

STILL RUNNING! FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS!

# The BOYS' FRIEND Id.

See inside for "The Boys of the 'Bombay Castle'!" By Duncan Storm.

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ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending December 22nd, 1917.

## MORNINGTON'S LAST PLUNGE!

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

### The 1st Chapter. Jimmy Silver's Guests.

"Now, then, you slackers!" Jimmy Silver burst into the room with a cheerful face, glowing with health. His skates jingled in his hand.

Mornington yawned. "Still leadin' the strenuous life, Silver?" he drawled.

"It's a ripping morning!" said Jimmy. "You fellows coming on the ice? It's simply perfect. Lovell's gone out, and Phyllis will be ready in a minute. Even young Algy is bucking up. Get a move on!"

Kit Erroll jumped up at once, but Mornington yawned again.

The dandy of Rookwood seemed in one of his slickest moods that bright, keen winter morning.

Mornington and Erroll were at Jimmy Silver's home for part of the Christmas vacation. Erroll was having a good time there, and Morny seemed to be cheerful and contented. The two were finishing a late breakfast. Erroll had waited for his chum, who was down late that day.

"Come on, Morny!" said Erroll. "Oh, don't hurry!" yawned Mornington. "We'll follow you, Silver."

Jimmy smiled. "Right-ho! We're going on a good run up the river," he said. "It's frozen as hard as a rock. We're going as far as Gower's place."

"Right-ho! We'll catch you up." "You'll have to put steam on, then, if you hang about long," said Jimmy, laughing.

And the captain of the Rookwood Fourth tramped out, meeting his cousin Phyllis in the hall, and they went out cheerily together.

Erroll looked at his chum. The two had the breakfast-room to themselves at that hour. Morny stretched one elegant leg over the other, yawned again, and blinked at the big log-fire.

"You're coming out, Morny?" asked Erroll.

"Oh, yes." "Get a move on, old chap! What's the good of slacking on a glorious morning like this?"

"Yaw-aw-aw!" "Oh, don't yawn your head off!" said Erroll. "What's the matter with you, Morny? You like being here, don't you?"

"Immensely," said Mornington. "It's gorgeous. Jimmy Silver is hospitality itself. His pater's an old brick, his mater's a very good sort, and his cousin Phyllis is ripping. Even his young cousin Algy is tolerable. Lovell is endurable. It's a merry life; full of strenuousity, too. Yaw-aw-aw!"

Erroll frowned a little. "Look here, Morny—" he began. Mornington held up his hand. "Don't!" he said. "Sermonise, old scout."

"I wasn't going to sermonise, Morny," said Erroll, a little testily. "I don't know what's the matter with you. If you're not satisfied it's easy enough to make an excuse and get out."



### AT GRIPS WITH THE GAMBLERS!

"I don't want to get out," said Mornington. "I'm lucky to be here, considerin' everythin'. I'm not flooded with invitations for the holidays as I used to be in my merry old palmy days. Fact is, nobody asked me but Silver."

His brows knitted a little. Morny, once the richest fellow at Rookwood School, now one of the poorest, had taken his fall from fortune with cool philosophy. It was very seldom that he showed a trace of bitterness on the subject.

But the difference was great, and he could not help feeling it. He was still the same fellow that he had been in his wealthy days, but he was not by any means so much sought after.

Between the fellow who had expected twenty thousand a year on coming of age and the fellow who was "swotting" for a scholarship at Rookwood there was a great gulf fixed, though he was the same fellow.

"Silver's a good chap," said Erroll. "You ought to enjoy life here, Morny. I like it."

"So do I," said Mornington. "Better than going to my uncle's, anyway, and puttin' up with my Stacpoole cousins." Erroll, old chap, I suppose you look on me as a sort of brand plucked from the burnin'. I

used to be the blackest of the black sheep at Rookwood—a more reckless goat even than Peele or Gower. I had to chuck it up when my money went."

"That wasn't the only reason you chucked it, Morny."

"Perhaps it wasn't, but I hadn't much choice, anyway," said Mornington moodily. "But—but there's an old proverb, Kit, that the leopard can't change his spots, or the Ethiopian his beautiful complexion. I'm afraid there's still the old Morny inside me somewhere. I—I don't half like to say it, Kit, but—he coloured—"it's the fact, old fellow, that every now and then I feel a sort of yearnin' to go on the spree again in the old style."

"I suppose it's natural," said Erroll quietly.

"It's so, anyway. It seems rotten. The people here are splendid. I like them immensely, and I know it's good for me to be in decent company like this. But—but I feel sometimes that I can't stand it, Kit, and—and I'd give anythin' for a little game in the old style, with Peele and Gower, and even Lattrey."

"Morny!" Mornington rose to his feet, and drove his hands deep into his pockets.

"I know it's rotten, Kit, but I can't help it. It's in the blood, I suppose. I came near chummin' again with Lattrey when he was here as Silver's guest. I think it would have come to that if he hadn't cleared off."

"That rascal?" said Erroll. "Morny, you know he was spotted gambling with Jimmy's young cousin, and was cleared off for it. You couldn't help despising a rotten scoundrel like that fellow."

Mornington nodded. "I suppose you couldn't think of associatin' with a fellow you disliked and despised, Kit?" he remarked, with a curious glance at his chum.

"I certainly couldn't."

"Well, I could—anythin' for a little excitement. And, wonderful to relate, I'm in funds now," grinned Mornington. "Some of my merry relations have played up for Christmas. They don't seem to yearn for my company." His lip curled. "I ain't so popular in the family circle as I used to be. I suppose my dear old uncles and aunts feel that they're bound to take some notice of my existence, all the same. They haven't asked me to visit them, but they've whacked out handsome tips for Christmas."

Erroll was silent. He could not tell his chum that his unpopularity with the "family circle" was probably due to his own bitter tongue and mocking nature.

"In fact, it's rained tips," went on Mornington, in the same bitter, sardonic tone. "A tenner from one dear uncle, a fiver from another, a bunch of currency notes from my dear aunt. Altogether, Kit, I've raked in thirty quid for Christmas, which isn't bad for a poor chap nearly on his uppers, is it?"

"I wish you wouldn't speak like that, Morny!" muttered Erroll, with a distressed look. "It was a hard blow, your losing your fortune, but you've stood it splendidly. You're not the kind of fellow to think much about mere money."

"Mere money means a dashed lot!" answered Mornington, with a laugh.

"I suppose I'm not a very agreeable chap in some ways, but people stood me cheerfully when I was rollin' in filthy lucre. Last Christmas I had almost too many invitations to answer. This time nobody's asked me but Silver, and I can't help suspectin' that he asked me out of pity."

He bit his lip hard. "Nonsense!" said Erroll sharply. "Jimmy asked us here because he wanted us."

"You, perhaps. But"—Mornington shrugged his shoulders—"why did he ask Lattrey? Lattrey was stranded at the school for Christmas, an' Jimmy asked him here. It was good-natured. But it's rather a hit for me to depend on a fellow's good-nature."

"Better than depending on people chasing you for your money, as you seem to think they did."

"Right on the wicket!" said Mornington, laughing bitterly. "It was jolly decent of Silver, and he's a good chap. But—but do you know where Lattrey went when he left here, Kit?"

"Home, I suppose." "His pater's away, and he's got no home to go to. Jimmy thinks he went to his uncle's. He didn't."

"How do you know?" "Because I've seen him," grinned Mornington. "He's stayin' with Gower and Peele at Gower's place along the river."

Erroll started. "Morny, you've not taken up with that gang?"

