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The BOYS' FRIEND

Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood, appear in This Issue!

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ONE PENNY.

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A FOOL AND HIS MONEY!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood School.
By **OWEN CONQUEST.**

The 1st Chapter.

The Fifty-pound Banknote.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell seemed to be walking on air.

Never had the great Adolphus looked so "chippy" as he looked on this particular afternoon.

Adolphus was accustomed to carrying his head high. He was, in fact, a very important person, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School at Rookwood.

Smythe's taste in waistcoats was really first-class. He wore his silk hat at the precisely correct angle. His necktie was simply "it."

He was not very good at games that required exertion, though he was supposed to know all there was to be known about bridge and banker. In class he had a somewhat exasperating effect upon his Form-master. But there was no doubt that he knew all about clothes from Alpha to Omega.

Naturally, Adolphus had a good opinion of himself, and he walked the earth as if common earth were not quite good enough for him to tread upon.

But now, as he sauntered gracefully across the quadrangle, Adolphus was looking even more lofty and ineffable than usual. Jimmy Silver & Co., who were adorning the steps of the School House with their persons, smiled as they saw him.

Something had evidently happened to "buck" the great Adolphus.

Like the poet of old who was gratified by the praise of Mæcenas, he seemed likely to strike the stars with his sublime head.

"Smythey's looking cheery!" Jimmy Silver remarked. "What's happened?"

"Perhaps his gee-gee's got home at last, and he's landed a winner!" grinned Arthur Edward Lovell.

Adolphus Smythe arrived at the steps.

He turned his eyeglass upon the Fistical Four with a lofty glance.

Tubby Muffin of the Classical Fourth came hurrying out of the big doorway. There was great excitement in Tubby's fat face.

"I say, Smythey, I've been looking for you!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

Smythe gave him a frozen look.

Familiarity from the fat Fourth-former was not in the least gratifying to the superb Adolphus.

But the "marble eye" had no effect whatever upon Tubby. He was brimming with affectionate regard.

"Have you got it about you, old chap?" he asked.

"Would you mind steppin' aside and allowin' me to pass, Muffin?" asked Smythe, with disdainful calm.

"But I say, old chap—"

"Get away."

"Look here, Smythey—"

Adolphus Smythe took Tubby by one fat ear and turned him aside. He came loftily up the steps, leaving Tubby Muffin rubbing his ear and glowering.

"Yah!" snorted Tubby. "Rotter! Purse-proud boonder! Yah! Who wants to look at your fifty-pound



IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR!

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note? I don't believe you've got one. Yah!"

"Fifty-pound note!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "My hat!"

"Fifty quids!" ejaculated Newcome. "Have you got a fifty-quid note, Smythey?"

"I have!" said Adolphus calmly.

"My hat! Been robbing a bank, old scout?" asked Raby.

"Oh, rats!"

"Are you putting it in the War Loan?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I am not puttin' it in the War Loan!"

"Why not wear it pinned on your necktie, so that all Rookwood could see and admire?" suggested Lovell.

Adolphus' lip curled, and he walked on.

In the doorway of the School House, Conroy and Pons and Van Ryn appeared in sight.

The three Colonials were grinning.

As if moved by the same spring, they bowed before the astonished

Adolphus till their noses nearly touched their knees.

"Hail!"

"Wha-a-t?" ejaculated Smythe.

"All hail!"

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

Adolphus Smythe frowned, and marched on. The Colonial Co. straightened up and chortled.

In the passage Adolphus Smythe was the recipient of a good many curious glances as he walked on with his noble nose in the air.

Apparently the Rookwood fellows all knew about the fifty-pound note, though Jimmy Silver & Co., who had been on the footer ground, had only just heard of it.

Tracy and Howard, Smythe's study-mates, joined him, their manner even more friendly and respectful than usual.

Adolphus Smythe was always a great man, but, in the happy posses-

sion of a fifty-pound note, he was a greater man than ever.

No junior at Rookwood had ever been known to be in possession of such a sum of money before, excepting Mornington of the Fourth in his palmy days.

It was an extraordinary sum for a Shell fellow to possess, and perhaps it was not surprising that it had turned Adolphus' head a little.

Mornington and Erroll were coming down the stairs together, and the former glanced at Smythe with a smile.

Morny, in his wealthy days, had thought little enough of even fifty pounds. It amused him to observe Adolphus' swank.

"Hallo! I hear you're in luck, Smythey!" he remarked.

"I am rather in luck," said Smythe in his most stately way.

"Chance for you to invest in National War Bonds!" suggested

Mornington. "That's the way to get rich quick."

"No fear!" said Adolphus.

"It's the patriotic thing to do, you know."

Adolphus shrugged his shoulders. Apparently he was not greatly troubled by patriotic considerations.

"Let's see it, Smythe, bedad!" said Flynn of the Fourth. "Faith, I've never even seen a fifty-pound note meself!"

"Certainly!" said Adolphus graciously.

He opened a handsome little pocket-book, and drew out a crisp, rustling banknote.

The Classical juniors gathered round to look at it.

A fifty-pound note was an uncommon sight to most of them, and it was the genuine article, worth "fifty of the best."

There were admiring exclamations as Adolphus displayed the great prize.

"Where did you get it?" asked Townsend of the Fourth.

"My uncle," said Smythe.

"Faith and phwat did you put up the spout to raise fifty quids on?" exclaimed Flynn.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus frowned.

"I was alludin' to my Uncle Guy!" he said disdainfully. "He has kindly sent me this banknote for my birthday."

"My hat! Is he in the war-profit bizney?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky ass!" exclaimed Adolphus wrathfully. "Do you think any of my relations are in trade?"

"Of course not!" grinned Mornington. "They toil not, neither do they spin, but they exude banknotes at every pore of their skin."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on, Morny," said Erroll, and he drew his chum away.

Smythe carefully replaced the banknote in his pocket-book, and headed for his study.

Lattrey of the Fourth joined him on the way.

"Congratulations, Smythey!" he said.

"Thank you."

"I suppose you'll be havin' a high old time now, old scout?"

"I certainly intend to," said Adolphus calmly.

Smythe's nutty friends were gathering round him, and they looked far from agreeably at Lattrey.

The black sheep of the Fourth was tolerated by the nuts of Rookwood, but they always made it clear to him that he was not one of themselves.

Lattrey was not wanted now.

Smythe went into his study, with Howard and Tracy, Townsend and Topham. Howard calmly closed the door on Lattrey's nose.

The cad of the Fourth, whose skill in games of chance was almost uncan-

ny, had designs on Smythe's banknote, but he was not to be allowed to carry them out.

(Continued on the next page.)



A FOOL AND HIS MONEY!

(Continued from the previous page.)

Lattrey scowled, and went his way discontentedly.

The feather-brained Adolphus was not likely to keep his wonderful wealth long in his possession, and Lattrey did not see why he should not have a "whack" in it. But Smythe's friends were looking after that.

The 2nd Chapter. Kit Erroll Looks In!

Adolphus Smythe's fifty-pound note became quite famous in Rookwood that day.

It was well known that Adolphus had some tremendously wealthy relations, though some fellows suspected that he also had some shady, poor relations, whom he made it a point never to mention.

But a birthday gift of fifty pounds—in war-time, too—was a thing decidedly out of the common.

That fifty-pound note was talked of up and down Rookwood, and its existence even came to the ears of prefects and masters.

Mr. Mooney, the master of the Shell, heard of it, and he reflected

upon the subject, and sent for Adolphus to come to his study.

Adolphus presented himself in the study a little uneasily. He was aware that Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, would not approve of a junior having so much money in his possession.

And the nut of the Shell did not want to have to put his great prize in the bank. It would have been the safest place for it, but Adolphus was looking forward to quite a dazzling time, with so much money in his pockets.

"Ah, Smythe, I hear that you have received fifty pounds as a birthday present!" said Mr. Mooney, with a curious look at the junior.

"Yes, sir," said Smythe. "That is a very large sum of money for a junior schoolboy to possess. I hardly think the Head would approve of it. You intend, I presume, to place the money in the bank at once."

"I haven't a bank-account, sir," said Smythe.

"I did not suppose that you had a bank-account at your age, Smythe. I was alluding to the Post-Office Savings Bank."

"What's that, sir?" asked Smythe calmly.

"You are surely aware, Smythe, that there is a savings-bank department attached to the Post Office."

"Yaas—somethin' for the use of the poor, isn't it, sir?" said Smythe, with as much arrogance as he dared exhibit to his Form-master. "I've never had anythin' to do with it!"

Mr. Mooney gave him a look.

"Then you had better place the money in your father's keeping, Smythe."

"Ahem! I—I was thinkin' of investin' it, sir," said Smythe.

"You are scarcely old enough to choose investments for yourself, Smythe."

"Oh, yes, sir! There's National War Bonds!" said Smythe innocently. "You can buy 'em at the post-office, sir, and it all helps on the war."

Mr. Mooney smiled quite genially. "My dear boy, you could not invest your money better," he said. "An excellent idea—most excellent. I am sure your father would approve of it, though perhaps you had better write to him first. I am very glad to see, Smythe, that you are both thoughtful and patriotic."

"Thank you, sir."

Adolphus was quite grave as he left Mr. Mooney's study.

But when the door had closed on him he smiled, and winked into space. He had as much intention of putting his fifty pounds into National War Bonds as of putting it in the school poor-box.

He had not exactly lied to Mr. Mooney, but the way he had put it came very near it. He had certainly given the master of the Shell a false impression.

He returned to his study, where Howard and Tracy were waiting for him.

"What did the old sport want?" asked Tracy.

"Heard of the banknote?" grinned Howard.

Adolphus nodded.

He sank gracefully into an armchair, crossed one elegantly-trousered leg over the other, and lighted a cigarette.

"Anybody would think that this was the first fifty-pound note printed at the Bank of England!" he drawled. "Mooney thinks it's too much money for a junior to have about him!"

"The ass!" said Howard.

"Like his check!" said Tracy.

"Of course, these dashed Form-masters ain't rollin' in money," said Smythe disdainfully. "I suppose fifty quid seems a fortune to Mooney! He thinks I'm going to stick it in National War Bonds."

"Ha, ha!"

"You get five per cent, on them," remarked Howard.

"I mean to get ten times that, at least," said Smythe calmly. "I've always wanted a decent bit of capital, so as to use my knowledge of racin' and other things to advantage. Mooney can think as he likes. I'm goin' to make this fifty into five hundred!"

"Oh!"

"There's precious few fellows at school know as much about racin' an' things as I do," said Smythe.

"Bunce, at the Bird-in-Hand, told me that himself! He said I astonished him! I'm goin' to astonish him some more before I've done!"

"Good old Smythe!"

"I—I say," said Tracy uneasily.

"Mind how you deal with that fellow Bunce, old chap! He's jolly sharp!"

Adolphus looked at him disdainfully.

"Do you think I can't take care of myself?" he demanded.

"Nunno, of course not. But—"

"I fancy I'm up to snuff," said Adolphus complacently. "Why, I've played that fellow Bunce at poker—rippin' game, poker—and played his head off! Only yesterday I cleared him out of two quids!"

"Phew!"

"I'm rather a dab at poker," said Smythe modestly. "Lattrey taught me the game, an' I admit that Lattrey did me pretty thoroughly at it, too. But I've studied the game, and I can win at it. You need knowledge, but mainly nerve—an' I flatter myself I've got the nerve."

He blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Lattrey's hangin' round for a game now, but I'm not takin' any. Matter of fact, I don't trust Lattrey—his luck's a bit too good. Carthew of the Sixth has asked me into his study this evenin'."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I'm not goin'," said Smythe calmly. "I'm not an ass. If he didn't win my oof he would cut up rusty, an' I don't want to have a waxy prefect ragin' on my track! But you should have seen his face when I told him I was sorry I had another engagement!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunce is my man," yawned Smythe. "Bunce has got plenty of money, an' can pay if he loses. He paid up yesterday, when I beat him at poker. Took his beatin' like a little man, an' owned up that I was too good for him. I like a sportsman! Of course, Bunce is rather a low hound, but he's a sport."

"You beat him at poker?" said Howard.

"Haven't I said so?"

"Did he know you were expectin' this banknote to-day?"

Adolphus turned his eyeglass on Howard with a freezing expression.

"I had happened to mention it in conversation," he said. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Oh, nothin'!" said Howard hastily.

"If you think I'm the kind of chap to have my leg pulled, Howard—"

"Not at all, old fellow. But—but if I were you, I'd buy National War Bonds with that fifty, instead of playin' poker with Bunce."

"You're an ass, old scout! I know what I'm going to do!"

There was a tap at the door, and Erroll of the Fourth looked in.

The three nuts regarded him with lofty surprise.

Erroll had never visited Smythe in his study before. The quiet, grave Fourth-former, who often seemed older than his years, had little enough in common with the nuts of Rookwood.

Even when his chum Mornington had been hand-in-glove with the nutty brigade, Erroll had had little or nothing to do with them. And since his fall from fortune Mornington had had little to do with them, either.

"Hallo," drawled Adolphus, "this is an unexpected honour!"

Erroll took no notice of the Shell fellow's tone.

"I should like to speak to you, Smythe," he said quietly.

"Sorry!"

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"Nothin' to lend!"

Erroll stared at him, his handsome face flushing.

"You silly duffer!" he broke out. "Do you think I've come here to borrow money of you?"

