sorry I shan't be here to help you beat St. Jim's. Silver. Good-bye, Erroll, old fellow! Good-bye, 'Erbert!'"

Erroll squeezed his chum's hand in silence. His heart was too full for words at that miserable moment. Little 'Erbert knuckled one eye.

'Erbert Mornington was Valentine's cousin, and the heir to the great Mornington property. But little 'Erbert never forgot that he had been a neglected waif of the streets when Val Mornington had befriended him and brought him to Rookwood. The fag almost worshipped the lordly fellow who had, until 'Erbert's appearance, been the heir to vast wealth.

Morny's face softened for a moment; but it was only for a moment. He waved his hand lightly, and stepped into the cab.

The driver set his vehicle in motion.

"Good-bye, Morny!"

"Good luck, old chap!"

A dozen fellows waved their hands as the cab rolled away down the gravel.

It passed out of the gateway, and disappeared. Some of the fellows followed as

far as the gates, to watch it down the road.

"Well, he's gone!" said Jimmy Silver, as the cab rolled away towards Coombe.

"Poor old Morny!" said Baby.

"Jolly cool customer, though!" remarked Newcome. "I fancy his uncle's going to have his hands full with Morny at home. I think I'd rather be Morny than the uncle."

"Poor old Erroll seems cut up!"

"More than Morny does!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell drily. "There's plenty of light for cricket, Jimmy!"

"Yes, come on!" said Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy's face was thoughtful as he walked with his chums to the cricket-ground. He was sorry for Morny, though Morny did not seem very sorry for himself. He was sorry, too, that he had lost one of the best men in his cricket eleven.

Erroll did not come down to the cricket. He was shut up in his study, alone now. That the parting with his chum had made him unhappy all the Fourth knew. But Erroll was not a fellow to wear his heart upon his sleeve, and he preferred to be alone just then, shrinking even from sympathy. Two or three fellows spoke to him as he went to his study, and Erroll answered them quietly. He was glad when the door of Study No. 4 closed on him.

In study No. 4 poor Erroll paced restlessly about, in a miserable and troubled frame of mind. That cheery study seemed lonely and desolate without his chum. Perhaps he was a little wounded, too, at the carelessness with which Mornington had parted with him. Morny, after all, had brought his fate upon himself by a long course of the most utter recklessness and defiance of authority. It almost looked as if he did not care whether he separated from his chum or not. If he was, as he had often said, "fed," with Rookwood, surely he might have controlled his restless discontent, for the sake of his friendship.

But Erroll would not reproach his chum, even in unspoken words. If a tinge of bitterness came into his mind, he drove it away.

What was it going to be like at Rookwood without Morny? He had other friends, plenty of them, but Morny was the only fellow he had really chummed with. Chumming with Morny had meant a great deal of patience and not a little

self-sacrifice on his part. There was no other fellow at Rookwood who would have borne with Morny's trying temper as Erroll had done. It was possibly because his friendship had involved sacrifice that Erroll had been so loyal and unchanging in it.

Now Morny was gone! Erroll did not make friends hastily, and he could not forget a friend in a hurry. He felt that there were dreary days before him.

There was a tap at the door, and Erroll snatched up a book hastily. He did not want to be seen "moping."

It was Conroy of the Fourth who looked in.

"Coming to tea, kid?" asked the Australian junior cheerily. "We've got a special spread in No. 3."

Erroll smiled faintly.

He understood the kindly motive of the invitation, but he shook his head.

"Thanks, but I won't come!" he said.

"Another time, old chap."

"Right you are!"

Conroy closed the door and walked on.

Erroll resumed his restless roaming about the study. He looked occasionally from the window, where he could see Jimmy Silver & Co. at cricket in the distance. They did not seem to miss Morny. There was no reason why they should for that matter. Erroll wondered whether any fellow but himself would miss Morny?

The door opened again, this time without a tap. It was Reginald Muffin who rolled in, and, to Erroll's surprise, the fat Classical had a stack of dog-eared books under his arm.

Tubby Muffin landed his cargo on the table, gasped for breath, and blinked genially at the solitary occupant of No. 4.

"That's the first lot!" he announced.

"The first lot!" repeated Erroll.

"Yes, I'm going to bring the rest now, and my banjo. If Jones minor comes along and says that Latin grammar is his, you tell him to go and eat coke. It's mine!"

"But I don't understand. What are you bringing your things here for?" asked Erroll, in astonishment.

Tubby smiled cordially.

"My dear old chap, I'm coming here to stay," he explained.

"What?"

"I'm not going to leave you lonely, now

Morny's gone," said Tubby. "You will want a study-mate, of course. I'm fed with Higgs and Putty Graco and Jones minor in No. 2. They don't place a proper value on a fellow."

"But——"

"Only this morning," continued Tubby, "Higgs was making a fuss about a cake. He said half his cake was gone. Suppose it was? You wouldn't make a fuss about a trifle like that, Erroll."

"Perhaps not. But——"

"I've told them I'm changing out," said Tubby. "Putty had the cheek to say he was deeply obliged to me. Just as if he was glad I was going, you know. Check! That beast Higgs danced round the table as if he was delighted. Only putting it on, of course."

"But——"

"And what do you think Jones minor said?" asked Tubby, in accents of deep indignation. "He said they'd all come here presently and see what I'd taken away with me. As if I'd take anything that wasn't my own, you know. Mind that Latin grammar doesn't go while I'm out. Jones is sure to say it's his, because there's his initials on the fly-leaf. I shouldn't wonder if Higgs was to claim that dictionary, too. He's always making out that it's his. You'll remember?"

"Look here, Muffin——"

"We shall get on no end in this study," said Tubby. "Room for a fellow here. As you're not so hard up as those cads you won't grumble about grub, and so on. You'll find me rather more agreeable than Morny; not so beastly bad-tempered and cheeky, you know. Between ourselves, Morny was a bit of a blighter, wasn't he, old chap?"

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Erroll angrily. "I——"

"Well, I won't say anything against Morny, as he's gone," said Tubby considerably. "Morny had his good points. When he used to have plenty of money he wasn't so bad. But you must own that since he came down in the world he's been awfully tart. Bitter you know. I couldn't stand that. Still, he's gone, and I won't be down on him. I suppose you won't mind my having the armchair, Erroll? I'm accustomed to one."

"I'd better speak plainly, Muffin. I——"

"Quite so! I always do," said Tubby. "I'm to have it, what? That's right! I knew you weren't selfish, like those cads in my old study. You're looking a bit down in the mouth, Erroll. But I'll soon cheer you up. I knew you'd feel lonely; that's why I'm coming here."

"I suppose you mean to be kind," said Erroll, looking at him. "But I—"

"That's it exactly. I'm the kindest-hearted chap at Rookwood," said Muffin. "Kindest friend and noblest foe, you know, like the chap in the poem. That's me all over. Where shall I put these books, Erroll?"

"You had better take them back to your study," said Erroll impatiently. "If you mean to be kind I'm much obliged to you; but I don't want a study-mate."

"My dear chap, you're mistaken. You'll be lonely here. In fact, I've made up my mind to come."

"Then you'd better unmake it again," said Erroll. "To speak plainly, Muffin, I don't want you here."

Muffin blinked at him.

"Is that what you call grateful?" he asked.

"Oh, rot!"

"If my company isn't desired," said Reginald Muffin, with a great deal of dignity, "I will retire."

"Do so, then," said Erroll.

"If you're joking—"

"I'm not!"

Tubby Muffin blinked at Morny's chum. The expression on Erroll's clouded face showed that he certainly was not joking. Amazing as it was, he was not yearning for Tubby Muffin's entrancing society. A frown came over the fat brow of Reginald Muffin, of the Classical Fourth.

"Very well!" he said, with dignity. "You don't want me to share this study with you—"

"No, I don't!"

"As you choose to be unfriendly, I shall certainly not force my friendship upon you!" said Reginald Muffin haughtily. "But I shall stay here all the same!"

"What?"

"This study will suit me, and though you're such a beast, you're not such a beast as Higgs. I'm staying."

Erroll gave the fat Classical one look. Then he strode towards him, and took Tubby's fat ear between his finger and

thumb. Tubby Muffin gave a loud and prolonged squeak as he was led into the passage by his ear.

"Yoo-wowowowowowow!"

"Now buzz off," said Erroll, "and don't come back. Here are your books!"

The dog-eared volumes bumped into the passage, and the door of Study No. 4 closed with a slam. Tubby Muffin blinked at the door and blinked at the scattered books, with wrath in his fat brow, as he rubbed his crimson ear.

"Well, of all the ungrateful rotters!" gasped Tubby. "Of all the thankless beasts! It's just like Spokeshave—I mean Shakespeare—says, how sharper than a thingummy's tooth it is to have a thankless what-d'ye-call-it?"

In breathless indignation Tubby gathered up his books. Then he bent his head to the keyhole, and howled a parting benediction.

"Yah! I won't come now! You can ask me on your bonded knees, and I won't come! Yah!"

And the indignant Tubby rolled away.

CHAPTER 4.

Uncle and Nephew!

VALENTINE MORNINGTON glanced at his uncle with a suppressed smile as the station cab rolled away from Rookwood School.

If Morny was feeling the parting with his chum and the disgrace that had fallen upon him, his looks did not show it.

His manner, naturally, was not pleasing to his uncle. Sir Rupert's face grew sterner and sterner.

Mornington had first come upon his hands as a ward at the time when Morny was the supposed heir of the great Mornington property. Probably that great property was some set-off, as it were, against the trouble Morny gave his guardian.

The sum allowed from the estate had been ample to cover even Morny's extravagances, and the connection with the heir of a great property had been gratifying.

But all that had been changed when Mornington's lost cousin had been found, and Morny's great prospects had passed to little 'Erbert of the Second Form at Rookwood.

Instead of a wealthy heir, he was now a penniless burden upon his uncle, who could scarcely refuse the charge of him in his changed circumstances.

Sir Rupert, testy old gentleman as he was, had a strong sense of duty, and he had not wished to refuse the charge. But it was natural that he should be less patient with a penniless relative than with the heir of Mornington. Morny's freaks of temper were sternly repressed now in his uncle's house, and his Staupoole cousins did not conceal their dislike of him. They remembered Morny's loftiness in former days, and they allowed him to see very plainly that they regarded him as an interloper. And as their dislike was repaid by sneering scorn, which they repaid in kind, Staupoole Lodge was not a happy dwelling when the boys were there.

Indeed, Sir Rupert had been considering the advisability of letting Mornington remain at Rookwood during the vacations, to prevent the incessant trouble when he came home on a holiday.

Instead of which, Morny had been turned out of Rookwood altogether, and was landed on his uncle's hands for good. Sir Rupert had now the happy task of finding a new school for him, and explaining to the headmaster thereof how and why Morny had left his old one.

Until the new school was decided on Mornington had to remain at home; and as Sir Rupert's sons were day boys at a school near his home, the prospect was appalling. Between anger and dismay the baronet was not in a good temper as the cab rolled him away from Rookwood with his hopeful nephew.

He was too angry to speak, and he knew of old that words were wasted on the scapegrace.

It was Mornington who broke the silence, looking at his uncle with a cool smile, which tempted Sir Rupert strongly to box his ears.

"We're going to Coombe now, I suppose, uncle?"

"Yes," said Sir Rupert curtly.

"What train are you takin', may I inquire?"

"Six-fifteen."

"My cousins are at home now, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"How glad they'll be to see me!" smiled Mornington.

His uncle breathed hard.

"Your cousins would be glad to see you if you behaved yourself as you should!" he answered. "You cannot expect them to welcome a boy who has been turned out of his school in disgrace, and has brought shame upon all connected with him! But I will speak plainly to you, Valentine. I refuse to have my house turned into a bear garden! If you cannot keep from quarrelling with your cousins you——"

"My dear old uncle, I don't want to quarrel with them, I'm sure!" said Mornington airily. "If they'd be as civil as they used to be, I'm sure we should get on remarkably well."

Sir Rupert set his lips. Although he had a natural prejudice in favour of his own boys, he could not fail to be aware that they had suppressed their dislike of Mornington in his prosperous days. They had given it full rein since Valentine's change of fortune; and perhaps had tried to make up for lost time, in fact. Morny's remark touched his uncle on the raw.

"I repeat, that I will not allow quarrelling in my house!" he said. "You have been turned out of your school for your own fault; annoyed as I was with Dr. Chisholm's decision, I had to admit that he could have taken no other course. I would not endure a disrespectful and reckless young rascal under my roof, if I had not the misfortune to be his uncle!"

Mornington's eyes glittered.

"I've always known that I was unwelcome, since I became poor!" he said bitterly, in a low voice. "I was welcome enough before that!"

"You are welcome now, if you behave yourself and keep your impertinent tongue in check!" said his uncle. "Because you cannot be relied upon to do so, I should be glad if there were any other means of disposing of you. I shall send you to school again as quickly as possible. Until then you will not be allowed to make trouble in the house. I shall not hesitate to deal with you as sternly as may be required— And if you grin in that impudent way while I am speaking, I will chastise you, sir, in this cab!" almost shouted Sir Rupert, his control of his temper getting perilously near the limit.

"So I'm to go to school again?" said Mornington, with a dark look at his uncle.

"As quickly as I can get you off my hands, certainly!"

"Have you selected the school?"

"That is not easy. You cannot go to a school of the same standing as Rookwood. The headmaster would refuse to take in a boy expelled from another school. You must be prepared for a very considerable change, and you have yourself to thank for it!"

"I'm prepared for a change," said Mornington, with a curious smile. "I'd made up my mind about that already. You're not going to have such a reckless young rascal under your roof, uncle."

"What do you mean? snapped the baronet. "I have nowhere else to place you till you go to school, or I should certainly not take you home with me."

"You're not going to take me home with you!"

"What?"

"I haven't left Rookwood for the pleasure of raggin' with my beloved cousins," said Mornington coolly. "I think you have told me about a dozen times, Uncle Rupert, that I am a burden on your hands."

"I have certainly reminded you of your position when you have annoyed me with your insolence!" snapped Sir Rupert. "You may thank yourself for it. I have tried to do my duty by you, but verily believe that so heartless and thankless a boy has never existed before!"

"I wonder!" said Mornington calmly.

Sir Rupert looked at him with knitted brows, and made a majestic gesture.

"That is enough!" he said. "Kindly be silent! I am trying hard to be patient with you!"

"But I'm not goin' to put your patience to the test any longer, dear old bean!" answered Mornington. "I'm not goin' home with you!"

"Hold your tongue, sir!"

"I'm not going to be a burden to you any longer," continued Mornington coolly.

"I'm fed with that! I'm not goin' to stand my cousins any longer—I'm fed with them! I really don't think I could put up with their society any more, even to please you an' show my deep

gratitude for favours rendered so gracefully!"

Sir Rupert stared speechlessly at his nephew.

Mornington smiled at him, apparently entertained by the mixture of feelings that struggled for expression in the old gentleman's face.

"The world's wide enough for me to live somewhere without comin' into contact with the delightful Stacpoole family at all," went on Mornington. "I'm fed up with bein' a poor relation, and bein' told of it! I'm goin' out into the wide, wicked world, uncle, to look for a nook where I can lay my weary head, all on my own."

"You—you young rascal!" spluttered the baronet, finding his voice. "Another word of such nonsense, and I will box your ears!"

Mornington rose to his feet.

The old cab was crawling at a slow, walking pace along the leafy lane to Coombe. Mornington threw the door open and jumped out before his uncle could guess his intention.

He stumbled in the road, but recovered himself immediately, and waved his hand to the purple face glaring at him from the cab.

"Good-bye-ee!" he sang out cheerily.

"Stop!" roared Sir Rupert to the driver.

The cab stopped, and Sir Rupert jumped out.

"Valentino! Get in instantly!" he thundered.

"I'm not goin' home with you, thanks!"

"Do you hear me, sir?" thundered Sir Rupert.

"Yes, an' I've answered."

Then Sir Rupert Stacpoole, baronet and M.P., quite lost his temper, and behaved like quite a common person. He grasped his cane and rushed at his nephew.

Mornington made a spring back, and leaped into a gap in the hedge. He cleared the ditch. But Sir Rupert was rather too old for such performances. He stopped, brandishing his cane, almost inarticulate with wrath.

"You—you—you impertinent young rascal! Come here at once! I will—will—will chastise you! I—I—I—" The portly old gentleman fairly spluttered. "I—I—Boy! Come here! Bless my soul! What have I ever done, to have this wretched

boy inflicted upon me? Valentine! Come here at once, sir! I command you!"

"Thanks! You look rather too hefty with that cane!" answered Mornington coolly. "Good-bye, uncle! I'm off!"

"Boy come back!" roared Sir Rupert, as Mornington backed through the hedge into the field.

"Not this evenin'!"

"I—I forbid you to go!" shrieked Sir Rupert helplessly. "I—I—I forbid you."

Mornington waved his hand, and started across the field, leaving his hapless guardian almost dancing on the wrong side of the ditch. Sir Rupert shouted, and shouted again; and Mornington vanished among the trees in the distance.

The baronet took off his hat and dabbed his perspiring brow with his handkerchief. Then he replaced his hat, a little sideways, in his agitation, giving his majestic countenance quite a rakish look.

What he was to do in the amazing circumstances was a mystery to Sir Rupert Staupoole. Pursuit of the elusive schoolboy across the fields was evidently out of the question; and returning to Rookwood was useless. It was quite certain that Mornington would not go back to school.

Sir Rupert fumed and gasped and murmured emphatic words; while the stolid driver of the cab blinked at him and chewed a straw and waited his passenger's good pleasure.

It was suddenly borne in upon Sir Rupert's mind that his train was almost due, and that there was no other train from Coombe that evening. At that thought he hurried back to the cab.

"Drive on!" he gasped.

The cab rolled on towards Coombe. There was nothing else for it. The mutinous schoolboy had to be left to his own devices for the present, at least. Sir Rupert Staupoole took his seat in the train in a really indescribable frame of mind.

CHAPTER 5.

News of Morny!

JIMMY SILVER & CO. were thinking a good deal about the expelled junior the next day, which was Sunday, and a day of leisure at Rookwood. The Fistical Four, in the kindness of their

hearts, made it a point to bestow some of their valuable society upon Erroll. Their society, fortunately, was more welcome to the lonely junior than Tubby Muffin's.

After morning service the kind-hearted Co. bore down upon Erroll and marched him off for the usual Sunday walk. Probably Erroll would have preferred to be alone with his sad thoughts; but, undoubtedly, he cheered up very much in the genial company of Jimmy Silver & Co.

But that day was a sad one to Kit Erroll. He could not help thinking of his absent chum, and wondering what he was doing at home. He knew the sour bitterness of Morny's home, and his endless disagreements with his cousins; and Erroll, faithful as he was to his friend, knew Morny too well to think that the Staupoole cousins were wholly to blame. A fellow had to be very patient and very tactful to get on with Mornington at all. And the Staupoole cousins probably saw no reason why they should exercise patience and tact towards a poor relation with a scornful smile and a bitter tongue.

However that might be, it was certain that Mornington could not be happy at home; and it did not cross Erroll's mind as yet that Morny had not gone home.

That was not known until the following day, and then it came as a surprise to the Rookwooders. The news was made known by Mr. Bootles when the Fourth came into their Form-room on Monday morning.

It was observed that Mr. Bootles looked somewhat disturbed; and, instead of proceeding to lessons as usual, he coughed several times. So the Fourth knew that something was coming, though they did not guess what it was.

"Erroll!" said Mr. Bootles at last.

"Yes, sir?"

"Have you heard or seen anything of Mornington since he was taken away from Rookwood on Saturday?"

Erroll looked astonished at the question.

"No, sir," he answered.

"He has not written to you?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Has any boy present seen Mornington?" asked Bootles, glancing over the class and scanning an array of astonished faces.

"No, sir!" said a dozen voices.

"Ah! Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles.

"Has—has anything happened to Morny?"

ington, sir?" asked Erroll anxiously. "Isn't he at home, sir?"

Mr. Bootles blinked at him over his glasses.

"No, Erroll; it appears—hem!—that Mornington is not at home," he replied. "Sir Rupert Stacpoole has communicated with the Head—hem!—and informed him that—hem!—Mornington left him on the way to Coombe Station on Saturday. What the boy's object was in taking to flight in that disrespectful and extraordinary manner is not known. It appears that he has not—hem!—returned home since. If any boy present is acquainted with Mornington's intentions, whatever they may be, he is in duty bound to tell me what he knows, so that I may—hem!—communicate such information to the headmaster."

The juniors were all silent; nobody had any information to offer. Certainly no one there had any knowledge of Mornington's intentions.

"It is presumed," continued Mr. Bootles, "that Mornington may—hem!—linger in the vicinity of the school, and open communications—hem!—with boys with whom he was intimate here. In that case—hem!—information must be given at once to me, so that the reckless youth may be—hem!—found and restored to his—his guardian's arms—hem!"

Still the juniors were silent. It was quite evident to the Form-master that no junior in his class had heard anything of Mornington. They all looked too amazed. He, therefore, changed the subject to the first of the morning's lessons.

But it was with difficulty that the Fourth-Formers could keep their minds upon the lessons that morning.

The startling news they had received was uppermost in their minds.

Mornington had not gone home—Morny had run away from his guardian, and was supposed to be lingering somewhere near Rookwood! Evidently the Rookwooders had not, as they had supposed, seen the last of the scapegrace of the school.

What Mornington's intentions might be was a very interesting question—much more interesting than Latin prose or geography!

Did he mean to "show up" at Rookwood again? That was a question of almost breathless interest. What would the Head say if he did? If Morny had money in his pockets, there was nothing to prevent him

from taking up his quarters at Coombe, if he liked—and why shouldn't he drop in to have a chat with old pals, if the spirit moved him to do so? But could he, now that Morny didn't belong to Rookwood, and the Head had no authority over him in any way whatever?

Mr. Bootles was very tart in temper that morning, as he had ample reason to be. He had never, or hardly ever, had such an absent-minded class to handle. There were incessant whispers among the juniors, and every whisper was on the topic of Morny. Mornington had always been an unruly influence in the Fourth Form, and that unruly influence did not seem to have departed with Mornington.

When the Fourth, to their great relief, were dismissed at last, they streamed out of the Form-room in a buzz of discussion, and the name of Mornington was heard on all sides. And it was not only in the Fourth that the absent junior was discussed; the Third and the Second and the Shell discussed him, too, and he was even talked of in the mighty Sixth. If the Head had hoped, by expelling Mornington, to be done with him for good, it was clear that the Head was going to be disappointed. Never had the schoolboy mutineer been so much in the thoughts of Rookwooders generally as he was now.

"Good old Morny!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a chuckle. "Isn't it just like his nerve? Isn't it?"

"He surely won't come back here," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "The Head would be no end waxy—"

"Morny wouldn't mind."

"I suppose he wouldn't," confessed Jimmy. "It would be just like Morny to drop in, just to exasperate the Head. Hallo, Tubby! What's up now?"

Tubby Muffin came panting up from the direction of the gates, his round eyes shining with excitement.

"Morny!" he gasped.

"What about Morny?"

"He—he—he—he's here!" spluttered Tubby.

"Here!" yelled the Fistical Four in chorus.

"Yes—at the gates—"

"Great Scott!"

There was a rush to the gates on all sides.

CHAPTER 6.
A Friendly Call!

MORNY!"

"Here he is!"

"My only hat! It's Morny!"

It was Morny! The expelled junior was standing in the road, looking in at the open gates with a smile. Old Mack, the porter, was blinking at him, evidently undecided whether it was his duty to collar Mornington or not. Old Mack had had many and varied experiences since he had been in charge of the school gates; but he never remembered to have seen an expelled junior saunter up to the school, with his hands in his pockets, and an amused smile on his face.

There was already a crowd of juniors at the gates when Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived. Valentino Mornington nodded coolly to the Fistical Four.

"Hallo, old tops!" he said.

"You—you here, Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"As large as life, old bean!"

"But your uncle——"

"The dear old gentleman is probably weepin' bitter tears for me now," said Mornington. "You must have noticed by his looks how sorry he would feel at partin' with me. My cousins at home have probably gone into mournin'. We're an affectionate family—very!"

Some of the juniors laughed. Erroll came scudding down to the gates. Mornington gave him a grin.

"Morny, why aren't you at home?"