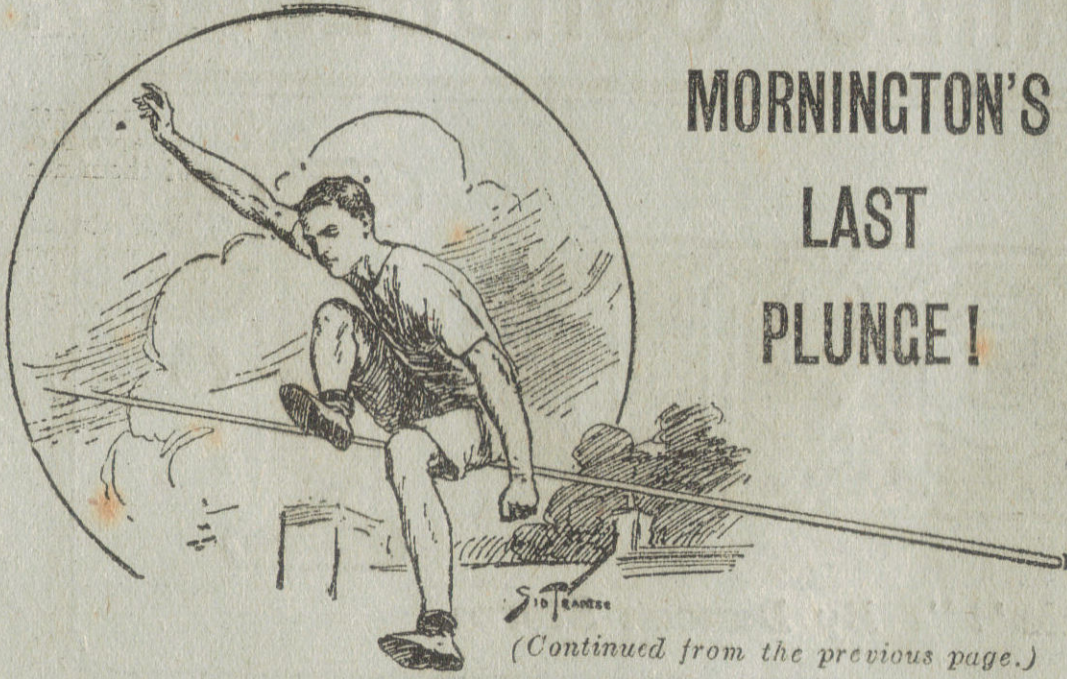
"Only a few words with Peele yesterday," said Mornington. "I met him in the wood. He asked me to give them a look in."

"And are you going to?" exclaimed Erroll.

Mornington shrugged his shoulders. "I suppose not. I can't! Lattrey's there, and he's on fightin' terms with my host, Peele an' Gower ain't friends with Silver, either. I'm Silver's guest, and I suppose I must play the game. But—but—oh, don't look like that, old chap! I'm not goin' to Gower Lodge. I'd like to, if you want to know. I'm in funds, an' they know it. And—and I'd like a scent of the old game again. But I'm not goin'. Let's get our skates an' get out!"

(Continued on the next page.)





(Continued from the previous page.)

"Morny—"  
"Come on, my infant! Who's slackin' now?"  
"I'm ready."

The two juniors left the breakfast-room, Morny whistling a merry tune, and Kit Erroll with an expression of troubled thought upon his face. He was anxious for his chum.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were already out of sight on the frozen river when Morny and Erroll came down to the bank. Morny fastened on his skates. "Let's run 'em down, Kit!" he said cheerily. "They think I'm a slacker. I'm goin' to beat 'em at skatin'. Put your beef into it!"  
"Good!" said Erroll, glad and relieved to see his chum's thoughts taking that new and healthier turn.

And in a few minutes the chums of the Rookwood Fourth were speeding down the shining ice at a great speed on the track of Jimmy Silver.

#### The 2nd Chapter.

##### Morny Meets the Nuts.

Jimmy Silver and his companions were going strong.

On that keen, bright winter morning Jimmy was thoroughly enjoying the rapid run down the frozen river. Lovell was ahead with Miss Phyllis, and Jimmy was leading with Phyllis, and Jimmy was lending a hand to his young cousin Algy, who was not specially good on skates.

"Slow down a little?" Jimmy asked good-naturedly.

Algy shook his head.

"Rats! I can keep up!" he said.

"Right-ho!"

"By gum!" exclaimed Algy Silver suddenly, as his glance rested on three figures on the river bank. "Lattrey!"

Jimmy, in astonishment, slackened down, his glance following the fag's.

Three fellows in overcoats were on the bank, and Jimmy recognised Gower, Peele, and Lattrey, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood.

Gower's home was only a mile or so from the Priory, but they were not on visiting terms. Gower was not the kind of fellow Jimmy Silver could pull with, and at Rookwood they had nothing to do with each other.

Lattrey, who had recently been Jimmy Silver's guest at the Priory, had evidently found a new host.

His glance met Jimmy's, and his thin lips curved in a sneering grin. "Hallo, there's Silver!" exclaimed Peele.

"Hold on a minute, Silver!" shouted Gower.

Jimmy slowed down.

"What is it?" he called back.

"Is Mornington still stayin' with you?"

"Yes."

"Will you give him a message from me?"

"No, I won't!"

"Same old Jimmy Silver!" grinned Peele. "Same old polite manners!"

"Oh, give him the message!" chuckled Lattrey. "Tell him we want to see him at the Lodge, Silver!"

"Go and eat coke!" growled Jimmy Silver.

He glided on with his cousin Algy, leaving the three nuts of Rookwood laughing.

Jimmy was frowning now.

He was not by any means pleased to find that Mark Lattrey was still in the neighbourhood of the Priory.

He had already repented the kindly impulse that had led him to ask Lattrey to the Priory for Christmas.

Lattrey had repaid him by inveigling his young cousin, Algy, into secret gambling, which was really what he might have expected of the cad of Rookwood.

When the discovery came Lattrey had short shrift. He left the Priory at once, taking with him a swollen nose, bestowed by Arthur Edward Lovell, as a souvenir.

Jimmy had supposed that he had seen the last of him till the new term at Rookwood, but evidently he had not.

He realised that he would have to

see that Algy did not come into contact with his unpleasant neighbour. To Mornington he did not give a thought.

Jimmy Silver was out of sight in a few minutes. Lattrey & Co. strolled on down the bank.

"I wonder whether Morny's out?" remarked Peele, with a grin. "I spoke to him yesterday, and I could see that he was yearnin' for the flesh-pots of Egypt. He would be jolly glad to drop in at the Lodge, if Erroll wasn't keepin' him in order."

"It would be one up against Jimmy Silver, and Erroll too, if we roped him in," said Gower. "Besides, Morny's an entertainin' chap when he likes. I'd like him to come over."

"We ought to be able to work it," said Lattrey. "He could keep his end up in a little game, too, now he's in funds. I know he's in funds."

"Hallo, there they are!"

Mornington and Erroll came sweeping up the frozen river. The three nuts puffed by a group of frosty willows and watched them.

The two juniors were going at a great speed.

Erroll was thinking only of the exercise, and of overtaking the fellows ahead, and he did not glance at the bank.

But Morny's eyes fell on the group by the willows.

As if by instinct, involuntarily he slowed.

Erroll glanced back.

"Shall we take it easy, Morny?" he called out.

"No fear. Put it on!" said Mornington. "You run them down, Kit, and I'll keep up if I can. Go it—hard!"

"Right you are!" said Erroll, with a smile.

He shot ahead.

Mornington had said that he would keep up if he could, but he was slowing down, and the unsuspecting Erroll was out of sight beyond a bend of the river in less than a minute.

Morny smiled sarcastically.

He had deceived his chum. As soon as Erroll was hidden by the willows at the bend, Morny glided towards the bank, where the group of nuts waved their hands to him.

He came to a halt by the frozen rushes, smiling.

"Hallo! Here we are again!" he remarked.

"Jolly glad to see you, Morny!" said Gower heartily. "I say, take those silly things off, and come home to lunch with me! My pater'll be glad to see you!"

"Yes, do!" urged Peele.

"Do!" chimed in Lattrey.

Mornington gave the cad of Rookwood a cold, sarcastic glance.

"So you've chummed with Lattrey again, Gower!" he remarked.

"That's not your business!" snapped Lattrey, before Gower could reply.

"Why not?" said Gower uneasily.

"Lattrey's all right. Look here, Morny, why not come home with me, and give Jimmy Silver the go-by? You must be fed up with him by this time."

"Can't be did!"

"We're a cheery party at the Lodge," said Peele. "Gower's pater has a party of racin' friends there. He never bothers about us, either. We can do as we like. It's rippin'!"

"It must be!"

"Drop in an' see us, anyway, Morny!" urged Gower. "We'll be glad to see you any time you like."

Mornington hesitated.

In his heart he despised and disliked the three young rascals, and the contrast between the fast, "racin' party" at the Lodge and Jimmy Silver's home was all in favour of the latter.

But the dandy of Rookwood was in a restless and perverse mood.

He had gone "straight" for so long that he was growing bored with it. His volatile nature craved for change and excitement.

Erroll certainly never meant to con-

trol his chum in any way. He would have shrunk from the thought. Yet Morny sometimes felt a sense of being restrained and held back when he was with Erroll.

The impulse to throw every restraint and consideration to the winds, and to plunge back into his old, wild recklessness, was strong upon him.

He hesitated, and it is said of old that he who hesitates is lost.

He nodded at last.

"You'll come?" exclaimed Gower eagerly.

"I'll come, if you like."

"Bravo!"

"When?" asked Mornington.

"This evenin'!" said Gower eagerly.

"There's great doin's among the pater's guests this evenin', but that needn't worry us. I'm givin' a little party in the gun-room. We've got that to ourselves in the evenin'. Awfully cosy; no interruptions. You remember the room, Morny. Come up the terrace an' tap at the door."