"Haven't you?" yawned Adolphus.

"No; certainly not!"

"Oh, my mistake!" said Smythe insolently. "You can go ahead, then!"

Erroll glanced at Howard and Tracy. But those nutty youths showed no intention of clearing off.

Erroll hesitated.

"You can speak before my pals, if you've got anything to say!" said Adolphus.

"I'd rather speak to you alone."

"By gad! You're dashed mysterious," said Smythe, in surprise.

"I don't see the necessity of it."

"I'll look in another time," said Erroll, turning away.

"Hold on!" said Smythe, whose curiosity was roused. "You fellows leave us alone for a few minutes, will you?"

Tracy and Howard rather discontentedly left the study.

They could hardly suspect a fellow like Kit Erroll of having designs on the fifty-pound banknote, but they were dissatisfied.

However, they left the study, and Kit Erroll closed the door after them. Then he turned to Smythe, who was looking at him with a supercilious smile through a blue haze of smoke.

The 3rd Chapter.

Adolphus is Not Grateful.

Kit Erroll was silent for a moment or two, while Smythe regarded him with increasing surprise and suspicion. Unless Erroll had designs on the banknote, he simply could not account for the Fourth-former seeking that interview.

"I dare say this surprises you a little, Smythe," said Erroll at last. "We're not friends—"

"In fact, we hardly know one another," said Smythe calmly.

"Quite so. But I felt that I ought to give you a warning," said Erroll. Smythe laughed.

"A sermon on riotous livin'?" he asked. "You think I'm goin' to paint the town red now I'm well heeled, what? I understand that you turned Morny from his wicked ways by sermonisin'. My dear man, don't try it on me. I'm a hardened sinner, I assure you."

"That isn't my intention. There's a rascally fellow at the Bird-in-Hand Inn in the village, named Bunce," said Erroll.

"A sportin' chap," assented Smythe.

"You know him?"

"Oh, yaas."

"I know him, too," said Erroll.

"By gad!" Smythe raised his eyebrows. "I shouldn't have thought he was much in your line, Erroll. I should rather have expected you to chum in with the vicar of the parish, by gad!"

"He is not at all in my line, Smythe—nor in yours, either, if you knew your own interests a little better."

"Yaas, I thought a sermon was comin'. Chuck it at once, dear boy."

"I don't exactly know this man Bunce, but I've seen him before," said Erroll, his cheeks reddening a little. "I've heard the fellows talk-

ing about your knowin' him—and playing cards with him. It's not my business, of course, and I shouldn't think of telling you my opinion about that—"

"Thanks."

"But I felt I ought to speak to you now. I dare say you've heard something of my life before I came to Rookwood," said Erroll. "Most of the fellows have."

"Yaas, you were brought up by a gang of thieves, or somethin', weren't you?" said Smythe, his lip curling.

"I had that misfortune," said Erroll quietly. "Before I was found by my father, I saw some very strange company at different times. I had a rather strong character, or I might never have been able to resist the influences that surrounded me at that time. Among the shady characters I came in contact with at that time was this fellow Bunce. He was an acquaintance of the cracksman, Gentleman Jim."

"By gad!"

"Whether he was actually a thief or not, I do not know. He was a card-sharper and racing swindler—I know that. About the last fellow in the world, Smythe, for a decent chap to know."

Smythe yawned.

"But to come to the point. I'm not here to preach to you. You have a large sum of money now, and you seem to be in the habit of seeing this rascal Bunce, and playing cards with him. Apart from the morality of the matter, the man will skin you to the very bones if you have dealings with him. Even if you have some skill at cards, he will cheat you, and so cunningly that you will have no chance against him. I know him, you see. If you do not want to lose your birthday banknote, Smythe, take my advice, and keep clear of that man."

Erroll spoke quietly and earnestly.

Any fellow but Adolphus Smythe would have been moved a little, at least, for it was plain that it had cost the quiet, reserved junior an effort to come and offer his advice

unasked to the nut of the Shell. A sense of duty, and perhaps a slightly compassionate concern for the egregious Adolphus, had induced Erroll to come.

But the flippant Shell fellow was the last person in the world to take Erroll's kindhearted action in the right spirit.

He smiled sneeringly.

"You're awfully good," he said. "Perhaps I'm a silly sheep requirin' good advice from a fellow in a lower Form. I think not, but perhaps I am. Of course, I'm awfully grateful."

"I did not mean to offend you, Smythe. There's nothing to take offence at. No schoolboy could be a match for a professional sharper."

"I rather fancy I'm a match for Mr. Bunce," said Smythe coolly. "It may interest you to hear that I beat him at his own game yesterday, and won two pounds from him."

"I am not surprised at that. If you won money from him at cards, it was because he wanted to lead you on."

Smythe flushed with anger.

"Confound your cheek!" he exclaimed. "Do you think I'm a baby?"

Erroll did not reply. It was plain enough that his well-meant warning had been wasted; he had only succeeded in wounding Adolphus' exuberant self-love.

Smythe rose to his feet, a bitter expression on his somewhat vacant face. The last thing he could have forgiven was a wound to his vanity.

"Is that all you've got to say?" he sneered.

"That's all."

"You're not goin' to offer to take care of my money for me?"

Erroll flushed.

"I think you're a cheeky, meddlin' ass!" said Smythe deliberately. "I don't believe a word that you've said about Bunce."

"What?"

"Bunce is a bit of a goer, but he's a sportsman, an' I can beat him at his own game, an' he pays up," said Smythe. "I'm not goin' to listen to you runnin' him down. You've got some axe to grind, I suppose."

"Smythe!"

"Oh, don't Smythe me! If you haven't got any axe to grind, what are you meddlin' in my business for?"

"I suppose that's how you'd look at it," said Erroll, after a pause, with contempt in his tones. "I can tell that I was an ass to come here."

"If you expect me to thank you for meddlin' in my affairs, you'll be disappointed. When I want your advice, I'll ask for it."

"Very well."

Erroll turned to the door.

"And since you're so interested in my business, I'll tell you what I'm

goin' to do," sneered Smythe. "I'm goin' to play Dicky Bunce this evenin', an' I'm goin' to clean him out, same as I did yesterday. I'm goin' to change my banknote at the Bird-in-Hand, and play for high stakes. An' I'm comin' home with my pockets full of tin. How does that strike you?"

"I think you are a fool!" said Erroll, as he opened the door.

"And I think you're a meddlin' cad, an' a rotter to run a man down behind his back, an' I've a jolly good mind to pull your nose!" said Smythe savagely. "I'm not askin' fatherly advice from a bouncer brought up in a thieves' kitchen, an' very likely a thief himself!"

Erroll spun round, his face flaming.

"What? You dare to say—"

"Oh, don't come the high horse with me!" said Smythe. "How do I know what you were before you came here? Most likely you and your precious Gentleman Jim were birds of a feather. In fact, I think it's pretty certain myself. Here, hands off, you cad!"

Erroll grasped the dandy of the Shell, and Smythe gave a yell of wrath and terror as he was swung off his feet.

Crash!

The Shell fellow crashed back into his armchair, flung there scornfully by the Fourth-former, with a shock that took his breath away.

Erroll's eyes gleamed at him.

"You cad!" he exclaimed. "You slandering cad! If you dare to repeat your words, I'll drive them back down your throat!"

Smythe gasped, and glared at him with mingled rage and fear.

"Get out of my study!" he panted. "Get out!"

Erroll walked to the door.

Adolphus Smythe gasped with relief when he was gone. The strong grasp of the Fourth-former had fairly crumpled him up.

"Oh, gad!" gasped Adolphus, groping for his eyeglass. "Oh, gad! The ruffian—the rough beast! Owl! Owl! Ow! Yow!"

Erroll, with a heightened colour, walked away from the study. Jimmy Silver, who was in the corridor, gave him a grin.

"I hope you haven't spoiled the set of Smythe's necktie?" he said anxiously. "Smythe's necktie is the glory of Rookwood, you know."

Erroll's face cleared, and he laughed.

"I oughtn't to have lost my temper with him," he said. "He can't help being a silly ass, I suppose!"

"Silly asses are like poets—born, not made!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "But what the merry dickens have you been going for Smythe for?"

"I—I—I was rather an ass, I suppose," said Erroll. "I gave him a tip to keep clear of Bunce, in Coombe, and he cut up rusty."

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Not much use giving Smythe good advice," he said. "Why, that fifty-quid banknote will be taken off him before he's a day or two older. If he were a friend of mine I'd march him down to the post-office by the scruff of his neck and make him put it in a safe place."

"Then it's rather a pity he's not a friend of yours!" said Erroll, laughing.

And he went to his study, and dismissed Adolphus Smythe from his mind. He had acted from good-nature and a sense of duty, and it had been a failure. Adolphus Smythe and the fifty-pound banknote were doubtless destined to illustrate once more the ancient proverb about fools and their money.

The 4th Chapter.

Mr. Mooney is Too Kind!

Many curious glances were cast at Smythe of the Shell after lessons.

It was a sort of open secret among the juniors that Adolphus intended to have a "first-class plunge" with his plenteous wealth.

There was envy among some of the fellows, and amusement or contempt among others.

Even Smythe's own friends, the nuts, did not approve of Adolphus' folly.

They were always ready for a "little game" themselves, but the idea of tempting Fortune with fifty pounds in one's pockets was rather staggering even to reckless fellows like Townsend and Peele.

If Smythe succeeded in "spoiling the Egyptians," certainly he would be a great man in the nutty circle for ever afterwards.

The speculations of the nuts generally amounted to a "quid on a gee-gee," or nap for shilling points, but the idea of setting out to paint the town red, so to speak, was new to them.

But between recklessness, greed, and self-conceit, Adolphus was deter-

mined to go on the way he had marked out for himself. Jimmy Silver felt a kind of compassion, mingled with contempt, for the sheep who was so determined to go to be shorn. But for Erroll's failure, Jimmy would probably have spoken a friendly word to Smythe on the subject.

As it was, he knew it would be useless, and held his peace.

Lovell remarked that it would be only friendly on the part of one of Smythe's friends to call a prefect in to deal with him.

But that was impossible. Certainly a prefect or a master would have made short work of Adolphus' reckless expedition planned for that afternoon. But severe trouble would have fallen upon Adolphus for having planned it, too.

Howard and Tracy had ventured mildly to hint that Smythe was playing the "ox," and to persuade him to leave his precious banknote at home if he went forth on that extraordinary enterprise of shearing the wolves.

Smythe curled his lip with disdain at the hints of his chums.

He knew what he was about, Smythe did! He was quite sure of that. To hint a doubt of it was to incur the lofty displeasure of Adolphus.

Indeed, Smythe did not fail to hint that the uneasiness of his friends was based upon an undue regard for the fifty-pounder on their part.

So Howard and Tracy gave it up, and let Adolphus go his own way, only wondering whether, when he came back, there would be enough of the fifty left for a game of bridge in the study.

Smythe had his tea early, and then sallied forth.

Twenty fellows at least knew where he was going, and a general grin followed him as he walked loftily down to the gates, en route for his "plunge."

Mornington burst into a laugh.

"Smythe's off!" he said.

"Quite off!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Off his silly onion! My only hat! What would Bulkeley say if he knew where that utter rotter was going?"

"Lucky for Smythe he don't know," grinned Raby.

"Still, it would save the birthday banknote if somebody tipped Bulkeley the wink."

"Did anybody ever hear of such a crass idiot!" said Rawson, in wonder.

"His uncle ought to be kicked for sending a fellow like Smythe fifty pounds. But to think of him going on the spree with such a sum in his pocket! My word!"

"Never had such a sum in your pocket—what?" said Lattrey, with a sneering glance at the scholarship boy.

"No, nor the tenth of it," said Rawson quietly.

"If I had I should find a better use for it than that."

"Well, fools and their money are soon parted," remarked Lovell.

"It's light enough to punt a ball about, Jimmy. Come on!"

"Hallo!" murmured Jimmy.

"Smythe's been stopped!"

Mr. Mooney had stopped Adolphus in the quadrangle. The master of the Shell had his coat and hat on, and was evidently going out.

The juniors drew a little nearer, rather anxious for Adolphus, wondering whether his Form-master had heard of the intended "plunge."

Incredible as Adolphus was, they would have been sorry to see him booked for a flogging.

But Mr. Mooney was not suspicious. He spoke to Adolphus quite genially.

"Ah! You are going out, Smythe?"

"Yes, sir! I—I was just going down to Coombe."

"To see about changing your banknote for a National War Bond, I presume?"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Smythe.

"Very good, Smythe! Strike the iron while it is hot!" said Mr. Mooney, with a smile.

"I am walking down to Coombe, and I will come with you to the post-office and assist you."

Smythe's jaw dropped.

As his destination was not the post-office, but the Bird-in-Hand public-house, he could not very well let Mr. Mooney accompany him thither.

The expression on Smythe's face was pure enjoyment to the juniors near at hand.

"The—the fact is, sir—" mumbled Adolphus.

"Yes, my boy?" said Mr. Mooney kindly.

"The—the fact is, I was only goin' to the post-office now to get some information about—about National War Bonds," said Smythe.

"I'd like to know all about the matter before I—I write to my father, sir. On reflection, I think I'd better ask his permission, as a matter of form, sir!"

"Quite right, Smythe!" said Mr. Mooney approvingly.

"Your father is your best adviser. Come with me, my boy!"