"Fed, dear boy! As the song says, 'There's no place like home, when there's nowhere else to go!' You seem surprised to see me! Bless your little hearts, you'll see a lot of me around here!"

"What are you doing around here, then?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Lokin' for a job."

"Lookin' for a job!" howled Lovell.

"A chap must live," explained Mornington. "Having relieved my beloved uncle of the unpleasant task of lookin' after my moral an' material well-bein', I've got to kick for myself. Naturally, I prefer to get a job in this dear old familiar spot. It will be so pleasant to see you fellows sometimes, when I'm trottin' along with a basket on my arm——"

"Wha-a-at!"

"Of course, I shan't expect you to know me," said Morny coolly. "I can see Muffin turnin' up his nose at me already——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've hopes," continued Morny, "of gettin' a job with Mr. Bruce, the grocer. I've never mixed sand with sugar but I can learn, I hope. If you fellows could give me a few orders, it might help me bag the berth. Can I induce you, Silver, to take a pound of our well-known and justly-celebrated four-shilling tea?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look out! Here's Bootles!" squeaked Tubby Muffin.

Mr. Bootles came hastily into the gateway. His eyes almost started through his spectacles as he looked at Mornington. That youth touched his cap respectfully.

"Good-morning, sir! I hope you are well!"

"Mornington!" gasped Mr. Bootles. "Ah! Hem! I will—ahem!—take charge of you, Mornington, and—and—ahem! send you home——"

"You won't, sir," answered Mornington coolly. "You've no authority to do anything of the kind, and I certainly shouldn't allow it. You've no more right to interfere with me than with the butcher-boy!"

"What!"

"You see, I'm not in your class now, old bean!" explained Mornington.

"Wha-at! Wha-a-at did you call me, Mornington?"

"Old bean!" said Mornington affably. "I might say, dear old bean! I was always very attached to you, sir, though you sometimes annoyed me, the way you bark in class."

"Wha-at!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! Mornington, you—you utterly disrespectful young rascal!" spluttered Mr. Bootles.

Mornington stepped back into the road.

"Ta-ta, you fellows!" he said. "I must be goin', if I'm to get a job to-day. Good-bye, Bootles, old son!"

Mr. Bootles gasped. Morny's last remark had quite taken away his breath. He stood with his mouth open, like a fish out of water, gazing speechlessly after Valentine Mornington, as that cheerful youth sauntered down the road.

"B-b-b-bless my soul!" stuttered Mr. Bootles at last, and he almost tottered away.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, with a deep breath, "here's a go!"

And indubitably it was a most extraordinary "go!"

CHAPTER 7.

A Very Troublesome Youth!

BOOTLES looks worried!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned.

There was no doubt that Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked worried.

He was feeling worried, too.

The fact that a fellow in his Form had been expelled from the school was enough to worry Mr. Bootles, who was a very kind-hearted little gentleman. But the additional fact that the fellow in question—Valentine Mornington—had refused to go home with his guardian and was coolly and cheerfully "hanging about" near to Rookwood, was still more worrying. How to deal with so extraordinary a situation as that was a problem beyond Mr. Bootles' powers of solving.

Mr. Bootles was on his way to the Head's study, to hand the problem over to that stately gentleman, and he was far too preoccupied to observe the smiling faces of the Fistical Four as he passed them.

He tapped at the Head's door with a nervous hand, and entered.

Dr. Chisholm glanced up.

The Head was not in a good temper that Monday afternoon. The affair of Mornington had annoyed him very considerably. He had been glad to wash his hands of the troublesome youth, and it was exasperating to discover that his hands were not so completely washed of Mornington as he had supposed.

"Well, Mr. Bootles," he said with some acidity, "has anything been heard of that unruly and disrespectful boy?"

"I came here to speak about him, sir," said Mr. Bootles.

"It is unheard-of!" said the Head, frowning. "Sir Rupert Stacpole should certainly have taken his nephew home with him. He has some control over the boy, I presume. I was astounded to receive his letter this morning, stating that

Mornington had quitted him on the way home, and had not been seen since. If he should have the impudence to present himself at Rookwood again, I will see——"

The Head paused on the verge of a very emphatic remark.

"The fact is, sir——" murmured Mr. Bootles.

"You have heard something of him?"

"I have seen him, sir!"

The Head started.

"Then the boy has been here!" he exclaimed. "Has he had the audacity to enter the precincts of Rookwood?"

"Not exactly, sir. I found him at the gates——"

"At the gates!" repeated the Head.

"Talking with the boys."

"Talking with the boys?"

"Yes, sir! I interfered——"

"That was very right and proper. The Rookwood boys must not be allowed to hold any communication with an expelled rebel!" said the Head emphatically. "The boy seems lost to all sense of shame. Although he no longer belongs to the school, I shall take the liberty of flogging him if he should set his foot within the walls of Rookwood!"

"He did not precisely do that, sir," said Mr. Bootles. "He was standing in the public road outside the gates. He was excessively impertinent to me—very impertinent indeed! I was so astonished——"

"You need not be astonished at anything said or done by that young scapegrace," said the Head. "Where is he now?"

"He walked away in the direction of Coombe."

"Is he staying there, then?"

"I presume so."

The Head made an angry gesture.

"He must be removed at once!" he exclaimed.

"I—I was thinking, sir, that he should be detained, and sent home," said Mr. Bootles. "But he had the audacity to tell me that I had no authority to touch him now that he does not belong to Rookwood. I—I suppose that statement was correct?"

Mr. Bootles blinked inquiringly at the Head over his spectacles. Dr. Chisholm gave utterance to a sound strongly resembling a snort.

"He must be taken away," he said. "I

will telephone to Sir Rupert Stacpoole immediately, and request him to send for his nephew."

"Very good, sir!"

The Head turned to the telephone, and Mr. Bootles quitted the study, glad that the difficult matter was off his hands, at least.

It was a trunk call to Stacpoole Lodge, and the Head had to wait some time before he was through.

He occupied that time by pacing to and fro in his study, with a knitted and frowning brow.

But the bell rang at last, and the Head took up the receiver again. The voice that came through was that of Sir Rupert Stacpoole, uncle and guardian of the scapegrace of Rookwood.

"What—what? Is that Dr. Chisholm?"

"Dr. Chisholm is speaking," said the Head acidly. "There is news of your nephew, Sir Rupert. He has been here."

"Bless my soul!"

"It appears that he has now taken up his quarters at Coombe, the village near the school."

"The young rascal!"

"I shall be exceedingly obliged if you will send for him, or call for him and remove him at once, Sir Rupert."

"Hem!"

"It is quite impossible for the boy to remain in close proximity to the school after being expelled. It will have a very deteriorating effect upon the discipline of the school."

Something that sounded like a grunt came along the wires.

Possibly the baronet was not chiefly concerned about the discipline of Rookwood School.

"May I take it that you will fetch him away to-day, sir?" asked the Head.

"How can I possibly fetch him away?" demanded Sir Rupert Stacpoole. "He deliberately ran away from me. No doubt he will return home when he no longer has any money."

"What—what?"

"You say he is in the village of Coombe. What is his precise address at the present moment?"

"I do not know, naturally. Doubtless he is somewhere in the village."

"Am I to take a long and troublesome journey, sir, to search through a village for a boy, who will take to his heels at

the sight of me?" exclaimed the baronet testily. "You must see for yourself that it is impossible!"

"But he cannot remain there, sir!"

"As I have said, he will doubtless come home when he no longer has any money. His impudence cannot last longer than that; and I am certain that he has very little money. You will doubtless see that his friends at Rookwood do not supply him with any."

"Certainly! But——"

"The fact is, Dr. Chisholm, I am a busy man, and I cannot spend my time in a ridiculous chase of a rebellious boy!" exclaimed Sir Rupert. "He has chosen to run away. I shall give him time to come to his senses. If he chooses to come home and apologise for his conduct, I will receive him into my house. Otherwise, I shall wash my hands of him!"

"But—but——"

"If you should see him, sir, you may give him that message from me. There is nothing more to be said."

"But—but——" stammered the Head.

There was no sound along the wires. Sir Rupert Stacpoole, apparently, had rung off. Dr. Chisholm put up the receiver.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

He realised that Sir Rupert was just as exasperated with Mornington as he was himself, and that it was very probable that the baronet would not be displeased if Morny went away "on his own" for good. To ask the old gentleman to undertake a long, troublesome and difficult chase in order to take home with him a nephew who caused unending trouble in his house, was really asking a great deal.

Sir Rupert's decision to leave the boy to himself till he had "roughed" it long enough to bring him to his senses was doubtless a wise one. It was wise, at least, from Sir Rupert's point of view. From the Head of Rookwood's point of view, it was most annoying, as Mornington seemed determined to haunt Rookwood with his obnoxious presence.

Ten minutes later there was a paper on the notice-board in the Head's "fist." In the severest terms it forbade any Rookwooder to hold any communication with the outcast, and, above all, to supply him with money. The direst penalties were foreshadowed for anyone who should transgress that severe prohibition.

The Rookwood fellows gathered round

that notice in crowds, and read it with a buzz of comment. Most of the fellows made up their minds to observe the Head's injunction. But there were some who were doubtful on the point, feeling that it was up to them, to a certain extent, to lend a helping hand to a fellow who was down on his luck, and among them were Morny's chum, Erroll of the Fourth, and his cousin, little 'Erbert of the Second Form, and Jimmy Silver & Co.

CHAPTER 8.

The Outcast of Rookwood!

"CRICKET?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy Silver looked very thoughtful.

After lessons that day, the Fistical Four sauntered into the quadrangle, and it was to be observed that "Uncle James" seemed to be thinking.

"May as well put in some cricket, Jimmy. There's not much more time for it," remarked Raby. "What are you scowling about, old chap?"

"Get it off your chest, Jimmy," said Newcome encouragingly.

"The fact is, I was thinking about Morny," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "The silly ass ought to have gone home with his uncle—"

"He ought!" agreed Lovell.

"But he hasn't—"

"He hasn't, that's a fact."

"The Head says we're to keep clear of him," went on Jimmy, still more deeply in thought.

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"You can guess that the Head's in a state about it," he said. "If we see Morny, we'd better keep it awfully dark. Do you want to see him?"

"Well, he's down on his luck," said Jimmy Silver. "He's got some potty idea in his head of defying his uncle and getting a job somewhere. Of course, it's all rot. The fact is, his uncle isn't a bad old sport; he must have found Morny rather trying at times."

"You bet!" chuckled Lovell.

"Morny ought to go home," said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "I'd like to speak to him and reason with him. I know Erroll means to see him. Suppose we drop in at Coombe, and if we meet him by chance,

that won't be disobeying the Head, will it?"

"If we meet him, it must be by chance," said Lovell thoughtfully. "We don't know where he's hanging out."

"Exactly."

"But if we go to Coombe on purpose—" began Raby.

"We won't do that," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll go to Coombe to have some ginger-pop at Mrs. Wicks. See?"

"Ha, ha! Quite! Come on!"

The Fistical Four strolled out of the gates with a very careless air. A junior was in the road ahead of them, going towards the village, and Jimmy Silver hailed him,

"Hallo, Erroll!"

Kit Erroll glanced round.

He waited for the Fistical Four to come up, colouring a little.

"You fellows going to Coombe?" he asked.

"We're dropping in at Mrs. Wicks' for some ginger-pop," grinned Lovell. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to look for Morny."

"What about orders from the Beak?"

"Morny's my chum," said Erroll quietly.

"I'm sticking to him. I've a right to speak to my chum if I like, I suppose?"

"The Head doesn't seem to think so," remarked Newcome.

Erroll frowned a little.

"I'm sorry for that," he said. "I think I've a right. The Head's sacked Morny from the school; his authority ends there, I think. It isn't as if Morny had done anything bad—as if he wasn't fit to speak to. He's only kicked over the traces—"

"Only!" grinned Lovell.

"I mean, he's been unruly and disrespectful, but that isn't as if he'd done wrong. If a chap was expelled for stealing, for instance, we shouldn't want to speak to him, and the Head's order wouldn't be necessary. Morny has only been a reckless ass, and that's quite different. He won't do us any harm, I suppose? I'm going."

"The fact is, we're rather thinking we may fall in with Morny," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Trot along!"

The five juniors walked down to the village together.

They thought it very probable that they would see Mornington, for it was most likely that he would be on the lookout for his friends from Rookwood.

That expectation was realised. Valentine Mornington, late of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, was seated on the old bench outside Mrs. Wicks' little shop when the juniors came up: There was a glass of ginger-beer on the little table at his elbow. He nodded coolly to the five juniors, who stared at him.

There had been a considerable change in Mornington's appearance.

The most elegant junior at Rookwood, Morny had been the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School. Even after his fall from fortune, he had contrived somehow to be the best-dressed fellow in the Fourth. Smythe of the Shell, who spent four times as much on his clothes, never succeeded in catching Morny's elegance. But that elegance was a thing of the past now.

Morny's Eton's were considerably dusty and rumpled, and he was wearing a cheap tweed cap and heavy boots. The change was remarkable.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Is that really you, Morny?"

"Little me," smiled Mornington. "Did you fellows come along to see me?"

"Impossible—it's forbidden. This meeting is entirely by chance," said Jimmy Silver. "But we're jolly glad to see you."

"I'd ask you to have some ginger-pop," said Mornington. "but cash is short. I haven't got a job yet."

"You got a job!" grinned Lovell. "Why not?"

"Well, there are a thousand reasons why not," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't do anything that it's worth anybody's while to pay for, in the first place. You're not going to offer a farmer to do Latin verses for him, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Morny, old chap, you ought to go home," said Erroll, in a low voice. "I came to find you, and to advise you—"

"Then you're wasting your breath, old top. I'm not goin' home."

"Your uncle isn't a bad sort, if you treat him properly—"

"He's quite a good sort," answered Mornington coolly. "I dare say my Stacpoole cousins are good sorts, too. Only, you see, I can't stand 'em. If I go home, I shall be rowin' and raggin' with that lot before the first day's out. When we rag, they remind me that I'm a poor relation,

eatin' the merry bread of charity. I'm not proud, but there's a limit."

"Oh!" said Erroll, in great distress.

"Of course, I am a poor relation, since my money went, and I have been eatin' the bread of charity," said Morny, with bitter coolness. "It's the fact; but, somehow, a fellow doesn't like havin' it rubbed in. But that isn't all. I can't stand my dear relations, any more than they can stand me. Old Uncle Rupert means well, but he bores me to briny tears. I'm goin' out into the wide world on my own."

"But what on earth are you going to do?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Get a job in the village, to begin with."

"Rot!"

Mornington smiled.

"I've been goin' the rounds already," he said. "The school grocer won't take me on. He's afraid of offendin' the Head."

"You've asked him?" exclaimed Erroll.

"Certainly."

"Look here, Morny, if you're not going home, you'll want money—"

"I shall—badly!" assented Mornington.

"Well; then—"

"Nothin' doin', old top! I'm not takin' your money, or any money that I don't earn by the giddy sweat of my brow. Besides, I've got a good chance of a job. I've applied to the other grocer, Mr. Bandy."

"And what does Mr. Bandy say?" asked Newcome, with a grin.

"As he doesn't serve Rookwood, he don't care two pins for the Head, of course. Grocers are quite independent gentlemen, you know, when they haven't your custom. I've got a good chance with the Bandy-bird. If I can take a few customers with me, I'm pretty certain of the job. That's why I've been hanging about to see you fellows."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I don't expect you to know me nowadays," continued Mornington. "Public school chaps don't know errand boys."

"Don't be a silly ass, Morny!" interrupted Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"But for the sake of old times," went on Morny, unmoved, "you might remember me and give me an order. You will always find me attentive to customers, and I shall know my place—rather a distinction in a

tradesman in these merry days. By constant and respectful attention, I hope to merit your further patronage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It isn't a laughing matter—it's business. Can I take some orders for you young gentlemen?" asked Morny. He touched his cap, and then took out a cheap pocket-book and pencil.

The Rookwood juniors blinked at him.

In spite of his ironical manner, Valentine Mornington was evidently in earnest.

There was a good side to Morny's peculiar character. In his high and palmy days he had never been a snob. Now that he was down on his luck, it was evidently his intention to turn to honest work—and he had too much good sense to suppose that there was anything derogatory in any work, so long as it was honest.

He glanced at the amazed juniors with quite a business-like air.

"I won't recommend Bandy's tea," he said thoughtfully. "His tea is rather a corker. What about butter? He gets his butter from a farm, and it's good, and two shillings a pound. Would any of you young gentlemen care to sample our two shilling butter?"

The juniors chuckled.

"If you really mean it——" began Jimmy.

"Of course I do. I tell you, I can bag the job at Bandy's, if I can take him some customers, and a few orders as an earnest of future custom."

The juniors exchanged glances.

The whole affair appeared to them in the light of a "lark," serious as Valentine Mornington was about it.

"Well, it's a go!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "We can whack out a pound of butter among the four of us."

"One pound of butter," said Mornington, making a note in his order-book. "Any sardines?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, put in a tin of sardines!"

"One tin of sardines. Cocoa—coffee—spices——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four entered into the spirit of the thing, and they made up a list of orders for Morny. That list of orders mortgaged their allowances for the week; but they felt that it was in a good cause. When the one-time dandy of the Fourth had

taken down the list, he turned to Erroll, who was looking on in grave silence.

"Anythin' for you, Master Erroll?" he asked.

"If you call me Master Erroll, you ass, I'll punch your silly head!"

"My dear chap, I know my place," said Mornington. "I'd be very glad to serve you, I can recommend our butter and cheese——"

Erroll burst into a laugh.

"Put me down for what you like," he said. "Make it come to a pound. I wish you'd give up playing the goat, Morny."

"This isn't playin' the goat; this is startin' in business. I may be a big shop-keeper some day—sort of Harrods or Whiteleys. Big thin's come from small beginnin's. Rely on me to give you the best value for your quid," said Mornington. "The goods shall be delivered to-morrow. Will that do?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Mornington rose.

"I'll cut off to Bandy's now," he said. "With an order like this, the job's mine. Bandy's as good as said so. He will be rubbin' his fat paws over the prospect of gettin' Rookwood custom. Excuse me, gentlemen. I have the honour to bid you a very humble and respectful good-afternoon."

And Mornington touched his cap and walked away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared after him.

"Well!" said Jimmy, with a deep breath. Lovell chuckled.

"What a change for Morny! I wonder how long it will last?"

And the juniors walked home to Rookwood, wondering. There was no doubt that it was a big change for Valentine Mornington, and they wondered what would come of it.

CHAPTER 9.

Mr. Bandy's New Boy!

"YOU fellows——"

Tubby Muffin gasped.

He was full of news; almost bursting with it in fact; but he was too breathless and excited to get it out. So he spluttered.

It was the day following Jimmy Silver & Co's visit to Coombe, and the Fistical

Four were chatting outside the School House, after morning lessons, when Tubby rolled breathlessly by. The Co. regarded the fat Classical curiously as he panted.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver enquiringly. "What's happened? Has Conroy found out it was you that bagged his cake, and he is after you with a stump?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Muffin. "I—I say, I've seen him—"

"Which him?"

"Morny!" spluttered Tubby.

Jimmy Silver held up a severe hand.

"Haven't you seen the Head's fist on the notice-board?" he demanded. "You're not allowed to see Morny, you young rascal!"

"Well, I like that—when you went down to Coombe to see him yesterday!" exclaimed Reginald Muffin warmly. "I heard you telling Putty Graco. Besides, how could I help seeing Morny when he's come here?"

"Here!" exclaimed the Fistical Four together.

"Yes, rather! He's here now!" gasped Muffin. "He's come to the back door with a basket—"

"A—a basket?"

"Delivering groceries!" shrieked Tubby. It was out now! "What do you fellows think of that?"

"Phew!"

"Hallo! What's that about Morny?" asked Tommy Dodd, the Modern junior, coming up. "Morny still hanging about?"

"Delivering groceries at the back door!" spluttered Tubby Muffin. "I've seen him! I say he's in shirt sleeves clothes. He's got a white apron on, too, tucked up, like a shopman, you know. I've just seen him come in at the tradesmen's gate."

"Another of Morny's weird larks," grinned Tommy Dodd. "I'm going to see him!"

Tommy Dodd started off at a run, quite eager to see Mornington in his remarkable new character. Five or six fellows who had heard Tubby's startling announcement followed.

Quite a little army of Rookwood juniors came round the buildings, and gathered round the handsome youth who was standing at the kitchen door.

It was Mornington—and he was as Muffin described him. A white and spotless apron was tied round him, and tucked up on one side, in the proper professional

style. He had put down a large basket stacked with groceries, and rung the kitchen-bell.

He glanced at the crowd of excited juniors as they arrived, and touched his cap with ironic respect.

The kitchen door opened, and Tupper, the page, looked out. Tupper almost fell down at the sight of Mornington, with groceries.

"Hallo! Wot's the game?" asked Tupper. He stared at Mornington, and he stared at Mornington again. Evidently Tupper supposed that it was a "lark."

"Goods from Mr. Bandy's, sir," said Mornington.

"Who are you calling sir, Master Mornington?" ejaculated the astonished Tupper.

"You, sir!"

"Oh, my eye!" said Tupper.

"Will you kindly take the goods, sir?" asked Mornington, lifting the basket. "I have another round to make. Goods for five young gentlemen of this school with separate bills. I think you will find them correct."

"Oh, lor!" said Tupper.

He took the basket mechanically.

Mornington waited outside the door.

More and more juniors were gathering on the scene now; Tubby Muffin had spread the news far and wide. There was a chorus of chortles—though Morny's face was quite grave. Apparently he was taking his new job with becoming seriousness.

"Here comes a merry prefect!" murmured Lovell. "I wonder what Bulkeley will say? Carthew, too!"

Bulkeley and Carthew of the Sixth came up. The prefects had noticed the army of juniors streaming round the house, and they had followed to see what was "up." They expected to find a fight or a rag of some kind going on, and they were astounded at the sight of Valentine Mornington, in a white apron, waiting at the kitchen door.

"Mornington!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "You again! What are you doing here, you young sweep?"

Morny touched his cap.

"Business, sir," he answered.

"What?"

"I'm Mr. Bandy's new boy, sir," explained Mornington. "I'm delivering the goods to the school."

"Great Scott!"

The Rookwood captain could only blink at him. Carthew struck in:

"The Head's forbidden you to enter Rookwood, Mornington. Clear out at once!"

"I'm waiting for my basket, sir!"

"Don't be a young fool! Clear off!" said the bully of the Sixth. "I'll help you with my boot if you don't go!"

Mornington did not stir.

"I'm afraid I couldn't go without my basket, sir," he answered. "There are other goods in it for my round."

"Do you want to make out that you're really a grocer's boy?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Yes, sir! Mr. Bandy has kindly given me a job—six shillings a week, all found, and sleep in," said Mornington. "It's a small beginning, sir, but I hope to make a good shopman when I'm a little older, and perhaps keep a shop of my own some day. May I hope, sir, that I shall have your custom?"

"You young ass!" muttered Bulkeley.

Carthew strode forward. As Bulkeley was head prefect, there was no need for Carthew to interfere; but the bully of the Sixth did not mean to let the opportunity pass. He had an old grudge against Morny—had not been mollified in the least by the junior's expulsion from Rookwood.

"Get out!" he snapped. "I give you one second before I kick you out! Now, then—sharp!"

Mornington's eyes glittered.

"May I appeal to you, Master Bulkeley?" he asked. "I have to wait for my basket, which is Mr. Bandy's property."

"Let him alone, Carthew," said Bulkeley. "If he's really delivering groceries, he must have his basket."

"Rot! It's only a cheeky excuse of the young cad's to wedge into the school!" exclaimed Carthew angrily. "You know as well as I do, Bulkeley."

"Let him alone, I tell you!" answered the captain of Rookwood gruffly. "If you touch him, Carthew, you'll have to deal with me; I warn you, Mornington, get out of this as quickly as you can!"

"Certainly, sir; only waiting for my basket," answered Mr. Bandy's new boy cheerfully.

Carthew gave the Rookwood captain a

bitter look. He did not venture to lay hands upon Morny after Bulkeley's warning.

"You are aiding and abetting this young rascal in his insolence!" he said between his teeth. "I shall report this to the Head at once!"

"You will please yourself about that," answered Bulkeley, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Carthew strode savagely away. It was evidently his intention to bring the Head upon the scene, and the juniors began to look anxious. What would happen if the Head arrived and found Mornington there, in his remarkable new character of grocer's boy, they could not imagine.