"I'll come! This evenin'."

"Right-ho!"

"Ta-ta! I must be off!"

"Ta-ta, old scout!"

Mornington went racing away along the ice, striving to make up for lost time. He disappeared in a few seconds, and the three nuts of Rookwood grinned at one another.

"Landed the giddy fish!" smiled Lattrey.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll bet you he won't tell Erroll!"

"No fear!"

"But I say, I suppose it's certain that Morny is well-heel'd?" remarked Peele. "We don't want to play Morny for IOU's."

Lattrey grinned.

"It's a dead cert; I've seen the money. He had a tenner by post while I was at the Priory. And I know he had a good bit more."

"Good egg!"

"Hallo, there's young Hopeful!"

Lattrey's remark was caused by the sight of Algy Silver, returning along the ice, alone. Lattrey called to him, and the fag of High Combe School steered shoreward. His face was excited and eager. The nuts did not

need telling that he had escaped from Jimmy Silver, and come back purposely to see them.

An evil satisfaction dawned in Lattrey's face. His dupe was in his hands again, and the cad of Rookwood did not mean to let the opportunity slip.

#### The 3rd Chapter.

##### A Thrashing for Three.

Erroll glanced over his shoulders as he heard hard breathing close behind. Mornington met his gaze with a smile. He had overtaken his chum. Algy had passed them, one after the other, on his way back. And now Jimmy Silver, Lovell, and Miss Phyllis were in sight, ahead.

"We shall catch them, Kit!" smiled Mornington.

"Looks like it! I thought you were fairly left behind, Morny."

"I've been puttin' it on a bit."

They glided on, faster and faster.

Some distance ahead now was a bridge, which was the limit of the long run. As Jimmy Silver & Co. slowed down at the finish, Erroll and Mornington put on a final spurt and joined them.

"Hallo, here you are!" sang out Lovell cheerily.

"Just caught you!" panted Erroll.

"Good for you!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "You must have bucked up! Have you seen anything of Algy? I left him sitting on the bank, way back. He had to give in."

"He passed us, going back," said Erroll.

"Passed you! I thought he was resting!"

"Going home, I think."

Jimmy Silver's brows contracted. Algy had made the excuse that he was tired, and Jimmy had left him sitting down, understanding that the party were to pick him up again on their return.

Yet if he had passed Erroll and Morny on his way home, he must have started again almost as soon as Jimmy was out of sight of him.

Jimmy was not suspicious, but he remembered the reckless fag's former dealings with Lattrey, and that Algy had seen the Rookwood junior on the bank.

It looked to him as if the fag had deliberately "spooed" him, for the sake of getting back alone—and he could only have had one motive for that.

Phyllis gave Jimmy a quick, troubled look.

She had observed Lattrey on the bank, and the same uneasy suspicion had evidently come into her mind.

"Come with me, Erroll, will you?" muttered Jimmy, in a low voice.

Then he called to his cousin: "Take a rest before you start back, Phil."

Erroll understood, and he followed Jimmy without a word.

Morny gave them a curious, sarcastic glance; he understood, too. But he joined Miss Phyllis with a smiling face.

Morny had consented to join Gower's little party that evening in the gun-room at the Lodge. But the thought that Gower was booked for a hammering at Jimmy Silver's hands did not worry him. It amused him.

Jimmy and Erroll did not speak, as they scudded away on the frozen surface of the river.

Jimmy's face was dark and angry. If Lattrey had not had lesson enough on the subject of Algy Silver, Jimmy was prepared to give him some more—with a freer hand, now that Lattrey was no longer his guest.

They covered the distance in great style, but slowed down as they neared the spot where they had passed the nuts, and drew in to the bank.

Jimmy threw off his skates, and ran ashore; Erroll followed his example. "You think the kid's with them, Jimmy?" asked Erroll.

"I'm afraid so."

"Lattrey's cad enough, I suppose. If Algy's joined them, they can't be very far away."

"We'll soon see!"

Jimmy Silver hurried along the bank, his eyes wide open and keen.

A path branched off at a little distance from the towing-path, into a leafless wood.

Jimmy paused there, and looked about him. He did not believe that Algy would venture to go home to the Lodge with the nuts. He expected to find them out of doors, and if Algy was with the nutty party, he did not need telling how they would be engaged.

"Play up, Peele!"

"There you are!"

"I'll go you one better, at any rate."

The voices came distinctly through the frosty air.

Jimmy Silver strode in among the trees, his lips set.

A dozen paces from the towing-path, he came upon the party. Where the woodman had left several fallen trunks, Peele & Co. had stopped. They were seated on the logs, with a sawn stump serving as card-table. Peele, Gower, and Lattrey sat round the stump—with Algy Silver!

They were playing poker.

The fag's face was flushed and excited.

Jimmy Silver's footsteps were deadened by the fallen leaves, thick with late snow, and the nuts did not hear his approach.

Algy could not see, but Jimmy could see, the half-hidden glances passing among the precious trio—mocking and amused. They were laughing in their sleeves at the foolish fag, whose money they were winning.

There were "sports" among the "Giddy Goats" of Rookwood, who, shady as they were played the game among themselves—fellows like Howard, and Townsend, and Topham. But Lattrey & Co. were not that sort.

They never bothered about playing the game.

Jimmy Silver could see, at a glance, that they were acting in concert to fleece the reckless fag.

Even if Algy Silver had had a chance, in such a game, with such opponents, he had no chance when the three were in agreement to swindle him, and divide the plunder among themselves, after the game.

But the fag did not see that, and he was playing recklessly, his "Christmas tips" going into the pool at a great rate.

Jimmy Silver strode on, and the gamblers saw him as soon as he was close. There was a general start.

"Hallo, Silver!" said Peele feebly. Lattrey set his lips.

"Your raise, Algy," said Gower deliberately. "The game's waitin' for you."

Algy gave his cousin a defiant look, and dropped five shillings in the pool. Jimmy Silver, the next moment, kicked the cap that was serving as a pool, into the trees. There was a clinking and jingling as the heap of coins it contained was scattered far and wide.

Gower sprang up furiously. "You cheeky hound!" he shouted. "What are you up to? Oh! Yah!"

Jimmy's fists smote him full in the face, and cut short his remarks. Gower staggered back, stumbled over the log he had been seated upon, and fell.

"Look here—" began Peele. "Here, hands off, confound you! I—I say—hang you!"

Peele put up his hands, desperately, as Jimmy Silver attacked.

Jimmy did not speak; there was no need for speech. He was there to

thrash the young rascals, and he proceeded to do it.

Peele scrambled back under a shower of blows.

Erroll was not slow to back up the captain of the Rookwood Fourth. He "went for" Lattrey, with grim eyes and lashing fists.

Lattrey backed away, his eyes gleaming like a wild animal's. He had to defend himself, but his defence did not avail him against Erroll's attack.

Algy Silver stood crimson and uncertain.

Gower staggered to his feet. With a savage glance, he caught up a billet of wood, and rushed at Jimmy Silver.

A savage blow was aimed at Jimmy from behind, as he was engaged with Peele. But Algy Silver, with a flash in his eyes, leaped forward and put out his foot, and Gower tripped over it and went headlong.

"Play the game, you cad!" snarled Algy.

"You—you young rotter!" shrieked Gower, sitting up dazedly. "I'll smash you!"

And he sprang at his dupe, and in an instant they were fighting hammer and tongs.

Crash!

Peele went down, under a terrific right-hander, and he lay gasping on the ground, quite finished.

Jimmy Silver swung round, and rushed at Gower.

The fag was getting the worst of it, but Jimmy's grasp closed on Gower's collar, and dragged him back.

"I'm your man!" he said grimly.

"Hands off, hang you! I—I—"

Crash, crash!

The next two or three minutes seemed like a series of compressed earthquakes to Cuthbert Gower.

He was knocked right and left, and Jimmy's fierce attack left him gasping and groaning on the ground.

Jimmy Silver glanced round.

Lattrey was fighting as savagely as a wildcat, and he was receiving bitter punishment. Erroll did not spare the cad of Rookwood. Lattrey went down at last, and lay where he fell, his eyes burning.

"Our win, Jimmy!" said Erroll lightly.

Jimmy Silver nodded, and looked at his cousin. Algy was flushed and ashamed.

"I—I—" he stammered.

"You young rotter!" said Jimmy bitterly.

Algy looked sullen.

"He'd have cracked your nut if I hadn't tripped him!" he muttered. "He was going to."

"I know that. But for that—"

Jimmy paused. "It's no good talking to you, Algy. Get away!"