The kindhearted Form-master evidently meant to render Smythe every aid in his power in his patriotic desire to invest his birthday present in National War Bonds.

It was impossible for Smythe to refuse.

He left the school with the master of the Shell, and there was a chortle among the juniors as they saw him go.

"Poor old Smythe!" chuckled Lovell.

"Nipped in the bud, by gad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a disappointment for Dicky Bunce!" sighed Mornington.

"He will have to wait till to-morrow for that banknote!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was an hour later when Smythe of the Shell came in, and he went to his study with a gloomy brow.

Howard and Tracy smiled at him.

"Did you get rid of Mooney?" asked Howard.

Adolphus sank into a chair.

good beatin' about the bush. Smythe. You're playin' the giddy ox; and it was a stroke of luck Mr. Mooney stoppin' you!"

"If you're goin' to be impertinent, Howard—" said Smythe.

"Oh, rats!"

"I'm goin' to-morrow afternoon instead, of course!"

"Look here, Smythe—"

"An' I decline to discuss the matter further!" said Smythe.

"Well, fools and their money!" said Howard crossly.

"Rats!"

And Smythe of the Shell smoked his cigarette with great dignity, and declined to say another word.

The 5th Chapter. Smythe's Plunge.

"Arternoon, Master Smythe!"

Mr. Bunce spoke with almost oily politeness.

It was the following afternoon, a Wednesday and a half-holiday.

Bright and early after the juniors' midday dinner, Adolphus Smythe had started out once more, and this time he had avoided an unlucky encounter with his kind Form-master.

Adolphus had strolled elegantly down to the village, but when he reached the precincts of the Bird-in-Hand he dropped his elegant saunter, looked about him keenly and cautiously, and slipped quietly into the path by the inn, whence he gained admittance to the garden.

A squat, shiny-faced man was

intended that Adolphus should pay, heavily.

"Very kind of you to give me a look-in, sir," said Mr. Bunce affably.

"Pr'aps you'd care to step inside, sir."

"Certainly, Bunce!"

Mr. Bunce waved a fat hand to the open French windows, and Adolphus lounged in.

There was an odour of stale tobacco, and the fumes of spirits, about the little parlour, but Adolphus' nerves were hardened to that kind of thing.

"Elp yourself to the cigarettes, sir," said Mr. Bunce affably.

"Turkish, sir—your favourite brand."

"Thanks!"

"Lemme give you a light, Master Smythe. It's kindness itself for you to drop in for a chat with me, your humble friend, sir, if I may call myself so."

"Certainly, Bunce!"

"Very nice weather we're having, for the time of the year, sir," went on Mr. Bunce, who intended to let Adolphus be the first person to mention cards.

"Oh, quite," said Adolphus.

"The fact is, Bunce, I haven't simply dropped in for a chat. I thought you'd want your revenge, you know."

"You're too good for me, Master Smythe," said Mr. Bunce, with a shake of the head.

"But it's like a real sportin' gentleman, as you are, to say so. I'm your man, sir."

"By the way," said Adolphus, with

Mr. Bunce assented, with a doubtful air.

But really he had nothing to be doubtful about; for very soon after the stakes had become substantial, Mr. Bunce began to win, in a sweeping manner.

The pile of notes at Smythe's elbow grew smaller and smaller, and the face of Adolphus Smythe grew longer and longer, till it almost resembled a fiddle.

The 6th Chapter. A Friend in Need!

"I fancy we shall beat Greyfriars next time!" Jimmy Silver remarked complacently, as he came off the football-ground with his chums that afternoon.

"We're in form!" said Lovell.

"Mornny's showing up jolly well, too! Swotting instead of painting the town red seems to agree with Mornny."

"Talking of painting the town red, I wonder how Smythe's getting on!" said Raby, with a laugh.

Mornington chuckled.

"He's gone on the war-path," he said. "They've skinned him by this time! Poor old Smythe! Fifty quids in a lump!"

"Would he be fool enough?" said Newcome. "All at once?"

"I'll bet you he won't stop so long as he's got a bob left," said Mornington, with cynical amusement.

"And Dicky Bunce will give him all he wants, and a little over."

"Here he comes!" said Erroll.

All eyes were turned upon the elegant Adolphus, as he came across the quadrangle from the gates. The footballers were rather interested in Adolphus' plunge; it was on such an uncommonly large scale.

But their smiles faded as they saw the expression on Smythe's face.

The foolish fellow's face was pale, lined, almost haggard. It was not necessary to ask how he had fared on his "plunge."

If ever a fellow looked utterly sick, it was Smythe of the Shell at that moment.

He did not look at the footballers. He passed on, unseeing, his eyes fixed on the ground, walking almost like a fellow in a dream.

"My hat!" said Jimmy Silver, in a low voice.

"The poor fool's got it in the neck, and no mistake! I suppose they've robbed him right and left."

"Cleaned him out!" said Mornington, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"What did the silly ass expect?"

"It's rotten!" said Erroll, setting his teeth.

"Smythe is a fool, but that arrant blackguard, Bunce, ought to be scragged!"

"Oh, he's got Smythe tight," said Mornington carelessly.

"He's no right to keep the money, but Smythe daren't say a word. He would be kicked out of Rookwood like a shot, if it came out about his gambling in a pub. He's got to take it quietly."

The juniors went in, and on the staircase Erroll left his companions. With a somewhat hesitating manner, Kit bent his footsteps in the direction of Adolphus' study.

Fool and blackguard as the wretched fellow was, Erroll could not help feeling pity for him. The look on Smythe's face had gone right to his heart.

Meanwhile, Smythe had gone into his study.

Howard and Tracy were there, and they grinned at the sight of him. They had not much sympathy to waste on the lame duck.

"Had much luck?" asked Tracy.

Smythe sank into a chair, with a groan.

"I'm cleaned out, clean as a whistle," he muttered.

"What did you expect?" said Howard, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, dear!"

"Well, you can't say we didn't warn you," said Tracy.

"I spoke to you as a friend, and you snapped my head off. It's your own fault."

Smythe groaned.

He was utterly weak and dispirited after the unhealthy excitement of gambling, and the reaction had set in. The loss of his fifty pounds almost stunned him. It was gone—to the last shilling!

He had played on desperately, in the hope of retrieving his losses, and the result had been what he might have expected—but which he had been very far, in his arrogant self-conceit, from expecting.

"Well, you don't look very cheerful," said Howard.

"Grin and bear it, you know. My only hat! Don't blub!"

Smythe, in utter misery, covered his face with his hands. He was too spent and miserable to care what his study-mates thought of him.

Howard and Tracy exchanged contemptuous glances as they saw the



The juniors drew a little nearer, rather anxious for Adolphus, wondering whether his Form-master had heard of the intended "plunge." Incredible as Adolphus was, they would have been sorry to see him booked for a flogging.

"Give a fellow a cigarette!" he moaned. "I've been through it! The awful old ass actually took me into the post-office!"

Howard and Tracy chortled.

"It's not a laughin' matter!" said Smythe indignantly.

"He made them explain to me all about National War Bonds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And told the blessed postmaster all about my birthday banknote, and my patriotic desire to help the country in war-time by investin' it in National War Bonds!" groaned Adolphus.

"Oh, that's rich!"

"He's bored me nearly to death!" said Adolphus pathetically.

"Blessed if he wouldn't have made me shell out the blessed banknote there and then, only I fended him off with makin' out I was goin' to write to my father first."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I shall have to stuff him up that I've sent it to my pater to invest for me," grunted Adolphus.

"Utterly spoiled my little game for to-day!"

"And Dicky Bunce's, too!" smiled Howard.

Smythe was lighting a cigarette. He left off to stare freezingly at his study-mate.

"I don't understand you, Howard!" he said icily.

"Well, Bunce would have had the banknote by this time!" said Howard coolly.

"It's no

smoking a strong cigar in the wooden veranda at the back, and he rose and greeted Smythe of the Shell with great politeness. Mr. Dicky Bunce was pleased to see Adolphus—very pleased.

Dicky Bunce had been aware for some days that Smythe's rich uncle had promised him fifty pounds on his birthday.

Mr. Bunce had rather wondered what Smythe's uncle could see in Smythe, to prompt him to make that munificent birthday-gift, but he had not said so.

And Mr. Bunce, with a hungry eye open for the fifty-pounder, had allowed the egregious Adolphus to beat him at the game of draw poker, and win two sovereigns from him—a sprat to catch a whale.

Now Adolphus had come along with the whale, so to speak, and Mr. Bunce was naturally glad to see him.

He had had certain unpleasant doubts as to whether some other sharper might not have been before him, on the track of the birthday banknote. But Adolphus' cheery look showed that he still had the banknote about him, and Mr. Bunce was reassured.

Adolphus responded to Mr. Bunce's greeting with condescending politeness.

He was polite to the "sportsman" in a very lofty way, which sufficiently marked his sense of the social disparity between them.

Mr. Bunce did not mind that in the least. So long as Adolphus paid for his airs and graces, he was welcome to them. And Mr. Bunce

exaggerated carelessness, "could you change a fifty-pound note for me?"

"I don't know as I could, sir, but the landlord will, with pleasure. I'll call him in."

"Oh, do!" yawned Adolphus.

The red-faced gentleman who kept the Bird-in-Hand stepped into the parlour at Mr. Bunce's call, and he was obliging enough to change the banknote. The red-faced gentleman had the change about him, just as if he had been prepared for such a request. Perhaps he had!

Adolphus Smythe received six fivers, and a bundle of greasy currency notes. It was quite a handful of money. Mr. Bunce's deep-set eyes were fairly glittering with greed.

The landlord gave Mr. Bunce a significant look, and retired from the scene. That look meant that he was to receive a percentage of the plunder afterwards, for leaving the rich pigeon in Mr. Bunce's hands to be plucked.

Mr. Bunce produced a pack of cards, and sat down at the table with Adolphus.

The game was draw poker, a game which Adolphus flattered himself that he had mastered. Certainly, he had beaten Mr. Bunce at that game—when Mr. Bunce chose that he should beat him.

And to Adolphus' delight, Mr. Bunce had bad luck to begin with, and several pounds passed over the table, and Smythe, in his delight, and with the greed of the gambler upon him, proposed to increase the stakes.

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(Continued from the previous page.)

tears oozing between poor Adolphus' fingers.

"Oh, chuck that, Smythe, for goodness' sake!" muttered Tracy.

"He—he cheated me!" mumbled Smythe. "I—I saw him dealing from the bottom of the pack in the last round—I'll swear I did! I've been swindled!"

"Well, blubbing won't help you."

Smythe did not answer. He was shaking from head to foot. Howard and Tracy walked out of the study. They did not want to be "on" in a scene like that. It was a miserable ending enough to the bold plunge of the blade of Rookwood.

A few minutes later there was a quiet tap at the door, and Erroll came in. Smythe looked up, with a miserable, tear-stained face.

He stared wretchedly at Erroll.

"So you've come?" he said bitterly. "Well, rub it in! I've been cheated, and I've lost all my money, so you can rejoice, hang you!"

"I don't want to rub it in, Smythe," said Erroll. "I'm sorry."

"Are you? That's more than my pals are!" muttered Smythe. "They're amused. Of course, it's all damned funny! I can see that."

"Of course, as I knew the man, I know he would cheat you," said Erroll. "I am glad you can see it for yourself, old fellow."

"I actually saw him dealin' from the bottom of the pack at the finish!" sobbed Smythe. "I suppose he was cheatin' me all the time, an' I was too excited to see it. Oh, what a silly fool I've been! And my pals only grinnin' at me—telling me not to blub!"

And poor Adolphus blubbed in good earnest. He was quite overcome, and his nerves were in rags.

Erroll's strong, handsome face was full of compassion. Strong himself, unswerving on the path of right, there was no self-righteousness about him. He could feel compassion and kind sympathy for a fellow who was too weak and foolish to keep straight. It was no time to lecture Smythe, and it was not Erroll's business to lecture him. He was not there for that.

He was there to help; it was his nature to help a lame dog over the stile, without accompanying his kind action with an ill-timed sermon.

"The man has no right to keep your money, Smythe," he said. "Even if he won it fairly he would have no right to keep it. But he cheated you."

"I know he did." "I know it also. He is a professional card-sharper, as I told you—and worse. He has no right to keep your money."

"I—I can't say anythin'. He knows that. I should be sacked from Rookwood if the Head knew where I'd been this afternoon, an' what I've been doin'!" groaned Smythe.

"But if he could be made to return the money?"

Adolphus started. "He couldn't! What are you talkin' about?" Adolphus felt a

twinge of remorse. "I—I say, Erroll, I'm sorry I cut up rusty as I did yesterday. You're a good chap, an' I treated you like a cad. I believe you'd help me now if you could; but you can't."

"I would—and I think I can," said Erroll quietly. "If that villain could be made to hand your money back, Smythe!"

"He couldn't! He's robbed me, an' he knows he's safe. I can't say a word without admittin' that I was there gamblin' with him!"

"No need for that. Suppose I can make him give you back the money he's robbed you of?" said Erroll.

Smythe jumped. "You!"

"Yes."

"But you couldn't!"

"I think I could."

"But—but you're potty!" said Smythe, in wonder. But already his face was brighter. There was something in Erroll's cool quietness that gave confidence. "I—I say, you're not pulling my leg? You wouldn't."

"I think I could do it," said Erroll steadily. "If I could, would you care for me to interfere?"