"I say, better hurry Tupper up a bit!" murmured Lovell. "Morny, call out to Tupper to buck up."

Mornington shook his head.

"I hope I know my place too well, sir," he answered. "Master Tupper must take his own time. I remember he always did take plenty of time about everything."

"But the Head's coming!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Carthew's gone to fetch him!"

"I've no objection to seeing the Head, Master Silver."

"Eh?"

"Perhaps he will give me an order."

"Oh, you ass!" gasped Jimmy.

Tupper, within, was certainly taking his time unloading the grocery basket. Tupper was not a hustling youth at the best of times, and just now he was in a state of astonishment and breathless excitement. Cook and housemaid had to be told of the astounding reappearance of Mornington before the basket was unpacked. Two or three surprised and astonished faces were peering from the kitchen windows at Mr. Bandy's new boy. Mornington touched his hat respectfully to the cook as he caught her glance. Cook gasped and disappeared.

Mornington was waiting with complete calmness, but the fellows gathered round were decidedly uneasy. Carthew was certain to lose no time in bringing the Head upon the scene, and when he—

"Here he comes!" squeaked Tubby Muffin breathlessly.

And there was an awed silence as Dr. Chisholm strode upon the spot, with Carthew at his heels.

CHAPTER 10.

The Chopper Comes Down!

DR. CHISHOLM stared at Mornington. He seemed to find a difficulty in expressing his feelings in words.

Mr. Bandy's new boy touched his cap respectfully.

"Mornington!" gasped the Head, at last.

"Yes, sir. Anythin' I can do for you, sir?"

"How dare you come here?"

"Excuse me, sir, I was sent to deliver groceries for my master, Mr. Bandy, sir, of Coombe; I am also prepared to take orders. Perhaps you would like to give our bacon a trial, sir?"

"Wha-a-t?"

"Best home-cured, sir—we keep no American stuff," said Mornington, taking out his order-book. "We have in a fresh side of the very best quality. If I may venture to advise you, sir, you should give an order now, as bacon is rather short, and we may be sold out pretty soon. I should be very pleased to secure your custom."

The Head almost gasped for breath.

The juniors were grinning again; but a glance from their Headmaster caused the grins to die away on their faces. Dr. Chisholm's glance just then was not unlike that of the fabled Gorgon.

"Mornington!" breathed the Head. "I command you to go to your home at once!"

"I'm goin' there, sir, as soon as Master Tupper hands out my basket. I live at Mr. Bandy's."

"I mean your guardian's home," exclaimed the Head. "You know perfectly well what I mean. I command you to return to Sir Rupert Stacpool!"

Mornington shook his head.

"Sorry I can't oblige you, sir," he said. "We do everything we can to please the public, but there is a limit. May I point out in the most respectful manner, sir, that you have no authority to command me to do anything, as you are no longer my headmaster? Anythin' in the way of business, sir—"

"Boy!"

"If you would care to give our home-cured bacon a trial—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted the Head; and there was instantly a silence that might have been felt. The juniors looked anywhere but at

Dr. Chisholm—they did not want to meet his eye.

That eye glittered at Mr. Bandy's new boy.

"Mornington, I am perfectly aware that this conduct is intended for insolent defiance!" said the Head, breathing hard. "It is correct that I have no authority over a boy who has left this school; but within these walls, sir, my authority is absolute. I command you to leave this place, and never set foot within these precincts again, on any pretext whatever!"

"But if my master orders me to deliver goods here, sir—"

"I will communicate with Mr. Bandy on that subject," said the Head, with a withering look. "Go!"

"Very well, sir; but I must take my basket."

Tupper, fortunately, appeared at the door with the basket, and handed it to Mornington. The Head called to him harshly,

"Tupper, you are not to take anything in future that may be brought here by Mornington. He is not to be admitted under any circumstances whatever. Bear that in mind."

"Yessir!" gasped Tupper.

"Now go, you insolent boy!" commanded the Head.

Mornington put his basket on his arm.

"Certainly, sir! You are sure there is nothing I can do for you in the grocery line—"

"Go!"

"I may point out, sir, that you would do well to secure some of our home-cured bacon. The demand is very keen."

"Go!" gasped the Head.

"Can we supply you with jam, sir—home-made by Mrs. Bandy and warranted of the very best quality?"

Dr. Chisholm made a stride towards the grocer's boy. Mornington touched his cap rather hastily, and walked away to the tradesman's gate, basket on arm. The juniors gazed after him speechlessly till the gate swung shut behind him, and Mr. Bandy's new boy was gone.

The Head strode away, and there was silence until he had disappeared; but then a buzz of voices and a chorus of chortles broke forth. Mornington's "latest" delighted the Rookwood juniors beyond all bounds.

"Isn't he a corker?" gasped Lovell.

"Isn't he a real gilt-edge corker? I thought the Head would burst a boiler when Mornay was recommending his home-cured bacon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He won't be able to come here any more now," remarked Raby. "We can't give him any more grocery orders."

"Never mind; he's got his job, now, at any rate," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "We may as well go in and field our groceries."

The Fistical Four returned to the School House. But there a rather disagreeable surprise awaited them. Bulkeley called to them in the passage.

"Silver, Erroll, Raby, Newcome, Lovell

"Hullo! What's wanted, Bulkeley?"

"You are!" answered the Rookwood captain grimly. "You're to go into the Head's study at once."

"Oh!"

Five dismayed juniors made their way to that dreaded apartment. They wondered whether the Head had learned of their meeting with Mornay in Coombe the day before. If he had, they knew that they were was trouble to come.

Dr. Chisholm's expression hinted of trouble as they came into his study. He sat at his desk, with five grocery-bills before him. His eyes almost glittered at the five juniors.

"The goods brought by Mornington appear to belong to you," he said. "Your names are here."

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver. "You ordered these goods at Bandy's shop?"

"No harm in that, sir, is there?" asked Jimmy Silver, with his most innocent expression. "The housekeeper would see you, sir, before they were given to us, usual."

"No doubt; but I have a strong suspicion that you ordered these goods at Bandy's shop because that insolent boy, Mornington, is there."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"For that reason," said the Head grimly, "these goods will be confiscated, and will not be handed over to you. You must, however, take these bills, and pay Bandy the sums due."

"Oh!"

"Any further goods delivered here by Mornington will be confiscated in the same

way," added the Head. "Mr. Bandy's shop will be placed out of bounds for all Rookwood. I am placing a notice on the board to that effect. Anyone transgressing this order will be dealt with severely. You may go."

The juniors turned to the door; but Jimmy Silver turned back, with a very demure look.

"Are we to pay these bills, sir?"

"I have said so!" snapped the Head.

"But, if Mr. Bandy's shop is out of bounds, sir, how can we go there to pay the bills?"

The Head breathed hard. He sometimes spoke very hastily, but he did not like being "caught out" by a junior. Certainly Jimmy's manner was not impertinent, but there was a glimmer in his eye that the Head did not like, and which he did not approve of.

"I will send Tupper to pay the bills, Silver," he said, after a short pause. "You may place them on my desk, with the requisite money."

"We haven't the money till Saturday, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

The Head breathed harder.

"Then I will pay the bills, and deduct the amount from your allowances," he said. "You, Silver, I think to have been chiefly to blame in this matter. You will take five hundred lines."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

"Now you may go, unless you have any further remarks to make!" added the Head, with a touch of grim irony.

But the juniors hadn't any further remarks to make. Remarks at five hundred lines a time were a little too expensive. They quitted the Head's study in a hurry, without making any further remarks.

CHAPTER 11.

Floored!

THE next day was Wednesday—a half-holiday, and there would have been a regular procession to Mr. Bandy's grocery shop in Coombe, to see Mornington in his new "job." But the Head had foreseen that. There was a notice on the board placing Mr. Bandy's establishment out of bounds, and, furthermore, forbidding all Rookwood to have any dealings with Mr. Bandy at all. The new custom which Mornington had brought

to his employer was, therefore, brief. Mr. Bandy's new boy was not to have another opportunity of visiting Rookwood School with a basket of groceries on his arm.

Some of the Rookwood fellows felt very restive at the Head's new prohibition. They remarked that he was exceeding his rights; as perhaps, indeed, he was. Lovell argued, in the Common-room, that it wasn't the Head's bizney where a fellow bought a tin of tomatoes or a pound of cheese, and Lovell's remarks were heard with applause by the juniors. Unluckily, they were also heard by Carthew, of the Sixth, who was prowling round the doorway; and Carthew marched Lovell off to the Head, there to repeat his arguments if he liked. Lovell came out of the Head's study, rubbing his hands hard, and was observed to be in anything but an argumentative mood afterwards. Whether the Head was exceeding his rights or not, it was pretty clear that he was going to have his way.

The procession to Mr. Bandy's shop, therefore, did not come off. Peele remarked, in his slangy way, that as the Head was so shirty about it, it would be wiser to give Mr. Bandy a miss in baulk. And as Carthew walked down to Coombe on Wednesday afternoon, probably in the hope of catching offenders and currying favour with the Head by reporting them, most of the juniors decided to give the Bandy establishment a wide berth.

Not so the Fistical Four, however. Lovell, no longer loudly argumentative on the rights of the master, was angry and obstinate, and he told his chums that he was going to Bandy's. He told them, in a subdued voice, in a quiet corner, rubbing his hands the while. The Head appeared to have given his cane some considerable exercise for Lovell's behoof, and Arthur Edward was smarting.

"Risky!" said Newcome.

Snort from Lovell.

"You sheer off, then, if you're funky!" he said.

"If the Head hadn't given you enough, old top, I'd dot you in the eye," said Newcome placidly. "Let's go."

"Let's!" assented Jimmy Silver.

And the Fistical Four sauntered out of gates, and started to walk in the opposite direction from Coombe. That was a cautionary measure, in case eyes were upon them. At a suitable distance they left the road, cut through the wood, and emerged

into the lane again near Coombe village. They walked down the little old High Street and stopped opposite Bandy's shop, and scanned it across the road.

"No beaks in sight," said Lovell. "If we were spotted and reported to the Head, there would be wigs on the green. The Head isn't sweet-tempered about Morny."

"Safe enough. Come on!"

After a further cautious survey of the village High Street, the Fistical Four crossed quickly, and plunged into Mr. Bandy's shop. It was a little dusky shop, two steps down from the street, and redolent of bacon and soap and other things in the grocery line.

Mr. Bandy, a stout gentleman with a bald head and red whiskers, was behind his little counter, and he grinned welcome to the Rookwooders. Mr. Bandy was highly satisfied with his new boy, and the prospect of custom from the big school. He was not the chief grocer of Coombe, and he did not serve Rookwood; in fact, his business was not a very prosperous one, and all was grist that came to his mill.

"Afternoon, young gentlemen," he said affably. "What can I do for you this afternoon?"

"Well, we really dropped in to see your new boy, Mr. Bandy," said Jimmy Silver. "He's an old friend of ours, you know."

Mr. Bandy smiled.

"Very kind of you, sir, to take notice of him now he's come down in the world," he said.

"Oh! Ah! Hem! Yes! Can we see him?"

Mr. Bandy jerked a fat thumb towards the little parlour behind the shop.

"He's in the parlour, 'aving his tea," he explained. "You're very welcome to step in. Make yourselves at 'ome, young gentlemen."

"Thank you very much."

"Not at all," said Mr. Bandy politely.

Jimmy Silver & Co. entered the little parlour. Mornington was seated at the tea-table, with a plate of thick bread and butter before him, and a big cup of tea. He was eating with a good appetite. From the kitchen, which adjoined, came a sound of clinking crockery, which seemed to hint that Mrs. Bandy was at her household duties there.

"Hallo, you chaps!" exclaimed Mornington, looking up. "Fancy seein' you

here! I don't know whether I'm allowed to receive visitors in business hours——"

"Mr. Bandy told us to come in," grinned Baby. "How are you getting on in the grocery line, Morny?"

"First rate."
"Like tho business?"

"Toppin'! Squat down somewhere. You don't mind if I go on with my tea?" asked Mr. Bandy's new boy. "I've got to mind the shop when my master goes out."

"Mind the shop!" murmured Newcome. "Oh, my hat!"

"I've been rather expecting an influx of Rookwood customers this afternoon," said Mornington. "Ain't I goin' to get your custom?"

"Head's put the shop out of bounds." Mornington whistled.

"Well, I suppose he would," he assented. "That's rather a facer, though. I shan't bring Mr. Bandy much custom at that rate."

"We'll do what we can," said Jimmy Silver. "But tho Head's very waxy; he's caned Lovell for talking too much. We'd buy some stuff now if we had any money; but we're cleared out at present."

"My dear man, big businesses are built on credit. I'll get you tick!"

"Right-ho!" said Jimmy, laughing. "You can assure Mr. Bandy that we will settle."

"Like a bird. You'll have to take the goods away—I can't deliver at Rookwood any more."

"Ha, ha! No!"

The chums of the Fourth remained chatting with Mornington while he finished his tea. It did not take him long. So far, at all events, Morny was keen on attending to his duties. Mr. Bandy, in fact, had quite a jewel of a shop-boy—so far.

Morny returned into the shop and the Fistical Four followed him. They made their purchases and pocketed the articles, and Morny made entries in a big book, under Mr. Bandy's eye. Morny was apparently taking over the book-keeping of the establishment; his abilities in that line were probably quite equal to Mr. Bandy's.

"Better scout before we step out," murmured Lovell, and he put his head cautiously out of the shop doorway, under cover of a stack of brooms and brushes exposed for sale.

He drew it back as suddenly as if he had

unwittingly put it into a lion's jaws. His face was quite pale.

"The Head!" he stuttered.

"What?"

"He's just coming."

"Oh, crikey!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not stop to think. They bolted back into the parlour like rabbits into a burrow at the sight of a terrier.

Barely had the glass door closed, when there was a stately tread in the shop doorway. They had just escaped!

"He's coming in!" breathed Lovell faintly. "Oh, dear! Might have run into him! Oh!"

"Shush!"

The upper part of the parlour door was of glass, covered by a thin muslin curtain. Through the muslin, the juniors were able to look into the shop without being seen. They watched breathlessly, feeling almost giddy from their narrow escape.

Dr. Chisholm's stately form loomed in the shop doorway; and he uttered an exclamation as he stumbled over the steps down from the pavement.

"Mind the step, sir!" called out Mornington, who was with Mr. Bandy behind the counter.

"Bless my soul!"

The Head recovered his balance, and sailed into the dusky little shop. He was breathing hard. He gave Mornington one steely look, and then turned all his attention to Mr. Bandy.

That gentleman blinked at him dubiously. He knew nothing of the circumstances in which Mornington had left Rookwood; but as he did not serve the school—officially at least—the Head's wrath was not alarming to him. Indeed, Mr. Bandy was quite prepared to give as good as he got—as he would have expressed it—in dealing with even so august a personage as the Head of Rookwood.

"I have called. Mr. Bandy, in reference to that boy!" said the Head in a deep voice.

"Yes, sir, good afternoon, sir," said Mr. Bandy. "Anything I can send you, sir?"

"I am not here to give you an order, Mr. Bandy. That boy, as you are doubtless aware, formerly belonged to Rookwood."

"I believe so, sir," said Mr. Bandy blandly.

"He is an extremely troublesome boy!" said the Head. "He has come here, I fear, in order to cause me annoyance. I hope,

sir, that you will send him away, at my request."

"I've found 'im a very good lad, so far, sir," said Mr. Bandy.

"He is the most insolent boy it has ever been my misfortune to deal with," said Dr. Chisholm, raising his voice a little.

"Can't say I've found 'im so, sir," said Mr. Bandy. "Very nice respectful lad, to my mind. You can wrap up that there cheese, lad."

"Certainly, sir," said Mornington, very respectfully.

"Very bright lad, and seemed cut out for the grocery, sir," said Mr. Bandy, confidently.

"It is not a proper state of affairs, Mr. Bandy, for a boy expelled from school, to take a position as grocer's lad in the adjoining village."

"Think not, sir?" asked Mr. Bandy calmly. "The poor lad 'as to earn 'is bread, I s'pose."

"His guardian is willing to allow him to return home. In fact, he is very anxious for him to return, at least—I presume so."

"Well, sir, if his guardian calls 'ere about 'im, I'll 'ave a talk to him," said Mr. Bandy. "Course, I wouldn't think of keeping a boy whose guardian wanted him at 'ome. That would be agin the law, too. You mention to his guardian, sir, that I'll be pleased to see 'im if he cares to call, and give 'im a cup of tea, sir, and 'ave a talk."

There was a faint sound of chuckle from the back parlour.

The idea of Sir Rupert Stacpoole taking a cup of tea with Mr. Bandy was almost too much for Jimmy Silver & Co.

The Head of Rookwood flushed a little. He was a peremptory old gentleman, and accustomed to having his own way. It was a little difficult for him to remember that, outside the walls of Rookwood, his lordly will and pleasure was of no special consequence to anyone but himself.

"I hardly think that it is likely that Sir Rupert Stacpoole will call upon you in reference to the matter, Mr. Bandy," he said haughtily.

"Then in that case, sir, there don't seem anything to be done, do there?" said Mr. Bandy, with unruffled calmness.

"I have called, Mr. Bandy—"

"And very glad to see you, sir. Won't you take a seat? Boy, place a chair for the gentleman."

"Certainly, sir," said Mornington.

He brought out a stool for the Head. That gentleman ignored it. He remained standing, his eyes fixed on Mr. Bandy's fat, smiling face. Mr. Bandy was beginning to enjoy the interview, with view to telling the tale, with great effect, at the social circle which met of an evening at the Red Cow.

"I have called, sir," said the Head, in a deep voice, "to request you, most urgently, to send that boy away."

"Hem!"

"His presence, sir, in this village, is most annoying to me personally," said Dr. Chisholm, in his most stately manner.

"And who, sir?" said Mr. Bandy, swelling a little. "As one man to another, sir, I ask, who are you, sir?"

"Mr. Bandy!"

"If you come 'ere, sir, to order goods, well and good," said Mr. Bandy. "I'm hopen to serve you, sir, and which I 'ope that my goods always give satisfaction, being of the best quality, and prices reasonable. But if you come 'ere, sir, to teach me how to manage this 'ere establishment, sir, and to dictate to me about the 'ands, sir, that I employ in this establishment, I can only say, sir, with the greatest politeness, sir, there's the door, sir."

And Mr. Bandy emphasised his observation, by pointing a very plump and buttery forefinger at the shop door.

The Head blinked at him.

He seemed deprived of the power of speech for some moments.

As Mr. Bandy afterwards described it, with great enjoyment, to the social circle of the Red Cow. "Fair took the wind out of 'im, you believe me! Fair knocked 'im!"

In the parlour, four juniors waited breathlessly. They had never heard their headmaster talked to like that before. Neither had the Head ever had such an experience. But it was the first time he had come into personal contact with a grocer of socialistic proclivities.

"Sir!" gasped the Head, at last.

"Impudence!" said Mr. Bandy emphatically. "I don't come up to Rookwood, interfering with you, sir, I s'pose? When I do, so, you tell me to mind my hown business, and I'll mind it. And until then, sir, you leave me to manage my shop my own way. I can manage my shop, sir, without assistance, which I don't require. With all possible respect, sir," continued Mr. Bandy, warming up with the effect of his own elo-

quence, "you're an interfering old codger, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Interfering old codger!" repeated Mr. Bandy, with enjoyment.

Dr. Chisholm wondered, for a dizzy moment, whether he was dreaming this. But it was no dream—it was real! Mr. Bandy's red face was real, his podgy forefinger pointing to the door was real, and Dr. Chisholm had really been called an interfering old codger! Not a word further escaped the hapless old gentleman. He backed to the shop door, stumbled over the steps, and faded away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. escaped by the back door, and fled for their lives. Not for the wealth of Golconda would they have allowed the Head to suspect that they had been witnesses of that remarkable interview. They arrived breathlessly at Rookwood. Prudence counselled silence; it was evidently a case in which silence was golden. But the story was too good to keep. The Head, as he pondered in amazement and horror over the occurrence, was fervently glad that, Mr. Bandy's shop being out of bounds, no Rookwood boy had been present at his discomfiture. It was fortunate that he could not hear the joyful talk that was going on in the Fourth Form studies.

CHAPTER 12.

The Head is Not Pleased!

B UZZZZZ!
"Oh!"

Jimmy Silver gave quite a jump.

The Head's study at Rookwood School was deserted just then; or rather, it ought to have been deserted. But it was not quite deserted, because Jimmy Silver, of the Fourth Form, had stepped quietly in. Jimmy had stepped in because the Head wasn't there. When the Head was there nobody was anxious to visit that study.

The Head was in Mr. Bootles' room, engaged in a deep and serious confabulation with the master of the Fourth. Jimmy Silver had ascertained that fact before he came along to the deserted study to use the telephone.

He was just about to lift the receiver

when the telephone bell rang, with a loud and aggressive buzz, which startled him very much.

Buzzzzzzz!

It was just ill-luck.

Jimmy could not possibly foresee that Dr. Chisholm would get a call just when he, Jimmy, had dropped in to use the telephone. It really was a thing that no fellow could foresee.

Buzzzzzzz!

The Fourth-Former beat a rapid retreat towards the door. He was not thinking of using the telephone now, but only of getting out of the study before the Head arrived. And the bell was ringing loudly, aggressively, and insistently.

Alas for Jimmy! He had not reached the study-door when he heard quick footsteps in the passage outside.

The Head was coming.

As Jimmy said afterwards in the end study, how was he to know that the Head had asked for a trunk call, and had only dropped into Mr. Bootles' room to chat, while he waited for it to come through. Evidently, Jimmy couldn't know.

So he was caught.

With the Head's footsteps sounding in the corridor, and the telephone-bell ringing behind him, Jimmy Silver stood for a moment in dismay, not knowing what to do or what to say if the Head found him there.

He knew that Dr. Chisholm's temper was tart that day, owing to the affair of Mornington of the Fourth. The Head was not likely to be at all pleased to hear that a junior had dropped in to use his 'phone—though really meaning no harm thereby. Jimmy felt a tingling in his palms at the bare thought of it.

The next moment he had acted. With one spring he was behind a screen that stood near the door.

His hope was that the Head would leave the door open, and that he could thus slip out unseen, while the old gentleman had his back turned, taking his call.

Unfortunately, when the Head came rustling in he closed the door behind him emphatically, almost with a bang.

He hurried across to the telephone and took up the receiver.

Jimmy Silver peered out cautiously.

The Head had his back turned, certainly; but the door was shut, and there were

several feet of open space to be passed to reach it—and then it had to be opened.

It was not likely that the junior would be able to execute that strategic movement without detection. Jimmy Silver sagely decided to remain where he was for the present. His position was neither safe nor agreeable; but he had it on Shakespeare's authority, that it is better to bear the ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of. So Jimmy stood fast.

"Hallo! Yes? Dr. Chisholm is speaking! Am I speaking to Sir Rupert Stacpoole? Oh! Yes! Very good!"

"Oh dear!" murmured Jimmy Silver. The Head was evidently "through" to Valentine Mornington's guardian.

Jimmy did not want to hear the Head's half of the conversation, by any means. But he really had no choice in the matter. It was that, or discovery and a caning; and it was better to be bored than to be caned. Jimmy Silver thought so, at least.

"The third time I have rung you up on this subject?" The Head was going on. "That is scarcely surprising, sir, considering the amount of trouble your nephew has given me. When I sent him away from Rookwood, sir, I supposed that I had done with him: I presumed, sir, that you had him home with you, as I had every right to expect."

Jimmy wondered what the baronet had to say to that. He deduced that Sir Rupert's temper was as tart as the Head's, at least.

"You are the boy's guardian," said the Head. "You can, I presume, use your authority. I tell you, sir, that Mornington, whom I have expelled from Rookwood, has taken a situation in a shop in Coombe—a shop kept by a grocer of the name of Bandy—a most insolent man. I have been treated with gross disrespect by this man, whom I desired to send the boy away. He refused."

A moment's silence.

"Absurd!" broke out the Head, angrily. "Utterly absurd! If you think, sir, that it will do the boy good to do some honest and laborious work, I think you are very likely right, but I suppose he need not do it practically at the gates of Rookwood. No harm! Certainly there is harm. His example of insubordination to the other boys—"

Pause!