"I—I—I won't speak to them again, Jimmy," muttered Algy. "I—I—I—it was only fun, you know. I—I—"

"Well, come on!"

Algy, with unusual docility, followed Jimmy and Erroll from the spot. Lattrey & Co. did not move till they were gone. Then they sat up, blinking dazedly at one another.

"Oh, crumbs!" groaned Gower.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Oh, dear!"

"You fool, Lattrey!" hissed Gower.

"What did you drag that silly fag into a game for? You might have known—"

"Yow-ow-ow!" mumbled Lattrey. "Pretty sights we shall look after this!" groaned Peele. "I wish the little beast had been at the bottom of the river and you with him, Lattrey!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Three extremely disconsolate nuts took their way home to the Lodge—not looking very nutty now.

Jimmy Silver and Erroll rejoined their companions on the way home, nothing being said of the affray in the wood. Algy was very subdued. His new friendship with Lattrey & Co. had ended in fisticuffs, which was probably all the better for the fag.

Mornington smiled as he joined Erroll in their room at the Priory.

"You've been barkin' your knuckles, dear boy!" he remarked.

Erroll nodded.

"What did you bark them on?"

"Lattrey's face!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington. "It will be interestin' to see his chivvy when—" He paused suddenly.

"When?" repeated Erroll.

"Nothin', old scout! They're having a merry party in the gun-room at the Lodge this evenin'," smiled Mornington. "I heard so. But it would shock our friend Silver too much if a fellow thought of joinin' them! Perish the thought! By gad, that run on the ice has made me ravenous, Kit. Let's go down to lunch."

And they went, Erroll very silent and thoughtful. But Mornington was very bright and cheerful for the rest of that day.



**The 4th Chapter.  
Morny Stays Behind.**

"You'll excuse me this evenin', Silver."

Mornington made that remark later in the day.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were going out that evening. They were to visit a friend of Phyllis—Clara Trevlyn, of Cliff House School, who lived at a little distance from Jimmy's home.

Naturally, Phyllis' cousin Jimmy and his schoolboy friends were included in the invitation, and they were looking forward to a very agreeable evening, as several fellows they knew at Greyfriars would be there, as well as some of the girls of Cliff House.

It was shortly before it was time to start that Mornington requested Jimmy Silver to excuse him.

"Why, you're coming along, surely!" exclaimed Jimmy.

"I've got a bit of a headache!" said Mornington calmly. "I fancy I overdid it a bit on the ice to-day."

"Not seedy, surely?"

"Not exactly; but I'd rather rest an' go to bed early, if you don't mind. You won't miss me!"

"Of course, it's just as you like," said Jimmy, with a rather perplexed look. "But you'll find it a bit dull. The pater and mater are coming with us, and you'll be fairly on your own!"

"I don't mind."

"Buck up and come!" said Lovell. Mornington shook his head.

"I don't feel quite equal to it, really," he said; and if there was a mocking inflection in his voice the juniors did not notice it. "There's a rippin' fire in my room, an' I'll have a quiet read, and turn in early. I'm sure you won't mind my desertin' you, Silver?"

"Not at all, if you'd rather stay in," said Jimmy. "Please yourself."

"Right-ho, then!"

"No need to stay in alone," said Erroll; "I'll keep you company, Morny. Jimmy won't mind."

"No fear!" exclaimed Mornington quickly. "I'm not goin' to spoil your evenin', Erroll. You cut along with the others!"

"But—"

"I insist on it."

Erroll gave him a curious glance. "Look here, Morny, I'd just as soon stay with you—in fact, rather, if you'd like my company," he said.

"I tell you, no!"

"Why not?"

"My dear chap, go an' enjoy your evenin'."

"Very well," said Erroll quietly.

But he found an opportunity of speaking alone with Mornington before the party started. He found the dandy of Rookwood yawning in a big easy-chair before a fire in the room he shared with Erroll.

Morny had a book in his hand, but he was not reading. He looked bored, but he did not look as if he had a headache.

"Off?" he asked, as Erroll stepped in.

"Just off," said Erroll.

"Have a good time, old scout!"

"Why aren't you coming, Morny?" asked Erroll gently.

"Didn't you hear me say I'd a headache?"

"Yes, but that's not your reason." Morny laughed.

"Well, I couldn't tell Jimmy that his friends would bore me to death at Miss Trevlyn's place, could I?" he queried.

"I don't see why they should bore you, Morny," said Erroll sadly. "There's some very decent chaps there that we're going to meet—Nugent and Rake, and some others from Greyfriars; and Miss Hazeldene and Miss Derwent from Cliff House, and her brother, a Highcliffe chap, and—"

"Don't give me the roll-call of the merry company," yawned Mornington. "I know I'm a beast, Kit; I'm a rotter, and a bouncer, with a sneakin' sulky temper. I warned you of that when you chummed with me first. Blessed if I know what a chap like you keeps up my acquaintance for!"

Erroll smiled.

"If you'd really be bored there, Morny, I suppose you'd better stay in. But I wish you'd come."

"I couldn't really, Kit. Leave me out this time. Now buzz off before they begin howlin' for you. You'll find me tucked up fast asleep when you come in."

"Right! So long, old chap!"

"Ta-ta!"

Erroll went out, and Mornington settled himself in his chair, yawning portentously.

There was a flush in his cheeks, a feeling of shame and uneasiness in his breast.

He was deceiving his chum deliberately, and though he did not refrain from doing so, it gave him a pang.

But, after all, he told himself angrily, Erroll had no right to control him—no wish even to do so.

If he was deceiving Erroll, it was for Erroll's own sake—to avoid spoiling his evening's pleasure; and certainly Erroll's pleasure would have been spoiled that evening if he had known how Morny really intended to spend his time.

But Morny was not satisfied. He listened for sounds from below, and heard the closing of doors and the rumble of wheels on the drive.

Jimmy Silver and Co. were gone, with cheery hearts, to what was, to them, a happy evening. Why could not Morny have been happy with them, in the same frank and boyish way?

It was partly, perhaps, because in some ways he seemed to have an old head on young shoulders, and partly, no doubt, because his restless nature craved for change; in a word, for the fierce excitement of his old shady ways.

He was ashamed of it. He knew that it was his lower nature that had the upper hand now, and he despised himself for it.

But it had the upper hand, and there was no gainsaying that. And he had ceased to struggle with temptation.

He opened his dressing-case, and extracted a cigarette from a box there. He lighted it, and moved restlessly about the room, smoking. It was his first cigarette for a long time.

He had given up that foolish habit,

Lodge, coming in from the stair on the terrace.

It was a cheerful room, and a bright fire of logs blazed in the grate. From another part of the house came sounds of merriment. Gower's pater and his friends were "keeping it up."

To judge by the sounds, the bowl was circulating freely among the hunting and racing men whom Sir Horace Gower was entertaining. The baronet had no thought for what his son might be doing, and probably cared little.

Gower and his friends had the old gun-room to themselves, and were imitating, in their own way, the older roisterers downstairs.

They were glad enough to see Mornington, though their gladness was not the result of any feelings of friendship.

Mornington stepped in, and Peele helped him off with his coat. There were three chairs round a card-table by the fire, and Gower added a fourth.

"By gad, you're comfy here!" Mornington remarked.

"Not so bad!" said Gower.

"I suppose your pater lets you do as you like."

Gower laughed.

"He never takes any notice of me at all," he said. "So long as I don't bother him he lets me alone. He wouldn't let me be home for Christmas if I worried him. He won't bother us here, don't you fear. He'll be squiffy before eleven o'clock."

"Oh, gad!"

"And if you feel inclined to follow his merry example, there's champagne

said Lattrey. "Why not have a good time while you can enjoy it—what? I'll put on sackcloth and ashes when I'm going bald."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cut for deal."

The deal fell to Mornington. He flicked round the cards, the "ante" was placed in the silver bowl used as a pool, and the betting began.

Of all gambling games, draw-poker is one of the most reckless. Even played with a fixed limit, large sums may be lost in a very short time. And Gower & Co. were playing without a limit.

The silver bowl was soon full of cash.

Peele dropped out, and soon afterwards Lattrey, and it was left between Mornington and Gower. Morny called for a show of cards.

"Four kings," said Gower, turning up his cards. "You gave me a jolly good hand, Morny."

"Four aces!" smiled Morny.

"Oh, gad!"

"Lucky as ever, Morny!" laughed Lattrey, as Mornington emptied over six pounds out of the silver bowl.

"Luckier!" said Mornington.

"Your deal, Peele."

The game went on. It was an exciting game enough, all the more exciting because the young rascals were playing for more money than they could afford to lose.

Morny had thirty pounds, the sum total of his Christmas tips from rich relations. That would have seen him well through the following term

It did not cost Lattrey anything to lose large sums, as he was in league with the other two, and the plunder was to be equally divided after Mornington had gone.