"Would I?" Smythe almost asked. "Yes, rather! I tell you I've been robbed me almost as if you'd picked my pocket!"

"But, one condition, if you don't mind," said Erroll. "If I can recover your money, will you put it in a safe place?"

"I'll stand you half of it if you can really get it back!" said Adolphus eagerly.

Erroll frowned.

"I don't want any of it, Smythe. If you will agree to invest it in National War Bonds, that's all I ask? It makes it safe, it's a good investment, and it helps carry on the war. Do that, old fellow. That's not much to ask of you, is it, if I get it back for you?"

"You're a queer fish, Erroll," said Smythe, with a tremble in his voice. "I wonder you can speak a word to me after the way I treated you. Of course, I'll do as you ask—I'll be glad to. I wish I'd taken Mr. Mooney's advice in the first place. But—but you can't get my fifty pounds away from that rogue—it's impossible!"

"I shall try!" said Erroll. "Come with me, Smythe!"

"Where?"

"To Coombe."

"You—you're goin' to see him?" stammered Smythe.

Erroll nodded.

"But—but it's a flogging if you're seen goin' to the Bird-in-Hand!" said the dandy of the Shell.

"I'm risking that."

"Erroll, old chap," Smythe faltered, "you're going to risk it for me? What on earth are you doin' it for? You're not a pal of mine—and my own pals don't care!"

"That's all right—come along! You'll wait for me at the post-office, and if I bring you the money, you'll pay it in at once, won't you?"

"Yes, rather, and glad to!" Amazed as he was, Smythe was

already feeling confidence. He gave his face a dab or two before the glass, and left the study with Erroll.

"Hallo! Going out?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, meeting them in the lower passage. "You're due in our study to tea, Erroll."

"Excuse me, Jimmy; I've got something on hand," said Erroll. "You don't mind?"

"Not a bit, old scout! Cut along!" said Jimmy cheerily.

But the captain of the Fourth looked very curiously after Adolphus Smythe and Kit Erroll as they went down to the gates together.

The 7th Chapter. Called to Account.

"Is Mr. Bunce here, please?" The barman at the Bird-in-Hand inn looked oddly at the handsome Rookwood junior as he asked the question.

Kit Erroll looked curiously out of place there.

"Yes, sir; he's in the parlour. Go straight through," said the man. "Thank you!"

"Skuse me, sir, the young gents usually drop in the back way," the man added, in a low voice.

Erroll smiled, and thanked him, and went into the passage. The barman had meant to give him a good-natured tip; but Erroll was not there for a "little game" with the sportsmen, and he had entered without disguise.

He went on to the inn-parlour, of which the door stood half-open. There was a murmur of voices within.

Erroll pushed open the door, and stepped in.

Mr. Dicky Bunce was there, with the fat landlord. They had glasses on the table between them, and both

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of them looked very cheery and satisfied.

The plucking of Adolphus Smythe meant a tremendous profit to Mr. Bunce and a handsome percentage to his confederate.

The two dingy men stared at Erroll. Mr. Bunce rose to his feet, a very startled expression on his face.

"Kit!" he exclaimed.

"Friend o' yours, Dicky?" said the innkeeper. "Come in, young gentleman! You're welcome here!"

"I have called to see Mr. Bunce on business," said Erroll quietly.

"Right you are, sir!" The innkeeper left the parlour, obviously under the impression that this was a fresh pigeon for Mr. Bunce's net.

Mr. Bunce was not thinking so, however. He was regarding Erroll with a very unquiet look.

The schoolboy stood, his hand resting on the table, looking across it at the dingy sharper.

"This 'ere is rather a surprise, Kit," said Mr. Bunce. "I ain't seed you since the old times, but I've heard about you from Gentleman Jim. You turned your back on him. Is

this 'ere a friendly visit? I'm willin' to be friends."

"It is not a friendly visit," said Erroll. "I have called to ask you for the fifty pounds you have cheated Smythe, of Rookwood, out of."

"Wot!" "Will you have the kindness to hand over the money?"

"Are you potty?" said Mr. Bunce, in wonder. "Wot's it got to do with you, anyway, Kit Erroll? Are you that feller's bear-leader?"

"I am taking a hand in this game, to prevent you from robbing him," said Erroll. "I have come here for the money, Bunce."

"Will you 'ave it now, or when you can get it?" asked Mr. Bunce, with an attempt at humour.

"I will have it now."

Mr. Bunce bit the end off a big black cigar, and felt in his pockets for a match. But in spite of his assumption of indifference, he was uneasy under the clear, steady eyes of the Rookwood junior.

"I am waiting," said Erroll.

"Wait as long as you like, cully!" said Mr. Bunce affably. "Ave a drink! Whisky-and-soda!"

"I mean business!" Mr. Bunce. "So do I!" said Mr. Bunce. "That there fifty's mine! I won it!"

"You stole it, you mean!"

"I won it at cards!"

"Even Smythe found out that you were cheating him, but I should have known it anyway," said Erroll. "You are not entitled to keep a shilling of it, so you will not be allowed to do so!"

"So the young gent's making a fuss—wot?" sneered Mr. Bunce. "It may pay 'im to remember that if he kicks up a shindy his 'eadmaster will 'ear of it, and you know wot that will mean for the young fool."

"His headmaster will not hear of it," said Erroll. "Smythe is not going to make a fuss. The matter is in my hands."

"I savvy. You've come along for a whack in the dibs," said Mr. Bunce, with a nod. "Well, fair's fair. How much do you want?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Oh, draw it mild, Kit!" urged Mr. Bunce. "I'll stand you a fiver out of it, to hold your tongue an' sit quiet. That's a good offer."

"You will hand me fifty pounds, to be returned to Smythe?"

"Ow do I know it's to be returned to Smythe?" said Mr. Bunce, with a sneer.

"You will take my word for that. Still, if you like, you can follow me to the post-office, and see the money paid in there by Smythe."

Mr. Bunce lighted his cigar.

"I ain't looking for a stroll jest now," he said. "Wot do you say to a little game of banker, Kit? I've got the cards 'ere."

"Will you hand me Smythe's money?"

"No, I won't!" Erroll's eyes gleamed, though his face was calm and composed.

"Very well. From here I go to the police-station," he said.

"To 'ave me up for gamblin' with a schoolboy?" grinned Mr. Bunce. "And wot will 'appen to Master Smythe at his school arterwards?"

"No! To denounce you as the accomplice of Gentleman Jim, the crackman, and to have you arrested!"

Mr. Bunce's teeth closed so hard on his cigar that they almost bit through it. His flabby hands clenched tight.

"Wot can you prove?" he asked. "I can prove nothing, though I suspect a great deal," said Erroll. "I believe it was by your aid that Gentleman Jim escaped from prison. I am certain that you know where he is lurking now. I know you are hand-in-glove with him and the gang, and I am quite certain that once the police knew as much as I know they would find proofs enough to send you to penal servitude. You know it as well as I do, Bunce. Don't play the fool!"

"And this is the ighly moral Kit Erroll, who wouldn't touch a stiver not his own, turnin' nark and police-spy!" said Mr. Bunce bitterly. Erroll flushed.

"Nothing of the kind! It is not my business to play detective, and I should not think of saying a word about you, if you keep clear of me. But I will not allow you to rob one of my schoolfellows when I can prevent it. The money is not your own. You must return it. Don't beat about the bush, Bunce. You know you've got to do it!"

Mr. Bunce gritted his teeth. "I never knowed this 'ere Smythe was a pal of yours!" he said.

"He is not."

"Then wot are you chippin' in for?"

"Fair play, common honesty!" said Erroll. "Nothing that you would understand, I'm afraid."

There was a pause.

"Halves, Kit!" said Mr. Bunce at last.

Kit Erroll set his lips. "For the last time, Bunce, will you hand me Smythe's money?"

"No!" muttered the rascal. "Enough said."

Kit Erroll swung round to the door. Mr. Bunce's eyes glittered after him, with mingled hatred and fear.

"Where are you goin', Kit?" he muttered.

"You know where I am going. You have brought it on yourself!" said Erroll coldly.

"Hold on!" said Mr. Bunce huskily, as the Rookwood junior was in the doorway. "Hold on, Kit! You—you know you've got me, hang you! I—I give in."

Erroll paused.

"Quick, then!" he said.

Mr. Bunce, with bitter chagrin in his coarse face, fumbled in his pockets. Erroll glanced at the greasy wad of currency notes and fivers.

"Where is Smythe's banknote?" he asked.

"It was changed with the landlord 'ere."

"Then you can get it."

Mr. Bunce passed into the bar. He came back in a couple of minutes with a scowling face. A minute more, and Kit Erroll left the inn and joined Adolphus Smythe at the corner of the street.

The dandy of the Shell eyed him eagerly.

"Well?" he breathed.

"Come along!" said Erroll, with a smile. "Here it is, Smythe!"

"Oh, gad!" said Adolphus, almost overcome.

His fingers trembled as they closed on the fifty-pound note. Willingly enough the Shell fellow walked into the post-office with Erroll to place the birthday banknote, after its narrow escape, in safe hands.

Kit Erroll was rather late to tea in the end study with the Fistical Four. Jimmy Silver & Co. did not know what had happened at the Bird-in-Hand, but they guessed that Erroll had somehow taken a hand in the game when they heard the news of Smythe's fifty-pounder later on.

For the great Adolphus had quite recovered from his depression of spirits, and was himself again. His lofty manner had returned, and there was considerable swank about Adolphus when he mentioned carelessly in the Common-room that he had invested fifty quids in National War Bonds. He was the only junior at Rookwood who had, and it was a great distinction.

But certainly that sage investment would never have been made if Kit Erroll of the Fourth had not come to the rescue of a fool and his money!

THE END.

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TALES OF THE DORMITORY!

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AT ROOKWOOD SCHOOL.

No. 2.—"FOILING THE FOOD-HOGS!"

By ARTHUR E. LOVELL.

Bulkeley, the captain of Rookwood School, closed the door of the Classical Fourth Form dormitory with a bang.

For a few moments complete silence reigned in the dormitory, but as soon as Bulkeley had had time to get clear of the passage the silence was broken by the voices of the juniors.

"Come on, you fellows!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, placing a pillow on the floor of the dormitory, and throwing himself upon it. "We've got to hear Lovell's yarn to-night!"

"Rather!" chorused the juniors. Dick Oswald lighted a candle, and placed it on a washstand.

"Buck up, Lovell!" cried Jimmy Silver. "What's the yarn to be called?" Lovell took his place in the centre of the eager throng of juniors.

"I think I shall call it 'Foiling the Food-Hogs,'" he said. "It's a tale of Setton School, and it's all about—"

"Don't give the yarn away, Lovell, old scout," urged Newcome. "Start right from the beginning."

"Oh, all right!" said Lovell. And he started. This is the tale he told.

The 1st Chapter.

Food-Hogs.

Like most public schools, Setton possessed its food-hogs.

The order had gone forth that there was to be rigid economy in food. Some fellows obeyed the order, but many didn't.

Rogers, Denham, and Dane, three of the wealthiest juniors at the school, did not openly disobey the order. But, all the same, they constantly held secret feasts in their study.

They smuggled immense quantities of grub into the school, and usually managed to avoid being suspected by the prefects and masters.

These feasts went on for quite a fortnight, when Jimmy Gray, the captain of the Fourth, and his chums, Tom Fisher and Green, took a hand in the matter.

"Those ratters in No. 7 Study are gorging themselves again," announced Tom Fisher one afternoon. "I just spotted Denham carrying a cricket-bag into his den."

"Cricket-bag!" exclaimed Jimmy Gray, in surprise. "What's he want with a cricket-bag at this time of the year? Cricket's all over and done with!"

"Of course it is!" said Fisher. "But, all the same, it's easy to guess what was in the bag."

"Grub?"

"What else could it contain? Besides, Adams and his crowd went into the study just after Denham. And if they haven't gone in there for a feed I'll eat my giddy hat!"

"I guess you're right, old son," said Jimmy Gray. "It's a bit too thick, though. They're absolutely helping the Huns by being food-hogs. It's a pity the prefects or masters don't get on their track!"

"Oh, they walk about with their eyes shut!" declared Fisher. "They never will suspect anything until it's thrust under their very eyes. I tell you what, Jimmy, old son. We shall have to put a stop to it ourselves."

"Not a bad idea," agreed Jimmy blandly.

"Well, how are we going to do it?"

"Dunno."

"You're leader of the study, Jimmy," said Tom Fisher firmly. "Therefore it stands to reason that it's up to you to think of a wheeze. You see—"

"My hat!"

"Hallo! What's bitten you now?"

"I've got a wheeze!" exclaimed Jimmy Gray excitedly. "A really top-hole wheeze, too! My giddy aunt! We'll make those beastly food-hogs sit up!"

"Good! How's it to be done?"

"Listen!" said Jimmy Gray. And he propounded to his chums the wonderful wheeze that was to be worked on Rogers & Co., the food-hogs of the Fourth.

When Jimmy Gray concluded his explanations his chums roared with laughter. There was no doubt that there was something in Jimmy Gray's wheeze. Jimmy Gray jumped up from his chair.

"You chaps buzz into the village and get half a dozen of the hungriest-looking kids you can find," he said, with a laugh. "I'll go upstairs and tog myself up as old Browning."