"Certainly, I have authority over all the boys in my charge, and I have strictly forbidden them to hold communication with Mornington—most strictly. But undoubtedly there will be communication without my knowledge, so long as that young rascal remains in the vicinity of the school."

Jimmy Silver grinned. His mental remark was that the Head was right on the wicket there!

"The boy cannot possibly remain so near Rookwood. Tired?—not at all; he will not get tired of his present folly so long as he knows that it is annoying to me. That is his object. As his guardian, it is your duty, sir, your duty to remove him. I have no authority over him now that he has left Rookwood. Your authority remains. I request you, sir, to take immediate steps to remove him from Coombe. What—what—what?"

Jimmy Silver fairly held his breath.

Evidently Sir Rupert had made some extremely disconcerting reply, for the Head was almost stuttering with wrath.

"You wash your hands of him!" gasped the Head, at last. "If he chooses to return home, you will give him shelter, and that is all—otherwise you wash your hands of him! Do I hear aright? This is—is unparalleled—I protest—I repeat, sir, that I cannot have this boy left in the village, almost at the school gates—are you there, sir?" almost shouted the Head. "Answer me, please! Are you there! Bless my soul!"

The Head put the receiver back on the hooks, gasping.

Jimmy Silver stood very still.

Discovery at that moment would have been appalling.

There was no doubt that the Head would have caned Sir Rupert Stacpoole, if it had been in his power to cane that gentleman; and not a shadow of a doubt that he would have taken it "out" or any impertinent junior he discovered in his study at that moment.

Scarcely breathing, Jimmy heard the Head rustling to and fro for some minutes in a state of great agitation and wrath.

Then, to Jimmy's immense relief, Dr. Chisholm quitted the study, and strode away—doubtless to another consultation with Mr. Bootles.

When his footsteps had died away, Jimmy Silver crept from the study. He

tiptoed down the corridor, and when he reached the corner, he bolted. He felt much better when he was safe in the end study in the Fourth-Form passage.

CHAPTER 13.

The Grocer's Boy!

"WELL?"

"Phoned to Morny?"

"What's the matter?"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome asked those questions together, as Jimmy Silver came into the study shared by the Fistical Four of Rookwood.

Jimmy sank into the armchair and gasped.

"I've had a merry time!"

"What's happened?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell. "Did the Head catch you using his 'phone?"

"Jolly nearly," answered Jimmy Silver. "Luckily, not quite! I haven't 'phoned to Morny, after all. I've had the pleasure of standing behind a screen while the Head was 'phoning to old Stacpoole."

"Phew!"

"The Head's in an awful wax because Stacpoole won't trot down to Coombe again to collect up his merry nephew. Stacpoole won't clear him out, and the Head can't, so Morny is going on."

"More power to his elbow!" grinned Raby. "Fancy old Morny as a grocer's boy! Towny and Topsy and the rest are turning up their noses no end. I say, it shows Morny's got some grit!"

"If he sticks to it," said Lovell.

"If!" chuckled Newcome. "But he won't! He's doing it to make the Head waxy, I believe."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Partly that, I'm afraid," he said. "But partly Morny's in earnest. He's sacked from Rookwood, and he doesn't want to go home and be a poor relation in his uncle's house. The only alternative is to work, and he's not trained for any job. He used to do good Latin verses when he took the trouble, but I don't fancy there's a living to be made at that."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "Fancy advertising Latin verses at a bob a time—the orders wouldn't roll in, I think!"

"Without any experience, he's lucky to get the job with Mr. Bandy," said Jimmy

Silver judiciously. "Orders from Rookwood helped him, and orders from Rookwood will help him keep it. We've got to buy all the stuff we can at Bandy's."

"Hear, hear!"

"Only the Head's in such a wax, there'll be fearful trouble if anybody is seen there," said Jimmy. "It won't do to call at Bandy's again. I was going to 'phone an order, and ask him to leave the things for us near the gates; but the 'phones cut off. I'm not chancing that again. I suppose a chap could write."

"Don't peep in the school letter-box, then," grinned Lovell. "Somebody will be keeping an eye on that."

"Or we might send in a message to him," said Jimmy Silver, thoughtfully.

"Smiley would do it. We've got to see young Smiley about the village match next week, and he's a good kid. What price a walk down to Coombe—not to see Morny, of course, but to see Smiley?"

"Won't he be at work? Smiley don't chuck it so early as we do, you know."

"We can see him at the shop," answered Jimmy Silver. "His governor won't mind; he makes up Rookwood's prescriptions."

"Right-ho!"

The Fistical Four sallied forth, having come to the decision to interview Master Smiley, the chemist's boy of Coombe, who was also the skipper of the village junior eleven.

The chums of the Fourth could not help glancing at Mr. Bandy's grocery shop as they walked down the High Street of Coombe.

A slim and handsome youth, in a white apron, was standing in the low, narrow doorway of the old-fashioned shop.

He touched his cap to the juniors, across the street.

The Fistical Four returned the salute, smiling.

It was extraordinary to see the once superb Mornington on duty in a little village grocery shop, and the juniors could not help regarding it as a "stunt" than as serious business.

Yet it was the fact that Mornington had no other resources, unless he chose to return to his uncle's house, a disliked dependent, and face the carping tongues of his Stacpoole cousins.

As Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on, Morny

disappeared from the doorway, apparently called back into the shop.

A couple of minutes later he issued from the shop, with his apron tucked up on one side, and a large basket on his arm. The basket was pretty well stacked with groceries.

"Morny's going his afternoon rounds," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, glancing back from where the Fistical Four had stopped outside the chemist's shop.

"Hallo, there's Smythe!"

"They've seen Morny!" grinned Raby. "Watch Smythe's face! See the horror grow!"

The chums grinned as they looked on. Smythe and Tracy and Howard of the Shell, came up the street, and met Mornington face to face. The three stared at him, and Adolphus Smythe fished an eyeglass out of his pocket, jammed it into his eye, and gave Morny a second scornful survey.

There were a good many fellows at Rookwood who regarded Morny's new "stunt" as no end of a lark, and others who looked upon him as a fellow down on his luck who ought to be stood by. Smythe & Co. were not among these. They regarded the fallen dandy of the Fourth with lofty contempt, and did not conceal their valuable opinion that he was disgracing Rookwood.

At Rookwood, Smythe & Co. had never felt quite easy under Morny's cool, mocking eyes; he had always, somehow, made them feel "small"; but now they felt that they had the upper hand, with a vengeance.

"Begad, it's Mornington!" said Smythe. "The dashed grocer's boy, begad. Here, young shaver!"

Mornington stopped.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" he asked, in a very respectful manner.

"Yes. Get out of the way with that dashed basket," said Smythe. "Don't brush your confounded basket against a gentleman's sleeve, do you hear?"

"I haven't, sir," said Mornington meekly. "I only brushed it against your sleeve."

Tracy and Howard grinned, and Adolphus reddened. Morny, the grocer's boy, evidently had the same bitter tongue as Morny the dandy of Rookwood.

"I don't want any dashed impertinence from a shop cad!" said Smythe, breathing

hard. "For two pins I'd box your ears, you young loafer! Step off the pavement and let me pass!"

The three nuts were walking abreast, and certainly there wasn't room for them to pass Mornington on the narrow pavement, unless they were separated.

That they were not inclined to do on account of a grocer's boy. But Mornington stood fast.

"Do you hear me?" demanded Smythe angrily. "Here, hustle that lout into the road, you fellows!"

"Now, - then, clear, you cad!" said Tracy.

The three Shell fellows hustled Mornington. Mr. Bandy's new boy had his right arm laden by the heavy basket; but he could use his left—and he used it quickly and effectively. He let it out with a lightning drive at Adolphus Smythe, and caught that elegant youth under the chin. Smythe staggered back across the pavement, and almost sat in a draper's shop window—fortunately, not quite.

"By gad!" gasped Smythe. "Go for him! Ow, my chin! Knock him over and his dashed groceries along with him!"

He rushed forward, and at the same time four figures came speeding across the street.

"This is where we chip in!" Jimmy Silver concisely remarked.

And the Co. agreed that it was.

Mornington and his grocery basket would have been pitched into the road, but for the prompt arrival of the Fistical Four.

They rushed straight at Smythe & Co., hitting out, and in a twinkling three elegant nuts were strewn on the pavement, dazedly wondering how they got there.

"Ow, ow! Wow, wow! Yow!"

"Cheer-ho, Morny, old top!" said Jimmy Silver. "You can leave these cads to us!" Morny laughed.

"Thanks!" he said, and he walked on with his basket.

Smythe & Co. sat up.

"You rotten, interferin' cads!" began Adolphus. "Why, you beast, Silver, how dare you touch me with your boot! Yaroooh! Stop kickin' me, you rotter! Yow-ow-ow! Oh gad!"

Adolphus scrambled up and fled, and Tracy and Howard fled after him. They had intended to enjoy ragging Mr. Bandy's

new boy; but apparently they had had enough ragging for that afternoon.

"And now we'll walk along and see young Smiley, and give him an order for Morny!" remarked Jimmy Silver.

And they went.

CHAPTER 14.

The New Recruit!

"**Y**OUNG SMILEY" was in sole charge of the establishment with the coloured bottles in the window. He grinned and nodded over the counter to Jimmy Silver & Co. as they came in.

"Good-afternoon, Smiley," said Jimmy Silver affably. "Can you spare a minute from the pestle and mortar?"

"'Arf an hour, if you like, Master Silver, unless a customer comes in," answered Smiley.

"We won't take up so much of the time of a rising young business man," said Jimmy, shaking his head; a remark at which Master Smiley chortled. "You haven't let us know about the match next week? What about Wednesday?"

"Wednesday'll soot," answered Smiley. "Tain't so easy for us, Master Silver, seeing as we 'ave to get the afternoon off for the game. But we've fixed it up all right, and I was going to let you know."

"We'll see you at Rookwood on Wednesday, then?"

"Two o'clock, if that'll soot."

"Done! Now there's another matter," said Jimmy. "Do you happen to know Mr. Bandy's new grocery boy?"

Another chortle from Smiley.

"Not 'arf!" he answered.

"He's an old pal of ours, of sorts," said Jimmy. "We're not allowed to call on him, and I've got a written message here for him. Will you hand it to him some time?"

"Wotto!" answered Smiley, taking Jimmy Silver's grocery order across the counter. "Pleased, sir. Mornington ain't 'arf a bad sort. When I used to see him about with the Rookwood young gents, I used to think he looked very uppish, but he's turned out quite different. He gets on all right with us."

"Oh! You know him well?" asked Love.

"Wotto! He's a member of our club."

"My hat! Your cricket club?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"That's it," said Smiley, with a nod. "First day he was at Mr. Bandy's I spoke to him, expecting cheek. But he wasn't cheeky! Not puttin' on airs, or nothing of that sort. Pally, in fact! We got friendly, and he asked me about the cricket. Course, I was glad to have him in my eleven. He could play the head off any man I've got. He said he didn't want to chuck cricket now he'd left school; and being as he was settling down to work in Coombo, he wanted to join the village club."

Jimmy Silver whistled.

"So he's joined?" asked Raby.

"I took him along to the next meeting," answered Smiley. "We hold our meetings in the big room over the fish-shop, you know. Scma of the fellows was a bit edge-wise to Morny at first, but they soon came round. I never saw a feller more perlite and nice. There ain't a chap in our club that don't like him. Course, it's a good thing for the team. Morny's given us a lot of tips in our practice together on the green."

Jimmy Silver looked rather serious. He saw complications ahead.

"Will Morny be playing for you on Wednesday?" he asked.

"You bet your life!" answered Smiley emphatically. "I ain't leaving my best man out. We're going to beat you this time, Master Silver."

Which was a prospect that evidently pleased Smiley. The village team never had much of a chance with Rookwood juniors; indeed, Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on the village match in a more or less humorous light. But with Valentine Mornington in the team, it was quite possible that matters would shape differently.

After a few words with Smiley the Fistic Four quitted the chemist's shop.

In the street, they looked at one another expressively.

"This is a go!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I—I suppose it's natural that Morny doesn't want to chuck cricket," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "And there's nothing but the village club here for him. But—but—"

"But if he comes up to Rookwood again——"

"He must come if he's playing for Smiley," said Newcome. "I—I say, it looks to me as if Morny is thinking more about pulling the Head's leg than about cricket. The Head will be awfully waxy if he sees Morny there. Morny's like a red rag to a bull to the Head just now."

Jimmy Silver nodded, with a rather worried look.

"We can't ask Smiley to leave out his best man," he said.

"He wouldn't if we did!"

"No, of course he wouldn't. But if Morny comes to Rookwood——" Jimmy Silver did not finish.

"Hallo, there's Carthew! Lucky we're not near Bandy's shop," said Lovell.

Carthew of the Sixth stared suspiciously at the Fistical Four, as he came along the village street.

The juniors were glad enough that they had cleared of Mr. Bandy's establishment.

They were well aware that Carthew made it his business to keep a very active eye on Mr. Bandy's shop, to detect any fellow who visited Mornington there in spite of the Head's prohibition. Bulkeley and most of the other prefects gave the shop a wide berth; but not so Carthew. The bully of the Sixth was very anxious to get into the Head's good graces by reporting any delinquent he could lay his hands upon.

"What are you fags doing here?" demanded Carthew, stopping to address the chums of the Fourth.

"Walking," answered Jimmy Silver.

"Have you been to Bandy's?"

"My dear man, it's out of bounds," answered Jimmy Silver in a shocked tone. "Haven't you seen the Head's notice on the board?"

"Let me catch you, that's all," growled Carthew, and he walked on.

"Wouldn't he like to?" grinned Lovell.

"We'll take jolly good care that he doesn't. Look at him now—spying!"

Carthew had stopped under a sun-blind outside a shop, and was watching Mr. Bandy's establishment across the street, half-hidden himself.

Evidently he was on the look-out for any Rookwooder who was injudicious enough to visit the shop Dr. Chisholm had placed out of bounds for all Rookwood.

Kit Erroll, of the Fourth, came up the street from the direction of the school, glancing about him.

He saw the Fistical Four, but he did not see Carthew under the sun-blind, and his footsteps slackened outside Mr. Bandy's doorway.

Erroll was Morny's special chum at Rookwood, and Jimmy Silver & Co. did not need telling that he had come along to speak to Morny.

Jimmy waved his hand to Erroll across the street in warning.

The junior stopped, and stared across at him inquiringly. Carthew of the Sixth rushed out, like a wolf from its lair, triumphant. He darted across the street, and dropped his hand on the astonished Erroll's shoulder.

"You were going into Bandy's?" he demanded.

Erroll gave him a contemptuous look.

"Yes," he answered coldly.

"You know it's out of bounds?"

Erroll made no reply.

"You'll come along with me to Rookwood," said Carthew, with a grin. "The Head will be pleased to see you, you young sweep."

And the prefect marched his victim away.

When Jimmy Silver & Co. saw Erroll again, the hapless youth was rubbing his hands hard, after a visit to the Head's study. The Head's temper was not very equable just now, and he had not spared the rod.

"Just as well we weren't caught at Bandy's!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Poor old Erroll's got it hot! Young 'Erbert was caught there yesterday and licked. I say, I'm sorry for old Morny, but I'm going to steer clear of the Bandy shop. I'll put off seeing Morny again till the cricket match next Wednesday."

Which Lovell's chums agreed was a wise decision.

CHAPTER 15.

Nice for Adolphus!

"BETTER keep clear, Smythey!"

"Rot!"

"It's out of bounds, you know," urged Tracy.

"I'm riskin' that."

Adolphus Smythe's eye gleamed with determination through his eye-glass.

The great Adolphus was wrathful—exceedingly wrathful.

The great Adolphus had been kicked—Jimmy Silver. That was a great humiliation for Adolphus. But Jimmy Silver was, after all, a Rookwood chap.

Adolphus' aristocratic face had been pinched by Mornington, a mere grocer's boy! That was much worse. A kick from a public-school boot was not so humiliating as a punch from a grocer's fist. At last, that was how it seemed to Adolphus.

Besides, it wasn't possible to punish Jimmy Silver for the kick, and it was possible to punish the grocer's boy for the pinch, and that was an important consideration.

So, some little time after the Fisticairour had cleared off, Adolphus & Co. hovered once more in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bandy's shop.

Adolphus' idea was to complain to the young cad's employer, as he expressed it in his chums.

A grocer would be bound to take notice of a complaint laid against his boy by a young gentleman from the big school. Adolphus considered. Smythe of the Shell had great hopes that Mr. Bandy, properly impressed by the lofty importance of Adolphus, would give his new boy the sack. That would have been a great consolation.

"The coast's clear," said Smythe, blinking up and down the street through his eyeglass. "You saw that cad Carthew archin' Erroll off. So we know he's not goin' about, as usual. I'm goin' in. You fellows come in an' back me up."

"We'll wait for you at the tuck-shop," answered Howard. "I'm not goin' out of bounds while the Head's so ratty."

"I tell you there's no risk."

"Well, you come along to Mrs. Wicks', and you'll find us," said Tracy.

Tracy and Howard walked on to the village tuckshop.

Adolphus gave a sniff, and another glance up and down the High Street, and then lunged into Mr. Bandy's.

He considered that there was little risk of detection, with Carthew safe out of the way. But with so much malice in his breast, Adolphus was prepared, even against his usual customs, to run a little risk.

He sailed into the little grocer's shop,

his lofty head up, and his eyeglass gleaming.

Mornington, who had returned from his "round," was behind the counter, in charge of the shop. Mr. Bandy was having his tea, in the bosom of his family, in the little parlour behind.

Mornington smiled slightly at the sight of Adolphus. There was a mark on the Shell fellow's chin, where Morny's knuckles had smitten. But the shop-boy's manner was quite respectful to a presumptive customer.

"Yes, sir; what can I do for you, sir?" he asked.

Adolphus stared at him haughtily.

"Call your master!" he snapped.

"Mr. Bandy is at tea, sir. Cannot I serve you?"

"Call your master, and don't talk to me!" said Adolphus. "I'm not accustomed to bandyin' words with shop-cads."

Mornington, still meek, tapped on the parlour door, and opened it a few inches.

"Gentleman insists upon seein' you, sir," he said.

Mr. Bandy gave a grunt. He did not like being disturbed at his tea, especially as he was deep in the columns of the "Clarinet," his favourite paper, of a strong socialistic turn. Mr. Bandy was by way of being a Socialist. It helped him to find compensation for many faults and failures after all, as good as his betters. His Socialistic proclivities helped to provide the gentlemen of the "Clarinet" with an easy living, and to save them from the painful necessity of turning to work.

Having grunted, Mr. Bandy laid down his paper, and came into the shop. He ducked his head respectfully to the well-dressed Adolphus. Socialism did not prevent Mr. Bandy from paying respect to wealth. It seldom does.

"Yes, sir," he said. "What can I—"

Adolphus pointed at Mornington.

"That boy of yours has assaulted me, Mr. Bandy!" he said.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Bandy.

"He dared to lift his hand to me in the street!" said Adolphus.

Mr. Bandy frowned sternly at Mornington.

"What does this mean, boy?" he exclaimed. "How dare you insult this gentleman?"

"The gentleman wanted to push me off

the pavement, sir," answered Mornington meekly, but with a glitter in his eyes.

"You should have stepped off the pavement if you were in the young gentleman's way," said Mr. Bandy irritably. "I don't pay you your wages to insult my customers."

Adolphus smiled.

Morny was beginning to "get it," and the Shell fellow fully expected Morny's passionate temper to break out at that rebuke. But Morny had apparently learned to govern his temper since he had left Rookwood. At all events, he was not inclined to play into his enemy's hands.

"The gentleman isn't a customer, sir," he answered suavely. "He's a Rookwood fellow, sir, and forbidden by the head-master to deal here."

"Oh!" said Mr. Bandy.

His manner changed at once. If Smythe wasn't a customer, and couldn't become a customer, there was no reason to be civil to him, from Mr. Bandy's independent and democratic point of view. Mr. Bandy had just been reading a fiery article about well-dressed and expensive loafers, who batted upon the hard earnings of the Bandies of the world. He bristled up at once.

"Did you come in 'ere to give an order, sir?" he inquired.

"Certainly not! I came in to complain of that disrespectful rascal of a shopboy of yours!" answered Adolphus haughtily.

Mr. Bandy sneered.

"And who are you?" he inquired. "Do you own the pavement in the High Street, and mustn't my boy walk on it as well as you?"

This was rather a startling change of front. Adolphus jammed in his eyeglass a little more firmly, and gave Mr. Bandy a supercilious stare, which ought to have reduced him to respectful submission at once. But it didn't. The democrat of Coombe was not to be awed by an eyeglass. Nothing but an order for goods, and a good order, would have reduced him to submission.

"If you ain't come 'ere on business," said Mr. Bandy, "get out! Can't a tradesman have his tea without being worried by young loafers?"

"What?" ejaculated Adolphus.

"Boy," snapped Mr. Bandy, turning back to the parlour, and addressing Morny, "if that feller don't get cut put him out!"

"Certainly, sir!" answered Mornington.

Mr. Bandy went back to his tea and the "Clarinet," closing the parlour door after him with a slam. Adolphus Smythe stood almost trembling with rage. Instead of seeing Morny severely reprimanded or discharged, he had been "checked" by a dashed tradesman. A fresh humiliation for the noble Adolphus.

Morny lifted the leaf of the counter and came through, evidently prepared to carry out his master's instructions.

Smythe of the Shell retreated towards the door.

"Hands off, you shop cad!" he gasped.

Mornington came straight at him. He was not scrupulous for the chance to handle Smythe of the Shell once more.

Adolphus turned, and made a jump through the doorway into the street. As he went, Mornington's boot landed behind him.

The Shell fellow gave a howl, and plunged into the street headlong, and butted blindly into a passer-by.

"Oh," ejaculated the latter, catching at Adolphus to steady himself. "Oh! Ow! You young ass! Where are you running to? Hallo, Smythe! What were you doing in there?"

It was Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood. Adolphus had run fairly into the arms of a Rookwood prefect!

Bulkeley grasped him by the shoulder sternly.

"You're out of bounds, Smythe!" he exclaimed.

"I—I—" gasped Adolphus.

"Go back to Rookwood at once! I have to report this to the Head."

"I—I—"

"Cut!" said Bulkeley concisely.

Smythe of the Shell "cut" in a dismal mood.

An hour later he stood in the presence of the Head, who had received the prefect's report. Bulkeley, who was a good-natured fellow, avoided seeing any Rookwood junior near Mr. Bandy's shop, if he could. But he couldn't affect to be ignorant of Adolphus' visit there, as the Shell fellow had pitched into his arms on leaving the establishment. So he had had to make his report. The Head selected a cane. It was useless for Adolphus to attempt an explanation. He had to go through it.

His feelings as he left the Head's study



Mr. Bandy brandished a fat fist at Mornington. "I'll learn you!" he stuttered. "I'm going for a policeman now. I'll learn you!" He backed out of the shop doorway and, as he went, a couple of eggs whizzed across and caught him on the nose and ear. (See chapter 19.)

were too deep for words. He had had a severe caning for visiting the expelled junior, and, considering his real motives for the visit, this was really rather hard. But perhaps it was just what Adolphus deserved.

CHAPTER 16.

The Coombs Match!

JIMMY SILVER was feeling worried as Wednesday drew near.

On Wednesday afternoon Rookwood juniors were meeting the village cricket team, and in that team was included Valentine Mornington, the expelled junior of the Fourth Form at Rookwood. By that time, all the Lower School knew that Morny was a member of Smiley's team, and there had been much discussion and much chortling over the circumstance.

The match was to be played on the Rookwood ground; that had been settled long ago. Mornington, therefore, had to come to Rookwood to play.

The Head had forbidden the expelled junior to show himself near Rookwood again. The prohibition, of course, included the playing-fields, as well as the rest of the school precincts.

But Morny was coming, all the same, and it was difficult to see what could be done.

Smiley was gleeful at having secured such a player for his eleven. It was no exaggeration to say that Morny was worth most of the rest of the eleven put together. Certainly no earthly consideration would have induced Smiley to leave his new man out of the match, if Jimmy Silver had asked it—which Jimmy could not very well do.

But Jimmy was sorely troubled.

He could not help suspecting that it was not so much the love of cricket, as a desire to defy the Head of Rookwood, that induced Morny to join the village team in time for the school match.

