

THE BOYS OF THE "BOMBAY CASTLE"!

A Magnificent New Story, dealing with the School Annot and introducing Captain Handyman, Cy Sprague, Lal Tata, and Chip appears in this issue.

The BOYS' FRIEND

SEE INSIDE FOR "FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS!"

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ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending September 8th, 1917.

MORNINGTON'S VENGEANCE!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.

By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Dropped!

"Extraordinary, ain't it?" yawned Townsend.

"Amazin'!" said Topham.

"Beats everythin'," remarked Peele.

Smythe of the Shell polished his eyeglass in a thoughtful sort of way. "I've been thinkin'," he observed.

"Go it, Smythey!" Adolphus Smythe glanced round at the meeting in his study.

It was quite a numerous gathering of the nutty juniors, the select circle who rejoiced in the title of the "Giddy Goats of Rookwood."

There were Townsend and Topham, Peele and Gower of the Fourth, and Tracy and Howard and Chesney of the Shell, as well as the great Adolphus Smythe himself.

They were discussing Mornington II.

Mornington Secundus was, in fact, quite a topic at Rookwood. Even the mighty Sixth Form deigned to be interested in him.

It was more than a nine days' wonder.

Erbert of the Second Form, the waif of Rookwood, the little ragamuffin who had been treated with studied contempt by Smythe & Co., had suddenly been transformed into a person of great consequence.

And Mornington of the Fourth—Morny the Magnificent—had, with equal suddenness, fallen from his high estate, like Lucifer, Son of the Morning.

Naturally, Smythe of the Shell had been doing some "thinkin'" on the subject. He now proceeded to acquaint his nutty comrades with the outcome of his unusual mental exercises.

"Morny," said Smythe, "always was a bit of an outsider. Morny of the Fourth, I mean."

"Always!" agreed Tracy.

"Insolent rotter, if you ask me," said Townsend. "Never quite civil, even to his pals. Not that I ever regarded him as much of a pal."

"In fact, we had practically dropped him before this happened," remarked Topham.

"Yaas, that's so."

"Now it appears that he was practically takin' us in," said Smythe. "We understood that he was no end of a great gun—rollin' in wealth, an' all that. Not that we cared anythin' about his rotten money. He got his cousin dark. Nobody knew he had a missin' cousin. Now his merry Cousin Cecil turns up, an' turns out to be heir to the Mornington estates—an' takes everythin'—Morny is practically a beggar."

"Hard up as that cad Rawson!" smiled Gower.

"Yaas. I regard Morny as havin' squirmed into our set on false pretences," continued Adolphus. "My idea is that Morny's goin' to be dropped—sharp! He was never anythin' but an outsider at the best."



MORNINGTON TAKES A HIGH HAND WITH HIS STUDY-MATES!

"I'm done with him, for one. I can't stand a fellow who puts on side, an' turns out to be a nobody after all."

"Right as rain, old chap!"

"But what about that kid 'Erbert?" resumed Smythe, lighting a cigarette with thoughtful care.

"Of course, we treated him with the contempt he deserved, when he was supposed to be a tramp picked off the high road, an' shoved into Rookwood to mix with the fellows here on equal terms. I regarded it as shockin'."

"It was shockin'!" said Howard.

"Yaas. But it turns out that this ragamuffin is really Morny's missin' cousin, kidnapped by gipsies or somethin'. Under those cires, I think we can be lenient with him. He really never had a chance, had he?"

"He hadn't!" agreed the nuts.

"Now he's taken Morny's place—there's no doubt about it, for old Stacpoole has been down, an' recognised him as his relation an' ward, and the Head's had his name changed to Mornington on the school books."

"No doubt at all, old scout."

"And he'll be fairly rollin' in money, too," remarked Peele. "Just like poor old Morny in his palmy days."

"Never mind his money," said Smythe hastily. "We're not thinkin' of his money!"

"Ahem! Of course not."

"But any idea is to do justice to the kid!"

"Oh!"

"He never had a chance," said Adolphus nobly. "Stolen by gipsies, and left to bring himself up—it's no

wonder he can't speak the King's English, an' cats with his knife, an' drops H's and things. He's been hardly treated, you know, an' I really think we ought to take some notice of him. In our society, he may pick up manners an' customs suited to what turns out to be his station in life. I regard it as a duty—a benevolent duty!"

"Hear, hear!" grinned Peele.

"It will be rather a trial to our feelin's," went on Adolphus. "But when duty calls, you know! I dare say we can make somethin' of the little beast! Teach him manners, an' all that. Anyway, we're goin' to try. Is that agreed?"

"Yes, rather."

"It would only be kind," said Townsend generously.

"He's rather a savage little beast, though," said Tracy of the Shell. "My minor, in the second, made it a point to be civil to him, after this came out, and the young ruffian pulled his nose! Pulled my minor's nose, you know!"

"H'm!" said Adolphus. "Well, he won't pull my nose, I fancy. Hallo, come in!" added Smythe, as a tap came at the door.

The door opened, and Valentine Mornington stepped in.

There was a general stir of uneasiness among the nuts in the study, as they saw the dandy of the Fourth.

Mornington had never been liked much by his nutty pals, his wealthy days of importance.

Now that he had fallen from his high estate, his former pals remembered all his insolence, and fully intended to repay it with vengeance.

Not that they would be acted any differently if Morny had been as thoroughly decent a fellow as Jimmy Silver or Tom Rawson. Smythe & Co. had no use for a pal who was down on his luck.

But the remembrance of much high-handed superciliousness gave a sort of zest to the process of "droppin'" him.

Smythe of the Shell put up his eyeglass, and surveyed the new-comer with a lofty glance.

He did not speak.

Nobody spoke.

The usual cordial chorus of "Come in, Morny, old chap!" was conspicuous by its absence.

There was a dead silence, and if some of the nuts were a little uneasy, it was because they knew Mornington's savage temper, and wondered whether his exclusion from the nutty circle would lead to some passionate outbreak.

The nuts of Rookwood were not fighting-men, and had a great dislike for fisticuffs. And there never was really any telling what Mornington of the Fourth, might or might not do.

Valentine Mornington looked at them, his well-cut lip curling sarcastically.

"You don't seem specially glad to see me!" he remarked.

Smythe jammed his monocle a little tighter into his eye.

"I don't remember askin' you to my study!" he remarked.

"Fact is, we're rather busy," said Tracy.

"Would you mind closin' the door after you, Mornington?" inquired Chesney, with great politeness.

Mornington stood and looked at them.

It was only too evident that he was no longer the wealthy and important Morny, whom the nuts of Rookwood delighted to honour.

"I rather expected somethin' of this sort!" he remarked, after a pause. "You are livin' up to my opinion of you, dear boys."

(Continued on the next page.)



"The fact is," said Smythe calmly, "we regard you as havin' spoofed us, Mornington. You weren't what you represented yourself to be. I won't say it was false pretences, but it was somethin' very much like it."

"You are not yearnin' for my company now, it seems," remarked Mornington.

"Never was!" said Smythe coolly. "You were always too cheeky for my taste, an' I regard you as havin' forced yourself on me. An' I tell you candidly, Mornington, the less I have to do with you, the better I shall like it."

"I understand!" assented Mornington.

"Glad you do! Close the door after you, dear boy."

"I'm goin'," said Mornington quietly. "But before I go, I feel bound to express my opinion of you, old fellow."

"Look here—Oh, my hat! Yah!"

Mornington made a sudden stride towards Adolphus Smythe, and seized his nose between a finger and thumb that seemed to close like a vice.

Smythe leaped to his feet, spluttering out his cigarette.

"Yow! Led do! Led do by dose!" he stuttered.

Mornington compressed his grip ruthlessly, till the dandy of the Shell howled with anguish.

The nuts were all on their feet now. But no hand was raised against Mornington. After all, Smythe was big enough to look after himself, if he chose.

Perhaps he did not choose. He aimed a blow at Morny, which the Fourth-Former knocked aside with his left.

Then Smythe's attention seemed to be chiefly devoted to dancing and gurgling.

"Groogh! Led do! Ow! Yow! By gad! Yah! Oh!"

Mornington grinned, and let go at last. Smythe clasped his damaged nose with both hands, gasping with pain and fury. Mornington cast a glance of careless defiance at the nuts, turned on his heel, and walked out of the study.

Tracy kicked the door shut after him.

The nuts looked at one another rather uncertainly.

"Ruffianly beast!" muttered Howard.

"Awful outsider!" murmured Chesney. "Not worth likin'!"

And from Smythe came, in a kind of running chorus:

"Ow, ow! Oh, by dose—by dose! Ow, ow, ow!"

The 2nd Chapter.

Adolphus Tries It On.

"Feeling very chirpy—what?"

Jimmy Silver of the Fourth clapped the waif of Rookwood on the shoulder as he spoke, with a smile.

'Erbert of the Second—now known in Rookwood as Mornington II.—looked up at the captain of the Fourth with a grin. Though it was known now that his name was Cecil Mornington, the fag was never likely to be called anything but "Erbert," as of old.

"Yes, Master Silver," he said. Jimmy shook a finger at him.

"What do you mean with your Master Silver?" he demanded.

"Don't you know that you're a person of tremendous consequence, much more important than a common person like myself?"

"Oh, Master Silver!" said 'Erbert, with a chuckle.

"Made a lot of friends since the news came out—what?" asked Lovell.

Another chuckle from 'Erbert.

"Tracy minor 'ave tried to make friends with me," he said. "He was always turnin' up his nose at me afore. Now he's been showin' a lot of friendship, an' I've pulled his nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Fistical Four.

"And how are you getting on with Mornington the First?" asked Jimmy.

'Erbert's bright face clouded a little.

"He's very kind," he said. "He's took it splendid. But—but it's rotten to take away wot belongs to

Master Morny, ain't it? I don't like it! I said to the old bloke—"

"Eh? What old bloke?" asked Newcome.

"Sir Rupert Stacpoole—Morny's guardian," explained 'Erbert. "He's my guardian now, too! I says to him, 'I'm goin' 'arves with Morny.'"

"Good for you!" said Jimmy Silver.

"But he says, says he, that ain't possible," said 'Erbert distressfully.

"All that there money is mine, but I can't touch it till I'm twenty-one, only my allowance. So he says, says he, I can't go 'arves with Morny."

"Of course you can't, you young ass," said Raby, with a grin. "You can when you're of age, if you like, so far as the property isn't entailed."

"I told Morny that, and he larfed," said 'Erbert. "He won't take nothin' from me, an' I don't like it. He done enough for me, didn't he, afore it was known that I was his relation. But he's set on my not doing nothing for him. That ain't nice for me."

"Oh, Morny's all right!" said Jimmy Silver. "He's got his uncle, you know; and he's going into the Army when he grows up. I suppose you're getting a bigger allowance now—what?"

"Yes, Master Silver."

"Would you like a tip from an old pal?"

"Cert'nly, sir."

"Well, look after your money, and look twice at fellows who pal with you, who didn't pal with you before," said Jimmy Silver. "There's some black sheep in this school, and you want to give them a wide berth. See?"

'Erbert nodded.