"Old Browning," or Mr. Douglas Browning, to give him his correct name, was master of the Fourth. He had been ill for some time recently, and had gone away for a holiday.

It was rather a good thing for Jimmy Gray and his chums that the master was absent from the school, otherwise they would have run a great risk in carrying out their scheme.

As it was, the prospects seemed bright. Jimmy Gray was roaring with laughter in eager anticipation of what was to happen within the next half-hour as he wended his way in the direction of the Fourth Form dormitory.

Once inside the dormitory, Jimmy went to an old locker and brought to view a master's cap and gown, and a pair of trousers that certainly did not belong to the Fourth-Form junior.

Jimmy took off his own clothes, and in less than five minutes he stood arrayed in cap and gown. The addition of a moustache to the upper lip and a pair



"Here, stop it, can't you?" exclaimed Rogers, as the youngster took hold of his arm with two jammy hands.

of spectacles made him the exact counterpart of Mr. Douglas Browning, the master of the Fourth.

His disguise complete, he walked over to the window, and peered into the quad beneath.

The quad was deserted, but in less than two minutes the figures of his chums, Fisher and Green, appeared in the gateway, closely followed by no less than six village children, ranging between the ages of five and nine.

The old porter came out of his lodge, and gazed spellbound at the little procession, but the gift of a shilling from Tom Fisher caused him to retire to his lodge once again.

Jimmy Gray left the window of the dormitory, and, going downstairs, he arrived at the end of the Fourth Form passage at the same moment as Tom Fisher and the village kids came up the stairs.

"Ah, my children," said Jimmy Gray, in the voice of Mr. Browning, "you've come, then?"

The children muttered amongst themselves. Their eyes glistened in eager anticipation of what was to come. Tom Fisher had told them the reason for bringing them to the school.

"Come along with me!" said Jimmy Gray, leading the way in the direction of Study No. 7.

He raised his hand for silence as they stopped outside the study shared by Rogers & Co., and tapped on the door.

Immediately there were mutterings inside the room, but the door was not opened.

"Rogers," exclaimed Jimmy Gray, in the deep voice of Mr. Browning, as he knocked on the door once again, "please be good enough to open this door!"

"Browning!" exclaimed Rogers from inside.

"Yes, Rogers, you are quite correct," said Jimmy Gray promptly. "It is I."

Next instant there came a sound of bustling in the study, and at length the door was opened, to reveal seven or eight juniors sitting round the table.

The plates on the table were empty; there was an entire absence of food of any description.

Jimmy Gray entered and surveyed the food-hogs critically. The six village children followed closely at his heels. Tom Fisher and Green had taken a hurried departure.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Rogers, in amazement, as he caught sight of the villagers. "What ever do these little brats—I mean, kids—want?"

"Have you forgotten, Rogers?"

"I—I—I don't understand!" faltered Rogers.

"Do you mean to tell me that you haven't asked these children to have tea with you?" asked Mr. Browning simply.

"Good heavens, no!"

"That is very strange, Rogers," said Mr. Browning. "These children must have been misinformed. They certainly were led to believe that you would provide them with tea when they arrived here."

"Me, sir?"

"Yes, you, Rogers!" continued Mr.

Browning. "It is very strange that you should deny having invited these poor little children to tea. I really thought that you had given a thought to these children's sufferings, and had decided to cheer them up by giving them a good, hearty meal."

"Why, I—"

"However," went on Mr. Browning, ignoring Rogers' protest, "one can hardly be cruel enough to send these children back to their homes without first appeasing their hunger."

"We've finished tea, sir," said Rogers.

"So I see, Rogers. But surely you have some food which you can give these hungry children?"

"Not a crumb, sir!"

"Oh, nonsense, Rogers! A loaf of bread, a little butter, and—"

"We have nothing, sir!" snapped Rogers impatiently. "If we— Here, mind where you're putting your paws, you little beast!"

One of the village children had walked into the study and placed a dirty hand on Rogers' immaculate trousers.

Rogers pushed the child roughly aside.

"Rogers!" exclaimed the pseudo Mr. Browning severely. "How dare you treat a child so roughly!"

"The little beast was rubbing its dirty hands on my trousers!" protested Rogers.

"That is not sufficient excuse for you to give way to brutality," said the master firmly. "Remember, this child's upbringing is entirely different from yours. Its father is probably one of the toiling millions who are working night and day for their country's sake. It is your duty to show every kindness to children of this sort, and strive your utmost to brighten their young lives. Dear me! Is there any hurry, Denham?"

Denham had jumped up from his chair, and was making for the door of the study.

"I've just remembered that I've got an appointment, sir," said Denham feebly.

"It will wait, I presume," said the master, stepping in Denham's path.

"Your manners are exceedingly bad, Denham," he added cuttingly. "I am your Form-master, and you have no right to leave my presence when I am talking to you."

"I—I thought you were talking to Rogers, sir!" mumbled Denham.

"I am talking to you all!" snapped Mr. Browning. "Dear me! You children are really making too much noise. Pray be quiet!"

The youngsters were certainly making a fair amount of noise, but they gazed up shamefacedly at the man in cap and gown, and all was soon quiet once again.

"Now," said Mr. Browning, "we must see whether we cannot find something to eat for these children. Rogers, just have a look in your cupboard, will you?"

"T-t-there's nothing there, sir!" stammered Rogers helplessly. "Really, the c-c-cupboard is empty!"

The master peered intently in the direction of the cupboard, the door of which was slightly open.

"Are you sure, Rogers?" he asked.

"Do my eyes deceive me, or is that a cake I can see there in the cupboard?"

Rogers gazed at the cupboard, and shifted uneasily on his feet.

"Oh, that's stale, sir!" he said awkwardly.

"Very stale, sir!" added Denham at once.

"That doesn't matter at all," said Mr. Browning. "I don't suppose these children will mind. I dare say they are used to eating cakes of that description—if they ever have any cakes."

Mr. Browning sighed. "Poor little cherubs! Their lives are indeed hard ones. Let me have a look at that cake, Rogers!"

"It's too stale, sir—far too stale!" protested Rogers. "We should hate to have to offer them a cake like that, wouldn't we, you fellows?"

"Rather!" agreed the fellows.

"Why, sir," said Rogers eagerly, "it would probably make them ill! Don't you think it would be better if we gave them, say, sixpence each, and let them buy exactly what they want?"

"Not at all, Rogers—not at all!" snapped Mr. Browning harshly. "These children have been led to believe that they would receive a good tea upon their arrival here. We must on no account disappoint them. They shall have their tea!"

"Oh!" gasped the food-hogs, in one voice.

"I will have a look at that cake," said Mr. Browning. "Possibly it is not quite so stale as you think."

And Jimmy Gray, playing his part as Mr. Browning to perfection, walked over towards the cupboard. Rogers and his fellow food-hogs watched him go with feelings of the most nervous kind. They happened to know exactly what that cupboard contained.

The 2nd Chapter.

Done Brown!

"Good heavens!"

It was the pseudo Mr. Browning who made the remark. He had drawn the door of the cupboard in Rogers' study open to its widest extent, and he started back in mock surprise at the sight of the contents of the cupboard.

"What ever is all this food doing here?" he gasped in amazement.

"I—I—I—" faltered Rogers, who, of course, knew the exact amount of food which rested in the cupboard, seeing that he and his cronies had hurriedly put it there when Mr. Browning had knocked on the study door.

"Why, this cake is quite fresh!" remarked Mr. Browning. "Bread, butter, sardines, tinned fruits, rock-cakes—"

"Why, Rogers, I really think you must have been endeavouring to deceive me! There's more than enough food here to satisfy these hungry children. Help me, my dear boys, to put this food on the table."

"That food doesn't belong to us, sir," said Rogers haltingly. "It—"

"Never mind, Rogers," said Mr. Browning, placing the cake on the table. "It will hurt no boy at this school to have to part with a little food in such a deserving cause."

"By gad!" gasped Rogers helplessly.

"Come along, Rogers, and you, Denham and Dane. Lend your assistance instantly!"

"B-b-but—" faltered the food-hogs.

"Please do not argue!" snapped the master. "I command you to lend me your assistance. Take this loaf of bread, Denham, and commence cutting it into slices."

Denham did not move.

"Denham, do you hear me?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!"

"Well, do as I tell you. Cut this loaf into slices for these poor, hungry children!"

"Phew!" gasped Denham. But, all the same, he took the loaf, and put it on the table. "This is the absolute limit!"

"The silly chump's gone mad!" muttered Dane.

"Did you speak?" asked the master, looking round at that moment.

"N-n-no, sir!" mumbled Dane.

"But you said something."

"Oh, y-y-yes, sir!" stammered Dane awkwardly. "I w-w-was saying what a s-s-splendid notion this is of yours."

"You consider I'm doing quite right, then?"

"Y-y-yes, sir!"

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Browning.

"Then perhaps you'd be kind enough to make the tea for these children. I am sure that after waiting for such a long time, they must be extremely thirsty."

"Oh!" growled Dane. He had put his foot in it now with a vengeance.

"Here you are, Dane!" said Mr. Browning, handing the junior a small packet. "Here's some tea. Ah! And here's some sugar! This is splendid!"

Dane held his hand out slowly and took the packets.

Mr. Browning put the kettle on the fire, and then turned towards the table.

"Now get up, you boys," he said, with a smile, "and let these children sit down. You have had your teas, so you must make room for others."

"By Jove!"

"Come along, Denham! Don't keep these children waiting!"

"B-b-but—" muttered Denham, attempting to argue.

"Denham," roared Mr. Browning, "how dare you disobey me! I shall have to administer a severe punishment to you if you do not arise from your chair!"

Denham got up. Mr. Browning was a stickler for discipline, and Denham had no desire to ruffle his temper.

"Now, come along, you children," said Mr. Browning simply. "Take your seats round this table. We'll soon set you going."

The children made a rush for the table, and each took the first seat he could place his hands on.

Rogers and his cronies moved slowly towards the door, but Mr. Browning's eagle eye caught them.

"Come back, you boys!" he ordered. "You can prove of considerable assistance to me in looking after these children."

The juniors pulled long faces, and turned slowly back.

"Why, Dane, you've not cut the bread-and-butter yet!" remarked Mr. Browning.

"Oh, I—I—I forgot, sir!" stammered Dane.

"Please do so at once, Dane!" commanded Mr. Browning. "Ah, the water's boiling! Make the tea, Rogers, please, and then pour out six cups. I presume you have some more cups?"

Mr. Browning peered into the cupboard. "My word!" he added. "You have a fine stock of crockery here! Come here, Denham, and place these cups and saucers on the table."

Denham moved forward, muttering beneath his breath. He took the pieces of crockery, however, and placed them on the table.

Dane had made the tea, and he put the pot near the cups and saucers.

Mr. Browning, who seemed to be enjoying himself immensely, poured out the tea, and passed a cup to each of the children.

"Bread-and-butter this way!" said Mr. Browning.

Denham handed the plate of bread-and-butter to the master.

"I do not require it, Denham," remarked Mr. Browning. "Please be good enough to pass the plate round yourself."

"Oh, crumbs!" muttered Denham. And he held out the plate before the children.

The kids immediately made a dive for the bread-and-butter, and in less than five minutes they were munching away at it for all they were worth.

Mr. Browning walked over to one of the youngsters, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"Well, young man," he said, "what's your name?"

"George!" replied the youngster.

"Oh, good! Is there anything you want?"

The youngster grinned, and pointed to a pot of jam.

"Jam this way, Rogers!" commanded Mr. Browning.

Rogers pushed the jam across the table.

"Anything you'd like, my son?" asked the master, bending over the shoulder of another youngster.

"I should like that gentleman to sit next to me, please, mister," said the youngster, pointing to Rogers.

"Very well," said Mr. Browning. "Come

(Continued on page 252, col. 5.)

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The 1st Chapter.

Beauclerc's Father!

"Hallo, something on!" remarked Bob Lawless.

It was a keen, frosty morning, and Frank Richards and his cousin Bob looked ruddy and bright as they jumped off their ponies at the gate of Cedar Creek School.

As they came into the school ground they looked round for their chum, Vere Beauclerc, but he was not to be seen.

Kern Gunten, the Swiss, was the centre of a group of fellows, and the sound of a general chuckle greeted Frank and Bob as they came in.

They joined the group.

Gunten gave them a quick look. He had been speaking as they came up, but he stopped suddenly now.

"Go on, Gunten!" said Eben Hacke.

"What's the merry joke?" asked Bob Lawless. "Don't leave us out of it!"

"It's old Beauclerc on the rampage again!" grinned Hacke. "Gunten's popper fired him last night out of his store in Thompson. Gunten was telling us about it!"

Frank Richards knitted his brows. "Gunten might find something better to talk about!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, rather!" chimed in Chunky Todgers. "If poor old Beauclerc was full, it was old Gunten who sold him the fire-water, anyhow! Beauclerc may be here any minute, and you don't want him to hear about his popper!"

"I don't care!" said Gunten. "If his father is a remittance man and a waster, that's his look-out! He kicked up a row at the store last night, and he was fired. Serve him right!"

"Oh, shut up!" snapped Bob Lawless, with much less than his usual good-humour.

"Rats!" said Hacke. "Let Gunten spin his yarn. If young Beauclerc hears him it may do him good, and take him down a peg or two, I guess. He puts on too many airs for a remittance man's son."