Mornington's continued presence in Coombs was, in plain words, a defiance of the headmaster who had expelled him; and Morny did not rest content with passive defiance. He liked action. And if the Head saw him on the Rookwood cricket-field he—

Jimmy Silver wondered what Dr. Chisholm would do and say.

He wondered, also, what he himself ought to do. Scratching the match was a drastic step; he felt that he could not do that. Smiley & Co. had given no cause of offence, and the half-holiday was open; there was no excuse for scratching. Jimmy thought of asking Smiley to change the ground, but there were objections to that. Playing on the village green was rather a game of patience than a game of cricket. The pitch left very much to be desired. Even that, as it turned out, was out of the question, for on inquiry Jimmy learned that the village pitch was booked for Wednesday by another crowd.

But if Morny came to Rookwood and—

The Co. held consultations on the subject in the end study, and the opinion of Jimmy Silver's chums was that it couldn't be helped.

"Perhaps the Head won't see him," suggested Arthur Edward Lovell. "I can't ever remember the old scout honouring a junior match with his presence.

"And his study window is a jolly long way off our pitch," remarked Raby.

"But the prefects—" said Jimmy.

"They mayn't notice him, either—or if they do, they may mind their own business."

"Carthew wouldn't."

"H'm! There's Carthew!" said Lovell thoughtfully. "He's bent on currying favour with the Head by spying on fellows who speak to Morny. I suppose if Carthew sees Morny he will blab at once."

"Sure to," said Newcome. "But, after all, what could happen?—The Head couldn't interfere with a cricket-match. That wouldn't be playing the game."

"He's in a rare wax about Morny, though," said Jimmy Silver, remembering the telephone incident in Dr. Chisholm's study. "I—I rather think he will fly into a rage if—"

"My hat! If he stopped the game and—"

"He might."

The Fistical Four looked very serious. It was rather a serious business, in fact, considering all the circumstances.

"It can't be helped," said Arthur Edward Lovell at last. "We can't scratch the match, Jimmy, and we can't play in the village. And we couldn't disappoint old Smiley, when he's so keen on the game,

and thinks he has a chance of beating us for once. Let's hope for the best."

And as there was really nothing else to be done, Jimmy Silver had to let it go at that.

But he was feeling worried, all the same.

For once, "Uncle James," of Rookwood, was not looking forward to a cricket match with any pleasure.

Wednesday turned out a bright and sunny day, and if Jimmy had hoped that the weather would come to the rescue, and cut the Georgian knot with a downpour, he was disappointed. It was an ideal day for cricket.

Jimmy was very thoughtful during morning lessons. It must be admitted that most of the other fellows regarded Morny's forthcoming visit to Rookwood rather as a "lark," and found great entertainment in wondering how the Head would take it if he saw the expelled junior there.

After dinner that day Tubby Muffin joined Jimmy, with a very serious expression on his fat face. The fat Classical had been thinking things out from his own particular point of view.

"I don't quite like this, Jimmy!" said Tubby Muffin, with portentous gravity.

"Eh, what?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"About Morny, you know."

"What has it to do with you, fathead?" inquired the captain of the Fourth.

"It looks to me like disrespect to the Head."

"What?"

"I've been considering," continued Muffin, blinking at the astonished Jimmy, "whether I ought to allow it."

"Allow it?" howled Jimmy Silver.

"Yes. I think if the Head knew Morny was coming, he would stop it. Can I countenance such disrespect?" said Tubby Muffin seriously. "On the whole, I don't want to interfere. But I think I'd better be off the scene."

"No objection to that, you silly owl," answered Jimmy Silver. "In fact, the landscape would be greatly improved by your getting off the scene. It will be an act of kindness to everybody present."

"Don't you be a cheeky ass, Jimmy. I don't mind going out for the half-holiday, only I'm short of tin. I suppose you could lend me five bob?"

"Oh!" said Jimmy.

He comprehended now why Reginald Muffin had given the matter so much thought.

"So I'm to give you five bob not to peach?" he asked grimly.

"That's a rotten way of putting it, old chap," remonstrated Tubby Muffin. "I ask you to lend me five bob. Then I can keep clear for the afternoon and my—my conscience will be satisfied."

"Well, I won't lend you five bob," said Jimmy. "I'll lend you my boot. And if you sneak to the Head, Tubby, I'll give you such a hiding that you won't be able to do anything but howl for a day afterwards."

And there and then Jimmy Silver took the fat Classical by the collar, and put in some effective work with his boot. There was a series of loud and dismal howls from Reginald Muffin.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow! Leggo! Leave off! Yooop! I—I say, I was only joking! Yow! Make it half-a-crown! Yooop! I'll take a bob! Yarooooop! You awful beast, leave off kicking me! Oh crikey!"

Jimmy Silver walked away, leaving the fat Tubby squirming. Tubby Muffin started for the Head's study, but he stopped. He reflected that if his fat conscience caused him to "peach," there would be more kickings to follow. So Tubby's conscience was allowed to sleep for that day.

Half an hour later Smiley & Co. arrived from Coombe, and with them came Mr. Bandy's new shop-boy.

CHAPTER 17.

Morny Has His Way!

"MORNINGTON!"

Bulkeley of the Sixth uttered the name.

The Rookwood captain had come along to Little Side to give the junior cricketers a look-in when the match started, as he sometimes did. He was astonished to see Valentine Mornington there.

Morny nodded to him coolly.

"Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"What are you doing here?" exclaimed Bulkeley sternly.

"I'm goin' to play cricket."

"You know that you are forbidden to enter Rookwood!"

"Can't be helped, old top," answered

Mornington blandly. "Smiley couldn't leave his best batsman at home. Could you, Smiley?"

"No blessed fear!" answered Smiley emphatically.

"Besides, I've got an afternoon off from my governor for the match," continued Mornington. "Sorry, Bulkeley, but I'm bound to play on any ground where my club fixes up a match."

"Your club?" repeated the Rookwood captain.

"Coombe Juniors, you know."

"Oh!"

Bulkeley stared at the cool shop-boy, not knowing what to do. The Head's orders regarding Mornington were explicit enough, but certainly Dr. Chisholm had not foreseen that the expelled junior might visit Rookwood as a member of a cricket eleven. It went against the grain with Bulkeley, as a good sportsman, to interfere with a match, and he hardly knew what was his duty in the peculiar circumstances.

Jimmy Silver looked at him anxiously.

Bulkeley solved the matter by walking away. If Mornington's presence was to be reported to the Head there were plenty of others to perform that unpleasing duty. Bulkeley let it go at that.

"Good old Bulkeley!" murmured Lovell. "Let's get going as soon as possible, Jimmy. I shouldn't wonder if this match was interrupted, sooner or later."

The cricketers lost no time in getting to work. Smiley won the toss, and went in with Mornington to open the innings for Coombe.

Round the field a large crowd had gathered. The presence of Valentine Mornington was quite enough to draw all the juniors of Rookwood to the spot, and some of the seniors, too.

Morny was in his best form.

Smiley did not last very long against Jimmy Silver's bowling; but Morny was made of sterner stuff. Bowler after bowler pelted his wicket in vain.

The runs were piling up for Mornington, and the crowd, mindful of the fact that he had very recently been a Rookwooder, cheered him loudly.

"Bravo, Morny! Well hit, Mornington!"

"Go it Morny!"

Mornington grinned as he heard the shouting. His name was ringing over the

field, and he knew that long before the game was over the Head must know of his presence there. And that, in point of fact, was just what Valentine Mornington wanted.

The name that was shouted reached the ears of a Sixth Former in the quad. Carthew came along to Little Side to investigate, and he stared blankly at the sight of Mornington at the wickets.

"Silver!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" Jimmy Silver looked round from the field.

"Send Mornington away at once!"

"Can't interfere with Coombe's players, Carthew."

"Mornington," shouted Carthew, "get off this field instantly!"

Mornington glanced at him.

"Go and eat coke!" he retorted.

Carthew bit his lip, and swung away. He walked directly towards the School House, evidently to inform the Head.

"Now look out for squalls!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell.

The Coombe innings was very near its finish. The last wicket fell to Erroll; Morny "not out" with fifty runs to his credit. And there was only a brief delay before the Rookwood innings began.

Lovell and Kit Erroll were sent in to begin; and Mornington went on to bowl for Coombe. But only a single ball had gone down when there was a buzz in the thronging crowd.

"The Head!"

Mornington, ball in hand, glanced round carelessly.

Dr. Chisholm was striding towards the cricket-field, his brows set in a deep, dark frown, his eyes gleaming.

The Head had been scarcely able to credit Carthew's report. But the sight of Mornington banished all doubt.

There was a hush on the crowded ground, and the game stopped of its own accord.

Dr. Chisholm held up his hand.

"Mornington!"

Morny raised his cricket-cap respectfully.

"Yes, Dr. Chisholm?"

"How dare you come here?"

"No choice in the matter, sir," answered Mornington. "I'm a member of the visiting eleven."

"This is a trick!" gasped the Head.

"Your object, Mornington, is to defy my

authority, as I am very well aware. Leave the precincts of this school at once—immediately, sir!” thundered the Head.

The cricketers looked at one another in silence. The storm had burst at last.

Mornington did not stir from his place. It was plain that he did not intend to obey.

“Do you hear me, Mornington?”

“I hear you, sir.”

“Go!”

“Sorry, sir, it can’t be done!”

“What—what?”

“I’m here to play cricket,” said Mornington coolly. He was quite enjoying the situation. “You can’t order me off this ground.”

“Mornington, if you do not depart this instant, I will have you removed by force!” exclaimed the Head.

“Not while I can kick, anyhow!” said Mornington coolly.

“You audacious young rascal——”

Smiley came forward, with a very determined expression on his face.

“Look ‘ere, sir——” he began.

“Silence! Who are you?”

“Who am I?” exclaimed Smiley warmly.

“I’m the skipper of this ‘ere eleven, sir—Coombe Juniors. You can’t send one of my men off the field. If you didn’t want the match played, you could ‘ave stopped it sooner, I s’pose.”

“I have no objection to the match,” said the Head, rather perplexed. “None whatever. I object to a boy who has been expelled from his school returning hither in defiance of my commands.”

“Morny’s in my team, sir, and my best man. I’m not going to part with him,” said Smiley doggedly. “We came ‘ere to get fair play. Stoppin’ a match when we’re winnin’ ain’t fair play.”

“Bless my soul!” said the Head.

He was nonplussed.

Certainly he did not wish to take the severe step of stopping the match, with no offence given by the visiting team. But to allow Mornington to continue to play——

“Silver, you should not have allowed this!” said the Head.

“I haven’t any control over members of a visiting team, sir,” said Jimmy Silver meekly.

“Ahem! Perhaps not! I do not wish to stop the game,” said the Head. “Your visitors have a right to play it out. But

I object to that boy’s presence at Rookwood.”

“We can’t play without ‘im, sir,” said Smiley. “He’s the best man in the ‘ole shoot.”

The Head bit his lip.

He felt that Mornington had defeated him. Without committing an act of high-handed injustice, he could not drive the obnoxious Mornington hence.

There was a pause.

Then the Head turned to Carthew.

“Carthew, will you see that Mornington leaves Rookwood the moment this match is over?” he said. “Silver, understand that it is distinctly forbidden, in future, for you to play a match with any club of which Mornington is a member.”

And with that the Head strode away, with a feeling of having been outwitted that was very disagreeable.

“Phew!” murmured Lovell. “I’m glad that’s over! The Head’s an old sport, after all!”

“Play!”

The game went on.

Mornington was in great spirits.

He had gained his point, and the Head had been beaten, and that was all the cheery Morny cared about.

His aid did not bring the villagers a victory, as Smiley had hoped, though they came within measurable distance of it. But when the last ball had been bowled, Rookwood were ten runs ahead, and winners.

“Never mind!” said Smiley. “It was a close thing. We’ll beat you next time, Master Silver.”

Carthew came striding up as the cricketers left the field. He dropped his hand on Mornington’s shoulder.

“Now, get out!” he snapped. “Oh—ah! Yaroooooh!”

Morny had his bat in his hand. He let the weighty end drop on Carthew’s too with a bump. The bully of the Sixth released him suddenly, and hopped in anguish.

“Oh—ah—ow! Yooooop!” howled Carthew. “I’ll—I’ll—Ow—ow!”

The enraged prefect made a spring at Mornington. Three or four Coombe bats drove him back, and he was forced to beat a retreat, yelling. Mornington walked cheerfully out in the midst of his new comrades.

“Ta-ta, old tops!” he called out. “I

mean, au revoir! I dare say I shall be coming along again soon. The Head is so pleased to see me, you know!"

And Mornington walked off airily with the Coombe cricketers, evidently in great spirits.

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, as he turned back from the gates—"well, Morny does take the biscuit, and no mistake! But—but this sort of thing can't go on, you know. I wonder how it will end?"

Jimmy Silver was not the only one at Rookwood who wondered; the Head was wondering, too. Even the august Head of Rookwood was beginning to feel that Mornington was a little too much for him.

CHAPTER 15.

Rough on Morny!

"IT'S the Bandy-bird!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that remark.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were sauntering in the quadrangle at Rookwood after morning lessons when they sighted the fat little gentleman trotting towards the School House.

The chums of the Fourth regarded him in surprise. Mr. Bandy, the grocer of Coombe, was about the last visitor they had expected to see at Rookwood.

Mr. Bandy was not "persona grata" there!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were well aware how wrathful the Head had been, on discovering that the expelled junior had taken service with Mr. Bandy in Coombe. So the sight of the fat little grocer at Rookwood, naturally astonished them.

The Fistical Four bore down upon Mr. Bandy to enquire, and they capped him very respectfully as they stopped him on the gravel path. They rather liked the "Bandy-bird," as Lovell called him; he had proved a good friend to the expelled Rookwooder, who was down on his luck. For, though Valentine Mornington had been expelled, he had left many friends behind him at Rookwood who were concerned for his welfare.

"Good morning, Mr. Bandy," said Jimmy Silver, with great politeness.

"Mornin', sir!" puffed Mr. Bandy. The walk to Rookwood in the hot sunshine

had rendered the fat gentleman rather breathless.

"How's your new boy getting on?"

Mr. Bandy grinned.

"Fast-rate, sir! I've left him in charge of the shop," he replied. "You young gents ain't been to see 'im lately."

"The Head's put your shop out of bounds," explained Lovell. "We've all been licked for looking in on Morny! But we haven't forgotten him."

"Though lost to sight, to memory dear!" grinned Bandy.

"We can't send poor old Morny any more orders, though," remarked Newcome. "The last lot was found out, and confiscated, and we got a licking all round. Carthew of the Sixth spied it all out. But, I say, Mr. Bandy, I'm surprised to see you here."

"I'm surprised to see meself 'ere," answered Mr. Bandy. "But I had a message from Dr. Chisholm, askin' me to call, so I've dropped in to see him as one gentleman to another."

"Hem, exactly!" said Jimmy Silver. "I say, you won't let the Head talk you over into sacking Morny, will you, Mr. Bandy?"

Mr. Bandy shook his head.

"Certainly not!" he answered. "Young Mornington is a good boy in the shop and earns his wages. I ain't going to sack 'im to please nobody. I've been asked to do it by your 'cadmaster, and I've refused. Let the boy earn a honest living, says I. What?"

"Good!"

And Mr. Bandy, with a reassuring grin, progressed towards the School House, puffing as he went.

Tupper met him at the door, and took him in, evidently to see Dr. Chisholm in his study.

"It's jolly queer, all the same, the Bandy-bird coming here," remarked Jimmy Silver thoughtfully. "The Head's going to try again to make him send Morny away, of course. I wonder—"

"Bandy won't send him away," said Lovell, with a grin. "Bandy's a cheery socialist, you know, and he's no end bucked at standing up to the Head and cheeking him. He enjoys it."

"The Head might bring him round, though," said Jimmy Silver.

"He can't! He doesn't deal at Bandy's

shop, and that makes the Bandy-bird independent of him."

"Yes, that's so."

But Jimmy Silver still looked very thoughtful. Mr. Bandy's visit was a great surprise, and Jimmy could not help wondering whether it portended a fresh move against the expelled junior.

The presence of Mornington so near the school that he had belonged to, was a thorn in Dr. Chisholm's side; all Rookwood knew how it annoyed and exasperated him.

Mornington's conduct was a defiance of the headmaster who had expelled him, and it was intended to be so. And such a state of affairs was too troublesome to be allowed to continue indefinitely.

Jimmy Silver & Co. loafed about the gates, waiting to see Mr. Bandy as he came out after his visit to the august Head of Rookwood. Jimmy wanted to be assured that it was all right! That is to say, all right for Valentine Mornington. For in this matter the chums of the Fourth did not see eye to eye with the Headmaster.

They wondered what the Head found to say to Mr. Bandy.

Certainly the old gentleman could not have anticipated any pleasure in the interview; the fat little grocer, with his red necktie and his defiant socialistic talk, was a horrid personage in the eyes of the reverend Head of Rookwood.

Yet the fact that he had asked Mr. Bandy to call proved that he hoped to induce the grocer to "sack" the junior he had taken into his service.

He had tried before and failed; and if he were trying again now, it must be because he had some inducement to offer Mr. Bandy.

So Jimmy Silver was uneasy on Morny's account.

It was some time before Mr. Bandy emerged and came puffing and blowing down to the gates.

There was a satisfied smile upon his fat face, which looked as if the interview with the Head had gone well, from Mr. Bandy's point of view.

"All serene, Mr. Bandy?" asked Jimmy Silver, anxiously.

Mr. Bandy paused and coughed, and the Fistical Four thought he had a rather guilty look for a moment.

"Oh, yes, Master Silver," he said. "Of course! And by the way, you young genta will be able to come to my shop if you like, after to-day."

Jimmy stared.

"And see Morny?" he exclaimed.

Mr. Bandy coughed again.

"My noo boy's leavin' to-day," he explained. "Come to think of it, it ain't quite the thing to keep 'im on, agin the wishes of gentleman like Dr. Chisholm."

Lovell whistled.

Evidently Mr. Bandy had lent an ear to the voice of the charmer, and the Head had succeeded in persuading him.

It was the "sack" for Morny.

"I—I say, that's rather rotten, Mr. Bandy," exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Are you going to send Mornington away, then?"

"You see it can't be helped," said Mr. Bandy. "I don't want to be offensive to a gentleman like Dr. Chisholm."

"You've thought of that rather late," grunted Lovell. "You cheeked him no end in your shop a week ago."

Mr. Bandy coughed again.

"Dr. Chisholm wasn't dealing at my establishment then," he said. "That makes a difference."

"Great Scott!"

The juniors understood at last.

Mr. Bandy's lofty independences had been founded upon the fact that Rookwood did not deal at his shop, and that he had nothing to lose by asserting his noble democratic ideals. The offer of the school custom had made all the difference! Mr. Bandy was a great orator among the free and independent democrats who gathered of an evening in the parlour of the Pearl-of-Bells. But evidently he was a grocer first and a socialist second. The socialist derided the lofty manners of the Head of Rookwood; but the grocer was anxious for his custom.

"So—so you're sacking Morny to get the Head's custom!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver in disgust.

Mr. Bandy had the grace to blush.

"Well, you see—" he began lamely.

"Rotten!" growled Raby.

Mr. Bandy walked on, feeling that argument would be wasted on these unreasonable youths. The next moment his hat was knocked over his eyes and his feet jerked away from under him, and he sat

in the dusty road, with a bump and a howl.

By the time he scrambled up, in great wrath, the Fistical Four had disappeared.

CHAPTER 19.

The Wolf and the Lamb!

VALENTINE MORNINGTON stood behind the counter in the little grocery shop with a white apron on, tucked up on one side, and quite a business-like look.

The one-time dandy of the Fourth Form at Rookwood made a very handsome shop-boy, and all Mr. Bandy's customers had been pleased by his manners.

There were no customers in the shop at present, and Mornington had a rather bored look on his handsome face.

The truth was that Mornington was growing a little tired of his new and remarkable "stunt."

He had become a grocer's boy in Coombe partly because he had to provide for himself, unless he was to return to his guardian, which he was determined never to do. But undoubtedly his chief object had been to exasperate his late headmaster. He was determined that the warfare between them should not end with his expulsion from the school.

But though he had to work hard in the service of Mr. Bandy, Mornington had had time for reflection, and reflection had told him that he had "played the goat." His reckless insubordination in the school had left the Head little choice but to expel him, and his peculiar retaliation upon the Head had not altered the fact that Rookwood was closed to him for ever.

And though he generally gave satisfaction to his employer, life at Mr. Bandy's was not like unto a bed of roses. Mornny did not mind hard work or early rising or short commons. But he had a strong objection to putting stale eggs in the new-laid box, and giving short weight, and some other duties that Mr. Bandy expected of him.

Mornington was, in fact, considering whether the game was worth the candle, when Mr. Bandy rolled into the shop after his visit to Rookwood.

Mr. Bandy did not meet his new boy's eyes.

He was, in fact, just a little ashamed of himself, though that made no difference to his determination. The custom of Rookwood was too valuable an asset to be disregarded, and Mr. Bandy was prepared to sacrifice Mornington for the sake of it, or a dozen Morningtons, for that matter. But he felt some diffidence about telling the boy so. It seemed an easier method to pick some fault with the helpless victim, work himself into a temper, and "sack" him without explanation.

He started at once.

"Loafing, as usual, I see!" was his beginning.

Mornington looked at him. This was a new turn for Mr. Bandy to take.

"I'm minding the shop, sir," answered the junior respectfully.

"'Ave you done them eggs like I told you to?"

"H'm!"

"You haven't?"

"N-n-no, sir!"

Here was Mr. Bandy's chance. Mornny's reluctance to sell stale eggs as fresh he took as a personal reflection upon himself. A dozen eggs that had seen better days were to be distributed carefully among six dozen in a new-laid box, and that task had been left to the hapless shopboy. And he had not done it!

"Loafing about the shop with your 'ands in your pockets, instead of doing your work!" said Mr. Bandy indignantly. "Putting on airs and graces over your employer! Is that what I pay you for?"

"You—you see—"

"Setting up to know my business better than I know it myself!" said Mr. Bandy. "Can I afford to throw them eggs away?"

"They're not fresh," said Mornny mildly.

"What's the odds if they ain't?"

"Well, if they're sold as new-laid, you know—"

"Well?"

"It's not good business," said Mornington. "People don't like to be swindled, even if swindling's right, and it isn't!"

Mr. Bandy jumped.

"Swindled!" he howled.

"Well, it is swindling, isn't it?" said Mornington. "What else do you call it, sir?"

"You impudent young rascal!" roared Mr. Bandy. "Is that the way you talk to your master?"

Mornington nodded calmly.

Added to the fact that he was quite "fed" with his life as Mr. Bandy's boy, he could see that his employer was determined to quarrel with him, so he cheerfully met Mr. Bandy half-way. It was a case of the wolf and lamb over again, and whatever line Morny had taken, the result would have been the same, as he could see. So he allowed himself the satisfaction of answering Mr. Bandy in plain English.

"That's the way!" he said. "Nothin' like callin' a spade a spade, old top! Swindlin' is swindlin', whatever you call it!"

Mr. Bandy trembled with wrath.

"You're sacked!" he shouted.

"Has the Head of Rookwood tipped you to sack me?" inquired Mornington disdainfully.

Mr. Bandy turned purple.

"You — you — you — There's your wages!" he gasped, flinging a few—a very few—shillings on the counter. "Take it and go!"

"My dear old bird, I'm entitled to a week's notice!" answered Mornington.

"I'm not going!"

"What?"

"Gettin' deaf, cocky? I'm not goin'!" said Mornington coolly. "You've taken me on by the week, and I'm entitled to a week's notice from Saturday."

"Get outer my shop!" roared Mr. Bandy.

"Bow-wow!"

"Do you want me to put you out?"

Mornington grinned.

"I don't mind!" he said. "There will be a thunderstorm first. But go ahead! Don't mind me, old nut!"

Mr. Bandy, panting with wrath, threw up the leaf of the counter, and came through, evidently with hostile intentions. He had intended to work himself into a rage, but Mornington had assisted him in that, and there was no doubt that Mr. Bandy was now in a terrific rage.

Morny chuckled, quite enjoying the situation. The junior who had defied the Head of Rookwood was not likely to be terrified by Mr. Bandy.