"I'll remember that, Master Silver. I knows wot you mean, and I ain't exactly a duffer, you know."

Jimmy Silver nodded, and walked on with his chums. Jimmy had always been very kind to the waif of Rookwood, before 'Erbert's good luck came along, and he had felt impelled to give him that word of advice. Jimmy knew the kind of friends who would gather round 'Erbert in his prosperity.

Probably 'Erbert knew it, too. In his early days as a ragamuffin, he had had his young wits sharpened.

Good fortune had not brought all pleasure to 'Erbert.

The fact that he had taken his cousin's place as heir of Mornington, though against his will, troubled him. His first thought had been to "go halves" with Mornington, and he had been distressed when he found out that that was impossible.

He was thinking a great deal more about Morny than about himself. What would the lofty and magnificent Morny do, deprived of his wealth and his prospects of greater wealth?

Morny, 'Erbert felt, was born to adorn a high station, and poor 'Erbert was not. It did not seem to him fair, somehow, that Morny should lose so much, and that he should gain so much without even having a voice in the matter.

Had Mornington taken it badly, 'Erbert would have been wounded to the very heart. But Mornington was taking it well.

It had been bitter enough to him at first; but the dandy of the Fourth had "faced the music" with his usual coolness and nerve, and he had found himself able to bear the change with equanimity.

It meant a great change.

Instead of being the wealthiest fellow at Rookwood, Mornington was now dependent on his uncle and guardian, and was certainly not better off than most of the fellows at Rookwood. He was worse off than a good many.

And he was dependent!

That was the unkindest cut of all, and Morny felt it.

He had taken his cousin's offer of "halves" with good-humoured merriment. He did not think it likely that 'Erbert would hold to that when he came of an age to dispose of his wealth. Morny's faith in human nature was not great.

But 'Erbert meant it sincerely enough, and he would have been very glad to share his prosperity with the fellow who had been, with all his faults, his generous benefactor.

'Erbert was thinking it over, after

Jimmy Silver & Co. had left him with a wrinkle in his brow. His meditations were interrupted by the drawing voice of Smythe of the Shell.

"Hallo! All on your own, kid?"

'Erbert looked at him. Smythe's manner towards the waif of Rookwood had always been one of the most profound and unconcealed contempt and aversion.

That manner had changed completely now.

Even the fact that 'Erbert was a fag of the Second Form, and that Adolphus was the ornament of the Middle School, made no difference to Smythe's extreme friendliness.

He was, in fact, beaming upon the fag with the utmost cordiality.

The heir of Mornington was a fellow worth knowing, on Smythe's principles. More than that, Adolphus had had bad luck lately in the billiard-room at the Bird-in-Hand, and he was short of tin.

'Erbert, and the noble game of banker in the study, offered an easy and honourable means of replenishing an exhausted exchequer.

"I've been lookin' for you!" said Smythe graciously.

"Ave you?" said 'Erbert.

Smythe shuddered slightly. The dropped aspirate got on his aristocratic nerves still. But he nobly concealed his distaste.

"Yaas, dear boy," he replied.

"Who's a dear boy?" asked 'Erbert deliberately.

"Eh? You are, you know!"

"Last time you spoke to me I was a measly little toad," said 'Erbert.

"Ow 'ave I changed into a dear boy?"

Smythe coughed.

Really, his change of attitude required some explaining away. He had considered that 'Erbert would be so honoured at being taken notice of

that he would be glad to let bygones be bygones. Apparently that was not the case.

Adolphus coughed, and coughed again. 'Erbert looked at him with a sarcastic grin.

"My dear chap, I apologise," said Smythe, taking the plunge, as it were. "I'm sorry if I—ahem!—if I—"

"No if about it," said 'Erbert.

"You did!"

"Well, a fellow can't do more than express his regrets," said Adolphus.

"Let it go at that, dear boy."

"Cert'nly!" said 'Erbert. "But are you sure I am a dear boy?"

"Eh?"

"S'pose I was to change back into a measly little toad again?" suggested 'Erbert.

"Ahem!"

"Or a 'orrid little ragamuffin?" said 'Erbert, recalling some more of Smythe's agreeable expressions. "Or a nasty little waster?"

Smythe was rather at a loss. He changed the subject.

"Had your tea?" he asked.

"No, I ain't!"

"Come and have it in my study," said Smythe hospitably. "We've got rather a spread goin'. Lots, in fact!"

"That's agin the grub rules," said 'Erbert.

Adolphus smiled benignantly.

"That's all right, kid—safe enough in the study. You kids in the Second Form don't get a chance to spread yourselves, even if you've got the tin. All serene in my study, I assure you!"

"You mean that you're playin' food-'og?" asked 'Erbert.

Smythe coughed again.

"Cause I don't want nothing to do with food-'ogs, ner with you, neither, anyway!" said 'Erbert.

And he turned his back, and marched off.

Adolphus Smythe stood rooted to the ground.

He—Adolphus Smythe, the dandy of the Shell, the glass of fashion, and the mould of form to all junior Rookwood—was cut!

It quite took his breath away.

"By gad!" he ejaculated at last.

And as Smythe slowly departed, with pink cheeks, he ejaculated again, several times, "By gad!"

And 'Erbert of the Second did not come to tea in Smythe's study!

The 3rd Chapter.

The Mighty Fallen!

Kit Erroll's brow darkened. He had gone into Mornington's

study in the Fourth to speak to his chum. Morny was not there, and Erroll stood looking out of the window while he waited for him. He spotted Mornington coming across the quad towards the School House.

There were a good many fellows in the quad, whom Mornington passed on his way.

Jimmy Silver & Co. nodded genially to the dandy of the Fourth, and Morny stopped a minute or two to speak to the Fistical Four.

Then he came on towards the House, outside which Townsend and Topham and Lattrey of the Fourth were chatting in a group.

Mornington passed quite close to them.

The three nuts of the Fourth stared at him in the most deliberate way, without a sign of recognition.

It was then that Erroll's brow knitted as he looked down from the window.

Mornington had been cut by his former associates—cut in open quad by the fellows who had been glad to be his hangers-on.

A slight flush crept into Mornington's cheeks, but he walked on without giving any other sign that he had noted the "cut direct."

When he had passed, Lattrey and his comrades grinned at one another.

Erroll could see how they enjoyed cutting the lofty Morny, who had snubbed them often enough in the days when he was sought after.

"The cads!" muttered Erroll.

"The rotten cads!"

Nearer the House, Morny fell in with Van Ryn, Pons, and Conroy, the Colonial trio. The three Colonials had never been on good terms with Morny in his wealthy days.

He was a black sheep, and they did not like black sheep. But the three of them stopped now, and began to speak to him, and Morny laughed.

He knew—as Erroll, looking on, knew—that Conroy & Co. had made it a point to show civility to Morny because he was down on his luck.

Mornington left the Colonials, and near the porch came upon Tubby Muffin, the fattest junior at Rookwood.

Tubby Muffin had never been treated by the lofty Morny with the respect that he felt was his due. Morny had never concealed his contempt, in fact, for the fat, greedy fellow; and Tubby, who wasn't a bad fellow apart from his inordinate appetite, had resented it keenly.

Tubby had never displayed his resentment, having a deep, inborn respect for wealth. But Morny's wealth was now a thing of the past, and Tubby, too, appeared to consider that his hour had come.

As Morny approached, Tubby's fat face was distorted into a scornful sneer of the largest proportion.

Morny caught his look, and paused.

"Hallo! Anythin' wrong with you, podgy?" he asked.

The fat Classical's sneer intensified. It was intended to convey the most unbounded contempt.

"Is that St. Vitus' dance you've got?" inquired Mornington.

Tubby waved a fat hand at him.

"Don't speak to me!" he said.

"What?"

"I don't desire your acquaintance."

"By gad!"

Tubby's lips curled more terrifically than ever. The effect was extremely comic, though Tubby meant it to be impressive.

"You're not the kind of fellow I want to know," said Tubby crushingly. "You'll oblige me by keeping your distance."

And Tubby turned his back loftily and rolled away.

His departure was meant to be stately. But the effect was spoiled by Morny, who strode after him, and planted his boot in the rear of Tubby Muffin's fat person.

"Yaroooh!"

Tubby Muffin roared at that unexpected attack in the rear, and staggered forward and fell on his hands and knees.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yah! Oh!" roared Tubby.

Mornington looked at him and laughed, and walked into the house.

But there was a dark frown on his face when he came into his study. He nodded to Kit Erroll as the latter turned from the window.

"Do you still know me?" he inquired.

Erroll smiled.

"Yes, Morny. I saw those cads from the window. They're not worth your taking any notice of them!"

"An' you saw Townsend and Topy an' Tubby Muffin—"

Erroll laughed.

"Never mind Tubby; he hasn't brains enough to know what he's doing," he said. "As for the others, you're better off without them."

"It's irritating, all the same," growled Mornington. "They used to hang around me, and put up with anythin' I chose. Now they don't know me. I don't want to know them, but it's irritating. I've a jolly good mind—"

He broke off. "Oh, bother them; they're not worth thinkin' about. More serious things than that to think of."

"It's a big change for you," said Erroll. "All the fellows think you've taken it splendidly."

Morny shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm not goin' to whine because I'm down on my luck," he said. "Besides, I'm not quite a beggar. I sha'n't have to scud after a scholarship like Rawson. I don't like bein' dependent upon my Uncle Stacpoole, but I can stand it. I shall have to keep clear of my Stacpoole cousins; they'd rub it in. They never liked me!"

"Perhaps—"

Erroll hesitated.

"Ha, ha! You're quite right—I never gave 'em cause to," said Mornington, guessing the unspoken thought. "I dare say I put on too much side for them. They were my poor relations, in a way! Now I'm a lot poorer than they are! Still, they're not a nice gang. Old Stacpoole is goin' to keep me at Rookwood an' pay my fees, but he won't have to pay 'Erbert's fees any longer. I'm going to have a moderate allowance—about as much as a chap like Jimmy Silver has—out of my uncle's pocket."

"Jimmy makes his allowance do."

"And I can learn to," said Mornington, with a nod. "After all, there's not much to spend money on, in wartime. I suppose I can do without cards and smokes and geegees."

"And you will be all the better without them, Morny. Football will be coming along soon, and that will be a bit better than geegees."

Mornington nodded.

He was trying to get used to his new position, but it was a wrench at first. It was a very new experience to the dandy of Rookwood to have to consider whether he could "afford" anything he wanted. Upon the whole, he was taking it very well, and Erroll was relieved.

There was a tap at the door, and 'Erbert came in. Erroll, with a nod, quitted the study, leaving the cousins together.

"Well, how are you enjoyin' your new feathers, 'Erbert?" asked Mornington, with a touch of sarcasm.

'Erbert coloured.

"I ain't enjoyin' 'em, Master Morny," he said. "I wish as 'ow it hadn't appened. I never wanted to take your money away!"

"Well, it wasn't your fault, kid! Don't think about it," said Mornington. "You've got me as a poor relation, but—"

"Don't talk like that, Master Morny. Look 'ere—"

'Erbert hesitated. "I've got a lot of money now, sir; more than I want. I gets a lot more than I did, of course."