"The old sport had got his remittance from England," grinned Gunten. "He came up to Thompson to blue it, as usual. He was in a game with Poker Pete, and I reckon he was cleaned out. Then the row started. If I had my way, old man Beauclerc would be ridden on a rail out of this section. We don't want his kind in the Thompson valley!"

"Shush!" muttered Bob hurriedly. Vere Beauclerc had come in at the gate.

The Cedar Creek fellows glanced towards him rather uneasily.

It was evident that the son of "old man Beauclerc" had heard Kern Gunten's brutal words.

Beauclerc stood quite still for a moment, the crimson flushing into his handsome face.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless exchanged a miserable look.

Their hearts ached, sometimes, for their chum, upon whose boyish life the shadow of a father's disgrace lay heavily.

They knew—what all the fellows did not know—that Vere Beauclerc's icy pride and reserve were but a shield, behind which deep and sensitive feelings were hidden.

Never by a sign did the proud lad betray how he felt the shame that clung to the name of his father—the most notorious "waster" in the section.

Lascalles Beauclerc might be a waster, a ne'er-do-well, and worse, but to the boy he was still his father.

Gunten's glance rested sneeringly on the handsome face of the remittance man's son.

There was not another fellow there who would have taunted Vere with his father's shame, but the cad of the lumber school had no scruples.

"I guess—" Gunten went on.

"Hold your tongue, Gunten!" whispered Frank Richards fiercely. The Swiss shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess I can say what I like," he replied. "Old man Beauclerc is a disgrace to this section. Some of the boys in Thompson have been talking of riding him on a rail over to Fraser. I guess it's a good idea."

Vere Beauclerc came towards the group. His dark eyes were glittering under his set brows.

"Are you speaking of my father, Gunten?" he said, in his low, quiet tones.

Gunten sneered. "I'm speaking of the hobo who was fired out of my popper's store last night!" he said. "He went in to paint the town red. He got the boot, and serve him right. I guess—Hands off, hang you!"

He backed away as Beauclerc came towards him with clenched hands.

"You have no right to speak of my father like that," said Beauclerc, in the same quiet tones. "I shall not allow it, Gunten."

"Do you deny that it's true what I've said?" sneered the Swiss.

"That isn't the point. It is probably false, as you are a sneaking, lying foreign cad, the son of a swindling Swiss storekeeper," said Beauclerc calmly.

There was a chortle from some of the fellows.

Beauclerc's description of the Gunten, father and son, was very true to life.

Gunten's hard, sallow face reddened with rage.

"But true or false, you won't say it in my presence!" said Beauclerc. "Put up your hands, you cad!"

Gunten had to put up his hands to defend his face.

The Cedar Creek fellows gathered round in a ring.

The burly, heavily-built Swiss was bigger than Beauclerc. He looked twice as heavy as the slim, graceful lad who was attacking him.

But he gave ground at every blow. Beauclerc's fists rained blows on his heavy, sallow face, and in sheer desperation Gunten put up a fight.

But pluck was wanted to back up his strength, and in pluck the cad of the lumber school was deficient.

A right-hander, fairly on his square, thick chin, laid Kern Gunten on his back, and he lay gasping helplessly.

Beauclerc looked down at him, his lip curling contemptuously.

Gunten was quite capable of rising and continuing the conflict, if he had chosen. But he did not choose.

He gave Beauclerc a look of bitter hatred as he lay panting on the ground.

But he did not rise. "Oh, get up, you galoot!" exclaimed Hacke. "You're not finished yet!"

Beauclerc turned on his heel, and walked away towards the log school-house, Frank and Bob joining him.

Then Gunten rose to his feet, and followed by derisive grins from his schoolfellows, limped down to the creek to bathe his face.

Frank Richards pressed Beauclerc's arm as they went into the schoolhouse.

"Don't mind that sneaking cad, Beau!" he muttered.

"I don't!" said Beauclerc quietly. "And very likely it was all lies," said Bob Lawless.

"It wasn't lies," said Beauclerc, his lip quivering. "I—I've just left my father at the shack. I know what happened last night."

"Poor old Beau!" murmured Frank. "But I'm glad you patted that cad. I'd have done it if you hadn't come in! The rotter! There isn't another fellow here who'd be mean enough—"

"I don't mind him. But—but it's true, more or less. I know there was a scene in Thompson last night."

Beauclerc's handsome face was pale now, his forehead deeply lined. "I—

I suppose you fellows think badly of my father. He—he isn't as that brute describes. He's weak—he's easily led—and when he has his money from England he gets among a crew of rotten rascals. He's not so much to blame as—as you may think."

The boy's lips were trembling.

To everyone else he showed only an impenetrable armour of cold reserve, but with his chums he had an almost pathetic anxiety that they should not think too badly of his father.

"I—I'm sure of it, Beau," said Frank. "Nobody's enemy but his own. I—I understand."

Vere Beauclerc nodded, and went into the school-room.

Frank and Bob remained in the porch with clouded faces.

There was nothing they could say by way of comfort to their chum. His trouble was one that could only be borne with quiet patience.

And it was thus that Lascalles Beauclerc, the remittance man, was nobody's enemy but his own. But it was true, too, that he was his own deadly enemy. And the shame that he did not feel for himself was felt only too keenly by his son.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Man Who Watched the Trail.

After school that day Bob and Frank walked their ponies down the trail with Vere Beauclerc to the fork, where he left them to follow the path through the timber to his lonely home near Cedar Camp.

"Good-bye, you fellows!" said Beauclerc, as they stopped at the fork of the trail. "No more school till Monday."

"We shall see you again before that," said Bob. "You're coming to the ranch to-morrow, Cherub?"

Beauclerc shook his head. "Thanks, Bob, but I can't come."

"Your pater doesn't want you?" asked Frank.

"Oh, no! But I've got work to do," said Beauclerc, with a smile. "There's plenty to be done before the winter's fairly on. You haven't been through a Canadian winter yet, Frank."

"I'm looking forward to it," said Frank Richards. "But if the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed will go to the mountain, you know. We'll come over and help you work."

"It's splitting logs for the winter," said Beauclerc. "Jolly hard work!"

"Not so hard for three as for one," said Bob. "We'll come."

"Well, I shall be glad if you do, of course," said Beauclerc. "But—"

"Nuff said. Expect us in the morning."

"Right-ho!" Beauclerc went up the trail through the timber, and the cousins mounted their ponies.

Bob Lawless glanced round quickly at the sound of a rustle among the larches.

"Hallo! Who's there?" he called out.

There was no reply, but another rustle came from the timber. Frank Richards checked his pony.

"What is it, Bob?"

Bob was staring into the dusky timber.

"There's somebody in the timber," he said. "Somebody was watching us when we said good-bye to Beau."

"What on earth for?"

"Blessed if I know! I'm going to see."

Bob jumped down and ran among the trees, followed by Frank Richards.

"Look here, Frank!"

In the grass there were plain traces of boots, but there was no one to be seen.

Whoever had been lurking in the timber at the fork of the trail had vanished.

Bob Lawless looked perplexed. "That's dashed queer, Frank!" he exclaimed. "There's been a man standing here, waiting, for a jolly

long time before we came up, and now he's cleared off, without letting us see him."

"How do you know he's been waiting a long time?" asked Frank Richards in astonishment.

Bob laughed. "That's easy enough to tell," he answered. Bob was scanning a rough old tree-trunk, and the earth about the roots.

"When you've been a bit longer in the Canadian West, Franky, you'll learn some woodcraft. I dare say it would make you open your eyes if I told you all I can read here about the pilgrim who's been on this spot."

"Well, go ahead!" said Frank, with a smile.

Vere Beauclerc had vanished from sight, and the wood lay quiet and lonely round the two schoolboys in the thickening dusk.

To Frank Richards' eyes there was no "sign," beyond the fact that the grass was marked with vague traces of footsteps.

But it was evident that to the Canadian schoolboy's keen eyes, trained in woodcraft, the surroundings told a different tale.

Bob wrinkled his brows, evidently perplexed.

"There's been a man standing here, under this tree, watching the fork of the trail, for an hour at least," he said. "A man about five-foot-seven high, in a rough grey coat, and pretty flush with money, too."

"Bob!"

Frank Richards' eyes opened wide. "My dear kid, if you weren't a tenderfoot, fresh from the Old Country, you'd see all that at a glance, and think nothing."

Bob Lawless good-humouredly said, "Well, I'm blessed if I see you make it out!"

"I suppose somebody has been here, as there are fresh footprints. But for the rest, you're trying to pull my leg, Bob!"

"Fathead!" said Bob. "It's as plain as your face, which is saying a lot. What was he doing it for? That's the puzzle. Some rustler looking for somebody to rob, I wonder?"

"How do you know he was watching the trail at all, and that he was here for an hour?" demanded Frank.

"Oh, rats! Look!" Bob pointed to the earth under the tree. "Look at those heel-marks—how they're sunk into the soil. The man was standing there, leaning on the trunk, for a good long time, or the heels would never have driven into the soil like that. And from the position of the marks you can see that he was facing the trail, with only a thin screen of bushes between that he could see through. If he wasn't watching the trail, what was he doing?"

Frank Richards nodded. "Right on the wicket!" he said. "I—I hadn't thought that out. But how the merry dickens do you know that he was wearing a grey coat?"

"Use your eyes, old chap!"

"Well, I'm using them. But as I never saw the man I can't see what kind of a coat he was wearing, can I?"

"No need to see the man. Look at this tree-trunk!"

"The—the trunk?"

"Yes, ass!" said Bob, laughing. "Can't you see that his coat's rubbed on the bark as he was leaning on it such a time, and the bark's rough? You'll find a dozen traces of a rough grey cloth there, if you look."

"Good egg!" said Frank admiringly. "It's simple enough—"

"When you know it," grinned Bob. "And how do you know he was five-foot-seven?"

"About that," said Bob. "Look where his shoulders rested—"

"How do you know where his shoulders rested?"

Bob gave his cousin quite a pitying look.

"My dear ass, those threads of grey stop at the place where the top of the man's coat rested. There isn't a fragment more than five feet from the ground—rather under that. Add the

height of the man's head to that, and there you are! Roughly, a man of five-foot-seven."

"Bravo!" said Frank. "It is like a detective story I used to read at home. But how in the name of thunder do you know that he's flush with money? That's a joke, I suppose."

"Not at all! He's flush with money, because only a pretty well-off chap could afford to smoke cigars which cost a dollar each at Thompson. And here are three cigar-stumps in the grass, if you'll take the trouble to look. The man smoked three dollars in cigars while he was waiting here."

"My hat!"

"Only a pretty well-off chap would do that, I guess," said Bob, laughing. "Not a cattleman. We haven't any millionaires in this section. I should guess that the man who's been here was one of the 'sports' of Thompson—those rotters who live by playing poker and euchre with the cattlemen. They're flush of money when they're in luck, and easy come, easy go, with that kind of jay."

"But what on earth should he have been here watching the trail for?"

"I give that up."

Bob Lawless returned to his pony, and the cousins rode away to the Lawless Ranch.

The incident had puzzled them, and at the supper-table at the ranch they mentioned it to Mr. Lawless.

The rancher listened with some curiosity, but he shook his head when Bob had finished his description.

"Some fellow keeping an appointment, I guess," he remarked.

"But he cleared off when we spotted he was there," said Bob.

"Sneaked away in the timber without letting us see him."

"Perhaps he'd waited a long time for somebody who didn't turn up, and gave him up," said Mr. Lawless, with a smile. "There are no rustlers in this section now, since the Mexican galoot was rounded up by the North-West Mounted Police."

And with that the matter dropped, though Frank and Bob did not forget it.

The 3rd Chapter.

Old Man Beauclerc.

Bright and early in the morning Frank Richards and Bob Lawless mounted their ponies, to ride over to the remittance man's shack near Cedar Camp.

There was a keen breath of winter in the air, and they enjoyed the ride thoroughly.

The shack came in sight at last, under the trees close by the side of the creek. It was a lonely habitation, out of sight of Cedar Camp, and with no other building within view of it.

There was the steady sound of an axe at work in the timber as the cousins rode up. Vere Beauclerc was already at work.

"Hallo!" shouted Bob Lawless, as he jumped from his pony. "Hallo! Where are you, Cherub?"

Beauclerc came out from the trees, axe in hand.

He greeted his chums cheerily. "Popper about?" asked Bob.

"No; he's gone over to Thompson," said Beauclerc, a shade crossing his face. "You fellows had brekker?"

Bob Lawless grinned at the word. Like Frank Richards, Beauclerc sometimes unconsciously used expressions he had picked up at his earlier school in England.

"Yes," said Bob. "We're ready to work. We've brought our axes, too."

"Good egg! I say, it's jolly hard work for you!"

"Do you think we're slackers?" demanded Frank Richards warmly. "I'll back myself to split more logs than you do, Beau!"

"And I'll back myself to beat the pair of you!" said Bob.

Beauclerc laughed, and led the way to the scene of his labours. There was

a pile of sawn logs to split, and the three schoolboys set to work. The ringing of the axes sounded merrily through the timber and along the creek.

Far off, in the distance, the summits of the Rockies loomed against the sky, capped with snow. The air was sharp from the snowy mountain-tops. But the hard labour made the school-boy chums warm enough.

The pile of fuel grew largely by the time they knocked off for lunch.

Lunch was of the plainest description, but quite good enough for fellows whose appetites had been sharpened by hard work in the open air.