He picked up a ham from the counter and stood on the defensive.

"Put that down!" shouted Mr. Bandy.

"On your napper, if I do!" retorted Mornington.

"Will you clear hout!"

"No!"

Mr. Bandy wasted no more time in words. He rushed at the recalcitrant shop-boy.

Biff!

The ham smote Mr. Bandy on the head, and he staggered. The weapon flew from Morny's grasp with the smite and rolled on the floor. The shopboy caught up a chunk of cheese and hurled it, and it caught Mr. Bandy on his plump chin. He sat down beside the counter with a howl.

"Have some more?" asked Mornington cheerily.

"Ow! Wow! Wow!" gasped Mr. Bandy.

"Shall I begin with the eggs?"

Morny caught up a couple of eggs in either hand. Mr. Bandy scrambled to his feet, and retreated to the other side of the counter. After the ham and the cheese he did not want the eggs.

He shook his fist at the rebellious youth over the counter.

"I horder you hout of the shop!" he gasped.

"Order away!"

"I'll fetch a perliceman if you don't go!" stuttered Mr. Bandy.

"Rats!"

"I mean it!" shrieked the enraged grocer.

"Go and eat coke!"

Mr. Bandy brandished a fat and impotent fist.

"I'll learn you!" he spluttered. "I'm going for a perliceman now. I'll learn yer!"

He backed out of the shop doorway, and, as he went, a couple of eggs whizzed across the shop.

Smash! Splash!

One of the missiles caught Mr. Bandy on the nose, another on the ear, as he bolted into the street.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington.

"I'm coming back with a perliceman!" roared Mr. Bandy, from outside.

"Rats!"

Mr. Bandy stamped furiously away in search of P. C. Boggs, of Coombe, and Mornington sat on the counter and whistled. His career as a grocer's boy was coming to a sudden end, but it was going to be an exciting finish.

CHAPTER 20.

The Order of the Boot!

"H ALLO Morny!"
Four cheery juniors came into the shop, and Mornington greeted them with a nod and a grin.

"Hallo, Silver, old top!"

"Has there been an earthquake here?" asked Athur Edward Lovell, looking round. "Or have you been shying things about?"

"Shying things about?" asked Morny. "I'm sacked!"

"That's why we came," said Jimmy Silver. "Bandy's been to see the Head and he's bought off—the shop isn't out of bounds now. Has Bandy sacked you already, Morny?"

"Yes; a quarter of an hour ago."

"Yet you're still here?"

"Oh, I'm not goin' yet. I'm goin' to make the Bandy man sit up first," said Mornington coolly. "I knew he'd been bought off, somehow, and was goin' back on me. I'm goin' to give him a high old time before I clear."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, he won't give you a good character for your next job, you know," remarked Raby.

"I'm not thinkin' of keepin' on in this business. Excuse me, here's a customer."

A lady in a red shawl came into the shop, and the Fistical Four looked on while Mornington attended to business.

"What can I do for you, madam?" he asked politely.

"Six new-laid eggs, please."

"I'm afraid we haven't any."

"Why, there's a box full, marked new-laid!" exclaimed the astonished customer."

"That's only a swindle," explained Mornington. "They're not really new-laid. The best of them are a week old, but most a month or so, and some of them are quite whiffy."

The customer blinked at Mornington.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled.

"Well, my eye!" said the customer. "You're an honest lad, you are."

"Thank you, madam," said Mornington demurely.

"I want some 'am——"

"The ham is a bit leathery—it's a cheap lot of American stuff and not fit to eat, really——"

"My goodness! Is there anything in the

shop that's fit to eat?" demanded the astounded customer.

"Very little. As an honest grocer, I'm bound to advise you to deal at the shop over the way."

"Oh, jiminy!"

The lady in the shawl retreated without making any purchases, possibly wondering whether Mr. Bandy's shop boy had escaped from a lunatic asylum.

"You howling ass!" gasped Lovell. "I'm not surprised at Bandy sacking you if that's your way of doing business."

"Hallo, here comes Bandy!" murmured Newcome.

"And the village bobby! Phew!"

Mr. Bandy rolled into the shop with P.-c. Boggs at his heels. He pointed a podgy finger at Mornington, taking no notice of the presence of Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Remove that young ruffian!" he commanded.

"Now, my boy" said Mr. Boggs persuasively. "I ear that Mr. Bandy 'ave give you the sack and you won't go! It's my dooty to see you clear off the premises."

"I'm here by the week and I'm asking for a week's notice," explained Mornington.

"You won't get any week's notice from me," sorted Mr. Bandy. "You clear off, you young rascal!"

Mornington shook his head.

"I'm not going without," he remarked.

"Put him out, officer!"

P.-c. Boggs hesitated.

"The boy's entitled to a week's wages in loo of notice," he said. "'Ave you paid him?"

"No, I haven't, and I'm not going to!" snapped Mr. Bandy.

"You'd better pay him what he's entitled to," said Mr. Boggs stolidly. "He can claim it afore a magistrate."

"Pay up, Bandy!" chuckled Lovell.

Mr. Bandy paused, but he extracted the necessary coins from his pocket at last, and hurled them on the counter.

"Take your money and go!" he snorted.

"Certainly, old top!" said Mornington, picking up the shillings. "Am I bound to go now I'm paid, officer?"

"You are," said Mr. Boggs, with a grin. "I've got to pack my bag, you know."

"Mr. Bandy will give you time to pack your bag."

"I won't!" shouted Mr. Bandy. "He's leavin' this 'ouse this minute."

"Yes, you will," said Mr. Boggs unmoved.

"That's the lor. You pack your things, my boy, and I'll wait and see you off."

"Thanks, old top!"

Mornington left the shop, and Mr. Bandy fumed to and fro while he waited for the rebel to reappear.

Jimmy Silver & Co. waited, too, and Mr. Boggs leaned majestically on the counter and waited.

Morny came back at last, with a bag in his hand—his personal possessions did not require much packing. Mr. Bandy pointed to the doorway.

"Now get hout!" he thundered. "Officer, remove 'im!"

"I'm going, old scout!" said Mornington cheerily. "Sorry I haven't had time to put the stale eggs in the new-laid box——"

"Get out!"

"Or to mix the sawdust in the oatmeal and——"

"You—you——"

"Or the sand in the sugar——"

"Ere, you get off?" grinned P.-c. Boggs. Mr. Bandy seemed on the verge of an apoplectic fit. "Hout you go!"

"Good-bye, Bandy," said Mornington, unabashed. "While Mr. Boggs is here you might explain to him about the weight fastened under the scales. It would interest him, as a bobby."

And with that Parthian shot, Valentine Mornington walked out into the street, bag in hand.

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed him, chuckling.

They joined Mornington on the pavement. The expelled junior of Rookwood was free again, with the world before him. But he did not seem to be at all cast down.

"What are you going to do now, old chap?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Blessed if I know!" answered Mornington candidly. "I'm not going home to my guardian, and I suppose the Head isn't likely to ask me to come back to Rookwood."

"Ha, ha! Not likely! If we can help you——" began Lovell.

"Thanks—I don't want to borrow your money," said Mornington. "I've got some tin—enough to last me some time, at any rate. Of course, I'm going to get another job."

"Near Rookwood?" grinned Raby.

"Naturally. I'm rather attached to my alma mater, you know; I'm not goin' to lose sight of Rookwood, and Rookwood isn't goin' to lose sight of me if I can help it."

"My dear chap," said Newcome, "you won't get another job in Coombe after the way you've taken leave of Mr. Bandy. You're a bit too much of a firebrand."

"I shall find something. I'm going to put up at the Bird-in-Hand for a bit, while I look round."

Jimmy Silver started.

"Morny! Not that low den——"

"It's cheap, and suitable for a fellow down on his luck," answered Mornington coolly.

"I may get a job there, if they're in want of a billiards-marker or a pot-boy. Ta, ta!"

With a cool nod, Valentine Mornington walked away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked at one another. They started back towards Rookwood in a very thoughtful mood.

In Morny's present reckless mood, he was very likely to go from bad to worse; and the Bird-in-Hand Inn, the worst place of its kind in the county, was an extremely undesirable refuge for a youth in Morny's situation, and in Morny's reckless temper. Jimmy Silver could not help feeling worried about it.

"If the Head would let him come back to Rookwood——" he murmured.

"If!" said Lovell.

"He wouldn't, at any price!" said Raby, shaking his head.

"I fancy he'll feel rather bothered when he knows Morny has put up at that awful pub; but he wouldn't let him come back to Rookwood for his weight in gold!"

"I wonder——" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Jimmy Silver did not speak again as they walked back to the school; but the brow of Uncle James was deeply wrinkled, showing that his thoughts were busy.

CHAPTER 21.

The Petition!

IT was Jimmy Silver's idea.

The Co. looked very doubtful when Uncle James first propounded it in the end study, but they came round to Jimmy's way of thinking, as they usually did.

Erroll, Morny's old chum, gave it his adhesion, though very dubiously indeed. Conroy, Pons, and Van Ryn, the colonial chums, agreed heartily. Putty Grace thought it a good idea, and Tubby Muffin declared that it was a corker.

With so much support Jimmy Silver

determined to go ahead, and a couple of days after Morny had received the sack from Mr. Bandy a meeting was convened in the junior Common-room at Rookwood.

All the Classical Fourth came to the meeting, and most of the Moderns. The Shell was invited, and the Third, and the Shell and the Third came in great force. Even a crowd of the Second turned up, headed by little 'Erbert, Morny's young cousin.

It had become known that Jimmy Silver had thought of a scheme for helping Mornington, and Morny had plenty of friends left at Rookwood who were willing to help. They did not yet know what the scheme was, but they wanted to know.

Smythe & Co. of the Shell wore superior looks, and plainly had come to scoff rather than to help; and it was the same with Lattrey and Gower and Peele of the Fourth, and Leggett. But most of the fellows were keen to help Morny in any way they could.

It wasn't as if Morny had been expelled for actually bad conduct; he had been driven away from Rookwood for reckless insubordination. That was bad enough, but it was not a crime. As a good many fellows had remarked, there were worse chaps than Morny at Rookwood, if only the Head had found them out. Smythe was one, and Peele was another, and Leggett was a third. And Lovell said very feelingly that it was hard cheese on old Morny to be sacked for being a reckless ass, when those real rascals still kept their places in the school.

If there was a way of helping Morny, nearly all the Lower School of Rookwood were prepared to lend a hand, as the full attendance at the meeting proved.

When Jimmy Silver came in with his chums to take the chair, the Common-room was crowded.

Jimmy Silver took the chair by mounting upon it to address the enthusiastic meeting. Lovell and Raby and Newcome gathered round him, Lovell with a cricket stump in his hand to keep order.

"Gentlemen of Rookwood," began Jimmy Silver, "some of you know the object of this meeting——"

"We all know the object at present standing on the chair," remarked Cyril Peele, and there was a laugh from some of the juniors.

"Order!"

"Some of you know the object of this meeting, and some don't," pursued Jimmy Silver unheeding. "It's to help Morny——"

"Hear, hear!"

"We want him to come back to Rookwood——"

"I don't!" murmured Peele.

"Order!"

"Yoop!" roared Peele suddenly as Arthur Edward Lovell lunged out with a stump.

The business end of the stump caught Peele in the ribs. For some time afterwards Cyril Peele was rubbing his ribs and had no time for interrupting the speaker.

"We all want Morny back, and I think it's possible that the Head might let him come back if he knew how the school felt on the subject," said Jimmy Silver.

"Bravo!"

"Of course, I don't answer for the stunt being a success," said Jimmy modestly, "but my idea is to try it."

"You're going to ask the Head to let Morny come back?" ejaculated Smythe of the Shell.

"That's the idea."

"What rot!"

"Utter rot!" said Tracy of the Shell.

"Order, you Shell cads! Shut up!"

"Give them the stump, Lovell!"

"Look here," began Adolphus Smythe, dodging Lovell. "Keep off, you cheeky fag! Why, you rotter—oh, gad! Yah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Lovell was lunging with the stump, and the hapless Adolphus dodged in vain. He fled from the Common-room, Lovell pursuing him as far as the door. A final lunge as Adolphus disappeared was answered by a demoniac howl. Then nothing more was heard of Adolphus of the Shell. As the poet has remarked, the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

After this little interlude Jimmy Silver resumed his address, and there were no more disrespectful interruptions.

"The idea is to present a petition to the Head, asking him to let Morny come back to Rookwood," said Jimmy. "We're all here to sign it. Signed by all the Lower School, it's bound to produce an impression on the Head."

"Sure to!" said Putty Grace.

"Of course, the Head's a bit of an ass," said Lovell, "but he's bound to see reason."

"We won't force anybody to sign," said

Jimmy Silver, "but every fellow is expected to play up, Classical and Modern."

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, we'll play up," said Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth. "My own opinion is that there are too many Classical chaps in this school, but——"

"Rats!"

"But one more or less don't make much difference," said Tommy Dodd. "We'll all sign."

"Hear, hear!"

"Who's going to draw up the merry petition?" asked Oswald.

"It's drawn up already. Only waiting to be signed," said Jimmy Silver, dismounting from his rostrum. "Here you are!"

He laid a sheet of imput paper on the table, and there was a crowding round of the juniors to read it.

The petition had been drawn up in the end study, and it was a very telling document in the opinion of the Fistical Four. It ran:

"Sir,—We, the undersigned Rookwood fellows, beg to state that we should like Mornington, late of the IVth Form, to be allowed to return to Rookwood.

"We consider that Mornington has had a rough time, and that it would be to the advantage of all parties concerned for him to come back.

"We shall be greatly obliged and duly thankful for the same.

(Signed) "J. SILVER.

"A. E. LOVELL.

"G. RABY.

"A. NEWCOME."

"You shove your signatures after ours," explained Jimmy Silver. "Now, then, go ahead!"

"I say, that won't do, Jimmy!" said Tubby Muffin, shaking his head.

"Eh? Why won't it do, duffer?"

"It's no good taking a badly spelt paper to the Head; it will only make him waxy. You ought to have asked me to draw up the paper."

"Where's the bad spelling?" demanded Jimmy warily.

"You've got a 'g' in 'signed' and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And only one 'd' in 'consider,'" said Tubby Muffin. "And you've left out the 'z' in 'concerned.'"

"You silly ass!" said Lovell. "Sign your name and dry up."

"Shall I alter the spelling first, Jimmy?"

"No!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Sign your silly name and buzz!"

Tubby Muffin gave a grunt of scorn and signed his name. He added a smudge and a couple of blots, perhaps to make up for the deficiencies of the spelling.

There was a procession past that valuable document for some time, each fellow stopping to sign his name and pass on.

Whatever effect the petition had upon the Head, there was no doubt that the Rookwood juniors regarded it as a very excellent idea.

Public opinion, as Arthur Edward Lovell sagely remarked, had to be regarded. Kings and emperors and prime ministers were kept in order by public opinion. And it was the same in the school, according to Lovell. And they were the public opinion of Rookwood—they all agreed on that. The opinion of practically the whole Lower School was bound to have some weight with the Head. Indeed, Lovell said he would disregard it at his peril.

The available space on the imput paper was soon filled with signatures, more or less legible. But there were plenty more to come, and the further signatures were traced round the margin. The margin was filled, and after that any odd space was taken advantage of to add another name.

By the time all the juniors had signed the petition was a very striking-looking document. It bore some resemblance to a map, but it looked most like a paper over which an army of flies had marched after swimming in the ink-pot. However, the petitioners were satisfied with it, which was the great point.

When all was completed a new question arose. Conroy asked who was going to hand it to Dr. Chisholm.

There was a pause after the Australian junior's question. Nobody appeared to be very anxious to hand the petition to the Head.

In spite of the fact that it conveyed to the reverend gentleman the public opinion of Rookwood, there was a lurking possibility that the Head might cut up rusty. You never did really know how to take a headmaster, as Oswald remarked. He might be pleased, and then again he mightn't. The workings of a headmaster's intellect were

strange and mysterious and beyond the comprehension of mere ordinary mortals.

"Volunteers!" said Jimmy Silver, at last. "Well, I'd volunteer," said Puffy Grace. "Only I think Jimmy Silver is the man to do it. It's his idea."

"Something in that," said Oswald.

"A lot in it," agreed Lovell. "Jimmy's just the chap for the job. Cool and collected, you know."

Jimmy Silver grinned faintly.

"I'll take it on, if nobody else is keen on it," he said.

Nobody else was keen on it—that was quite clear.

Jimmy picked up the document.

"We'll come as far as the Head's study," said Lovell courageously. "We'll see you through, Jimmy. I dare say the Head will be glad to see this petition—it will get him out of an awkward position, you know. He can let Morny come back, as a concession to public opinion in the school, and all that."

"I don't think!" murmured Howard, of the Shell.

"You're a silly ass, Howard. If the Head agrees, Jimmy, you tip us the wink, and we'll all cheer in the passage."

"Good!"

Jimmy Silver marched off boldly, with the petition in his hand, and perhaps with some lurking misgivings in his breast. And the whole army of juniors marched after him—modestly resolved to remain outside the Head's study during the interview, but prepared to cheer no end if the result was favourable.

CHAPTER 22.

Not a Success!

MR. BOOTLES was coming out of the Head's study as the army arrived. He glanced in astonishment at the numerous array that crowded the wide corridor from end to end.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Bootles. "What—what does this mean?"

"A petition to the Head, sir," said Jimmy Silver respectfully.

"A—a—a—what?"

"Petition to the Head, sir."

"Bless my soul!"

Jimmy Silver held up the paper for inspection, and Mr. Bootles blinked at it over his glasses. Jimmy Silver watched

him rather anxiously. He was anxious to know what Mr. Bootles thought of the petition before the Head saw it; it was "trying it on the dog," as he expressed it afterwards.

"Upon my word," said Mr. Bootles faintly. "You—you—you are going to show that—that extraordinary concoction to Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes, sir. No harm in it, is there, sir?"

"No—no! But Dr. Chisholm is extremely incensed upon the subject of Mornington, with good reason, and—and really——"

"The Head may change his mind, sir, after hearing what the public opinion of the school has to say!" suggested Lovell.

Mr. Bootles blinked at him.

"I think it is very improbable, Lovell," he replied. "I—I should certainly advise you boys to go away at once."

The petitioners looked at one another rather discouraged.

"But—but you'll let us take it in, sir," stammered Jimmy Silver.

"You may please yourself, Silver, certainly; but that is my advice," said Mr. Bootles, and he rustled away.

"Hum!" said Raby.

"Hem!" said Newcome.

"I say, old Bootles don't seem to think there's much in it," observed Tubby Muffin doubtfully.

"Well, Bootles is a bit of an ass," said Lovell.

"Yes, that's so."

"We're going to try it on," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "It can't do any harm if it doesn't do any good. The Head ought to know what we think on the subject."

"Yes, rather."

Jimmy Silver stepped to the Head's door, and tapped. There was a breathless hush in the crowded passage.

"Come in!"

The Head's deep voice had rather a dismaying effect on the juniors. A few of the weaker spirits sidled away along the corridor and disappeared. But most of them stood their ground, though they kept back out of the Head's sight when the study door was opened by Jimmy.

Taking his courage in both hands, as it were, the captain of the Fourth stepped into the Head's study; feeling a great deal

like the celebrated Daniel, when he stepped into the lion's den.

Dr. Chisholm was seated at his desk, with a frowning face. A few minutes before he had been discussing the affair of Mornington with Mr. Bootles. Morny having been discharged by the village grocer, the Head had concluded that the boy, without resources now, would be forced to return to his guardian's house—which was, fortunately, at a considerable distance from Rookwood; But the expected had not happened.

The Head, with intense exasperation, had learned that Valentine Mornington was still in Coombe, and that he had taken up his quarters at the Bird-in-Hand—an extremely disreputable establishment.

Morny was not to be got rid of so easily, that was evident; and the Head was troubled, too, by the knowledge that the wilful boy was in such exceedingly demoralising surroundings.

So he had telephoned once more to Morny's guardian; only to receive a snappish reply from Sir Rupert Staupoole.

The baronet absolutely refused to have anything more to do with his nephew, unless the said nephew returned home and apologised for his conduct—which Mornington was very unlikely to do.

Apparently, the expelled junior was to continue to haunt the school with his presence close at hand; for the Head could think of no way of influencing the landlord of the Bird-in-Hand, as he had influenced Mr. Bandy.

As a matter of fact, the Head was not, just then, in a suitable mood to hear anything in favour of the exasperating Mornington. His glance, as it fell on Jimmy Silver, was irritable; though as yet he did not know the purport of the junior's visit.

"Well, Silver, what is it?" he exclaimed sharply.

"If—if you please, sir—" stammered Jimmy.

"Come to the point at once."

"It's—it's—it's a petition, sir."

"What?"

Jimmy Silver laid the document on the table before the Head.

Then he waited; his heart beating unusually fast.

The dye was cast now!

Dr. Chisholm, in great astonishment, ad-

justed his glasses, and looked at the semi-legible document before him.

For some minutes he did not seem able to make out the full meaning of that document.

Those minutes were painful enough to Jimmy Silver. He waited in cruel suspense. Outside, in the corridor, there was a faint shuffling of feet and a murmur of whispers.

The Head looked up at last.

The expression upon his face made Jimmy Silver jump.

"Boy!"

"Yes, sir?"

"You—you have dared—" Breath seemed to fail the Head for a moment. He gasped.

Jimmy Silver wished himself well out of the study. But it was too late now, though it was painfully clear that the petition was not going to be a success!

"You—you impertinent young rascal!" exclaimed the Head, at last. "You venture to dictate to me—"

"Oh, no, sir!" gasped Jimmy. "N-n-not at all, sir! Nothing of the kind!"

"How dare you bring such a document as this to me?" thundered the Head.

"I—I—we—"

Jimmy's voice trailed away.

It was not much use trying to explain when it was clear that his very worst possible anticipations were to be realised, and that the Head was going to cut up rusty, exceedingly rusty!

Dr. Chisholm rose to his feet, and looked round for his cane. Jimmy Silver backed towards the door.

"Silver, I shall cane you severely for this impertinence."

"I—I—"

"Every boy who has signed this impertinent paper will receive five hundred lines, and will be detained for a half-holiday!"

"Oh!"

The Head's voice was heard in the passage, heard with dismay. Evidently, there was going to be no occasion for cheering.

Instead of cheering, there was a sound of scampering feet.

The army had fled before the Head could glance out of his study.

"Silver, hold out your hand!"

"Oh dear!"

Greatly dispirited, Jimmy Silver held out his hand.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

The swishing of the Head's cane could be heard at the corner of the passage, where a few of the bolder spirits had lingered. Jimmy Silver's anguished ejaculations could be heard still farther.

"Now you may go!" rumbled the Head, pointing to the door with his cane. "I shall keep this document until all the boys whose names appear there have been punished. You may go!"

Jimmy Silver went, almost limping.

He came round the corner of the passage, with his hands tucked under his arms, and deep woe in his countenance.

"Five hundred lines each!" said Lovell.

"Ow!" said Jimmy.

"After all, it was a rather rotten idea——"

"Wow!"

"Had it bad?"

"Yow-ow-wow-wow!"

It was some time before Jimmy Silver's anguish subsided sufficiently for him to think of Mornington again. But his sympathy with the expelled junior never took again the form of presenting a petition to the Head. Once was enough.

CHAPTER 23.

Morny's Latest!

"WHAT a horrid row!"

Arthur Edward Lovell made that remark the following day, after morning lessons. The chums of the Fourth were in the quad, when strange and weird sounds of music reached their ears from the direction of the gates.

A hurdy-gurdy had stopped in the road, close to the gates of Rookwood, and the raucous sounds could be heard almost all over the school.

"Why the thump doesn't Mack send the merchant away?" growled Raby.

"He seems to be enjoying the music," grinned Jimmy Silver.

Old Mack, the porter, had come out of his lodge, with the intention of dispatching the itinerant music merchant. Instead of that, however, old Mack had stopped in the gateway, and was staring out into the road with his eyes almost bulging from his head.

"Something going on there," said Jimmy Silver curiously. "Let's go and look!"

The Fistical Four sauntered down to the gates. Tubby Muffin was there, and he yelled to them as they came along.

"This way, you chaps! It's Morny!"

"Morny!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"He, he, he! Yes, Morny!"

The Fistical Four broke into a run.