"You'll find some use for it. Peele will teach you how to play banker," said Mornington sarcastically, "or Lattrey will initiate you into the joys of poker."

"They've asked me already," said 'Erbert, "and I ain't havin' nothin' to do with 'em, specially that rotter Lattrey. But—but you play banker, Master Morny!"

"Yes, when I had the money to waste."

"Well, let's 'ave a game," said 'Erbert.

Mornington stared at him.

"Why, you young rascal! Are you tryin' to lead your innocent cousin upon the downward path?" he ejaculated.

"Well, you play," said 'Erbert. "I don't see why we shouldn't 'ave a game, 'ere in the study."

"You young ass, I should clean you out, as clean as a whistle."

"I wouldn't mind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington, as he comprehended. "You young duffer! Do you think you're goin' to give me your money by that method? Ha, ha, ha!"

'Erbert stood crimson.

"You young ass, I'm not goin' to rob you," said Mornington, still laughing. "But there's one thing you can do for me, if you like!"

"Anything, Master Morny," said 'Erbert eagerly.

"Promise me not to play cards for money with anybody, or to let anybody get you to put money on horses."

It was curious enough for the black sheep of Rookwood to be exacting a

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT!

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promise of that kind from the fag. But Mornington was in earnest.

What was good enough for him he did not regard as good enough for 'Erbert, apparently, and he foresaw the temptations the now wealthy fag would meet with.

"That's a go, Master Morny," said 'Erbert cheerfully. "I promise that! I don't want to do nothin' of the kind. But I wish you'd—"

"Bow-wow!" said Mornington, and the subject was dropped.

But when 'Erbert left the study his face was very cheerful. In spite of the change in their position, the junior he admired owed him no grudge, and was as kind to him as he had ever been. And that was a great comfort to 'Erbert.

The 4th Chapter. Evicted!

Jimmy Silver & Co. found themselves getting on much better with Valentine Mornington than in the old days. The Colonial Co. found him much more tolerable, too.

Tommy Dodd and his friends, of the Modern side, pronounced that Morny wasn't a bad chap, in the main. Somehow, the best part of Morny's nature seemed to be brought to light by the change in his circumstances.

Morny found, too, that there were many things he could do without—the wealth he had loved was not, after all, necessary to his comfort. And the simple fact that he could not afford to play the "giddy goat" kept him from many of his old, shady amusements, and he was all the better for it in every way.

Morny was not quite reformed, certainly; but he was on the right road.

Erroll thought it would be easy for him to regard with contemptuous indifference the supercilious looks of Smythe & Co.

But Morny did not seem to find that so easy.

Smythe and the other nuts of the Shell repaid a good many old grudges now by ignoring the fellow they had once sought after and flattered. Townsend and Topham cut him dead.

Lattrey of the Fourth was as unpleasant as he could make himself, which is saying a good deal. Even Morny's study-mates in No. 4—Peele and Gower—were cold and contemptuous.

Morny kept up an appearance of indifference, but this treatment at the hands of his old associates made his eyes glitter at times.

He realised, perhaps, that he was only being repaid with interest for a good deal of "swank" at the time when he could afford to swank. But he resented it as keenly as if he had been faultless.

And Peele and Gower found that his patience had limits. They were having tea one day in No. 4, when Mornington came in. In order to irritate their study-mate as much as possible, the amiable pair always lingered over their tea in the study, carefully ignoring Mornington all the time.

They ostentatiously ignored his entrance on this occasion. But on this occasion Morny was not to be ignored.

"You fellows nearly finished?" he asked politely.

"I don't know about takin' up football, Gower," said Peele, apparently deaf to Morny's voice. "Too much fag, you know!"

"I asked you a question," remarked Mornington.

"Besides, Silver wouldn't put us in the team," continued Peele. "I don't care about playin' with Silver skipper, either."

"I asked you if you'd nearly finished," said Mornington calmly. "As you don't answer, I'll take it that you've finished. You can get out!"

"Pass the jam, Peele," said Gower, unheeding.

Peele was about to pass the jam when Morny grasped the back of his chair and dragged it away from the table.

As his chair disappeared from under him, Peele sprawled on the floor with a yell.

Gower jumped up. "You cad!" he exclaimed. "What are you up to?"

"I'm goin' to turn you out of the study," said Mornington calmly. "I don't care for you two as study-mates!"

"Wha-a-at!"

Peele scrambled up, red with rage. "You cheeky hound!" he roared.

Mornington pointed to the door.

"Do you think we're going to be turned out of our own study by you?" roared Peele, forgetting even to drop his final g's in his excitement.

"Yaas!"

"You cheeky rotter!"

"Are you goin'?" asked Mornington coolly.

"No, you rotter!"

"Then you'll be put out!" Mornington pushed back his cuffs and advanced upon the two nuts of the Fourth.

Peele and Gower drew together, angry and alarmed. With all Morny's high-handed ways, they had never dreamed of this.

"Keep off, you beast!" howled Gower.

Biff! Bump!

Mornington was hitting out right and left.

As the nuts were two to one, they certainly ought to have been able to defend themselves. But they did not seem able to. Under Morny's fierce attack they were driven to the doorway, resisting feebly.

Mornington was a good boxer, and his pluck and recklessness were unlimited. On the other side, those qualities were very limited indeed.

In a few minutes the two furious juniors were driven headlong out of the study into the passage.

"Hallo! Trouble in the family?" sang out Jimmy Silver, as the Fistical Four came along, bound for the end study to tea.

"Go it, both, sides!" said Lovell impartially.

chin, and Gower found himself fighting Morny single-handed. He was driven round the study under a shower of blows.

"Leave off, you beast!" howled Gower. "I'm goin'!"

He dodged hurriedly out of the study, stumbling over Peele in his haste.

There was a roar of laughter from the juniors.

Mornington commenced throwing out his study-mates' belongings after them.

There was a shower of books and other articles in the passage.

Then he closed the door.

Peele and Gower, red with rage, but not caring to renew the contest, slunk away. Mornington remained in possession of Study No. 4.

A little later the two evicted juniors came back and gathered up their property, and carried it away to Lattrey's study. And a little later still Mornington's door was opened, and Tubby Muffin's fat face, full of dismay, looked in.

"Get out, you fat boulder!" growled Mornington.

"I—I say, Morny—"

"Oh, buzz off!"

"Lattrey's turned me out of the study," said Tubby Muffin dolorously.

"He says he's going to have Peele

The 5th Chapter. Startling News!

Tubby Muffin was the first to hear the good news.

Great news it undoubtedly was, as the nuts of Rookwood acknowledged when they heard it.

A week had passed since Kit Erroll had become Morny's study-mate, and since Peele and Gower had been so ignominiously expelled from No. 4.

During that week the nuts of Rookwood had been very careful to treat the fallen dandy of the Fourth with supercilious disdain.

More than once Morny's temper had been on the point of breaking out, but he had restrained himself.

And now came the startling news via Tubby Muffin!

Tubby, full of importance, presented himself in his old study, now shared by Lattrey, Peele, and Gower. Those three cheery youths were improving the shining hour before prep with a game of nap on the study-table.

Lattrey reached for a stump as Tubby looked in.

But Tubby did not retreat. He was simply bursting with what he had discovered.

"I say," he gasped, "it's amazing, you know! Mornington—"

"Bother Mornington!" growled Peele.

"And bother you! Get out!"

"Get it out, you silly fool!" growled Gower.

"Ain't I trying to tell you?" gasped Tubby. "They were talking it over. Morny was looking awfully pleased, and 'Erbert was rather down in the mouth."

"He would be, if it's true!" grinned Peele.

"Morny was saying he was sorry he was disappointed, and he would look after him just the same as he used to. Old Stacpoole's coming down about it. It's come out that the real Cecil Mornington died when he was a kid, and they've found proof of it."

"Impossible!" muttered Lattrey.

"I don't see that it's impossible," said Peele. "After all, it was a bit thick, that ragged wastrel turnin' out to be Mornington's cousin, and heir to a fortune an' all that. I thought it was very thick."

"Same here," agreed Gower. "A bit too thick, if you ask me. I remember remarkin' to Smythe that very likely it was all a mistake, or a swindle, or somethin'."

"I thought so all along!" announced Tubby Muffin. "I never quite swallowed it, you know. It seems that Morny thought it was true, because 'Erbert's got a mark on his shoulder like the Mornington birthmark."

"He has," growled Lattrey. "I've seen it."

"But he's not Morny's cousin, and I never really believed he was," grinned Tubby Muffin. "Morny's heard from his uncle, and he's going to the Head about it."

Lattrey looked out of the study window.

Mornington and 'Erbert could be seen, in the distance, seated upon an old oaken bench under the beeches, in animated talk.

As Lattrey stared towards them savagely, they rose and came towards the house.

Mornington's step was jaunty. The waif of Rookwood walked with his eyes on the ground, as if in gloomy thought.

Certainly their aspect bore out Tubby Muffin's amazing story.

Lattrey hurried from the study, and downstairs.

He met Mornington as he came into the House, and gave him a quick, searching look. Mornington took no heed of him. He walked away to the Head's study, tapped, and went in.

Lattrey returned to his study.

"Seen him?" asked Peele.

"He's gone in to the Head!"

"By gad! That looks like it, then!"

"Let's go and see 'Erbert," suggested Gower.

The three nuts left the study, and Tubby Muffin rolled along the passage to impart his wonderful news to other interested juniors.

Lattrey & Co. found 'Erbert downstairs, staring out of the hall window with a knitted brow. Lattrey clapped him on the shoulder.

"Thinking it out, kid?" he asked affably.

'Erbert stared at him.

"Tell us all about it, dear boy!" said Peele.

'Erbert sniffed.

"I ain't a dear boy now," he said sarcastically. "As soon as you've heard some noos that's coming along, you'll think me a measly toad agin."

The nuts exchanged glances.

"What's the news, then?" asked Lattrey.

"Find out!"

"Well, we know already. Muffin heard you talking to Morny," said Gower. "You're not his lost cousin, after all."

"I don't see as it matters to you," said 'Erbert.

"Is it true, or isn't it?" demanded Lattrey savagely.

"Find out!"

Lattrey clenched his hands, and advanced on the fag. A strong hand was laid on his collar, and he was swung round, to look into the smiling face of Jimmy Silver.

"Spoiling for a fight—what?" asked Jimmy cheerily. "I'm your man!"

"Let go my collar, hang you!"

Jimmy let go his collar, first giving him a twist, and Lattrey spun away and sat down hard.

"I've been looking for you, 'Erbert," said Jimmy. "There's a yarn going round that you're not Morny's cousin, after all, and it's all a mistake. Tubby says he heard it."

"He's a sneaking, listening rotter!" said 'Erbert.

"You don't seem to mind much," said Jimmy.

"I'd rather Master Morny 'ad the money than me," said 'Erbert.

Jimmy whistled.

"Well, I was going to sympathise, but you don't seem to need it," he



Mornington had been cut by his former associates—cut in open quad by the fellows who had been glad to be his hangers-on. Kit Erroll's brow knitted as he looked down from the window.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'm turnin' these cads out!" explained Mornington. "I'm not goin' to allow them to dig in my study any longer."