And in the afternoon work was resumed. Log after log was split, and the fuel stacked round the shack for the coming winter.

It was strange enough that the foresight and the labour should be left, as a matter of course, to the remittance man's son. But for the boy the winter would have found the dwellers in the lonely shack totally unprepared.

The remittance man had other occupations of a much less laborious and honourable nature.

But of the remittance man the chums did not speak. Frank and Bob were there to help Beauclerc, and they helped him with hearty goodwill.

It was when labour was over, and coffee was brewed over a fire of chips under the dusky sky, where the stars were coming out like points of fire, that Bob Lawless related the incident of the previous evening.

Vere Beauclerc started, and gave the rancher's son a strange look as Bob spoke of the man who had waited and watched the trail.

He fell very silent.

"Bob's worked out a description of the man, like a detective in a book," said Frank Richards laughing. "The only thing he can't work out is, what was the man doing there?"

"Watching the trail, of course!" said Beauclerc, in a constrained tone.

"But why?"

Beauclerc shook his head.

"You fellows always ride home the same way," he said. "You always walk to the fork of the trail with me, and we part there. It may be somebody who's interested in your movements."

"Some rustler, do you mean, like that Mexican galoot who tried to rob us once?" asked Bob Lawless.

"It's possible."

"But he cleared off without letting us see him, whoever he was!"

"He may have been spying to get information as to the best place and time to lay for you, with help at hand!"

"By Jerusalem! You think so, Cherub?"

Beauclerc gave him a strange look.

"Your father's a rich man, Bob—what we call rich in the Thompson valley, at any rate. Some—some rascal might have an eye on his dollars—through you!"

"Phew!"

"Anyway, you ought to be careful," said Beauclerc quietly.

"Couldn't you ride home by another trail from school?"

"Only by losing two or three miles. And we never get in before dark now," said Bob. "No fear!"

"But—but there might be danger—"

"We'll dodge it when it comes along, not before," said Bob. "Dash it all, Cherub, you're making us out nervous cases."

There was a step on the path by the creek. Lascelles Beauclerc, dimly seen in the gloom, passed into the shack without a glance at the school-boys.

Vere rose to his feet, and the chums followed his example.

A few minutes later Vere Beauclerc went into the shack, and Frank and Bob were riding homeward under the stars.

There was a strange expression on Bob Lawless' face. He broke the silence at last.

"Frank, old chap—"

"Hallo!"

"Kick me, will you?"

"Yes, if you dismount," said Frank Richards laughing. "What's the matter?"

"I'm a howling chump from Chumpville!" said Bob Lawless.

"Did you see Old Man Beauclerc when he went in?"

"Yes."

"Did you notice his coat?"

Frank Richards started.

"My hat! Yes; a grey coat!"

"And he's about five-feet-seven or eight," said Bob.

"Bob! You don't mean—"

"And he smokes expensive cigars, so long as his remittance lasts," said Bob grimly. "Flush of money, till it's gone in drink and draw-poker!"

"Bob!"

"That's what I want you to kick

me for!" said Bob. "I—I was describing the Cherub's own father to him. Luckily, he didn't see it."

"Bob"—Frank Richards drew a deep breath—"Bob, you think it was Beauclerc's father who was watching the fork of the trail last night?"

"Well, doesn't it look like it?"

"I—I suppose it does."

"Luckily, Beauclerc didn't see the connection, but as soon as I saw the old galoot's grey coat it came into my head," said Bob. "It was old man Beauclerc right enough. Of—of course, he wasn't doing any harm there; very likely came to meet his son coming home, and—and didn't care to meet us, or—or something!"

The chums rode on in silence.

But Bob Lawless had made one mistake. Vere Beauclerc knew who was the man who had watched the trail in the timber.

That night, for long hours, the son of the remittance man lay, troubled and sleepless—thinking, thinking.

Back into his mind had come fragments of talk he had heard between his father and Poker Pete of Thompson.

"Old man Beauclerc was the man who had watched the trail—the trail

identity of the man who had watched the forked trail.

But the Cherub gave no sign.

He was a little more quiet and subdued than usual, and that was all. And that was fully accounted for by trouble at home. By this time Lascelles Beauclerc had dissipated the remittance from England. It never lasted him long, and he wasted the money in reckless profusion, without a thought of the future.

True, the wretched man always had a hope of luck turning his way at cards, and enabling him to make a handsome "stake."

But even a turn of luck was useless to the inveterate gambler. If he lost he played on to retrieve his losses, so long as he had any money left. If he won, he played on to increase his winnings while he was in the "vein." And in the end it came to the same thing.

With grim poverty at the door, and his father weak and irritable after his latest outbreak, Vere's young life was troubled enough, and Frank did not expect to find him looking cheerful.

He was not cheerful, but he had quiet composure. Whatever cross Fate chose to impose upon his young

"That doesn't matter. I shall get in by my usual bedtime. Evening indoors isn't specially entertaining at the shack, you know."

"You ought to have a gee-gee, Cherub," said Bob. "Look here, my popper's offered to give you a horse; why don't you let him?"

"Mr. Lawless is very kind," said Beauclerc, colouring.

"Well, then, why don't you let him have his way?"

"I'd rather not, Bob. But if you fellows don't mind walking a bit—"

"Right you are! We're good for a tramp, as far as you like."

And with Frank and Bob leading their ponies, the three schoolboys tramped on down the dusky trail under the trees.

The early night of autumn had fallen, but the moon was rising over the hills, and the light filtered through the thick branches overhead. Bob Lawless chatted cheerily as they walked on through the wood, but only Frank answered him. Vere Beauclerc had fallen into silence.

It was half a mile from the forked trail, that a sudden rustle was heard in the larches, and a dim figure appeared for a moment.

and hard, as he tramped on in the dim moonlight.

Hardy as he was, inured to exertion by the rough life of the frontier, he was fatigued by the time he reached the shack.

A red point of light greeted his eyes as he came up to the tumble-down building. It was the glowing end of a cigar.

"Is that you, Vere?" It was his father's voice.

"Yes, father."

"You are late."

"Yes, father. Does it matter?"

said the boy wearily.

Lascelles Beauclerc peered at his son in the gloom.

"You are quite pale," he said.

"I am tired."

"Why are you so late?" asked the remittance man harshly.

"I walked a bit farther than usual with my friends."

"You should not have done so. You cannot stay out till this hour. Don't let it happen again, Vere. I shall expect you to-morrow night at the usual time. Keep that in mind."

"Father!"

"It is your bed-time now," said the remittance man. "Get into the house. Don't be as late as this to-morrow."

"Will you be home to-morrow evening, father?"

"No. Go in!"

Beauclerc went into the shack, without another word. His father grunted angrily, and replaced the cigar in his mouth.

It was much later that night, when Beauclerc woke from a troubled sleep, to hear the murmur of voices in the adjoining room. His father was not alone.

The voices were cautious and subdued. He did not hear the words; but he recognised the tones of Dave Dunn, the "bad man" of Cedar Camp, and the more silky voice of Poker Pete of Thompson.

He closed his eyes again, and tried to sleep.

But it was long before sleep would come, long after the murmur of the voices had died away in the shack by the murmuring creek.

voices had died away in the shack by the murmuring creek.

The 5th Chapter. Held Up on the Trail.

"Cherub, old scout—what the thunder—"

"Beau!" exclaimed Frank Richards.

It was after morning lessons at Cedar Creek the next day. Frank and Bob had stayed to speak to Mr. Slimmey, but a few minutes afterwards they looked for their chum.

They found Vere Beauclerc under the trees by the creek. He was seated on a log on the bank, too busily occupied to notice their approach.

It was his occupation that struck them with astonishment.

Beauclerc had a six-chambered revolver upon his knees, and was carefully cleaning it, and as the chums came up, he began slipping cartridges into the chambers.

His face was flooded with crimson as he looked up, and caught their surprised glances upon him.

He made a hasty movement, as if to put the weapon out of sight; but it was too late for that.

"What on earth are you doing with a shooting-iron, Cherub?" exclaimed Bob Lawless.

Beauclerc did not reply.

"Beau!" exclaimed Frank.

The remittance man's son finished loading the firearm, and slipped it into the inside pocket of his rough jacket. He rose to his feet, his face still crimson.

"I—I did not mean you to—to see it," he said haltingly. "I—I decided to bring it with me—because—"

"Any trouble on the way home last night?" asked Bob.

"Oh, no! But—"

Bob chuckled.

"Did I alarm you with that yarn about the galoot watching the trail?" he asked. "Don't say you've got nerves, Cherub!"

"I have a very lonely way to go home," said Beauclerc, his manner less frank than usual. "And—and you remember that Mexican rustler who was round this part once. Don't say anything about this, you fellows. Miss Meadows would be angry if she knew I had a revolver."

"By gum, she would!" said Bob, with a whistle. "Better keep it dark, old chap. Mind it doesn't go off in your pocket."

"That's all right. I—I mean to carry this for a night or two," said Beauclerc, in a low voice. "You remember there was somebody lurking on the trail last night. I feel safer with it."

Beauclerc changed the subject at once, and nothing more was said about the revolver.

After some time the three chums left



"No harm is intended," said one of the masked men, looking down at the boys, "but you must come with us, Bob Lawless."

by which the rich rancher's son rode home from school.

Why?

To learn where the chums of Cedar Creek parted on the trail? To know where Bob Lawless could be found after he had parted with Beauclerc on the way home?

What did it mean? What meant the fragments of whispered talk that had come to his ears, in which the name of Bob Lawless, and the wealth of Bob's father, had been covertly referred to?

Was it the shadow of a crime that hung over the boy's reckless father? If it was not that, what did it mean? And if it was that—

The unhappy boy groaned aloud as he turned upon his sleepless couch.

The 4th Chapter. Danger!

Frank Richards gave Beauclerc a quick, searching look when they met at Cedar Creek School on Monday morning.

In spite of Bob's assurance, Frank was uneasy lest Vere should have guessed from the description the

shoulders he had the courage to bear it without flinching.

Frank and Bob had not talked again of the man in the timber. But they could not help wondering.

What had old man Beauclerc been there for? Why had he watched the trail? Why had he eluded the school-boys' eyes?

It was possible, of course, that the wastrel had come along to meet his son, and had not cared to meet his friends. It was possible.

Frank Richards strove to think that there was nothing more in it than that. It was too terrible to suspect that Vere Beauclerc's father, in his desperate need of money, had formed some desperate scheme for obtaining lawless gains.

After school that day, the three chums left Cedar Creek together as usual, and walked down to the fork in the trail, where they were accustomed to part. As Frank and Bob stopped, a brief hesitation came into Beauclerc's manner.

"I think I'll walk on a bit farther with you chaps," he remarked carelessly.

"You'll be late home," said Bob.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

Vere Beauclerc halted.

"Who is that?" he called out loudly and clearly.

A rustle—and silence.

"Better get on," said Beauclerc quietly. "Somebody is lurking in the timber."

The schoolboys hurried on.

No sound came to their ears again. Whoever it was that had been lurking by the trail was silent.

It was not till they reached the plain beyond the belt of timber, that Vere Beauclerc said good-night to his chums.

"You'll be a bit late," he said.

"Better put on speed."

"Oh, we'll be home in a brace of jiffies," said Bob cheerily. "You'll be jolly late, though, Cherub."

"All serene. Good-night!"

"Good-night, old chap!"

Frank and Bob mounted, and dashed off at a gallop for the ranch.

Beauclerc stood watching them till they disappeared in the gloom, and then he turned and started upon the long tramp to the creek.

His face was troubled, his lips set



SAVED FROM A CRIME!

(Continued from the previous page.)

Cedar Creek as usual. Vere Beauclerc halted at the fork of the trail. "Not coming on this evening?" asked Bob. "No; father did not like my being so late home." "Well, it isn't really safe to be out in the woods so late. There was a grizzly bear loose in this section once, you know. Good-night, old scout!" The cousins mounted, as Beauclerc disappeared into the timber, and rode on down the dusky trail. "What a glorious moon!" said Frank, as the silver edge of the Queen of Night showed above the trees. "Gorgeous!" said Bob. "Nearly as light as morning. I say, Frank, it's a jolly queer the Cherub carrying that gun about. I've never noticed that he was a nervous guy!" "He isn't!" said Frank. "That fellow on the trail last night seems to have rattled him, though, or what is he carrying a gun about in his clothes for?" said Bob. "I'm blessed if I quite understand the Cherub lately. By the way, it's queer about that fellow hanging on the trail; he cleared off the minute Beau called out to him, you remember." "I remember." "I wonder if we shall meet anybody to-night. Don't ride too fast, Frank, you'll catch your cocoanut on the branches in this half-light. "Right-ho!" The ponies' hoofs thudded softly on the grass of the forest-trail, as the chums rode on at a trot. As they neared the spot where the lurking figure had been seen the previous night, they looked about them sharply. Neither of them was nervous, but they remembered their adventure with a Mexican rustler on that trail a few weeks before. They were on their guard. From the darkness of the trees, there came a sudden, deep voice. "Halt!" "By gum!" "Halt! There's a rope across the trail!" The schoolboys drew in their ponies at once. Across the trail, in the dimness, a rope stretched from tree to tree. They had almost ridden into it. As they halted, there was a trampling of feet under the shadows of the trees, and three dim figures rushed out into the trail. Hands caught at the bridles of the horses. "Hands off!" shouted Bob Lawless angrily. "What's your game? Rustlers, by gad!" "No harm is intended you," came the deep voice again. "But you must dismount. Only one of you is wanted." "Which one?" exclaimed Bob, in astonishment. "You, Bob Lawless!" "Holy smoke!" The cousins, sitting their panting horses, looked down at the three dim figures. Each of the three had a cloth mask tied across his face, completely hiding his features. Only their eyes could be seen, gleaming through slits cut in the cloth, strange and eerie as they caught the moonlight and glittered. "No harm is intended," repeated the masked man. "But you must come with us, Bob Lawless. Your friend can ride on." Bob clenched his teeth. "Who are you, and what do you want?" he demanded. "That need not concern you now. You are wanted, and you are in our hands. If you resist, you will be handled!" Bob's pony was drawn to the side of the trail. The masked man turned to Frank Richards, and pointed down the path. "Ride on!" he said. "I'm not going without Bob," said Frank between his teeth. "Fool! Ride on while you are safe! And carry a message to Rancher Lawless from me. Tell him that when he wishes to see his son again, it will cost him a thousand dollars. He will hear from me later, where and when to pay the money." "Kidnappers!" muttered Bob. "Ride on!" Frank Richards did not ride on. It was not much use to think of a fight between two schoolboys and three burly men, but Frank did not intend to desert his chum while the breath of life was in his body. "Will you go, you young fool?"