They came breathlessly up to the gates, and an astonishing sight met their eyes. A barrel-organ was in the road opposite the gateway, and the musician turning the handle was Valentine Mornington! He was grinding out a doleful tune, which bore some distant resemblance to "The Bogie Man." But the resemblance was very distant.

But that was not all. A large placard was fastened upon the organ, large enough to be read at a distance. It bore a striking and well-displayed inscription. Jimmy Silver gasped as he read it:

"NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC!

**I AM A PUBLIC-SCHOOL BOY
REDUCED TO THIS METHOD OF
EARNING AN HONEST LIVING!**

MY NAME IS MORNINGTON.

**I BELONG TO ROOKWOOD
SCHOOL!**

SPARE A COPPER!"

A frowsy old hat lay on the ground beside the organ, for the reception of coppers from a compassionate public.

"My word!" breathed Lovell. "That—that—that's Morny's latest stunt!"

"Morny, you awful ass——"

Mornington ground on at the organ.

"Look 'ere!" stuttered old Mack. "This won't do! You move on, you young raskil! You take that thing away from 'ere!"

Mornington looked at him.

"This is a public road," he said. "I can grind my organ here if I like. I'm not on Rookwood ground."

"You clear off!"

"Rats!"

Tubby Muffin had sped into the quad with the news, and it spread like wildfire over Rookwood.

Crowds of fellows came swarming down to the gates, to stare at the amateur organ-grinder, and howl with laughter.

Mornington ground on.

"By gad!" said Townsend of the Fourth.

"Spare a copper for an old Rookwooder! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "What will the Head say?"

Coppers showered into the hat, and sixpences and shillings, too. The Rookwooders felt that the entertainment was worth it, especially when they considered what the Head would say.

There was a rustle and an exclamation, and Mr. Bootles came pushing through the crowd at the gates, looking very agitated.

"Mornington!" he gasped. "Cease this at once!" These—these disgraceful proceedings—

"Nothing disgraceful that I know of, sir, in turning an organ for a living," answered Mornington.

"Go away at once!" said Mr. Bootles faintly. "The—the Head is coming!"

"Let him come, if he cares for music!" said Mornington. "I'm sure I'm honoured by such a distinguished audience. Hallo! Good-mornin', sir! Any special tune you'd like?"

Dr. Chisholm stepped through the crowd, his eyes fixed on Mornington and his placard with a terrific expression.

"How—how dare you!" he gasped at last. "Wretched boy, have you no sense of shame—"

"What's wrong?" asked Mornington, in surprise. "I've taken this up as a profession, sir. Quite an honourable profession, sir. Would you care to make a contribution to the hat, sir?"

"Boy, you—you— Stop it at once! Stop, I tell you! Mack, turn that young rascal away at once!" thundered the Head.

"Oh, lor'!" murmured old Mack.

"You don't care for music, sir?" added Mornington affably. "You wouldn't care for me to come along to-morrow, sir, and play in the quad?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington picked up the well-filled hat.

"I'm going, sir," he said. "Any fellow who cares for music—this kind of music—can hear me grinding outside the Peal-of-Bells this afternoon. I'll pay your school another visit to-morrow, sir."

"If—if you dare—"

"Good-afternoon, sir! Keep your wool on!"

And, with that parting salute, Valentine Mornington picked up the handles of his barrel-organ, and trundled the instrument away down the road towards the village.

The Head stood gazing after him as if transfixed.

His expression was extraordinary as he turned away at last, and hurried back to

the School House. There was a roar of laughter the moment the Head was gone. Morny's latest stunt had taken Rookwood by storm, and the juniors yelled over it. But the hapless Head was not inclined to join in the general merriment. He paced his study with contracted brows, wondering what was to be done with Mornington, without finding an answer to the question.

CHAPTER 24.

Music Hath Charms!

IT started suddenly.

Rookwood School was at lessons. In the Fourth Form room, Mr. Bootles was busy with his class.

Erroll of the Fourth had stood up to construe. His construe was not quite up to the mark, though as a rule he was one of Mr. Bootles' best pupils. But poor Erroll was thinking of his absent chum, Mornington, whose place in the Fourth was empty, and his work had fallen off very much of late.

Mr. Bootles had opened his mouth to make some remarks on Erroll's construe; and Lovell whispered to Jimmy Silver that Erroll was going through it. But Mr. Bootles' remarks were never made.

For just then the music started suddenly.

Through the open windows of the Form-room—wide open in the warm summer morning—the sweet strains floated in from the quadrangle.

It was the grind of a barrel-organ that smote abruptly upon the ears of master and pupils.

The tune it was playing was an ancient one, and had reference to a Mr. William Bailey, who, apparently, was far from home.

Mr. Bootles jumped, and then stood rooted to the floor, as if thunderstruck.

Erroll's voice faltered and stopped.

Jimmy Silver looked at his chums, aghast. Two or three of the juniors broke into a chuckle.

A hurdy-gurdy grinding under the Form-room windows was a new experience at Rookwood.

Certainly it was Mack the porter's duty to see that no itinerant music-merchant gained admittance into the sacred precincts of the school. Equally certainly, old Mack

had failed in his duties that morning. For there the hurdy-gurdy was grinding!

"Is it Morny?"

That was the question in every mind in the Fourth Form-room.

But the question answered itself. They knew it was Morny; that it must be Morny. Certainly no common or garden organ-grinder would have wheeled his machine into the school quad in the hope of gathering coppers there. The utmost he could have expected was the order of the boot. But Morny, the amateur organist, was not so keen on gathering coppers, as on exasperating the headmaster who had expelled him from Rookwood. And this purpose could be effected thoroughly by grinding the hurdy-gurdy under the Form-room windows.

Gr-r-r-whirrerrrr! Yowl-owl-owl!

"Bless my soul!" murmured the dazed Mr. Bootles.

He stirred at last, and started for the door. As he rustled into the corridor, he almost ran into Mr. Greely, of the Fifth, and Mr. Bohun, of the Third, bound on the same errand—to interview the organ-grinder. In the Fourth Form-room there was a chortle loud and long.

"Morny again!" howled Arthur Edward Lovell, "Morny, of course! And here!"

"Here, under our merry windows!" chuckled George Raby. "What next?"

"Let's see if it's Morny!" said Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Bootles being out of the Form-room, the juniors left their seats and crowded up to the windows.

The windows were crammed.

Every eye was fixed upon the figure outside, standing by the barrel-organ, industriously turning the handle.

It was, of course, Valentine Mornington, lately of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood School, now an outcast and a lodger at the Bird-in-Hand Inn at Coombe.

Mornington was looking very shabby; quite a contrast to the one-time dandy of Rookwood.

But his handsome, reckless face was the same as ever.

He glanced up at the faces crammed the windows, and nodded and winked. But the industrious handle never ceased. The strains of "Bill Bailey" rang through Rookwood, from the painful beginning to the

bitter end, and then the amateur organist started again.

"The awful nerve!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "Hallo! There's old Mack coming after him!"

Old Mack was ambling up from the direction of the gates. Morny had found the gates unlocked, and Mack elsewhere, when he gained admittance. But the strains of music drew Mack to the spot, and he was coming up with wrath in his visage.

But before he arrived Mr. Bootles and Mr. Greely and Mr. Bohun came bursting out of the School House.

They bore down on the organist in threatening array.

"Boy!" shouted Mr. Greely.

"Cease that noise!" shrieked Mr. Bohun.

"Wretched boy!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"Have you no—no sense of shame—of—of—decency? Wretched youth!"

"Good-mornin', sir!" said the organist cheerily.

"Cease—"

"Stop!"

"Go!"

Valentine Mornington, still turning the handle, pointed to the placard on the barrel-organ with his free hand. It was a new placard, with letters of great size daubed on it in red. It ran:

**"SPARE A COPPER FOR AN OLD
ROOKWOODER!"**

"'Ere, you git out of this 'ere, you young rip!" panted Mr. Mack, arriving in a state of breathless fluster.

"Eject him, Mack!" gasped Mr. Bohun.

"Turn him out!" boomed Mr. Greely.

"Go it, Morny!" howled Putty Graco from the window; and the juniors roared with laughter.

Mr. Bootles spun round.

"Go back! Go back from the windows at once! Take your places! How dare you! Bless my soul!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. drew back obediently from the windows; but the next moment they were there again. They simply could not help looking on at the extraordinary scene now being enacted in the quadrangle of Rookwood. The three masters were almost dancing round the organ, in their wrath and excitement; but they checked themselves as an awe-inspiring figure emerged from the House. It was the Head.

Dr. Chisholm, deep in the mysteries of Greek with the Sixth Form, had been drawn forth by the strains of "Bill Bailey."

His face was a study.

Valentine Mornington did not seem abashed.

"Boy!" said Dr. Chisholm.

"Sir!"

"How—how dare you!"

"Don't you care for music, sir?" asked Mornington innocently. "I've got a jazz I can play you, sir, if you'd prefer it."

"Go!"

"But I haven't collected any coppers yet, sir."

"Mack!" thundered the Head.

"Yessir?"

"Remove that boy, and his instrument! If either enters the gates again, I shall discharge you!"

"'Tain't my fault, sir! I never knowed—"

"Remove him!"

Old Mack closed in on the organist. The strain of the music came to a sudden stop as he grasped the organist by the shoulder.

"Now you git a move on, you young raskil!" said Mack. "I don't want to 'urt you—"

"You couldn't!" said Mornington cheerfully.

"Look 'ere—"

"Remove him!" thundered the Head.

"Come along, Master Morny—I mean, you young raskil!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Mornington stood with his hands in his pockets, and old Mack was constrained to pick up the handles of the organ and wheel it away to the gates. Mornington, with a cool grin, extended his hat towards the Head.

"Spare a copper, sir?" he said.

"Go!"

"Not a stiver, sir, for an old Rookwooder down on his luck!" asked Mornington. "This is a rather hard life, sir, for a public school chap. I've been accustomed to better things."

"If—if you do not depart at once, I—I shall forget myself, and—and strike you, you wretched boy!" stuttered the Head.

"Dear old bean, keep your wool on!"

"I—I—"

Dr. Chisholm made a stride towards the expelled junior, his face crimson with anger. Mornington backed away, smiling.

The Head's "rag" was out with a vengeance. He had more than achieved his object in paying that morning visit to Rookwood.

"Ta-ta, old top!" he said. "I'll see you again later. Keep smiling!"

And Mornington strolled away to the gates to take possession of his instrument of torture, which old Mack trundled out into the road. The Head stared after him blankly, and then turning, disappeared quickly into the House.

CHAPTER 25.

The Head's Problem!

"H A, ha, ha!"
The Fourth Form room echoed with merriment as Mr. Bootles came back looking very disturbed and flustered.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors roared.

Morny's astounding impudence struck them as funny, though it did not have that effect on the Head or his staff.

The expelled junior was still making his presence felt at Rookwood School. Since his expulsion Valentine Mornington had certainly been the most talked of fellow in Rookwood.

Mr. Bootles raised his hand angrily as he strode in, and the laughter died away.

"Silence! What does this unseemly disturbance mean?" rapped out the Form-master. "Silence, I say, or the whole class shall be detained this afternoon!"

That was enough. That afternoon was a half-holiday, and nobody wanted detention. But it was with difficulty that the juniors composed themselves to a proper gravity. Mr. Bootles' dark frowns could not repress the smiles that continually broke out on their faces during the remainder of morning lessons.

When the class was dismissed at last it was a chuckling crowd of juniors that swarmed out into the quad.

Erroll was the only fellow in the Fourth who was looking grave. Arthur Edward Lovell slapped him on the shoulder.

"What are you looking like a graven image for, fathead?" inquired Arthur Edward. "Why don't you grin?"

Erroll smiled faintly.

"It really isn't a laughing matter," he said.

"Most of the fellows seem to think that it is!" said Jimmy Silver, with a smile.

"But it isn't! Morny ought not to be checking the Head like this——"

"True, O king!" said Lovell. "He oughtn't. But it's funny to watch the Head's face when Morny's checking him, all the same."

"It makes it hopeless to think of Morny ever coming back to Rookwood," said Erroll, with a sigh.

"Not much chance of that, in any case!" said Newcome. "Morny's taking it out of the Head like this because he knows he can't come back. But bringing his hurdy-gurdy inside the school is really the limit. Mack will get the boot if Morny gets in again."

"He won't have a chance again," said Jimmy Silver. "His hurdy-gurdy is only a stunt. He will be thinking of something new soon. It looks as if he's set out to worry the Head into a fit. I wonder what the beak will do?"

Most of the Rookwooders were wondering what Dr. Chisholm would do. Perhaps the Head himself was wondering.

This state of affairs could not be suffered to continue. Yet how it was to be ended was a problem.

Morny's guardian refused to take any steps in the matter unless the expelled junior should return home and apologise for his conduct—which Morny was not likely to do. And nobody else had any legal control over the reckless fellow.

On rare occasions culprits had been expelled from Rookwood before, but an expelled fellow generally slunk quietly away, ashamed to be seen, and ashamed to revisit the scene of his humiliation.

It was quite otherwise with Morny.

All Coombe was talking of the Rookwooder who had come down to playing a hurdy-gurdy for a living. Indeed, the Head was in constant terror that it might get into the papers.

If some enterprising journalist with a keen nose for a "stunt" should get wind of the affair it might become famous through the length and breadth of the land.

Rookwood was a famous old school, and there was "copy" in the extraordinary affair. Quite entertaining columns might be written about it if some pressman got hold of it at a time when there was a dearth of other news.

And if that had happened Dr. Chisholm's feelings would have been beyond description. Like most quiet and scholastic old gentlemen of his kind he had an intense horror of publicity and scandal.

It would have been a deadly blow to him if Rookwood and its affairs had become a theme of public comment to be chatted and joked about in 'buses and trains.

Yet Mornington was not to be got rid of. The Head had succeeded in inducing Mr. Bandy, the grocer, to sack him. But instead of clearing off the reckless fellow had hired the barrel-organ with which he perambulated Coombe and the neighbourhood, and probably he made a good thing of it, too, and earned his daily bread thereby.

The placard on the organ attracted much comment and sympathy from the simple country-folk. And the Head, though he reigned supreme within the walls of Rookwood, had no more power outside the gates than the smallest fag in the Second Form. There was no law or influence by which he could exclude the expelled junior from the vicinity.

"The Head's in a rare wax!" Tubby Muffin confided to Jimmy Silver & Co. that afternoon. "Trotting up and down his study like a wild lion in a cage, you know! He's been ragging Bootles."

"How do you know?" grunted Jimmy.

Tubby chuckled.

"I saw Bootles coming away from his study looking as if he'd been bitten," he explained. "The Head's taking it out of everybody who comes near him. I heard Catesby say he was awfully rough on the Sixth this morning, after Morny came here. He jawed Bulkeley in class—the captain, you know. I wonder Bulkeley stood it."

"Well, a chap has to stand the Head!" remarked Lovell. "I'm rather glad I'm not in the Sixth at present."

"Same here," chortled Tubby Muffin; "and I say it's a good wheeze to keep out of the Head's way, and not come near him in the passages. He might start on anybody."

Jimmy Silver grinned. He could not help wondering what the august Head of Rookwood would have thought if he had heard that. But Reginald Muffin's remark was undoubtedly well-founded.

The dispute with Mornington was telling on the Head's nerves, and his temper was growing very tart and uncertain. His

staff had much to bear with, and the Sixth Form were not enjoying life these days.

A Third-Former had been called in and caned for whistling near the Head's window. The sight of his frowning brow in the corridors was enough to set the fags scampering away. But the Head's reflections would have been interesting to know if he had guessed that he was now looked upon by the smaller boys as a sort of Hun that was dangerous at close quarters.

Early that afternoon, when Jimmy Silver & Co. were going down to the cricket-ground, the Head was observed crossing to the gates, and Tubby Muffin scudded after the Fistical Four to Little Side with the news.

"I say, Jimmy—I—I say—" panted Tubby.

"Well, what is it now?" grunted the captain of the Fourth.

"The beaks gone to see Morny."

"What?"

"He's gone to the Bird-in-Hand!" chirruped Tubby Muffin. "Out of bounds, you know, for Rookwood! I say, the Head ought to give himself a licking for going out of bounds! He, he, he!"

"How do you know he's gone?" demanded Lovell.

"I heard him say to Bootles—"

"Oh, dry up!" said Jimmy. "You're always hearing something that doesn't concern you."

"But, I say, the Head said—"

"Rats!"

"He didn't say rats, you ass; the Head wouldn't! He said—"

But the Fistical Four did not stay to hear what the Head had said. They went to the cricket, leaving Tubby Muffin to impart the rest of his news to anyone who cared to hear.

CHAPTER 26.

Ordered to Quit!

"EXCUSE me—"

"My eye!"

The gentleman who was washing glasses behind the bar of the Bird-in-Hand jumped and nearly dropped a glass.

It was the Head of Rookwood who had suddenly dawned upon him in the dusky bar; and the sight of the King of the Cannibal Islands would hardly have astonished the barman more.

He blinked at Dr. Chisholm.

"Excuse me" said the Head, in a very quiet voice. "I have called to inquire—"

The barman winked at a fat man in a corner, who was smoking a big black cigar, and washing down the flavour with a glass of spirits. It was Mr. Joseph Hook, a sporting gentleman of disreputable character. Mr. Hook winked back at the barman.

Dr. Chisholm coloured painfully.

"Yessir," said the barman. "You was saying, sir—whisky, sir?"

"No, no!" said the Head of Rookwood hastily. "I have merely called to inquire whether there is a boy named Mornington staying at this inn."

"Ho!" said the barman.

"I wish to see him," said the Head.

Another wink passed from the gentleman behind the bar to Mr. Hook in the corner.

"Know where the young feller is, Mr. Hook?" asked the barman.

"Knockin' the balls about, I believe," answered Joey Hook. "You'll find 'im in the billiard-room, sir."

"Thank you very much!" faltered the Head.

"Not at all, sir," said Mr. Hook politely. "Always pleased to oblige a gent like you, sir! If you'd care to take something—"

"Thank you, no!" gasped the Head.

And he beat a hurried retreat.

As he retreated the sound of chuckling followed him from the dusky bar. Apparently, Mr. Hook and the barman saw something amusing in the Head and his visit.

The sound of clicking balls guided Dr. Chisholm to the billiard-room. His colour was high as he entered that apartment. He was glad to see that it had only one occupant. The solitary occupant was Valentine Mornington, who was knocking the balls about idly.

The outcast of Rookwood glanced round, and started as he saw the Head. He dropped the butt of the cue to the floor, and stood staring at Dr. Chisholm.

"I have called to see you, Mornington," said the Head, in a deep voice.

Morny recovered himself at once.

"Thank you, sir; that's kind of you," he said. "You're welcome, for old acquaintance sake."

The Head bit his lip.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Morn-

ington cordially. "Shall I call for some refreshments?"

"Certainly not!"

"You wouldn't care for a whisky-and-soda?"

"Mornington!"

"Or a gin cocktail, sir?" asked Mornington genially. "Though rather down on my luck at present, I can stand refreshment to an old friend. You may command anything in the establishment, in fact."

"This is intolerance, Mornington!" gasped the Head.

"I'm sure I only meant to be civil, sir," said Morny. "Won't you sit down, and make yourself at home?"

"I will not sit down, Mornington!"

"Very well, sir. Care for a hundred up?"

"Wretched boy——"

"Not at all, sir. Enjoyin' life, I assure you," said Mornington cheerily. "It's a bit hard work, trundling round an organ, but I make a livin'. Lots of kind people take compassion on a public school chap reduced to organ-grindin' for his daily bread. It's really better than grindin' Latin in school, with a peppery old headmaster always ready to drop on a fellow—what?"

"Mornington, I am going to make an appeal to you——"

"You want me to come back to Rookwood, sir!"

"No, sir, I do not want you to come back to Rookwood!" thundered the Head. "Under no circumstances whatever shall you ever enter the gates of Rookwood again!"

"My mistake, sir," said Mornington blandly. "I might come back if you asked me nicely!"

"I am going to make an appeal to your better feelings, if you possess any," said the Head, in a gasping voice. "This course of conduct on your part, Mornington, is disgraceful!"

"Opinions may differ on that point," answered the junior. "If you were my headmaster, sir, I should be bound to respect your opinion. As you're not, I'm entitled to regard you as an interferin' old gentleman!"

"Wha-at?"

"And to advise you to mind your own business, sir!"

Dr. Chisholm breathed hard.

"You are disgracing yourself and your

old school," he said. "You do not seem to care whether you drag the good name of Rookwood in the dust."

Mornington laughed.

"Rookwood can't ask much of me, sir, after kicking me out," he said. "What about my good name, which Rookwood has dragged in the dust?"

"It is your duty to return to——"

"School?"

"No, to your guardian."

"My dear guardian bores me, sir, and my cousins at home are simply intolerable. I prefer organ-grindin'!"

"If you must pursue this disreputable career, Mornington, can you not have the decency to take yourself into another district, and not make the name of your old school a byword of scorn?"

"No fear!" answered Mornington coolly. "You kicked me out of Rookwood, an' I'm goin' to haunt Rookwood. You won't get rid of me in a hurry, sir!"

"You will not be allowed to continue——"

"I don't see how you're goin' to stop me," interrupted Mornington. "I'm earnin' an honest livin', and turned the age when the School Board inspector can't worry me. I really don't see what you are goin' to do, sir."

"You refuse to go?"

"You bet!"

For a moment they looked at one another, the Headmaster and the expelled junior, with cool defiance in the latter's face, grim wrath in the former's.

Then Dr. Chisholm, without another word, left the billiard-room.

Mornington winked at the ceiling, and returned to knocking the ivory balls about.

But his face grew serious.

Cool and self-reliant as he was, and determined to continue upon the peculiar course he had marked out for himself, Mornington was not satisfied. Since leaving Rookwood he had had plenty of time for reflection, and he realised quite clearly that he had made a fool of himself—that he had given up what was good for what was not so good. His recklessness had led him too far, and, defiant as he was he had the penalty to pay.

There was a surprise in store for him, too. He found soon that the Head had now exhausted the arrows in his quiver. From the dirty window of the billiard-room

Morny watched the old gentleman pass down the street again. A few minutes later the red-faced barman came into the billiard-room with a grin on his face.

"Its outside for you, young man," he remarked.

Morny looked at him.

"What does that mean?" he inquired.

"Landlord wants your room."

"Rot! There's two or three garrets empty, as well as mine."

"Landlord wants it all the same, and you're to go to-day," answered the man coolly. "You've got till six to remove your traps; if they're there later than that they're to be put in the street. That's all."

"I suppose the Head of Rookwood has tipped your landlady to do this!" said Mornington bitterly.

He received no reply. But he did not need one. It was easy enough to see that the Head had interviewed the landlord of the Bird-in-Hand, and that he had induced him to turn the lodger out—a few pounds in hand were worth more to the innkeeper than the few shillings Morny paid for his wretched garret.

That afternoon Valentine Mornington stood in the street again, with a bag in his hand, containing his worldly possessions. He was homeless once more; but there was a bitter, determined expression on his face. Once more the Head had made a move that he could not counter; but Rookwood was not done with the expelled junior yet.

CHAPTER 27.

In Camp!

"SOME blessed gipsy camp!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Cheek to camp here, in sight of our boat-house!" remarked New-

come,

"My dear chap," said Jimmy Silver tolerantly, "it's public land along the river, and anybody can camp there. Pick-nickers and caravanners haunt the place. Let 'em rip."

"They'll rip anyway, whether we let 'em or not," Newcome remarked, "so we may as well let 'em."

Those observations were made by the Fistical Four of Rookwood, as they strolled down to the river after cricket.

From the trees by the river thin column of smoke was rising, showing that someone had lighted a camp-fire on the bank.

The weather was too warm for a fire to be wanted for its heat, so it was pretty clear that cooking was going on.

The junior turned into the path by the river to have a look at the camp, which was much nearer the school than was generally the case with caravan campers. Indeed, the column of smoke might have been seen, and doubtless was seen, from the quadrangle.

A cheery fire crackled away, fed by branches and twigs, and over it three sticks were erected, from which swung a pot, in gipsy style.

But it was not a gipsy who tended the fire.

As the Fistical Four came in sight of the solitary camper, one amazed exclamation burst from all four of them at once.

"Morny!"

The camper looked up and smiled and waved his hand to the chums of the Fourth.

They came up, gazing at him blankly.