"Oh, my hat!"

"You rotter!" howled Peele. "I'll go straight to Mr. Bootles—"

"Do!" said Mornington. "That won't prevent me from thrashin' you whenever you show your nose in this room!"

"You—you—you—" stammered Peele.

"Why don't you wade in?" demanded Jimmy Silver. "You're two to one. If you let Morny turn you out, you deserve all you get!"

"Oh, rats!"

"Sure, discretion is the better part of valour!" chuckled Flynn of the Fourth. "Peele's simply burnin' for combat, but he's exercisin' heroic self-restraint. Ain't you, Peele?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A crowd of the Classical Fourth had gathered in the passage, attracted by the row. The mocking laughter of the juniors drove Peele and Gower to make an attempt at least to recover their rights. They exchanged a look, and rushed in suddenly to tackle Mornington.

But the dandy of the Fourth was ready for them.

He stood up to the two with perfect coolness, and his left and right came out like lightning.

and Gower for his study-mates now, so there won't be room for me. He kicked me, the beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I shall have to come in here, you know!" said Tubby.

"Do, if you want me to help you out with my boot," said Mornington grimly.

"Look here, Morny—"

Mornington reached for a cushion, and Tubby Muffin closed the door and fled. Ten minutes later it opened again, and Mornington looked round angrily. But it was Kit Erroll who entered, and Morny's frown changed to a smile. Erroll was smiling, too, as he came in.

"It seems that you've turned out your study-mates?" he remarked. Morny laughed, and nodded.

"And Lattrey's taken them in. And Tubby Muffin is without a home for his weary head!"

"I'm not goin' to have him here!"

"Would you care to have me here?"

Mornington jumped up.

"You! Yes, rather! I hadn't thought of that!"

"Well, Higgs and Jones minor are willing to take in Tubby instead of me, so if you like—"

"Good egg!" said Mornington, with great satisfaction.

And so the two chums became study-mates, much to their mutual satisfaction.

"Yes, but Mornington—"

"Buzz off, you fat beetle!"

"But I tell you it's all a mistake!" shouted Tubby in triumph. "Morny ain't done in after all! He ain't hard up. And that young boulder 'Erbert ain't his cousin at all! It's all a mistake! What do you think of that?"

"What!"

The stump dropped from Lattrey's hand.

"By gad!" said Peele.

"My only hat!" stammered Gower. "All a m-m-mistake!"

"It's lies!" exclaimed Lattrey savagely. "The fat fool's trying to pull our leg. I know there's no mistake!"

"There is!" gasped Tubby. "I just heard 'em talking about it—Morny and 'Erbert, you know. They're out there under the beeches now, if you like to look. They didn't see me—"

"You eavesdroppin' cad!" said Peele.

"I wasn't listening!" exclaimed Tubby indignantly. "Nothing of the kind. I simply happened to stop to rest under the tree. I saw them confabbing, you know, and wondered what it was all about—I mean, I didn't wonder—"

Tubby Muffin broke off, as Lattrey grasped him by the shoulder and shook him angrily.

"Look here, you fat fool—"

"Yow! Leggo!"



"He looks it!" grinned Peele. Smythe of the Shell came along with Howard, evidently having heard Tubby Muffin's yarn. The Shell fellows looked excited.

"Is it true?" exclaimed Smythe. "Erbert did not answer. "Out with it, kid!" said Howard. "I never quite swallowed the story. I couldn't quite believe that you came of a gentleman's family, you young ragamuffin."

"Ain't I a dear boy now?" sneered 'Erbert. "Don't you want me to come into your study for a game of nap?"

Howard coloured. "If you come into my study, you'll jolly well get kicked out!" he said curtly.

"Losing your friends already, kid!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "I sha'n't miss 'em, sir—not that sort."

"Then it's true!" said Adolphus Smythe, wrinkling his brows. "By gad, I shouldn't wonder if Morny knew it all along; it's just one of his jokes on his pals."

"Oh, by gad!" said Howard. "Well, now you've fallen from your high estate, 'Erbert, come and have tea in my study," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll kill the fatted war-loaf for you!"

'Erbert grinned, and trotted off with the captain of the Fourth. Lovell and Raby and Newcome met him in the end study, with sympathetic looks. But 'Erbert did not seem in need of sympathy.

"So your giddy riches have taken unto themselves wings and flown away?" said Lovell. "Erbert hesitated.

"I—I'd like to tell you fellows somethin', if you won't talk about it outside this 'ere study," he said. "Silent as the merry tomb!" said Raby. "Go ahead!"

'Erbert went ahead. And when he had finished there was a howl of laughter in the end study. Apparently 'Erbert's communication had been of a surprising and also a humorous nature.

The 6th Chapter.

A Happy Reconciliation!

Smythe & Co. had gathered in Adolphus' study, with serious looks. Morny, coming away from the Head's study, had passed them in the passage, with his aristocratic nose in the air.

They had nodded to him, experimentally, as it were. Mornington had ignored their existence.

He was quite the old lofty Mornington again, and apparently not in the least inclined to accept the olive-branch from his former pals.

If Smythe & Co. had needed any further proof of the story, this would have furnished it.

The council in Smythe's study was a troubled one.

Mornington was the old Mornington again—wealthy and important, a

"fellow worth knowin'." And they had "cut" the dandy of the Fourth—they had "dropped" the wealthiest fellow at Rookwood!

Doubtless Morny's little card-parties would be resumed—his expensive driving-parties—all the luxurious indulgences in which the nuts had taken a liberal share in Morny's old days of prosperity.

And they would not be asked to them!

The wealthy Morny would be surrounded by friends; and they would not have the entree into the magic circle.

Smythe & Co. could have kicked themselves!

Gower, for instance, had made a regular income out of Morny at banker and nap. Peele had always had his expenses paid when he went anywhere with Morny.

Smythe had been proud to be seen with the wealthiest and best-dressed fellow at Rookwood—to join him in great motor-drives, and yachting-runs in the vacation. Morny, in his wealthy days, had been "worth while"; there was no doubt about that.

And they had thrown it all away!

"The—fact is," said Smythe, at last, hesitatingly—even Adolphus, perhaps, had some slight sense of shame—"the fact is we've been rather hard on Morny."

"I've been thinkin' so for some time," remarked Tracy.

"He was rather an irritatin' beast, of course—"

"Oh, he wasn't a bad chap!" said Peele. "A bit high-handed, but a wealthy fellow like Morny, you know—"

"I always rather liked him, I must say that!" observed Howard.

"Yaas, at bottom we liked him well enough, and I'm sorry we cut up rusty with him," said Smythe.

"Look here, we were rather in the wrong. It ain't pleasant to admit it, but—but we can afford to be candid. We were in the wrong. Well, there's only one thing for a gentleman to do when he's in the wrong—own up and apologise!"

"Just what I was thinkin'," agreed Townsend.

"I'm willin' to apologise to Morny," said Smythe. "I feel that I owe it to him, an' to my own self-respect, you know, when I can see that I was—was hasty."

"That's so."

"Well, what about lookin' in on Morny, and puttin' it to him frankly? Can't do more than say we're sorry."

"He's got a beastly temper," said Gower uneasily.

"Well, if he's a bit touchy, we can look over it," said Smythe magnanimously. "We've been rather rusty, haven't we? I'm prepared to let Morny jaw a bit, to—to make up, you know."

"Let's see him," suggested Lattrey.

"You'd better not come, Lattrey," said Adolphus decidedly. "Morny

can't stand you. You keep off the grass. Fact is, you're not in our set, and we're not goin' to irritate Morny by takin' you up."

Lattrey gritted his teeth. But the nuts streamed out of the study, leaving him there alone. They were more than willing to throw over the cad of the Fourth, without compunction, if by so doing they could make their peace with Valentine Mornington.

They found Morny in his study, in cheerful talk with his new study-mate, Erroll. Both the juniors stared at the numerous visitors.

"Hallo! Did I ask you fellows here?" said Mornington.

"You did not!" said Adolphus Smythe, coming forward with an air of great frankness. "We've come of our own accord, Morny, to ask you to overlook our havin' treated you rather rottenly. We can see we're in the wrong, and we apologise."

Erroll's lip curled.

But Mornington, keen as he usually was, did not seem to see the underlying motive of the worthy nuts.

"Well, that's puttin' it fairly," he said. "If you mean that."

"We do!"

"Honour bright!" "We've treated you badly, old chap, and we own up!" said Smythe. "We lost our temper with you, and we're sorry. As pals, we can't say anythin' less."

"All serene," said Mornington cordially. "Bygones are bygones, my infants. By the way, there'll soon be some startlin' news for you."

"Startlin' news!" repeated Smythe, as if he had not heard it already.

"Yes; about young 'Erbert and me," said Mornington.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, I do. I'm goin' to tell all the fellows in the Common-room presently," said Mornington. "I'm goin' to have tea now."

"Come along to my study for tea, old scout," said Smythe affectionately. "We'll have a little party to celebrate the reconciliation—what?"

"Rippin'!" said Mornington heartily. "You'll excuse me, Erroll."

"Certainly," said Erroll, with a smile. "I'll drop in on Jimmy Silver."

And Mornington left the study with Smythe & Co.

The nuts were in high good-humour; the reconciliation had been effected without the slightest difficulty. Morny had been brought back into the fold, and everything in the garden, so to speak, was lovely.

Fellows who saw Morny sauntering along the passages with the happy nuts did not need any further confirmation of Tubby's startling yarn.

Lattrey was still in Smythe's study when the party arrived. Mornington raised his eyebrows at the sight of him.

"I didn't expect to meet Lattrey here," he said drily. "If he is your guest, Smythe, I must ask you to excuse me."

He made a movement towards the door. Smythe slipped his arm through Mornington's.

"Not at all, dear boy," he said reassuringly. "I never asked the fellow here, an' I'm hanged if I know what he's doin' here. What do you want here, Lattrey?"

Lattrey gave him a black look, and left the study.

There was quite a merry tea-party

in Smythe's study, and later, when the nuts went to the Common-room, Smythe walked elegantly, with his arm linked in that of the dandy of the Fourth, evidently on the most chummy terms with him.

The 7th Chapter. Shown Up!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were in the Common-room.

Most of the Fourth and the Shell had gathered there, and some of the Third, all interested in the change in Mornington's fortunes.

It was known that Morny intended to tell the fellows, that evening, exactly what had happened, and all wanted to hear him.

Erroll, who was with the Fistical Four, smiled as the nuts sauntered in, with Valentine Mornington in their midst.

"My hat! The lion and the merry lambs have made it up," grinned Conroy. "Tubby had his yarn right, it seems."

"Looks like it," said Oswald. "Blessed if I'd stand the rotters, if I were Morny."

All eyes were on Mornington. The dandy of the Fourth nodded cheerfully to Jimmy Silver.

"Heard the news?" he asked. "Yes, I've heard it," said Jimmy, with a smile.

"Somebody seems to have heard me talkin' to young 'Erbert—"

"Quite by accident, Morny, old chap!" said Tubby Muffin anxiously. "You know I wouldn't listen, don't you, old fellow?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Perhaps you fellows would like to hear the particulars," remarked Mornington. "It's rather an interestin' story."