"No, I won't go!" said Frank. "Both or neither!" "You'd better go, Frank," muttered Bob. "Tell my father, and tell him not to think of paying these scoundrels a penny. Tell him I'll wait till he comes with the cattlemen and a rope for their necks." There was a laugh from one of the masked men at Bob's fearless words. "I guess you're a young bantam to crow so loud," he said. "You're not going to be hurt, sonny. Keep cool." "I'm cool," said Bob scornfully. "Cooler than you will be when your time comes to be slung up on a branch!" "Silence!" muttered the masked leader. "That is enough. Frank Richards, ride on at once, unless you wish to be left senseless in the trail!" Frank's eyes gleamed. "I will not go!" he said. "Start him!" rapped out the leader harshly. One of the ruffians struck Frank's pony a sharp blow on the flank, at the same time jerking away the rope across the trail. The pony started forward. Frank perforce rode down the trail, but only for a few yards. He swung his pony round, and drove him on at a gallop, right at the three rascals gathered round Bob Lawless. The manoeuvre was entirely unexpected. The charging pony crashed into the three, and sent them spinning in various directions. There was a roar of surprise and pain and loud curses from the ruffians, as they reeled right and left. "Now, Bob!" panted Frank. "Ride for it, Franky!" yelled Bob, urging on his pony. But a hand gripped the bridle, and swung the animal round in time. The leader of the rustlers struck furiously at Frank Richards, and the schoolboy reeled from the saddle and crashed into the grass. "Hold that young fool!" An iron grip was laid on Bob Lawless. Frank lay dazed in the grass. In a few moments more Bob would have been led away into the timber. But at that moment a figure sprang out from the dusky thickets into the clear moonlight on the trail. "Stop!" "Beau!" panted Frank Richards. It was Vere Beauclerc. With a face white as marble, his eyes gleaming from it like stars, the

handsome son of the remittance man stood, with the revolver in his hand, the barrel levelled at the rustlers, his finger on the trigger. "Stop!" His voice rang out sharp and clear. "Stop! Let them go, or I will shoot!"

The 6th Chapter. Father and Son.

Vere Beauclerc's voice rang and echoed on the trail. The weapon in his hand was level. His hand did not falter for a second. The three ruffians, startled, stared at him. The revolver-muzzle bore upon all three from where the schoolboy stood, and a pressure of the finger was enough to send one, at least, into eternity in the twinkling of an eye. "The Cherub!" panted Bob Lawless, in surprise and delight. "Good old Cherub! Keep them covered." Frank Richards scrambled to his feet. "Keep them covered, Beau! Shoot if they lift a finger!" he panted. "I shall!" said Beauclerc grimly. The masked men stood irresolute. "Boy!" The deep voice of the leader was husky with rage. "Boy! Fool! Go at once! Leave this spot!" "It is you who will go," said Vere Beauclerc quietly and steadily. "Mark my words, this revolver is loaded in every chamber, and I am a good shot. I shall shoot if you raise a hand!" There was a muttered curse. "Go!" said Beauclerc. "Go! I swear, by all that is sacred, that if you are not gone in one minute, I shall shoot, if you raise a hand!" There was no mistaking the grim earnestness of the boy. The hands that held Bob Lawless fell away from him. There was still a brief hesitation. But Vere Beauclerc's steady eyes were gleaming along the levelled barrel. The trigger was already rising under the pressure of his finger. With muttered curses, the three masked men plunged into the timber. Their trampling footsteps died away in the silence of the forest. Not till the last sound had died did Beauclerc lower the weapon. Then his arm dropped to his side, and he drew a deep, sobbing breath. "Beau, old chap!" said Frank. "Oh! Would you—would you have fired?" "I should have fired," said Beauclerc quietly. "Heaven forgive me! I should have fired, if the next bullet had been for myself." He shuddered. "Ride home now—ride home, and

remember in future that there is danger on the trail." "But how did you get here, Cherub?" exclaimed the astonished Bob. "I did not go home. I followed you through the timber—out of sight." "Then you expected this?" "I feared it." "Jolly good luck that you did!" said Bob. "But you're not going home alone, after this, Cherub. Those scoundrels are still in the wood. Come home with us. We can send word to your father." Beauclerc shivered. "No, no!" "Then we'll come home with you." "No, no! Good-night! Good-night!" "Beau!" shouted Frank. But the remittance man's son had already plunged into the wood and disappeared. The chums shouted to him, but no answer came. Frank caught his pony. "I guess we'd better be moving," said Bob at last. "Come on, Franky! The Cherub doesn't want us." Frank Richards nodded silently, and the cousins mounted and rode off. They lost no time in getting to the ranch.

Through the dusky wood Vere Beauclerc was tramping homeward. He reached the shack and entered. A candle burned on the plank table. By it sat Lascelles Beauclerc, with a black brow. He looked up, frowning, as his son entered. "You are late again!" he said, in a grinding voice. "Yes, father," said Beauclerc dully. "Where is my revolver? I have missed it from its place." Beauclerc laid the revolver on the table in silence. The remittance man looked at him, and their eyes met. As he read what was written in Vere's face, the remittance man paled, and his breath came thickly. "Vere!" he muttered. "I should have fired, father!" said Beauclerc, in a low, shaking voice. "I was not sure, though I suspected—but I should have fired! And this night would have been the last for me, father! Better death than crime! Better death, a thousand times, than dishonour and disgrace! Father!" The remittance man's eyes sank before his son's. Vere Beauclerc gave him one look—one look of haggard misery, and passed into his room. And no word came from the man whom his son had saved from crime.

THE END.

FOILING THE FOOD-HOGS! By ARTHUR E. LOVELL. (Continued from page 249.)

here, Rogers, and sit next to this little boy." "I'm hanged if I—" began Rogers, going red in the face. "What did you say, Rogers?" "Nothing, sir. I—" "Well, do as I tell you this instant!" snapped Mr. Browning. And he forced Rogers down into a chair beside the youngster. The kids were having a rare old time—in fact, it is doubtful whether they had ever enjoyed themselves so much before. Rogers shifted uneasily on the chair, whilst his cronies sniggered at him in his discomfort. "Yow! Ow! Leave off, you little beast!" exclaimed Rogers suddenly. "What is the matter, Rogers?" "The little brat is wiping its dirty fingers all over me!" "Well, what of it?" "Here, stop it, can't you?" exclaimed Rogers, as the youngster took hold of his arm with two jammy hands. "Oo 'ave some jam?" urged the youngster, grinning hugely. "Get away, hang you!" "Rogers, how dare you talk in such a manner!" snapped Mr. Browning. He turned to the youngster. "You mustn't do that, my little man," he added. The "little man" desisted, and the tea continued. Never before had there been such a scene in Study No. 7. By the time the children had eaten their fill the floor was strewn with crumbs, the tablecloth was covered with lumps of jam and drops of tea. The food-hogs were in a fearful rage, and could they have given vent to their feelings, they would probably have ragged the master baldheaded. They knew, however, what the punishment for such an act would be, so they held their hands. At last the meal was over. "Now then, my children," said Mr. Browning kindly, "follow me downstairs, and I will see you back to your homes. You, Rogers, will kindly clear up this room, and see that it is perfectly tidy by the time I return." Mr. Browning led the way out of the study, and the children followed eagerly at his heels. The food-hogs glared. The happenings of the last half-hour had struck them almost speechless. It was not until they went up to their dormitory that evening that Jimmy Gray and his chums came into contact with Rogers & Co. "I say, Gray," said Rogers, "have you seen old Browning anywhere?" Jimmy laughed. "He's not due back till to-morrow," he said. "He's come back," said Rogers. "He came into our study, and— Here, what are you kids roaring at?" Jimmy Gray and his chums were in convulsions with laughter. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Gray. "Hear us smile! Ever been had, Rogers, you silly ass?" "Look here! What—" faltered Rogers, dumbfounded. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Jimmy Gray & Co. "We've done you properly this time, Rogers! Perhaps you'll think a bit in future before you indulge in food-hogging!" "By gad!" gasped Rogers, realising how neatly his leg had been pulled. There was no doubt that Jimmy Gray & Co. had succeeded in foiling the food-hogs.

His yarn finished, Arthur Edward Lovell rose to his feet. Jimmy Silver clapped him on the shoulder. "Jolly good, old son!" he said. "We shall have to try a wheeze like that on our food-hogs. What do you say, Townsend?" "I bet you wouldn't catch us as easily as that, Townsend." "Well, you wait and see!" said Jimmy Silver. "I've had my suspicions of you food-hogs for some time now. We shall have to put a stopper to your little games. But that'll do later. I'm going to get into bed. It's none too warm out here." "Hear, hear!" agreed the other Classics. And in less than half a minute they were all between the sheets, eager for sleep.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY!

"DIXON'S DIAMOND!" By ARTHUR NEWCOME. DON'T MISS IT!

TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT!

If you are unable to obtain this publication regularly, please tell any newsagent to get it from:

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YOUR EDITOR.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN! 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."

A GRAND TREAT! Order Your Copy at Once!

Readers of the BOYS' FRIEND will, I feel sure, be glad to learn that the Special Christmas Number of the "Penny Popular," price twopenny, will be on sale on Friday, November 30th. This issue of our little companion paper will be a magnificent one in every way, and will be filled from cover to cover with sterling reading matter. There will be an extra long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., entitled "Billy Bunter's Christmas Dream!"; an extra long complete tale of Tom Merry & Co., entitled "The Ghost of St. Jim's!"; an extra long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., entitled "Snowed Up!" and another special attraction. Such a splendid number of the "Penny Popular" has never before been placed on the market, and therefore I would urge upon every reader of the BOYS' FRIEND to order his copy at once if he wishes to avoid disappointment.

The Special Christmas Number of the BOYS' FRIEND will be on sale week ending December 15th. Full particulars will appear in our next issue.

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

Bound to Meet with Approval!

I have no doubt whatever that the five splendid stories, due to appear in our next issue, will meet with general appreciation. The long complete tale dealing with the schooldays of Frank

Richards, the famous author, is a very exciting one. It is entitled

"THE 'BAD MAN' FROM BOOT LEG!" By Martin Clifford.

Long Bill, the bad man, is an absolute terror. He appears in the vicinity of Cedar Creek, and creates a great sensation. And when he comes to the school in the backwoods—well, then there is considerable excitement. I am not going to tell you exactly what happens; but I can tell you this, Frank Richards and his chums have some thrilling times ere the bad man from Boot Leg is roped in.

The splendid long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND, is entitled

"FOILED AT THE FINISH!" By Owen Conquest.

Finding himself barred by the juniors, Lattrey, the cad of the Fourth, schemes to get Jimmy Silver into disgrace. He works his scheme out to the smallest detail; but "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip" and everything does not turn out quite so well as Lattrey expects. You will like this story, and will, I feel sure, admire the parts played in it by Kit Erroll and Mornington.

I say, without the least hesitation, that our splendid serial,

"THE BOYS OF THE BOMBAY CASTLE!" By Duncan Storm,

is the most popular serial which has

ever appeared in the BOYS' FRIEND. I am not surprised at this, as every instalment so far has been packed with exciting incidents. Next Monday's instalment is no exception to the rule. You will laugh heartily when you read of the way in which the boys of the Bombay Castle escape from the Spanish police, and also when you read about Cecil Simmonds, the new boy. As Chip would say, Cecil Simmonds is "a fair corker!" The next story in our great new series, "King Nadur's Diamonds," is entitled

"THE KAID OF DENESRA!" By Maurice Everard.

The little party of adventurers push on a considerable distance in their amazing quest. They have a thrilling encounter with a crowd of Berbers, and at length fall in with the Kaid of Denesra, who appears to be a very genial, kind-hearted man. But in reality the Kaid is something different, as you will learn when you read this fine story.

The concluding item in our next issue is a tale of the dormitory, entitled

"DIXON'S DIAMOND!" By Arthur Newcome.

A fine story it is, too. I am sure you will all like it, and vote this new series of stories, told by the juniors of Rookwood School, a really splendid one.