Lattrey, Peele, and Gower lost to one another continually, and Morny lost to one or another of them nearly all the time.

His thirty pounds had dwindled down to five, and it was eleven o'clock, when it dawned upon him that he was being "rooked" in concert by the three.

A dangerous glitter shot into Mornington's eyes.

But he made no remark.

He went on playing quietly for small stakes, watching his companions covertly to make sure, and watching the cards.

For two or three rounds he "dropped out," losing only his "ante," and Peele & Co. had the pleasure of winning one another's money in turn.

As their money was a common stock in this game they were soon tired of that. It was Morny's money they wanted.

They soon showed signs of irritation.

"Oh, play up, Morny!" said Peele. "You're not stony, I suppose?"

"Bit funky to drop out round after round, I think!" said Gower, with a sneer.

Mornington smiled.

It was the proof he wanted. If the young rascals had been playing fairly for one another's money Morny's dropping out would not have mattered. But it mattered a good deal when every round they played without Morny was only a matter of keeping up appearances and wasting time.

"All serene! I'm coming down heavily presently!" smiled Mornington.

His attention was devoted to the cards—that is to say, to the backs of the cards. He knew now that they were marked.

Morny was keen enough, though he had been taken in for a long time. As soon as he was quite sure that the cards were marked, it was only a question of time and observation before he discovered the marks.

When he was satisfied on that point he was prepared to play again, more extensively than by simply dropping his "ante" into the pool.

His companions were decidedly irritable by this time. For seven or eight rounds they had won only a few shillings from Mornington, and the money they won from one another was nothing in the peculiar circumstances.

The deal came to Mornington, and he shuffled the cards.

"By gad, look at the time!" he exclaimed suddenly.

It was nearly midnight.

Mornington had quite forgotten his intention to return to the Priory before Erroll. There was very little time to lose now, if he wanted to do that.

"Oh, you're not an early bird!" said Lattrey.

"I'm stayin' at a select spot," said Mornington. "Mustn't be too late. But I'm goin' to have a plunge before I chuck it, my pippins. This will have to be the last round, for me."

"Then for goodness' sake put somethin' on the game worth playin' for," said Gower tartly.

"I'll do my best, if I get any cards."

Mornington dealt in his usual careless manner. Not by the flicker of an eyelid did he betray any change in his thoughts and his intentions, and the scheming trio did not dream that he had discovered their trick, and was turning it against themselves.

Peele smiled as he glanced at his cards—four queens, a very strong hand. Lattrey had four aces, and Gower had three jacks and two eights—a "full hand." All were well provided, and their glances to one another betrayed as much.

Mornington's face had a shadow on it as he glanced at the cards he had given himself. In the draw he took none, however, shrugging his shoulders in reckless carelessness.

His manner was hesitating when his first stake went into the pool. Peele just covered it, and the others followed his example. The raising was left to Mornington.

His apparently unconscious look of disappointment had not escaped the nuts. Their game now was to draw Morny on to play high, if they could, as they felt certain they had the cards to beat him.

Morny glanced at the clock.

"Oh, never mind the time!" said Lattrey.

"I sha'n't be able to keep on after this round, old scout."

"Then make this a good one, for goodness' sake!"

"Well, a chap can only die once,"



It was a startling scene that met Erroll's gaze. Mornington was on the floor, with Lattrey's knee on his chest, and Gower was holding his wrists fiercely.

but it claimed him again. If one thing went, all might go.

He might as well smoke as gamble—better, in fact. And he found some solace in this return to old habits, and he smoked cigarette after cigarette as he paced about the long room.

But he stopped at last, and took his coat and hat and gloves. All was quiet below. It was time to start for the Lodge, if he was going. And he had promised to go. And he wanted to go—wanted keenly to experience once more the old excitement.

He could return before Erroll. Jimmy and his friends would be late home that night. He could return and be in bed before Erroll came, and his chum would never know. There was no need to cause Erroll the pain he knew it would cause him if he knew.

He slipped quietly downstairs. The house was almost in darkness. The servants were in their own quarters; everyone else was out. Mornington let himself out quietly, pulled up his collar, and strode away through the clear, frosty night.

**The 5th Chapter.  
Roosting the Rooks.**

"Good man!"

"Trot in!"

"Welcome, my merry infant!"

Peele & Co. greeted Mornington heartily enough as he stood in the doorway of the gun-room at the

on the sideboard," said Gower coolly.

"I've tipped the butler to sneak me half a dozen bottles."

"My hat, you are a goer!"

"Lots of smokes, too—cigars, if you like them, as well as fags."

"I fancy I'll let the cigars alone," said Mornington, laughing. "I'll try your cigarettes, old son."

The others were already smoking, and he joined in. Gower's face was flushed, and it was pretty clear that he had been already at the champagne.

All three of the juniors showed signs of the combat of the morning, though they had done their best to remove the traces of it. But they were in great spirits.

As a matter of fact, all three of them had had bad luck that day at an inn where they were accustomed to meet some "sporting" gentlemen.

The sporting gentlemen had relieved them of a very considerable part of their loose cash. And they were looking forward to Mornington to replenish the exchequer.

"What's the game?" asked Mornington, as he blew out a little cloud of smoke.

"Poker!"

"I'm your man!"

"It's a great game," said Peele. "Beats bridge hollow! Bridge is rot! Poker's the game to make the money fly!"

"And that's what we're after!" smiled Mornington.

"Chap can only be young once,"

at Rookwood, even in an expensive way, if he had taken care of it.

But his very last thought was to take care of his money.

He was rich again for one evening, at least, and it was a pleasure to the one-time wealthy Mornington to feel rich again, if only for a few hours, to being moderately well-off for a whole term.

But luck—if it was luck—was against Mornington.

When he happened to be dealer he had cards that were as good as the others, on an average.

But when Peele or Gower or Lattrey dealt, Morny's cards were generally bad.

More than once Mornington gave Mark Lattrey a suspicious glance. He knew Lattrey's old.

But it had not yet occurred to him that the three young rascals were in a scheme together to "skin" him, which was the case.

Sometimes one or two of them "bluffed" on a poor hand, which looked like the most reckless play, losing quite considerable sums to the others. Those tactics naturally blinded Morny for a time, keen as he was.

He knew Lattrey was capable of cheating at cards, and at anything else, but when he saw Lattrey lose five pounds in a lump several times over his suspicion faded.

It was not till the play had gone on to a late hour that Mornington began to realise the truth.

"All serene! I'm coming down heavily presently!" smiled Mornington.

His attention was devoted to the cards—that is to say, to the backs of the cards. He knew now that they were marked.

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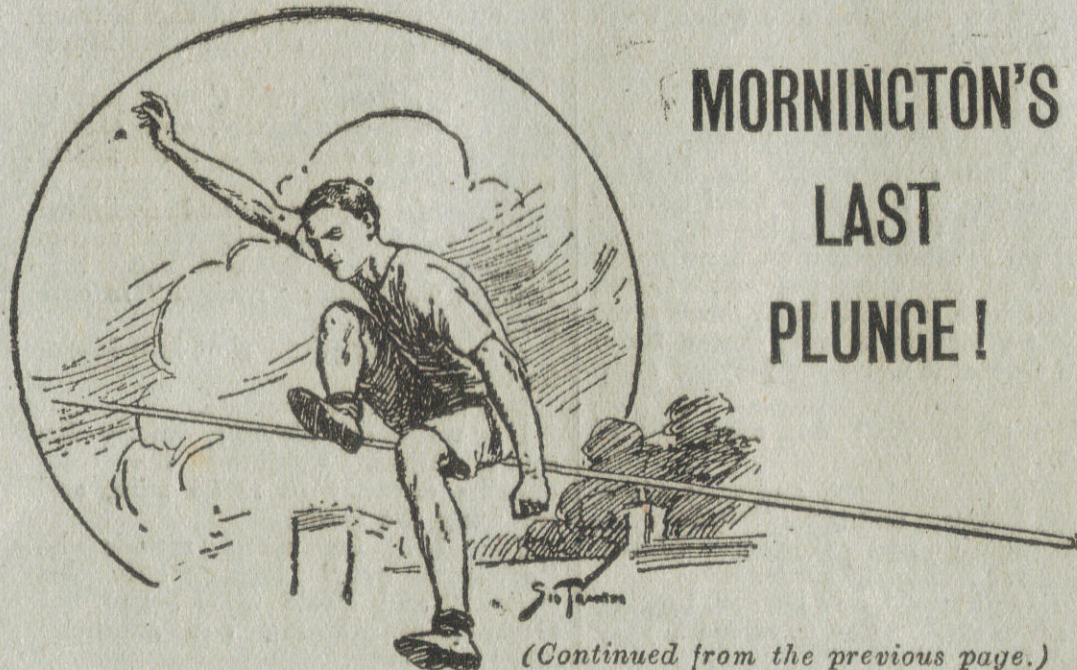
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"Well, a chap can only die once,"





(Continued from the previous page.)

said Mornington recklessly. "Here goes!"