"Yaas! Go ahead!" said Adolphus encouragingly.

"You'll be pleased to hear that I'm on friendly terms again with my old pals," said Mornington. "It's so nice to be on friendly terms with chaps a fellow really esteems. Ill-natured people might suspect that my pals have rallied round me because I've come into a fortune again. That would be rotten unjust! Nothin' of that sort about my pals."

The nuts grinned feebly and uneasily. There never was any telling what Mornington would say next, and they dreaded his bitter tongue.

"Some of you look like doubting Thomases," resumed Mornington. "I'm rather shocked. In justice to Smythe and the rest, I'm bound to explain that their motives are perfectly disinterested. You see, I'm as poor as a church mouse!"

"Phwat!" ejaculated Flynn. "But Tubby says—"

"Why, I heard you—" gasped Tubby.

Smythe & Co. were looking a little queer.

"Yaas," smiled Mornington. "I wanted to give my dear old pals a chance of showin' what really splendid fellows they are—see? Knowin' that Tubby would listen if he saw two fellows confabbin', I planted 'Erbert and myself on the bench near him, and began to spin a yarn. As I expected, I soon heard Tubby gruntin' on the other side of the tree—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say!" protested Tubby Muffin.

"I pitched a really entertainin' yarn for Tubby's exclusive benefit,"

went on Mornington calmly. "As I expected, Tubby scudded off to spread it over the whole school." "Oh!" gasped Tubby. It dawned upon the fat Classical that his eaves-dropping and tattling propensities had been made use of by the dandy of the Fourth, for his own peculiar purposes.

"When I came in, I found that Lattrey was on the track already," continued Mornington. "So I went to see the Head, to bear out the yarn Tubby had heard under the beeches. I asked the Head to put my name down for a prize exam. I dare say it was thought I was goin' to tell him somethin' else—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Silver.

Smythe's face was a study. "The little joke has now gone far enough," said Mornington. "You may be pleased, or not, to hear that there's nothin' at all in Tubby's yarn. I was only stuffin' him up!"

"Oh!" gasped Tubby.

"But the little joke's done this much good—it's brought all my old friends rallyin' round me in the hour of adversity," said Mornington. "Here's Smythe an' Howard an' Towny an' Topsy, an' the rest, all prepared to back me up through weal an' woe—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors. "You—you—you—" stuttered Adolphus.

"You spoofin' rotter!" shouted Peele.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Mornington looked pained.

"My dear old fellows, surely you're not roundin' on me again!" he ejaculated. "Are you goin' to drop my acquaintance once more, after the happy reconciliation that made us all so merry an' bright?"

Smythe & Co. were crimson. They realised Morny's peculiar little game now. He had "shown them up" in a way there was no escaping, in the eyes of all the Lower School.

"You lyin' cad!" yelled Smythe, quite losing his temper. "Don't talk to me! You poverty-stricken cad! Just keep your distance, that's all!"

And Adolphus Smythe stalked away, and his friends followed him, amid a yell of laughter from the juniors.

Mornington sighed. "Friendship has its ups and downs in this uncertain world," he remarked. "Here, I'm losin' all my devoted pals again, only an hour after a handsome apology an' a happy reconciliation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's heart-breakin'!" said Mornington. "I shall have to take up footer to distract my mind, or I shall pine away an' perish! Fancy my dear old pal Adolphus cuttin' up rusty again so soon!"

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY!

"THE DOWNWARD PATH!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

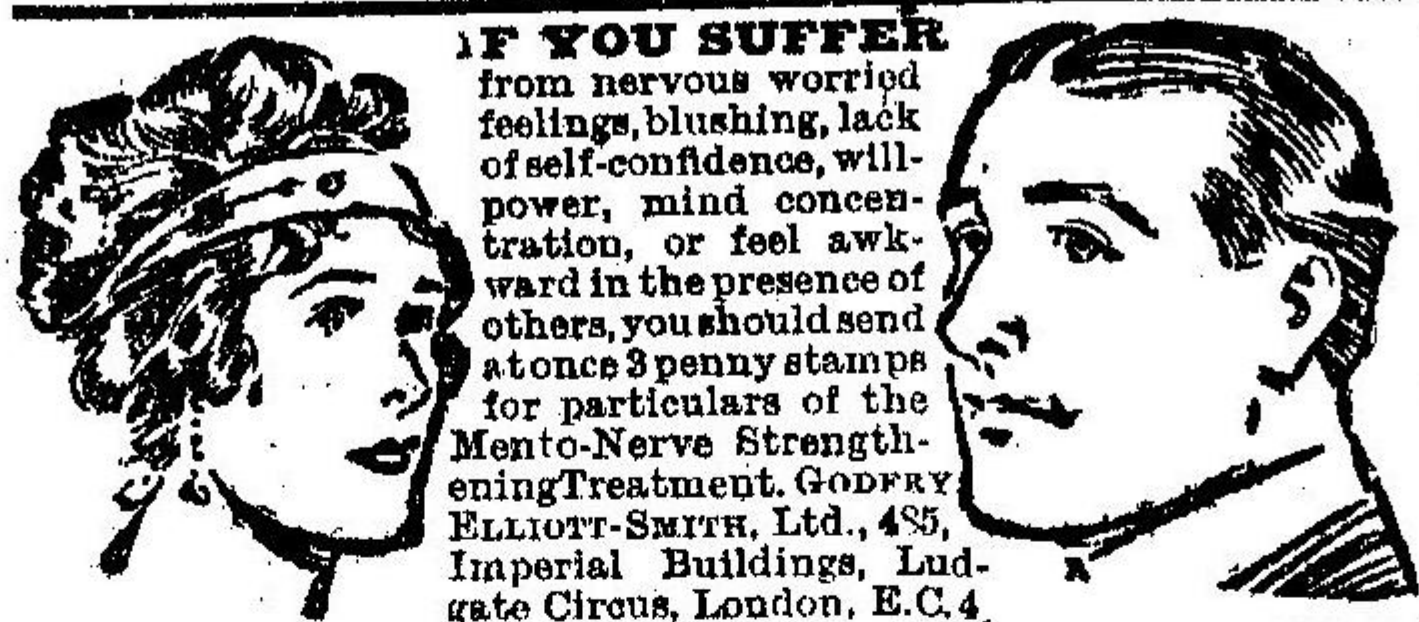
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The 1st Chapter.

"Bear!"

"By gum!"

Bob Lawless stopped suddenly as he uttered that exclamation.

Morning lessons were over at the log school on the bank of Cedar Creek. Frank Richards and his cousin Bob were sauntering along the creek, chatting, when Bob halted, his startled eyes fixed on the grassy bank.

Frank Richards stopped, too, and looked inquiringly at his Canadian cousin.

"What's the row?" he asked.

Bob pointed to a heavy track in the soft earth.

"Do you see that?"

"Yes. What is it?"

Bob drew a quick breath.

"Haven't you ever seen a bear track?" he exclaimed.

"A bear!" Frank started, and looked quickly about him. "By Jove, a bear round the school, Bob!" Frank could not help feeling startled.

The lumber school was miles from the nearest dwelling, and there were three or four dozen schoolboys and schoolgirls in it, or in the vicinity, waiting for the bell to summon them to afternoon classes.

The only grown-up persons at hand were Miss Meadows, the headmistress, Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master, a negro man-of-all-work, and a Chinese cook—none of them the kind of person to tackle a savage beast.

"You are sure, Bob?" exclaimed Frank Richards breathlessly.

He remembered suddenly his Canadian cousin's propensity for practical jokes. But Bob's face was grave and alarmed.

He stood up, and shouted:

"Look out, you fellows! Bear!"

Chunky Todgers, the fattest fellow at the lumber school, came tearing up the bank.

Chunky's teeth were set in a chunk of maple sugar, and he could hardly speak, but he managed to stammer:

"Bear! Run for it!"

"Run!" yelled Bob.

"Light out!" roared Eben Hacke.

There was a rush towards the log School House. Bob caught Frank Richards by the arm.

"You're the quickest," he panted. "Cut on and tell Slimmey to get his gun—quick, for goodness' sake!"

"Right-ho!" muttered Frank.

He dashed on ahead at top speed, a speed he had never equalled on the cinder-path in his old days at St. Kit's.

In a couple of minutes he reached the porch of the School House, and dashed breathlessly in.

The porch was empty and the hall within. But in the big school-room he could see Mr. Slimmey, with his glasses and watery eyes, peering over a book. He dashed in, and caught the young man by the arm.

"Quick!" he panted.

Mr. Slimmey started up, his book falling to the floor, and his glasses sliding down his thin nose.

"What! What!" he ejaculated.

"Richards, what—"

"It's a bear, sir!" panted Frank.

"Get your gun—quick, sir!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey.

Mr. Slimmey was from the old country, and savage bears were not in his line at all. He stood gasping helplessly, while Frank, in his excitement, dragged him by the arm.

"The gun!" he shouted. "Where is the gun? Quick, sir!"

"Goodness gracious!" stammered Mr. Slimmey. "I—I cannot fire a gun. I—I—A—a gun would be—"

would be somewhat dangerous in my hands, Richards. Bless my soul!"

"Where is there a gun?" exclaimed Frank.

"I—I think Miss Meadows has a shotgun," stammered the young man, setting his glasses straight. "Bless my soul! I—I will—will attempt to protect the children! Bless my soul!"

Mr. Slimmey looked round wildly for a weapon.

Feeble young gentleman as he was he had plenty of pluck, as he showed by catching up a pair of large compasses, and rushing forth from the School House.

How he was going to tackle a bear with a pair of compasses Mr. Slimmey did not stop to think. It was his duty to interpose between his pupils and the danger, and he rushed to do it, without thinking.

Frank Richards followed him out breathlessly. There was a shotgun hanging in the hall, and the English boy caught it down. It was not loaded, and it would not have been much use against a bear if it had been, but it was something.

Frank expected to find a scene of wild excitement and terror outside, and boys and girls rushing for shelter and protection at top speed.

But he did not find anything of the sort.

As the tutor with the compasses, and Frank with the shotgun, rushed into the open air, there was a terrific yell of laughter.

Nobody was running. Nobody seemed alarmed.

The pupils of the lumber school were yelling with laughter. Bob Lawless had thrown himself on the ground, and was kicking up his heels in the exuberance of his mirth. Eben Hacke was shrieking with laughter. Chunky Todgers was nearly suffocating between merriment and maple sugar.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Frank stared round him in bewilderment.

"The—the bear!" he stammered.

"Bob, the—the bear!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Bob.

"The bear!" shrieked Eben Hacke.

"B'ars hyer. There isn't a b'ar within twenty-five miles, you young jay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Slimmey feebly. "Richards, this is really most inexcusable! How dare you, sir, play such jokes!"

"I—I—I—"

"You are a bad boy, sir!" exclaimed Mr. Slimmey. "I shall report this to Miss Meadows."

And Mr. Slimmey dodged back into the School House, trying to hide the compasses under his coat as he retreated.

Frank Richards stood rooted to the ground, the shotgun in his hand, his cheeks crimson.