"Where's your hurdy-gurdy?" asked Newcome, with a grin.

"I've dropped that stunt for a bit," drawled Mornington. "Wheelin' it about is rather heavy work. I'm campin' out here."

"Here!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"Why not?" asked Mornington coolly.

"This is common-land, and it has the advantage of bein' within hail of Rookwood, so I shan't have quite to part company with the dear old Head. I'm sure he will be delighted to hear that he's got me for a near neighbour."

"Oh dear!" murmured Jimmy.

"The dear old beak dropped in at the Bird-in-Hand to-day, an' got me turned out," explained Mornington. "I've decided on campin' life for a bit. The weather's splendid for it. I bought a few things in the village an' ambled along here. Hallo, here's Muffin!"

Tubby Muffin came out of the trees, and stood transfixed, staring at the camp and the camper.

For some moments Muffin was non-plussed, and then the explanation dawned upon him, and he gave a fat chortle.

Without approaching nearer to the camp, Tubby started off for the school as fast as his fat little legs would carry him—to bear the startling news.

"I suppose I shall have half Rookwood here in ten minutes," remarked Mornington, with a grin.

"Which is what you want, I believe!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I don't deny it, old top. I'm goin' to turn the Head's hair white for kickin' me out of Rookwood," said Mornington coolly. "I'll go back if he asks me nicely."

"I can see him doing it!" said Jimmy Silver laughing.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, unless he does, I'm going to haunt him. You fellows care to have tea with me? I'm brewing some coffee in that pot, and I've got a cake and some sandwiches. Lots, in fact; and I'm glad of company."

The Fistical Four exchanged smiling glances.

Morny's endless "stunts" were entertain-

ing, from the junior point of view, at least, and they could not help admiring the outcast junior's determination. "No surrender" was evidently Morny's motto.

They accepted Mornington's invitation and sat down on the green bank of the river, under the setting sun. The coffee Morny was brewing was not, perhaps, quite perfect, but the Fourth-Formers were not very particular. They enjoyed their meal, and long before it was over there were fresh arrivals on the scene.

Tubby Muffin had spread the news.

Rookwood juniors came from far and near to see the camp, and to stare at the camper and chortle. Peele remarked that it was naother pull for the Head's nose as certainly it was. Hansom and Talboys of the Fifth came along, and advised Morny to clear off, and he declined, they seemed disposed to help him shift. But the Fistical Four chipped in promptly, with a dozen more juniors, and the Fifth-Formers were chased away with ignominy.

It was different when Carthew of the Sixth arrived on the scene. Carthew was a prefect, and, as such, was not to be handled by the juniors—unless they were prepared for trouble with the Head. And Carthew ordered Morny to quit at once.

Mornington eyed him coolly, and did not even answer. He sipped the tin cup of hot coffee in his hand as if Carthew had not spoken.

"Do you hear me?" snapped Carthew.

"You've no right to interfere, Carthew," said Erroll mildly. "Anyone can camp on this land."

"Take fifty lines, Erroll, for cheeking a prefect."

Erroll bit his lip hard.

"Now, Mornington, you're to go!" said Carthew, coming closer to the outcast of Rookwood. "The Head won't allow you

to plant yourself down so close to the school, and you know it! Will you go?"

Mornington smiled.

"Fine weather for campin', isn't it?" he observed.

"What?"

"Lucky it doesn't look like rain, or I should need a tent or somethin'."

There was a chuckle from the onlookers, and Carthew's face reddened angrily.

"I don't want any of your impudence, Mornington!" he bawled. "You're to clear out of here at once, or I shall shift you!"

"I can't afford a tent at present," went on Mornington imperturbably. "I've got a couple of rugs, that's all."

"Will you go?"

"But it's going to be a warm night, so I think I shall be all serene."

"For the last time, Mornington, will —"

"There'll be a moon, too——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew strode right at the outcast junior, his hands raised to grasp him.

Swoosh!

Mornington jerked his hand forward, and the contents of the coffee-cup shot full into the Rookwood prefect's face.

Carthew staggered back with a wild howl.

"Yurrrggh!"

Mornington rose quickly to his feet, and picked up a thick cudgel that lay in the grass by his side. He stood on the defensive, as Carthew gouged coffee from his eyes and nose.

"You—you—— I'll—I'll——" spluttered Carthew. He sprang savagely at the outcast of Rookwood.

He sprang back again faster still, as Morny's cudgel lashed at him. Mark Carthew would have received a very unpleasant knock if he had not escaped that blow.

"You—you young ruffian!" he panted.

"Better mind your own business," suggested Mornington calmly. "I've got this cudgel to deal with any tramps who may interfere. I'm quite ready to crack your head, Carthew, if you want it cracked. You've only to come on!"

Carthew evidently did not want his head cracked, for he did not come on. It was clear enough that Valentine Mornington was in deadly earnest. The prefect stood furious and perplexed for a minute or so, while the crowd of juniors looked on, grinning.

"Here comes Bulkeley!" murmured Lovell.

The captain of Rookwood came striding on the scene. Carthew turned to him at once.

"Help me clear this young scoundrel off, Bulkeley," he said. "The Head won't allow him to stay here."

"Hum!" said Bulkeley, in perplexity. "I don't think we have a right to clear anybody off this ground, Carthew. You'd better go, Mornington."

"Thanks; I'm stayin'!"

"Will you help me clear him off, Bulkeley?" demanded Carthew savagely.

The Rookwood captain shook his head.

"We've no right——"

"Oh, hang that! I shall report this to the Head, then."

"You can do as you like about that," said Bulkeley, shortly; and Carthew tramped angrily away towards the school.

"You ought not to be here, Mornington," said Bulkeley, turning to the outcast junior again, with a frown.

"Sorry I don't agree, old top!"

"You fags can clear off!" said Bulkeley, taking no further notice of Morny. "Now, then, get back to the school, the lot of you! You know the Head's forbidden you to speak to Mornington."

"I say, Bulkeley—" began Jimmy Silver.

"That's enough! Get a move on!"

The juniors reluctantly retired from the spot, and Bulkeley followed them, shepherding them all back into the gates of Rookwood. Valentine Mornington shrugged his shoulders, and sat down again to finish his coffee.

CHAPTER 28.

The Heart of a Hero!

"IMPOSSIBLE!"

"It's true, sir! He's there!"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Dr. Chisholm.

The Head of Rookwood looked so angry, that Carthew half-regretted coming to his study with the news. In the Head's present state of irritable nerves, there was no telling upon whom his wrath might turn.

"You should have sent him away, Carthew!" snapped the Head.

"I tried, sir; but he had a cudgel—"

"Nonsense!"

"Bulkeley refused to help me—"

"You may go, Carthew!"

Carthew went—rather glad to escape from the Head's presence just then. Dr. Chisholm, giving him no further thought, strode to and for in his study with corrugated brows.

This was the last straw; the expelled junior camping in the open air almost at the gates of Rookwood. It was not to be borne.

After some minutes of agitated reflection, the Head selected a cane. He had just taken it in hand, when there was a tap at the door, and it opened to admit Mr. Bootles. The Fourth Form-master looked very agitated.

"Dr. Chisholm, are you aware—"

"I am aware that that insolent boy has

posted himself almost at the school gates, Mr. Bootles! I am going to send him away."

"That is the difficulty, sir. It appears that he has camped on public land, and cannot be interfered with—"

"Nonsense!"

The Head made a gesture, and Mr. Bootles was silent. Dr. Chisholm strode from the study, cane in hand. There was an expression of grim determination on his face. Fags who sighted him in the corridor scudded off and vanished round corners. There were many glances turned upon him as he strode away to the gates, but his path was avoided, as if it were the path of a devouring lion.

Heedless of the glances, if he was aware of them, the Head strode on and trod the path down to the river. His eyes glittered at the sight of the thin column of smoke rising from the bank, and his grip tightened upon the cane.

He came rustling up to the camp with a brow like thunder.

Mornington was at the river-side, drawing a can of water from the stream. He straightened up at the sight of the Head. His cudgel lay in the grass near the campfire, and the Head was between him and it. The Head sighted him, and came directly towards him.

"Mornington!"

"Good afternoon, sir!" said Mornington coolly, with one eye on the Head's cane.

"Nice day, sir!"

"You have camped here?"

"Some interferin' old Johnny got me turned out of the Bird-in-Hand."

"You won't be allowed to remain here."

"I don't see how you're going to prevent it, sir," answered Mornington. "Anybody can camp on common land."

"Will you go?"

"No!"

"Then you will take the consequences, Mornington."

And the exasperated Head strode right at the junior, with the cane uplifted. It came down on Mornington's shoulder with a sounding thwack, and the outcast of Rookwood gave a yell. Then he sprang forward, butting at his assailant, and the Head grasped him by the collar with one hand, while the other wielded the cane. Mornington struggled furiously, and hooked his leg in the Head's, and tore himself loose as Dr. Chisholm staggered.

He sprang away, panting, and the headmaster of Rookwood reeled in the rushes on the river's margin, struggling to recover his balance. But he struggled in vain, and the next moment there was a loud splash.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Mornington.

He sprang forward, as the Head splashed bodily into the river. The cane flew into the rushes, and the headmaster went completely under. He came up a dozen feet from the bank, struggling with the current.

Morny stared at him blankly for a second.

The Head could swim, but he was a poor swimmer, and he was old, and the current was strong. It was borne in upon the junior's startled mind that he was looking upon what was probably to be a tragedy!

That thought was enough for Mornington.

He threw off his cap, put his hands together, and dived into the river.

The Head, resisting feebly, was swept out into the middle of the river by the current, going under again.

Mornington had to swim hard and strong to reach him at all, but fortunately he reached him.

"Hold up, sir!" he apnted.

His grasp was on the Head, dragging him up as he was going under for the third

time. Swimming strongly, he supported the exhausted old gentleman,

It was all he could do; the Head was helpless now, and, cumbered by him, Morny had no chance of getting to the bank. He could only support his burden and go with the current. Twice he made a fierce effort to get shoreward, but the river was too strong for him.

His eyes swept the banks despairingly. But the banks were clear of any human form; the Rookwood fellows had been ordered away from the river, since Morny had camped there.

Fortunately, Valentine Mornington was a strong swimmer, or he would have gone down to death with the headmaster in the depths. But all he could do was to keep afloat with his burden; and, unless help came, that could not last long. And there was no sign of help.

But his face lightened suddenly with

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hope. Ahead of him, the river made a bend, with a racing current; and a point of land that jutted out at the curve was crowned with willows, and a long branch hung drooping over the water. With a great effort, Morny steered himself to pass under the overhanging branch, and caught it with one hand as he passed beneath.

The river tore at him from below, but he held on grimly.

The Head's eyes met his.

"Can you reach up and get hold, sir?" breathed Mornington. "It's the only chance."

Dr. Chisholm did not speak, but he understood. The branch, dragged down by Morny's weight, was within his reach, and he caught it with both hands, and held on. There was an ominous crack along the branch. It was long and slender, and the weight was breaking it down.

Morny's heart throbbed. The premise of safety was false after all; the branch was breaking under his grasp.

"Mornington!" The Head's voice was a husky whisper. "My dear, brave boy, I forgive you all. Heaven help us now!"

Crack, Crack!

"Hold on, sir!" said Mornington quietly. "The branch will hold one, and help must come if you hold on. I'm sorry I played the goat, sir, and given you so much trouble. I'm goin' to take my chance now."

He let go the branch.

"Mornington!" panted the Head.

But Valentine Mornington was gone, swept away round the bend of the river by the fierce current, and in a moment he had vanished from Dr. Chisholm's sight. Holding on to the creaking, swaying branch, the headmaster of Rookwood gazed dazedly over the swirling, shimmering waters, in the sinking light of the sunset. Mornington was gone to his death!

"Help!"

For a quarter of an hour the half-unconscious man clung to the branch, crying faintly for the help that did not come. It was death to let go, and his strength was exhausted. He could scarcely keep his hold upon the swaying, creaking branch, with the wild river tearing at him like a wild animal hungry for its prey.

But help was coming at last. A farmer's dog was barking by the clump of willows, and the farmer came through the trees, and shouted to the exhausted man. The Head called back feebly.

"Hold on, sir! I'm coming!"

To the big, sturdy farmer it was not a difficult task. Holding to the branch, he plunged neck-deep in the water and waded out. He was out of his depth before he reached the Head, but he grasped him, and bore him shoreward. Even for the powerful man it was a struggle, then; but he came into the willows at last, and dragged the headmaster ashore breathlessly. It was an insensible man that he landed in the willows. When Dr. Chisholm's eyes opened he was lying in the farmhouse, and his first question was of Mornington. But of Mornington nothing was known, and the Head groaned in bitterness of spirit. Was that the end of Mornington's rebellion? Had the wilful, headstrong, but true-hearted boy gone to his death in the depths of the river, gone to his death in the effort to save the headmaster who had expelled him?

CHAPTER 29.

All's Well that Ends Well!

AND Mornington?

When he let go the branch, and the swirling current tore him away, Morny had no hope of escape. The act was the last reckless act of his reckless young life. It was in keeping with his character to give his life for the headmaster

he had defied. But though there was no hope in his breast, he was still fighting for his life, and long after the river had swept him from Dr. Chisholm's sight, he was still resisting his fate. Once he came near the bank, but a whirling eddy tore him away again, and the current sped him on, his senses failing him now. Twice he had been under, and dimly, dazedly, he knew that the end was near.

And then came a sudden shock and an exclamation, and Mornington, as in a dream, felt himself grasped by the collar, and drawn from the cruel waters.

He was far too gone to see clearly, or to think clearly; but he realised that he had been dragged into a punt, and that a face was bending over him. He heard, without understanding, a voice that spoke. The sky and the trees danced before his closing eyes.

Then he knew no more.

His eyes opened. He was lying in the punt in a pool of water, but the punt was moored to the bank now. A round, ruddy face looked at him, the face of Mr. Boggs, the village policeman of Coombe. Mornington blinked at him dizzily.

"Comin' to, sir?" said Mr. Boggs. "Bless your heart, sir, you give me a start, bugin' into my punt like that there. Lucky for you, sir, I was doin' a bit o' fishin' arter dooty, sir. Feel better now, Master Mornington? I'm jest goin' to get you to the school—"

Mornington tried to speak. His voice came in a faint whisper,

"Not to the school, I don't belong to Rookwood now—"

"I'll 'ave to take you somewheres," said Mr. Boggs. "I can get Mr. 'Uggin's' trap at the farm yonder, you see, an— My eye! Blest if he ain't orf agin!"

Mornington did not know what happened next. He had sunk into a deep insensibility,

and he did not know how a crowd of anxious faces gathered round him at Rookwood when the cheerful Mr. Boggs drove him in, in Huggins' trap. That day and that night he lay unconscious, while all Rookwood waited for news of his recovery.

Dr. Chisholm's face was the first that Valentine Mornington saw when his eyes opened in the morning sunshine. His gaze turned dazedly round from the white pillow.

"Lie still, my boy!" It was the Head's voice. It sounded far away in Mornington's ears, though the Head was at the bedside. "Quiet!"

"Is—is that the Head?"

"Yes."

"Where am I, then?"

"In the sanatorium at Rookwood, my dear boy. The doctor is here. You must not speak now."

There was another blank to Mornington. But in the afternoon he was sufficiently recovered to speak and to take refreshment. Kit Erroll was by his bedside then.

Morny stretched out a feeble hand to his old chum.

"Have I been ill?" he asked.

"Just a little, old fellow. You mustn't talk much," said Erroll. "Dear old fellow, all Rookwood's talking about you."

"I've given 'em somethin' to talk about lately," murmured Mornington, with the ghost of his old smile.

"I mean about your rescuing the Head. Dr. Chisholm thought at first you had been drowned. When he came back to Rookwood you were still missing, and then Boggs brought you in."

"He picked me up in his punt. First time old Boggs has done anythin' useful in his life. Lucky he was there. I say, how long before I can get out of this?" muttered Mornington. "I never meant to come

here. You see, I couldn't help myself
—"

"You old fathoad!" said Erroll, smiling.
"You're at Rookwood now, Head's said so. After what you've done, do you think he would let you go? Don't you understand that the whole school's proud of you, you duffer, and the Head as much as anybody. You're going to make a fresh start at Rookwood, Morny."

Mornington lay silent.

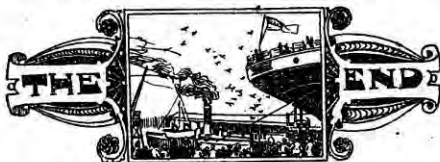
"You're guardian's coming," said Erroll.
"The Head sent for him, and he's anxious about you. Everybody's been anxious. But it's all right now. You're booked for sanny for a week, the doctor says. That

won't hurt you, and then you'll be back in the Fourth Form."

"Oh gad!" murmured Mornington.

His pale face brightened. He was glad to be back at Rookwood, glad it was all over. And as he lay in the shaded room, Mornington, during the following days, made resolutions for the future, which afterwards he did his best to keep.

It was a great day at Rookwood when Mornington left the sanatorium. Jimmy Silver & Co., and most of the Fourth, came in a body to march him in triumph to the School House, and the celebration that followed was quite tremendous, in honour of the expelled junior who had come back to the old school!



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GREYHOUND RACING.

There is little doubt but that the latest sport of greyhound racing has come to stay. The thousands that attend the meetings held at the White City, at Belle Vue, Manchester (where only a year ago the chasing of "Rupert the Hare," as the electrically driven "bunny" is known, was first seen in this country), at Liverpool, Sheffield and other towns are as excited over the "dogs" as they are when their football favourites are romping home to victory.

Though an American claims to have first introduced the sport to Great Britain, yet hundreds of years ago, way back in the dim and distant middle ages, that leggy canine aristocrat, the greyhound, was a popular figure in these islands. But in the days when the Black Prince was winning his spurs at Crecy, the greyhound was not known as a greyhound, but as a gazehound. For all dogs of this breed follow their quarry by sight, and not by smell as is the case with others of their species—hence the name gazehounds.

The Race Course

Practically all of the greyhounds seen on the tracks to-day are experienced "coursers." Coursing was the immediate forerunner of track-racing, and the valuable Waterloo Cup is to the greyhound what the Derby is to the racing thoroughbred. At coursing the dogs pursue a live hare; on the race-tracks they chase a well-made-up "dummy," which they take to be the real thing, and it is amusing to watch them nosing for their quarry after it has disappeared from sight under a wooden covering—disappeared that is, of course, when the race is over.

A greyhound racing-track is oval in shape, and roughly five hundred yards in circumference; at the White City it is five hundred and twenty-five. The "hare," which is attached to an iron arm, and runs on a single rail, is controlled from a tower that bears a striking resemblance to a light-

house. The official in charge of the levers that control the "bunny" has to be on the alert to see that it does not go at too great a speed. Otherwise the dogs would lose sight of their quarry and refuse to race. A speed of forty miles an hour can be attained, but the customary rate at which "Rupert" progresses may be put down as somewhere near thirty-five per hour.

All dogs have to be placed in the charge of trainers selected by the Greyhound Racing Association, and two hours before the sport commences they are taken from their quarters and confined in kennels on the course. These kennels have electric light and concrete floors. There they are carefully watched to prevent any kind-hearted individual giving the dogs a feed. Unlike the Zoo, bath-buns and such-like are strictly taboo at a greyhound race meeting. For should a dog have a meal directly before he takes part in a strenuous race, his condition would resemble that of a footballer who has eaten rump-steak and chips ten minutes before going on the field.

The Race.

There are six runners in every flat race, and four in the hurdle events. A bugle blows, and the dogs already muzzled to prevent them savaging each other, though, of course a nasty nip cannot be prevented even with a muzzle, are paraded by white-jacketed attendants. They walk the whole length of the course so that all in the stands can see, and then, after the judge has inspected the muzzles to see that they are properly fixed on, the dogs are "boxed."

The "box" has six divisions, each to contain a dog, and the greyhounds are put into the respective compartments in the order they are drawn. As in a horse race, number one is nearest the rails, number two next to him, and so on. It can be seen that the dog drawn near the rails has the advantage, for if he is speedy and holds on to that position he has not so far to go as the dogs drawn on the outside.

The bugle blows again. "Rupert the Hare" sets off on his journey right around the course. The "bunny" does this so that the dogs can "sight" him. Then, when the hare flashes past the box, the trapdoor is released, out rush the dogs, and the race is begun. The excitement is intense. Almost human in their intelligence, the greyhounds seem to know that by hugging the rails they are going the quickest way after their quarry. They charge one another out of the way in order to obtain the coveted berth. Round the back stretch they go at a pace approaching thirty miles an hour. First one leads, and then another. A white dog may appear to have the race in hand, when a hundred yards from home a black that has been conserving his energy, flashes past one after another, to win on the post. For some of the older hands at the game display uncanny judgment. They will not rush off madly, but, just like the famous Steve Donoghue wins many of his races, comes with one great burst of speed at the end.

Over the Sticks.

Hurdle races are even more exciting. The dogs are taught to jump the obstacles by the trainer taking the hurdles with them, and some of the leaps they make are truly "prodigious," as Dominic Sampson says in Sir Walter Scott's well-known romance, "Guy Mannering." Some jump so high that they wind themselves on landing on the other side of the hurdle, and it is some moments before they recover. Others in their anxiety to catch the hare, charge headlong into the obstacles, but the majority take the hurdles like seasoned performers. Incidentally, "Rupert" does not get over the jumps—he gets under by means of a concealed trapdoor, and "bobs" up again on the other side.

A Bold, Bad Villain!

There is humour as well as sport where the "longtails" (a pet name for the greyhounds) are concerned. There was a dog running at Manchester that rejoiced in the name of Fair Ferdy. "Ferdy" was anything but fair; like the villain in the story, if he couldn't win by fair means, he would win the other way. Fair Ferdy was one of the four runners in a hurdle race. They all cleared the first of the four jumps, when

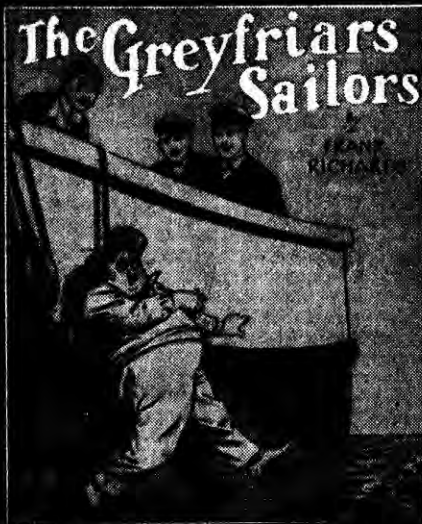
Ferdy, who was second, took a sudden dislike to the dog in front. He dived for him and nipped him hard. The leader let out a squeal and fell back. By this time the one dog had taken a long lead, with the only other runner just passing Ferdy as he finished with his rival. Ferdy immediately set about this dog in first-class style, and he, too, retired. Then he saw the only rival left in the distance. Ferdy went after him like a shot out of a gun, and as the leader stumbled at the last jump but one, caught him, and an instant later Ferdy was the only dog left in the race! Of course, the race was declared void, and, sad to tell, when it was run over again after the last event on the card, Fair Ferdy, the bold, bad villain, won in a canter!

On another occasion a dog came to the last hurdle of all ten lengths in front. He had only to clear it to "walk" home. But the jubilation of his supporters, for the dog was favourite, was turned to dismay. He crashed into the jump, fell over on the other side, and lay sprawling. The second dog was coming along like a whirlwind, an assured winner now. Suddenly the fallen dog rolled over. He rolled over again, and yet again. Just as the second almost got to him he rolled over once more. And this time he rolled over the finishing line, a winner!

Another Humorous Tale!

Here is a final yarn. There was an artful old dodger of a greyhound at Hull who had reasoned out things to his own satisfaction. He knew the "dummy" went right round the track. Why, thought Master Mike (that was his name), should I go all that way after it? If I went the other way I could meet it coming towards me! So as the trap was released, instead of pursuing the quarry with the other dogs, Master Mike swung right round in the opposite direction, and bolted like a lunatic to meet "Rupert." And meet "Rupert" he did, though not with the same result that he expected. Master Mike hurled himself at the "dummy." The next instant he bowled head over heels, the most astonished dog in the kingdom. Master Mike hadn't heard of such a thing as electricity! He had a deal to say to his pals when he got back to the kennels.

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