He threw two pounds into the pool. "I'll see you," said Peele.

The game went round, and round again. Then Gower passed. The other three kept it up; and Peele passed, his ready cash being all in the pool. Lattrey was left in last with Mornington, and Lattrey was beginning to feel a little uneasy.

His four aces could only be beaten by a straight flush, the strongest hand in poker, and certainly Morny's clouded look when he first saw his cards did not hint that he had the strongest hand possible.

But Lattrey was uneasy now, all the same. He played on. Nearly all the money the nuts had won from Mornington, and nearly all their own, was in the pool now.

If Morny had deliberately been drawing the nuts on he had played his game well. He "saw" Lattrey every time, now, without turning a hair. It was Lattrey who called at last for a show of cards.

He laid out his four aces.

"Beat that!" he said.

"Certainly," smiled Mornington.

He flipped his cards out on the table. There was a gasp from the nuts as they looked at a three, four, five, six, and seven, all of hearts. It was a straight flush, and the four aces were beaten.

Mornington reached over to the silver bowl. The three nuts stood speechless as he crammed the money into his pockets. They had brought Mornington there to shear him, and they had been shorn—shorn almost to their last half-sovereign.

The dandy of Rookwood rose, a smile on his lips.

"Good game!" he remarked. "I'll have another smoke, and then I'll go."

An oath dropped from Gower's lips. "You won't go!" he said, between his teeth.

"My dear man!"

"Cheat!" shouted Lattrey, beside himself with rage and chagrin.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mornington.

"Cheat, with your own cards—your own cards, my dear sportin' friends! That's rich!"

Lattrey ground his teeth.

He could see, what was more slowly dawning upon Peele and Gower, what had happened.

The intended victim had detected the marks on the cards, and in his deal he had carefully given his opponents good hands, to lead them on, giving himself a hand that would just beat them. It was their own game turned against themselves, and they could not complain without confessing that the cards were marked.

But considerations of that kind weighed little with Lattrey.

He sprang towards Mornington, his face white with rage.

"Cheat! Give us back our money!"

Mornington laughed.

"Rooked at your own game, by gad!" he smiled. "You admit that you played marked cards on me—what!"

"You'll hand out the money before

## MORNINGTON'S LAST PLUNGE!

you go, or you'll play again," said Peele.

"Play again, with three sharpers and marked cards! Not if I know it!"

"Then you'll shell out!" said Gower desperately.

His knavery was exposed now, and the recovery of the cash was the only consolation possible. But it was not easy to recover from Mornington.

"Good-night, dear boys!" he said, and moved towards the door.

Lattrey sprang in the way.

"Let me pass!" said Mornington, in a dangerously quiet tone.

"Collar him!" hissed Lattrey. "He was foolin' us all the time. He's cleaned us out! Collar him, and make him shell out, the swindlin' cad!"

"Swindlin'!" chuckled Mornington. "That's too good. Hands off!"

But the nuts were desperate, and they rushed on him, and the next moment Mornington was fighting furiously against three.

### The 6th Chapter.

#### Erroll Takes a Hand.

"Morny's gone to bed?"

Jimmy Silver made that remark as he came up to his room with Lovell and Erroll. They had returned to the Priory at a somewhat late hour.

Erroll nodded. There was no light in Morny's room.

"Yes. Good-night, you chaps!"

"Good-night!"

Lovell and Jimmy went into their room. Erroll opened the door of the

adjoining room quietly. He did not want to disturb Morny if he was asleep.

He started a little as the scent of stale tobacco-smoke struck him. He closed the door, and turned on the light.

"You asleep, Morny?"

He compressed his lips the next moment. Mornington's bed was empty, and had not been slept in, and Morny's coat was gone. The fire had long been out, and there were two or three cigarette-stumps in the fender.

Erroll stood quite still.

It was past midnight. Where was Mornington?

The Rookwood junior hardly required information on that point. He remembered Morny's reference to Gower's little party in the gun-room at the lodge. That was where Morny had gone—that was why he had not accompanied Jimmy Silver & Co. to Clara Trevlyn's little gathering.

Erroll looked at his watch.

It was half-past twelve.

Where was Morny now? Surely he could not have stayed so late with the little party at the Lodge? Erroll felt a vague sense of alarm.

He did not think of condemning his chum, or being angry with him. He had taken Morny for his friend as he was, not as he would have liked him to be.

It was for him to bear with the wayward fellow's faults, and to lead him as far as he could upon the right path.

But Morny was late—very late. He

would have to ring up the house when he returned, and what would Jimmy's parents think of that? Erroll slipped on a cap, and turned out the light, and descended the stairs softly.

He let himself out by the door of the conservatory, which he thought it would be safe to leave unfastened for a time, and hurried round to the drive.

He wanted to meet his reckless chum on his return, and let him into the house without awakening all the inmates. That was his only thought so far.

But there was no sign of Morny, and Erroll moved slowly on the path through the fields that led towards the Lodge. If Morny had gone there he was bound to meet him on his way back.

But he did not meet him, and there was no one in sight in the clear, frosty starlight, when he came in sight of the Lodge.

The big gates stood open, and Erroll went up the drive towards the house. He was anxious and uneasy now, more than ever. A fear was in his heart that something had happened to Mornington on his way back through the lonely fields.

After all, it could do no harm to call for his chum. Mornington must have failed to notice the flight of time. He could not have intended to give the whole Silver household a shock by returning home at one in the morning.

Erroll paused for some minutes, hesitating.

He could hear the sounds of roistering within the house; the drinking party was still keeping it up. But it was in another part of the building that the baronet's son was holding revel, he knew. Morny had spoken of the gun-room. Where was that?

Suddenly, from the darkness, came a blaze of light. A door, at the head of a little stair at the end of the terrace, had been thrown suddenly open.

A figure appeared there, in the bright light—with two or three others clinging to it.

It was Mornington!

Erroll stared at the startling scene, dumb with amazement.

It lasted only a few seconds.

Mornington was dragged back, bodily, into the room, and the door was closed, with a thud that reached Erroll's ears where he stood.

"Good heavens!" panted Erroll.

His chum needed his aid; that was only too clear.

In a moment more, Erroll was on the long, dark terrace, running hard. From big, curtained windows that he passed came the roar of a drinking song. Erroll ran on, and reached the stone stairs, and ran up breathlessly.

The door was closed, but he could hear the sounds of a fierce struggle within. He groped for the handle, and hurled the door wide open.

With set teeth, Erroll sprang into the room.

It was a startling scene that met his gaze.

Mornington was on the floor, with Lattrey's knee on his chest. Gower was holding his wrists fiercely. Peele lay on the hearthrug, groaning, evidently knocked out in the struggle.

Morny was panting and exhausted in the grasp of his assailants. He had fought fiercely, and had reached the door once, and dragged it open, only to be dragged back and down.

He was spent now, and at the mercy of the sharpers.

But his chum was there.

Erroll did not speak.

There was no need of speech. He rushed at the struggling group, and a terrific right-hander sent Lattrey spinning across the room.

Gower sprang up savagely.

"You hound—you here! Get out—ah!"

Crash!

Erroll's clenched fist struck him fairly between the eyes, and he went down like a log.

Mornington sat up, panting.

"Kit!"

"Morny, old man—"

Erroll helped his chum to his feet.

Mornington was dishevelled and panting. He gave a breathless laugh.

"Old scout, you've come at the right time. Bully for you!"

"Morny!"

Gower, and Peele, and Lattrey scrambled up, white and furious. But they did not renew the combat. Mornington alone had been a tough handful for them. Erroll was too dangerous for the nuts to tackle.

"You rotten hounds!" muttered Gower, caressing his nose, which was streaming red. "Get out of my house, or I'll call the servants to put you out!"

"But I was goin', dear boy, when you persuaded me to stop," grinned Mornington. "What price shellin' out now?"

"Get out, hang you!"

"Mornington!" panted Erroll.

"What does this mean?"

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"Dear old man, it means that your pal's a merry blackguard, same as ever," he replied coolly. "I came here to gamble. The dear boys asked me here to swindle me. They did it, too—till I discovered the marks on the cards, an' then I cleaned 'em out at their own game. Tit for tat, you know. But they didn't seem satisfied."

Erroll shuddered.