He had been the victim once more of his cousin's exuberant sense of humour, and evidently all his school-fellows were in the joke against the unsuspecting tenderfoot.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

practical jokes on a new boy!" she exclaimed severely.

Frank Richards rushed to his cousin, who was still kicking his heels in ecstasy in the grass and yelling. Bob's yell changed a little to crescendo, as Frank grasped him by the ears.

"You silly ass!" shouted Frank.

"You were taking me in!"

"Yow! Leggo!"

"You silly fathead!"

"Yaroo!" roared Bob, as Frank Richards bumped his head on the ground. "Leggo!"

"Richards!"

It was Miss Meadows' clear voice.

"Sorry, ma'am!" gasped Frank.

And he released Bob Lawless, who roared in quite a different way now.

Bob Lawless jumped up, looking very warlike. But he changed his mind, and burst into a chuckle.

"Oh, you blessed tenderfoot!" he exclaimed.

"You cackling duffer!"

"Well, how can a chap help cackling when you were sprinting for cover after seeing a horse-track by the creek?" demanded Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clang! Clang! Clang!"

Never had the sound of the school-bell been so welcome to Frank Richards. The school trooped in, still grinning, and Frank took his place at his desk with a crimson face.

The 2nd Chapter.

From Jest to Earnest.

Bob Lawless nudged his cousin as he dropped into his seat beside him.

"Not mad?" he asked.

Frank's grim face relaxed. After all, he knew Bob well enough by this time to take him as he found him.

Bob's sense of humour was liable to get out of hand at any time, in season or out of season.

"No, I'm not waxy, you duffer!" said Frank. "I'm getting a bit tired of your fat-headed jokes, all the same."

"Well, you're so jolly green, you know!" pleaded Bob. "When you know the ropes you'll take a hand in fooling new fellows, you know, just the same. I say, ain't old Slimmey a hero?" He chortled.

"Fancy coming out to tackle a bear with a pair of compasses!"

Frank grinned.

"I suppose there aren't any bears in this district?" he remarked.

"I guess not. Plenty of them left up in the Rockies, of course, and in the forests up north," said Bob.

"There was a bear here once," said Chunky Todgers, helping himself to maple-sugar from under his desk. "It got away from the hunters up in the hills, and came down on the Sunset Ranch, and the cattlemen killed it. It claved up a Chinaman there."

"One might come here, then?" said Frank.

Bob chuckled.

"Well, it's possible," he said. "Ask Miss Meadows to shut the door when she comes in, Franky."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Rats!" growled Frank.

"If there should be a b'ar, Richards can be relied on to show him a clean pair of heels!" grinned Hacke.

And there was a fresh outburst of chuckling, which ceased when Miss Meadows came in to take the class.

Miss Meadows gave her class a

somewhat severe look. The girl "school-marm" ruled her class with quiet authority; and though the fellows were sometimes cheeky to Mr. Slimmey, they never ventured anything of the kind with the headmistress.

Chunky Todgers made an effort to bolt his maple-sugar as Miss Meadows' calm, clear eye fell upon him. But the chunk was too large, and he had to keep it in his mouth, bulging out his cheek in quite an alarming manner.

"Todgers!"

"Groogh!" murmured Chunky.

"Todgers! Come here!"

The fat youth went unwillingly before the class.

"Have you the toothache?" exclaimed Miss Meadows, with a look of concern.

"Nunno!" gasped Chunky.

"Your cheek is very swollen. Have you been stung?"

"N-no."

"Then what is the matter with it?"

"N-n-nothing."

"There must be something the matter with it!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

Chunky drove his teeth into the chunk of sugar, determined to dissect it and swallow it. But it was not yet reduced to the requisite state of softness, and his teeth stuck in it.

"Gurr!" he murmured.

"Dear me! The boy must be ill!" exclaimed Miss Meadows in alarm.

"Are you suffering from any pain, Todgers?"

"Gug-gug-gug!"

"Answer me!"

"Gug-gug!"

"Todgers!"

"Grrrrrrrrr!"

The whole of the class was grinning. They knew what was the matter with Chunky, though Miss Meadows did not.

Chunky made a desperate effort and disposed of the sugar. He guggled as it went down.

Then Miss Meadows understood.

"Todgers, you greedy boy, you are eating sugar in class again!" she exclaimed severely. "I am ashamed of you! Go to your place."

"Groogh!" gasped Chunky.

He went back to his place, still gasping. Miss Meadows' severe glance stilled the grinning in the class, and afternoon lessons commenced.

At the lower end of the big school-room Mr. Slimmey was busy with his class. He was a conscientious young man, and his scholastic attainments were far in excess of the requirements of a lumber-school. But in other respects Mr. Slimmey was like a fish out of water in a Canadian backwoods school.

The Cedar Creek fellows still related, with great enjoyment, how Mr. Slimmey had asked the black servant to call him a cab, in the first days of the school. The boys pulled his leg without limit, though, upon the whole, they rather liked the good-natured and somewhat vacant young man.

His devotion to Miss Meadows, who kept him at a respectful distance, amused the whole school, though Mr. Slimmey was quite unaware that they had observed it.

The "b'ar" joke was soon forgotten as the school settled down to work. It was very pleasant in the great schoolroom. The big door stood open, letting in the breeze from the

hills and the bright Canadian sunshine.

From where he sat Frank Richards could catch a glimpse of the shining creek, and the deep, dark woods beyond.

Frank had found the curriculum at the lumber-school somewhat different from that of St. Kit's, in far-off England, and much easier. He had succeeded in pleasing Miss Meadows by working hard in class.

The class was travelling through Canadian history, and were "doing" the last meeting of Wolfe and Montcalm on the Heights of Abraham, when a sudden horrified gasp from Chunky Todgers startled the class.

"Todgers!" said Miss Meadows warningly.

Chunky did not even look at her.

His eyes, round and saucerlike, were fixed in a stare of horror at the big open doorway of the schoolroom.

The rest followed his glance in wonder, and then there was a shriek.

Miss Meadows whirled round towards the door.

Then her face went white.

For, framed in the open doorway, black against the sunshine beyond, stood the form of a gigantic grizzly bear, raised on his haunches, glaring into the schoolroom!

For a second, horror held the whole school in its grip.

There was a dead, frozen silence.

The bear, probably as surprised as the school, stood reared on its haunches, as if uncertain, glaring in with red eyes, and open jaws that showed a fearful array of white, sharp teeth.

Frank Richards was the first who moved.

He acted upon impulse, without stopping to think.

With a bound he was out of the class, with another he was at the door, dragging at it.

Slam!

The heavy door crashed shut right on the peering nose of the bear, and there was a terrible growl without.

Frank, with lightning quickness slammed a bar into its place in the iron sockets.

He was only just in time.

The next second there was a heavy crash on the outside of the door, and it shook and groaned under the weight of the grizzly.

But it held fast.

His hands shaking now a little, Frank Richards dropped the other two bars into place.

Crash!

Again the monster flung himself on the door, but the stout pinewood held fast—the thick pine bars did not yield. For the moment, at least, the terrible enemy was baffled.

The 3rd Chapter.

The Grizzly.

There was a babel of voices in the schoolroom now.

The younger children were shrieking and crying, and every face was white.

Mr. Slimmey stood as if rooted to the floor, his mouth wide open, his eyes staring behind his glasses.

"A—a bear!" Mr. Slimmey was stammering. "A—a bear! A live bear, such—such as is seen in the Zoological Gardens? Bless my soul!"

Mr. Slimmey hardly knew what he was saying. "A—a—a bear—certainly, a bear—probably ferocious! Ursus horribilis! Undoubtedly, a grizzly bear! Bless my soul!"



FOR LIFE OR

(Continued
from
the previous
page.)

DEATH!

he was wreaking his temper on the hats and cloaks in the hall.

But for Frank Richards' prompt action the fearful beast would have been in the school-room, with living bodies to wreak his fury upon.

For there was nothing to oppose him.

The grizzly bear is capable of killing a buffalo, and carrying off the huge carcass. Poor Mr. Slimmey, the only man present, would not have required more than one sweep of a terrible paw to dispose of him.

Miss Meadows dropped her hand on Frank Richards' shoulder.

"My dear, brave lad!" she said quietly. "You have perhaps saved us all!"

Frank coloured. "Jerusalem crickets! What's goin' to be done?" muttered Hacke.

"Take your places!" said Miss Meadows calmly. "The bear cannot enter this room, and there is at present no danger."

Frank Richards peered from the slit between the shutters of a window.

Outside, the sun was shining down on the playing-grounds and the silvery creek beyond.

He knew that there were a negro and a Chinaman about the house, and he wondered where they were. And Sally the negress, too! Where was she? In the school-room they were safe for the moment. But the others?

He approached Miss Meadows.

She gave him a kind glance.

"Well, Richards?"

"What about Black Sam and Sally, ma'am?" said Frank. "And Chu Chung Chow?"

"I was thinking of them, my boy." Miss Meadows' brows were knitted.

"We are quite helpless. I must think."

"There's the bear!" muttered Bob Lawless.

There was a rush to look.

A loud whinnying was audible in the distance. The ponies belonging to some of the fellows who came on horseback to school were loose in the field, and they had evidently scented the bear, or he had scented them.

Frank Richards heard a clattering of hoofs in the distance, and the huge form of the grizzly came in sight, lumbering across the field in pursuit, as the horses fled for the wood.

"He's gone!" muttered Chunky Todgers.

"I guess he'll come back," said Eben Hacke. "He won't catch them hosses. They're too spry for him."

Frank ran back to Miss Meadows.

"The bear's gone across the field, Miss Meadows. We can look for Black Sam and Sally now."

Miss Meadows nodded, and Frank began to remove the bars of the door.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Slimmey helplessly. "Perhaps—perhaps I had better go forth, Miss Meadows—"

"Remain where you are, please!" said Miss Meadows sharply.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Slimmey feebly.

The door was opened, five or six fellows holding it ready to slam again at a sign of the bear, and others with the bars in their hands ready to replace.

Frank Richards ran out into the hall.

"Richards!" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

But Frank turned a deaf ear. He did not intend to leave that risky sortie to the school-mistress.

He ran to the kitchen, of which the door was closed and barred. He hammered on it.

"Loramussy!" came the voice of Sally in dire terror. "Dere is dat bear, Mr. Chow! Loramussy!"

"Me tinkee me deadee Chinee!" moaned Chu Chung Chow. "Me tinkee me nobber see Canton no moree. Me deadee Chinee."

"Let me in!" shouted Frank.

"Golly!"

The kitchen door was opened.

"Get into the school-room—quick!" rapped out Frank. "Sharp's the word! Hook it, do you hear?"

streaked for the school-room, and bolted in. It was the safest place. As Frank followed them there was a rapid patter of footsteps, and Black Sam, the stableman, burst in from the porch, quaking with terror. His ebony face was thick with perspiration, and his eyes rolled white.

Behind him there was a fearful shuffling sound. Frank Richards knew what that meant.

He grasped the negro by the arm and rushed him to the school-room.

Black Sam staggered in, and Frank Richards followed.

The door was slammed as soon as he was inside—none too soon. As the bars rattled into their places again the grizzly bear was heard shuffling in the hall.

The prisoners of the school-room held their breath as they heard the terrible animal nosing over the outside of the door. There was a sound of scratching, and then a deep growl, and silence.

"My word!" murmured Bob Lawless.

"Thank Heaven all are safe!" said Miss Meadows quietly.

The grizzly had evidently failed to pull down one of the horses. He had returned to the schoolhouse for prey. The animal must have come down from the mountains, and had doubtless been driven by hunger. And



Frank Richards looked back, to see the snout of the grizzly rise from the water behind, and he struck with the paddle at the animal with all his strength.

hunger held him to the building where there was food—if he could get at it. And there was no help!

How long would the log walls keep the fearful creature from his prey?

The 4th Chapter. A Desperate Venture.

Miss Meadows stood, pale but calm, her hand resting on a desk, trying to think.

There was no help at hand.

Such a happening was utterly unlooked-for. It had never occurred before in the history of the school on Cedar Creek. It was years since a stray bear had been killed on the Sunset Ranch, a dozen miles away, and since then none had ever been seen in the section.

What to do in such an emergency was a puzzle. The school, like most Canadian frontier schools, occupied the central spot of a large district, and there were no habitations near at hand. There had never been any thought of danger in the section since the far-off days of Indian risings.

Mr. Slimmey approached the schoolmistress, his eyes gleaming behind his glasses.

"Something must be done, Miss Meadows," he said.

"Undoubtedly."

"There is no rifle here?"

"There is only a shotgun, and that is in the hall," said Miss Meadows.

"It would be useless."

said Mr. Slimmey. "If—if I had a sword, or something—"

He stopped helplessly.

Serious as the situation was, Miss Meadows could scarcely restrain a smile at the idea of Mr. Slimmey tackling a grizzly bear with a sword, if such a weapon was to be found in the backwoods of Canada.

Poor Mr. Slimmey's heart was in the right place, but his head was certainly unequal to the emergency. Such emergencies did not occur in the Old Country, where all Mr. Slimmey's ideas had been formed and fixed.

"It is a grizzly bear, is it not?" pursued Mr. Slimmey.

Miss Meadows nodded.

"Ursus horribilis; a most terrible animal," said Mr. Slimmey. "He will attack man, even when not hungry, and will chase even a horseman for miles. He has been known to—"

He paused again. Mr. Slimmey's confused mind was wandering to the lessons of the natural

taken on a previous occasion. He ran to the window with the compasses open.

The horrible claw was feeling, groping within a foot of him. With all his strength Frank drove the sharp point of the open compasses into the paw.

There was a terrible howl from the animal without, and the paw was whisked away, the compasses still sticking in it.

"Frank!" panted Bob. "Good man!"

For several minutes there was an incessant howling and roaring from the pain-stricken animal without. The bear was shuffling and rolling outside the window, the compasses still sticking in his paw.

The bellowing of the great brute died away at last into savage growling. But the claw did not come through the cracked shutter again.

"Oh, begad!" said Mr. Slimmey, wiping his brow. "I—I feel that I ought to do something or—other! Yes, I feel that! Miss Meadows, can

"Not you, I guess," said Bob Lawless. "I guess I'm the critter, if anybody goes."

"I cannot allow you to go," said Miss Meadows. "Leave me now. I must think."

Frank Richards exchanged a glance with his cousin, and they drew aside.

"What do you think, Bob?" Frank whispered.

"We've got to have help," said Bob decidedly. "The horrible brute is hungry, and he will force a way in sooner or later. Some of the girls are called for after lessons, to be taken home; but their people won't know there's anything wrong here, and won't come armed. They might walk right on to the bear, too, before they see him. Are you really game, Franky, to risk it—you a tenderfoot, only just out from home?"

"I'm game," said Frank quietly. "I meant what I said. Bob, I'm going!"

"Not alone," said Bob. "Two's safer than one. And—and if one gets chawed up, the other gets clear, Franky, and takes the alarm to the ranch."

Frank nodded, setting his lips.

"The horses are loose in the wood," he said. "We might get hold of one—"

"Better than that. If we can get clear down to the creek, we can get a canoe out. Hacke's canoe is moored there, and once we reach it—"

Frank's eyes gleamed.

"I hadn't thought of that. I—I'm not a good hand at paddling. But you—"

"That's where I live," said Bob. "The paddles are in the canoe, and once we get off we're all hunky."

Chunky Todgers came up to them.

"I—I say, have you fellows thought of anything?" he muttered.

"You bet," said Bob cheerily.

"Splendid idea!"

"What is it?" asked Chunky hopefully.

"We're going to chuck you out to the bear!"

"What!" yelled Chunky.

"You're the fattest chap here, you know, and if the bear's reasonable he'll be satisfied with you," explained Bob.

"Hallo! Where are you going, Chunky?"

Chunky was retreating to the protection of Miss Meadows. The chums followed him.

"Keep him off!" roared Chunky. "I'm not going to be chucked to the bear! I won't do it! I—I—"

"What ever is this?" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Chunky's been dreaming," said Bob, with a grin. "Miss Meadows, we're going to run across to Hacke's canoe on the creek. You've got to let us go, ma'am; it's the only chance."

"But—"

"Milly Brown's popper is coming for her after school, and he may run right into the bear," said Bob.

"We've got to chance it, and get rid of him, ma'am. Now, you see, we must go. Once we get into the canoe the bear can't touch us."

Miss Meadows hesitated. The two brave lads were ready to take the risk; and, to save other lives, it was necessary to let them take it.

"Begad, a first-rate idea!" said Mr. Slimmey. "Of course, I must go."

"You can't paddle a Canadian canoe, sir," said Bob bluntly.

"Bless my soul, I had forgotten that!" said poor Mr. Slimmey.

"Indeed, that would be somewhat of a disadvantage, under the circumstances."

"Wouldn't it?" grinned Bob.

There was a scratching and growling at the window again. Mr. Slimmey, determined to do something, seized a pointer, and lashed at the paw that came feeling its way through the rift. There was a fierce howl from the grizzly without.

Bob caught Frank's arm, and rushed him to the window on the other side of the log School House.

"Now's our chance!" he exclaimed.

He tore open the shutter.

"My boys!" exclaimed Miss Meadows, torn between anxiety for the two lads and anxiety for the rest.

"It's all right, ma'am. While he's on that side we'll dodge round on this. Come on, Frank!"

"I cannot allow it. I cannot—"

But the chums did not heed.

The window was open, and Frank Richards was already swinging himself out. He dropped nimbly to the ground.

Bob Lawless followed him with a bound.

Miss Meadows' face, deathly white, looked after them. There were tears in the eyes of the brave Canadian woman.

"Shut the window, ma'am—the shutters!" panted Bob.

(Continued at foot of next page.)

history class, but he realised that a disquisition on the habits of the grizzly bear was not wanted now.

"Bless my soul, what is to be done?" he concluded feebly.

"Hark!" muttered Chunky Todgers.

There was a growling and scratching at one of the windows. The shutters shook and rattled.

All eyes were fixed upon it in deep and painful anxiety.

If it yielded—

There was little doubt that the bear, if it exerted its full strength, could smash in the pinewood shutter. If the animal's intelligence was equal to directing his terrible strength there was no doubt of the result.

Bob Lawless pressed Frank's arm.

Frank looked at him.

Even Bob's bold, reckless face was pale now.

"If we could only get word to the ranch, or to Cedar Creek Camp!"

muttered Bob. "If they only knew—"

"But we can't."

"I guess not."

Crack!

"Good heavens!" muttered Chunky Todgers, with chattering teeth. "It's giving!"

A bar of bright sunlight streamed in at the cracked shutter. A hideous claw groped within.

Frank Richards seized the big compasses from the schoolmistress's desk, the compasses poor Mr. Slimmey had

you suggest something that a fellow could do?"

"We must get help," said Miss Meadows quietly.

Mr. Slimmey brightened.

"You'd like me to dodge out, and run for help?" he exclaimed. "Certainly! I—I think that's a good idea, you know!"

"You could not do it," said Miss Meadows. "Sam!"

"I see here, mum."

"Sam, someone must go for help."

Black Sam shivered.

"I couldn't go out wid de b'ar dar, missy," he mumbled. "Dat black debble, he gobble up poor ole Sam!"

The schoolmistress compressed her lips. Black Sam was useless, Chu Chung Chow still more so, and Mr. Slimmey, though willing, was the least capable of the three. Frank Richards came towards the schoolmistress. His face was a little pale, but quite calm, and there was a gleam in his eyes.

"Miss Meadows, let me go!"

"My boy," said Miss Meadows, with a shake of the head, "I cannot. You could not escape the bear. It is impossible!"

"We must have help," said Frank quietly. "The brute will get in sooner or later, ma'am. Help must be fetched. I may be able to get a horse in the wood, or I could tramp it to the ranch—"

"But the bear, my dear boy—"

"Somebody's got to risk it."

LETTERS IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

I would like all my readers to look upon me as their real friend, someone to whom they can come for help and advice when they are in doubt or difficulty. It is never "too much trouble" to me to be of use to my boy and girl friends if they feel they would like to write to me.

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, The BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4."

MY BEST THANKS!

To Readers Who Have Written
To Me!

I feel it my duty to offer my heartiest thanks to every one of those loyal readers of mine who have written, during the last few weeks, praising our present programme of stories.

To many of these readers I have sent a written reply, but as a large number failed to attach their full names and addresses to their communications, I am answering them by the only means possible—through the medium of my Chat.

When I decided to publish "The Boys of the Bombay Castle" and "Frank Richards' Schooldays" in the BOYS' FRIEND, I expected my loyal readers would greatly welcome the two tales, but I hardly thought I should receive such a tremendous batch of complimentary letters from my chums.

The two stories mentioned above met with a most enthusiastic welcome, whilst the stories of Jimmy Silver & Co., and Bob Travers, and "Crusoe Island" came in for a large amount of praise. Taking things all round, I am forced to the conclusion that our present stories are to the liking of I am forced to the conclusion that our present stories are to the liking of every reader.

I would like to address a few words to the large number of fellows who have recently joined the ranks of the BOYS' FRIEND supporters. By the numerous letters I have received from new readers, I know that many thousands of boys—and girls, too, for that matter—commenced reading the BOYS' FRIEND when our two most recent stories started.

I would assure all these new readers that I welcome them to the fold, and trust they will remain staunch supporters of the good old BOYS' FRIEND for many years to come. I am delighted to learn that they hold such high opinions of our stories, and I would assure them that it will always be my one desire and intention to supply them with the finest reading-matter obtainable.

My thanks are also due to the many, many staunch supporters of the BOYS' FRIEND who have persuaded their chums to become readers of their favourite paper. These readers have, indeed, done me a great service, and I can assure them I greatly appreciate their kindness. I am always extremely grateful to readers who recommend the BOYS' FRIEND to their friends, and I hope my chums will continue their splendid work in the interests of their favourite paper.

NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME.

Stories You Will All Like!

I can promise my readers a rare treat in next Monday's magnificent long, complete tale dealing with Frank Richards' Schooldays. This tale is entitled

"THE REMITTANCE MAN!"