"I'm glad you came," continued Mornington. "I don't know how you got here, but I'm dashed glad to see you. They were goin' to take back the plunder, you know—after I'd rooked the rooks—ha, ha!"

"Oh you cad!" groaned Peele.

Lattrey did not speak; his face was savage and gleaming with hate. Morny's eyes fell before Erroll's steady gaze.

"You're down on me for dishin' the merry cheats, Kit?"

"Don't ask me," muttered Erroll.

Mornington hesitated a moment.

"They asked for it," he said.

"Fairly begged for it. But you're right, Kit—it's money a bit too dirty for me to touch. Wait a tick!"

The dandy of Rookwood grabbed a handful of money from his pocket. With quiet care he separated his own money from his winnings.

The former he replaced in his pocket. The latter, he threw upon the floor with a sweep of his hand.

"There's your money, you dogs—soramble for it!" he said arrogantly.

"Come on, Erroll!"

He strode out on the terrace, and Erroll followed him.

Lattrey kicked the door shut, and then began to collect the scattered money from the floor.

Peele and Gower did not offer to assist him. They stood watching him moodily.

"It's turned out all right, after all," said Lattrey.

Gower gave him a bitter look.

"You call it all right?" he said.

"Oh, you cad, you got us into this. You put us up to cheatin' the fellow, and—and then—" Gower bit his lip till the blood almost came. "Then we—oh, it's too rotten! Like a gang of swindlin' sharpers in a pub—and in my father's house!"

"It's too sickenin'!" muttered Peele.

Lattrey sneered.

"You were willin' enough to rook him—and willin' enough to help me make him shell out when he'd rooked us. Don't preach to me."

"I'm not goin' to preach to you," said Gower, in a low voice. "But I'm done with you! Come on, Peele, old man—let's get away from this!"

And Lattrey of the Fourth was left alone, his face hard and set, his eyes gleaming with bitter rage and hatred.

On the frosty, starlit road, Mornington paused.

The careless mockery had gone out of his face now.

Erroll had not spoken on the homeward way.

"I suppose you're pretty ratty with me, Kit?"

"No."

"Shocked—what?"

"Never mind that," said Erroll.

"Let's get on. You don't want to wake the house, Morny. I've left a door unlocked. Mr. Silver wouldn't make the allowances for you that I do."

"I meant to be back early," Mornington shrugged his shoulders. "I'm a dashed bad egg, Erroll. Why don't you throw me over?"

"Oh, rats! Come on!"

"You don't want me to swear repentance?" said Mornington, with a touch of his old mockery.

"What's the good?"

"You don't think I should keep my word, if I did?"

"I don't think you could, Morny," said Erroll sadly.

Mornington paused again.

"I've been a dashed fool!" he said.

"Blessed if I know what came over me. I don't really care for that rot, an' if I did, I fancy my experience this evenin' would have sickened me of it. It's the last time, Kit—and I mean it now! I'm done with that mug's game—done for good. You can kick me if you like."

Erroll laughed.

"I won't kick you," he said. "I take your word, Morny—and, anyway, you'll do your best, and I'll help you. We'll forget this, when we start fresh at Rookwood."

"Done!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not hear the chums as they went quietly to their room; and they did not know of the scene at the Lodge. And, needless to say, Mornington saw nothing more of Lattrey & Co. during his stay at the Priory. And, if Erroll had had doubts, they were removed at last, and he knew that Mornington had said a last farewell to his old ways, after that last reckless plunge.

THE END.

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# TALES OF THE DORMITORY!

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THIS WEEK: "THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY!" BY TOM RAWSON.



"I'll teach you—" exclaimed Cyril, holding his fist threateningly before his brother's face. The next moment, however, he looked round, as the sound of his father's voice could be heard in the doorway. "Cyril!" exclaimed Mr. Burton. "What is the meaning of this behaviour?"

"Rawson, old scout, I believe you promised to tell us a yarn to-night!" Jimmy Silver made the remark as he entered the Classical dormitory at Rookwood. Rawson smiled. "I'm quite willing," he said. "But it won't be a school story. You see—the scholarship boy flushed slightly—"this is the first public school I have been to, and—well, nothing happened of any importance at my other school."

### The 1st Chapter.

The Boy Who Wasn't Wanted. Richard Burton was a very wealthy self-made man. He owned a big boot factory in the town in which I lived. Everybody knew him, and, what's more, everybody liked him. He had two sons. One was Cyril, a fellow of about eighteen years of age; whilst the other was Bob, a very decent chap, two years younger. Bob was of a mechanical turn of mind. Mr. Burton always said that if you wanted Bob you would generally find him in his little workshop. It was pretty true, too. Bob simply revelled in anything in the mechanical line, and it was a well-known fact that he was persevering with an invention for improving aeroplanes. Every minute Bob had to spare he spent it in his workshop; and when at length he left school, and was waiting for a situation, he worked upon his models from early morning till late at night. About this time Jonathan Dane, a big merchant in the town, was staying at the Burtons' house. He was taking a stroll in the grounds one morning when he caught sight of Bob's workshop. He immediately made towards it, and pushed open the door. Bob turned round at once. "Oh, come in, Mr. Dane!" he said quickly. Dane entered, and gave the young inventor a genial smile. "Hallo!" he exclaimed. "What ever have you got there?" "It's an invention of mine," explained Bob promptly. "I don't know that there's much in it. But there, I'm keen on this sort of thing, so I keep on with it."

"Still messing about with those rotten toys?" he asked, with a sneer. "They're not toys!" replied Bob, with promptitude. "I've told you that time after time, Cyril. To hear you talk, anybody would think that I played with kids' toys!" "Well, so they are, you silly little ass!" said Cyril, with a grin. "It's time you grew out of being a kid. You never see anything of the world. You stick to your blessed toys from morning to night!" Bob's face reddened at the insulting tone of his brother's remarks. "I don't know why you can't leave me alone, Cyril," he said plainly. "I know you think I'm a fool, and—" "Most certainly I do!" jeered Cyril. "You're the biggest little fool I've ever struck. Why don't you chuck this foolery, and enjoy yourself a bit?" "I enjoy myself quite as much as I want to!" declared Bob. "Yes, messing about with those ridiculous toys." "They're not toys!" snapped Bob impatiently. Cyril had been tapping the bench with a spanner, and he suddenly threw the latter across the shed, regardless of whether it would do any damage. "Look here!" he said. "I want to make a man of you. What do you say to a dinner at Bonner's this evening, and a theatre afterwards? We can have a ripping time if you like. I'll bring a couple of my pals, and—" Bob shook his head. "Sorry, Cyril," he said slowly, "but I haven't got the money to spare." "Why, the gov'nor gave you a pound note this morning!" "I know. But I want that for some new tools," said Bob. "Oh, hang the tools!" growled Cyril. "Come out and enjoy yourself! You don't know what it's like to go out on the spree. We can get a ripping dinner at Bonner's, and wine and smokes ad lib."

"What I say!" said Bob unflinchingly. "Only a low-down bouncer would get himself the worse for drink. You're a beastly rotter, Cyril, and I'm disgusted to think that you're my brother!" "What—what!" Cyril spluttered with uncontrollable rage. "You—you—Take that, you little beast!" The elder brother swung out his fist promptly, and caught Bob full between the eyes. Bob went to the floor with a bump. Cyril reached over him, holding his fist threateningly before the youngster's face. "I'll teach you to—" "Cyril! What is the meaning of this behaviour?" The elder brother looked round quickly, to find his father and Jonathan Dane standing in the doorway of the workshop. Cyril stood stock-still, and did not reply to his father's question. "Cyril!" repeated Mr. Burton harshly. "Answer my question immediately! What prompted you to indulge in a fistic encounter with your brother?" "I'd rather not say if you don't mind," said Cyril. "I think I have punished Bob sufficiently, and I shouldn't like you to have a go at him." "I don't understand!" said Mr. Burton, in surprise. "Explain yourself more clearly, my boy. Do you suggest that it was under provocation that you raised your fists to your brother?" "Most certainly, dad!" said Cyril unflinchingly. "I couldn't stand still and hear him openly insult you." "Insult me?" Mr. Burton eyed the two brothers critically. "Good heavens! Has my son seen fit to insult me before his own brother?" "It's a lie, father!" exclaimed Bob heatedly, rising to his feet. "It's a deliberate lie!" Mr. Burton turned to the elder boy. "Do you adhere to your statement, Cyril, that Bob has openly insulted me?" he asked. "Oh, yes, father!" said Cyril artfully. "Surely you wouldn't think I was telling you an untruth? I would not have repeated a word of what Bob said, only—only that I felt absolutely disgusted with him." "You rotter!" exclaimed Bob, moving towards his brother, his eyes gleaming fiercely, his fists clenched. "You He—you know you lie! Tell the gov'nor that what you've said is all lies, or, by gum, I'll—" "Bob!" roared Mr. Burton. "Control yourself! Go to your room this instant, and remain there until I send for you! To think that a son of mine should treat me with such gross disrespect! It is astounding—unbelievable!" "But, father—" pleaded Bob. "Go!" Mr. Burton pointed towards the door. "Go at once! I had this workshop built for your sole benefit, and what good has it done you? None at all! Your whole time has been spent here, and not a thought have you given to your future! You are a fool, sir—a helpless young idiot!" Bob left the workshop, his head held high in the air. He did not feel at all bitter towards his father. His father had been misled. But all the same he despised his brother at that moment. He despised him for his blackguardly ways, and also for having blackened him in his father's eyes.