By Martin Clifford.

In this story Vere Beauclerc, the son of a remittance man, an absolute waster and ne'er-do-well, makes his appearance. Beauclerc possesses any amount of pride, and although, owing to his father's habits, he is often in great need, he scorns assistance and

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those who are willing and eager to assist him.

Bob Lawless would have nothing to do with Beauclerc, but Frank Richards sees good in the fellow, and is very eager to further his acquaintance with the remittance man's son. Frank eventually has great cause to think highly of Beauclerc, for when Frank is in great peril, and in danger of losing his life, Beauclerc shows that he does not lack pluck, and performs a most gallant deed.

I wonder whether you will like Beauclerc! He is a very queer character, yet withal an interesting one. On no account should you fail to read this really splendid story.

Next Monday's grand long instalment of

"THE BOYS OF THE BOMBAY CASTLE!"

By Duncan Storm,

is without doubt a ripping one. The

great boat-race between the boys of the floating-school and the middies of the British warship takes place. And a most exciting race it is, too! Poor seaman that he is, Lal Tata has a very sorry time in the race when a terrific storm overtakes the rowers. Nevertheless, the race is a splendid one, with a most thrilling finish. There are other enthralling incidents in this instalment, as you will see next Monday.

Absolutely the finest story of Jimmy Silver & Co. that has ever appeared is my opinion of next Monday's grand tale of the Rookwood chums, and I should be glad to hear from any readers who disagree with my opinion. The title of the yarn is

"THE DOWNWARD PATH!"

By Owen Conquest.

In this story we find Mornington going downhill fast. The loss of his fortune proves too much for him, and, shunned by his former chums, the better side of his nature, which has occasionally been apparent, completely disappears. He takes to pawning his belongings, and then comes the last straw. He decides to sell his furniture by auction!

But Mornington possesses a staunch friend in Kit Erroll. Erroll feels greatly upset at the way in which Morny is taking the downward path. He rallies round his chum in a most loyal manner, and I am sure you will have nothing but admiration for the part in which he plays in next Monday's grand tale.

Our next story of Dick, Frank, and

Joe, the Crusoe Island adventurers, is entitled

"THE GIANT MOONSTONE!"

By Maurice Everard.

The two boys find a small hole on the island, and, although they are confident that it has been made by human hands, they are unable to discover who is responsible for the work. They receive a great surprise the next day, when they find that the size of the hole has been increased in the night. By whom it has been done is a mystery.

At length it is arranged that Frank Polruan shall remain on watch one night to discover the mysterious digger. He does so, with startling results, as you will see when you read this splendid story.

"FIGHTER AND FOOTBALLER!"

By Herbert Britton.

In this fine tale, Bob Travers shows his prowess as a footballer. He meets with a thrilling adventure before the football match, and during the game an amazing revelation takes place. What form this revelation takes you will learn when you read this splendid story.

Your Editor

FOR LIFE OR DEATH!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Heaven preserve you, my boys!" faltered Miss Meadows.

"Come on, Bob!"

The shutter closed.

The 5th Chapter. Neck or Nothing.

Frank Richards felt his heart thumping.

The two boys were in the open playing-ground now, the log School House between them and their terrible enemy.

As yet the grizzly could not see them. But as soon as they started for the creek he was certain to see them. And then—

Frank drew a deep breath.

"Come on, Bob! It's neck or nothing now!"

Side by side the two lads rushed for the bank of the creek, where Eben Hacke's handsome canoe lay on the water, moored to a larch.

They had reached the gate in the fence surrounding the school grounds before the grizzly sighted them.

A savage growl warned them that they were seen, and a heavy shuffling that came nearer and nearer.

They took one swift glance.

Not twenty yards away the huge grizzly was lumbering on their track, with eyes aflame. Huge and heavy as he was, his movements were swift and active.

With thumping hearts the boys ran for the creek.

Behind them thundered the grizzly in hot pursuit.

The grizzly was gaining; they knew that. His panting breath came nearer and nearer behind. Closer and closer, till it seemed as if they felt the terrible jaws snapping on them.

The creek at last!

Bob made a bound into the canoe, and it rocked and sent up a splash of water. Frank Richards was only a second behind him.

"Cast off!" yelled Bob, as he groped for the paddles.

Frank tore at the cord that secured the canoe to the tree, but it was

knotted. He tore out his pocket-knife and opened it in a flash, hacking savagely at the cord.

The huge form of the grizzly loomed on the bank. The eyes seemed to flame as he closed in furiously on the schoolboys.

Snap!

The cord parted.

Bob drove a paddle against the tree, and the canoe danced out upon the river, rocking wildly.

Splash!

The huge weight of the bear, thrown at the canoe as it moved, just missed the little craft, and the grizzly crashed into the water behind.

The grey, savage head went right under, and the water foamed and swirled as the grizzly struggled, half drowned.

Bob had both paddles out, and was paddling swiftly, and the canoe righted, and shot farther out into the creek.

He tossed a paddle to Frank, who caught it. Frank looked back, to see the snout of the grizzly rise from the water behind, with furious eyes above it. He struck with the paddle with all his strength. The force of the blow smashed the paddle, and the grizzly's head went under the stream.

Bob was paddling furiously.

Frank, with the stump of the paddle in his hand, looked back, with throbbing heart. To his intense relief, he saw the grizzly scramble back to the bank, and drag his huge bulk ashore.

Dripping, snarling, panting, the great brute loped back to the School House.

Frank sank down in the canoe, white and almost sick with the reaction.

"He's gone, Bob!"

"Gone back?"

"Yes."

"Heaven send that he don't get into the School House!" muttered Bob.

Frank Richards echoed that prayer in his heart.

Swift as the canoe was, it seemed slow to Frank. But the trees on the bank were racing by as if past an express train.

There was a roar of waters ahead of the speeding canoe, and Frank Richards gave his cousin a startled look.

"Bob!"

"The rapids!" said Bob, without pausing.

"But—"

"It's all serene!"

The canoe sped onwards in a racing

current that swirled and tossed drift-logs amid its foam. As if by magic, the skilful paddler avoided every danger, and the canoe shot into the rapids.

Frank Richards sat tight, scarcely breathing.

It seemed to the inexperienced eyes of the English lad that the frail cockleshell of a canoe must be capized or engulfed every moment.

But the Canadian lad knew what he was about. Bob Lawless had been "in the rapids" on large rivers, and the fall of the creek was nothing to him. The canoe shot onward unharmed.

Frank drew a deep breath when they were past.

Bob Lawless was still paddling away at top speed, and the canoe was shooting on like an arrow over the shining waters.

Frank Richards watched the bank for a sign of Cedar Creek Camp.

They passed a shack near the shore, the first building of the settlement to come in sight.

Five minutes later he sighted the log walls of the Hotel Continental through the clearings.

"The camp, Bob!" he gasped.

The paddle flashed on.

Cedar Creek town was in full sight now, and a number of cattlemen were staring towards the canoe from the veranda of the hotel. Two or three came running down to the creek.

Among them was Rancher Lawless, who had business in the town that afternoon, but had little dreamed of seeing his son and nephew there.

Bob drove the canoe to the bank, and Frank Richards jumped ashore.

Bob followed him more slowly. His strength was spent.

The rancher stared at them in blank amazement.

"You young rascals!" he exclaimed. "What are you doing here? Why are you not in school?"

"Dad," panted Bob, "we—we—"

He gasped for breath, and broke off. He was too exhausted with his efforts to speak.

The rancher caught Frank Richards by the arm.

"What has happened at the school, Frank?" he exclaimed, in alarm.

Frank panted out an explanation. The rancher's tanned face grew suddenly pale.

"Good heavens!" he muttered.

"We came for help!" gasped Bob, finding his voice. "Dad, the brute

may have got in, and the girls—

Oh, dad—"

But the rancher was already turning away and shouting to the cattlemen. Rancher Lawless was a man of action. There was no time for words.

There was mounting in hot haste in Cedar Creek. In five minutes a dozen men were in the saddle, with rifles on their backs, riding like the wind for the lumber school, with the rancher at their head.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless, breathless but determined, were riding after them. The canoe, forgotten, was left on the creek. Fast and faster they rode over rough prairie trail and under the boughs of the forest trees, silent save for the panting of the horses and the ceaseless clatter of the hoofs.

Fast and faster, till they came in sight of the lumber school, standing black against the sky reddened by the setting sun, with set faces and beating hearts. Had they arrived in time?

There was a deathly stillness in the log School House. After the two boys had gone all had listened with tense hearts. But there had been no cry. They could only hope that the chums had got clear. And soon they heard the grizzly snuffing round the log walls again. The brute was hungry and savage.

"The boys are safe!" said Mr. Slimmey at last. "They are safe, Miss Meadows!"

The schoolmistress nodded. She could not speak.

Every nerve was on edge. The great beast, snuffing round the log walls, was restless and untiring. Sooner or later there was little doubt he must effect an entrance, and then

It was hard to keep calm.

But the quiet courage of the schoolmistress had its effect, and all were quiet, all were silent, patient.

In deathly silence the school waited. The silence was suddenly broke.

Hoof-beats came muffled from the distance—louder, clearer, the beat of many galloping hoofs upon the earth.

Then came a sudden, deafening burst of rifle-fire.

Crack-ack-ack-ack!

It rang and echoed and re-echoed, and there was a general intake of breath as the welcome sound was heard. Help had come at last.

It seemed as if pandemonium followed that sudden burst of firing. Growling, snarling, rattling, and

savage howlings that woke every echo of the woods—the sounds of the fury of the great, savage animal surrounded by the hunters. Crack on crack from the rifles, till the howlings died down, and then silence once more, broken by a loud cheer.

A heavy knock sounded at the door.

"All safe now!" It was Mr. Lawless' voice. "You can open the door."

Miss Meadows removed the bars, her face white, but still calm. The door swung open, and the red sunset streamed into the log School House. The rancher strode in, a smoking rifle in his hand.

"The boys?" panted Miss Meadows.

"All serene, ma'am!" sang out Bob Lawless' cheery voice.

And Frank Richards' voice echoed: "All right, Miss Meadows!"

"Thank Heaven!"

Mr. Slimmey took off his gold-rimmed glasses, and polished them and jammed them on his nose again.

"Well done—well done, my lads!" he exclaimed. "Well played, by gad! But you shouldn't have cut off like that. You should have let me go, my lads. It was too risky—too risky!"

Whereat Frank Richards and Bob Lawless grinned.

"And your canoe's at Cedar Creek, Hacke!" grinned Bob. "You'll have to walk home to-night, my infant!"

Eben Hacke laughed.

"I guess I don't mind that," he said. "I reckon I never was so glad to see your cheeky face as I am now. Yep!"

The whole school crowded out, to gather in awe round the body of the grizzly, riddled with bullets, but terrible in death.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were the heroes of the hour. Mr. Slimmey congratulated them, Miss Meadows thanked them in sweet, quiet tones, and boys and girls gathered round them, till the fuss that was made of them made them glad to mount again and ride home to the ranch in the sunset with Mr. Lawless.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY!

"THE REMITTANCE MAN!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

DON'T MISS IT!