Bob clenched his fists tightly. He felt that if only he could have faced his brother man to man at that moment he would have amply repaid him for his treacherous act.

### The 2nd Chapter.

The Rascal's Downfall. "Now that young reprobate has gone we will get to business." Mr. Burton made the remark as soon as Bob had left the workshop. "This is my boy Cyril," he added, introducing Cyril to Mr. Dane. "I think he will suit you admirably." "H'm!" Mr. Dane knitted his brows. "I rather thought your younger son would answer my requirements. You see—" "That young fool!" interrupted Mr. Burton. "Impossible, my dear Dane! I would not think of saddling you with such a young reprobate! That is absolutely out of the question! You will find Cyril far more capable and willing. Why, Bob would want to play about with his toys all day! That wouldn't do at all in a busy office." "Er—no!" faltered Mr. Dane awkwardly. "To tell you the truth, my dear Burton, I rather admired that youngster's invention. I happen to know something about inventions, and I think the boy shows excellent promise. But if you'd rather not—well and good." "Of course I'd rather not!" said Mr. Burton firmly. "Cyril will suit you splendidly." He turned to his son. "You'd like to go into Mr. Dane's office, wouldn't you, Cyril?" "Oh, rather, father!" said Cyril promptly. "A job like that would suit me splendidly!" "There you are, Dane!" said Mr. Burton. "See how eager he is! Why, he's worth ten of my younger boy!" "Very well," said Mr. Dane resignedly. "I will do as you suggest. I presume thirty shillings a week will suit your son?" Cyril smiled genially. "Splendid, Mr. Dane!" he said affably. "I trust I shall give you satisfaction. I assure you I shall do my very utmost to prove my worth." "Very well spoken, my boy!" said Mr. Burton, clapping his son on the shoulder. "I can see that you will turn out a credit to your old father." "I hope so, dad," said the boy. "Well, perhaps you will come along with me now, my boy?" said Mr. Dane kindly. "You need not commence your duties to-day, but I will show you over the office if you will come along with me." Cyril Burton walked along with Mr. Jonathan Dane as far as his office. There Mr. Dane led the way to his private room, and explained to the boy the nature of his duties. "I was very surprised to hear your brother had passed insulting remarks about his father," remarked Mr. Dane at length. "He seemed a very nice young fellow to me, and extremely keen on his invention." Cyril laughed cynically. "I am afraid you don't know him as well as I do, Mr. Dane," he said. "As father said, he's a little fool, and he wastes too much time on those toys of his."

"You call them toys?" asked Mr. Dane, raising his eyebrows. "Well, what are they, sir?" said Cyril complacently. "Ah, they're more than toys!" said Mr. Dane calmly. "That boy has the makings of an inventor in him. One of these days I shall get him to explain the workings of his latest invention. I believe there is something in it." Cyril chuckled to himself. He thought that Mr. Dane must be mad to see any sense in his brother's ridiculous "toys." Mr. Dane rose from his seat and held out his hand. "Well, my boy," he said, "I have explained your duties to you. I shall expect to see you at ten o'clock sharp to-morrow morning." Cyril Burton took his departure, looking anxiously forward to his new job. It was not that he was keen on the job, but he knew only too well that the money he received in salary would enable him to spend many more "enjoyable" evenings at Bonner's. The prospect was indeed a happy one to the young rascal. The next morning Cyril Burton arrived at the office right on time. He got through the first week's work very commendably. The second and third weeks he did very well, but after that his enthusiasm for the work flagged. He rushed off early one evening in order to go to a theatre, and as he made a mistake in the petty-cash book Mr. Dane called him to account. Cyril Burton hated to be corrected, and a great dislike for Mr. Dane became embedded in his heart. He got more lax than ever with his work. He contrived to attend a theatre or music-hall every evening, and his thirty shillings went very quickly. On the Thursday of his fourth week at work two of his chums begged of him to go out to dinner at Bonner's with them that same evening. Cyril had no money, and he knew it was not a bit of use his asking his father for any. He had had too many loans of late. And then the rascal gave way to temptation. Why shouldn't he borrow the money from the petty-cash box? He could easily repay it when he was paid on the following Saturday. Cyril Burton did not dwell on the matter for long. No sooner had he thought of the idea than he put his thoughts into action. He took two pounds from the petty-cash box, and the dinner at Bonner's came off after all. The next day was an unfortunate one for the cad. His father called him into his private room during the lunch hour. "I am very sorry to have to call you to account, my boy," said Mr. Burton, in his kindly manner. "But there is every reason why you should cut down your expenses." Cyril's face changed colour. "When I was a boy," went on Mr. Burton, "I was taught to be thrifty, and it is my wish that you should be the same. Had I not saved the money I did when I was young I should not have been in the position that I am now. I want you to learn how to look after your money. I want you to put your money away for the rainy day, as the saying is. You will give me the whole of your earnings to-morrow, and I will return you five shillings for pocket-money. The rest I shall place in the bank to your credit." Cyril pulled a wry face. "But, father," he protested, "surely you don't think I'm not capable of looking after my own money?" "Well, Cyril, it doesn't seem much like it," said Mr. Burton quietly. "You have spent all your earnings this last week, and also ten shillings which you borrowed from me. It is far too much for a young fellow of your age to spend." "I'm sorry, father," faltered Cyril uncomfortably. "I didn't know that—" "That I should object to your spending so much money," concluded Mr. Burton. "No, I don't suppose you did. I thought I would give you a free hand with your money, and see how you got on. As you have proved yourself incapable of spending your money reasonably, it is time that I gave you some assistance." "Oh, father!" "Remember, Cyril, my boy, you are to bring your thirty shillings to me to-morrow," said Mr. Burton. "You may think me hard, but it is for your own good, as you will realise in later years." Cyril shifted uncomfortably. "Can't we start next week, father?" he asked. "No, my boy; we will start to-morrow. Now then, hurry up, or you'll get back late to your office!" Cyril Burton went off, his mind full of anxious thoughts. How could he replace the money he had taken from the petty-cash box if his father insisted upon his taking home all his earnings? He couldn't do it; the money could not be replaced. Supposing Mr. Dane discovered the loss, and— But why should he discover it? After all, he had not asked to look at the petty-cash box yet, and possibly he never would. Satisfied in his own mind, Cyril Burton arrived back at the office, and went on with his work. During the afternoon Mr. Dane came up to his desk. "Oh, Burton," he said, "I'll get you to bring the petty-cash accounts in to me on Monday afternoon! I always like to go through them once a month." Cyril did not answer. "Did you hear me, Burton?" asked Mr. Dane, after a moment's silence. "Y-y-yes, sir," said Cyril quietly. But he did not look up at his employer, for his face had turned pale, and he was afraid of being suspected. Cyril Burton did very little work during



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## The 1st Chapter.

## Guntent's Latest.

"Ain't you fellows coming?" Chunky Todgers' plump face was quite excited.

Morning lessons were over at the lumber school, and Frank Richards was chatting with Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc, outside the porch, when Chunky came up.

Frank had noticed that a good many of the fellows had cleared off at once, in the direction of the old corral, at a little distance from the school. The schoolground was almost deserted.

Chunky was following the rest when he spotted the three chums near the porch and bore down upon them.

"What's on?" asked Frank.

"Haven't you been told?" asked Chunky.

"Not a word! What is it?"

"H'm! Perhaps Guntent don't want you there," remarked Chunky thoughtfully. "Still, I'd come all the same, if I were you."

"Oh, Guntent!" said Bob Lawless, with a sniff. "What's the little game now? Poker or euchre in the old corral?"

"A bit more exciting than that!" grinned Chunky Todgers. "It's a great game! Guntent says so. Keep it dark, of course! Miss Meadows would be awfully mad if she knew."

"What is it, then, Chunky?" asked Vere Beauclerc, in his quiet way.

"Faro," said Chunky.

"What?" exclaimed the three, in chorus.

Frank Richards & Co. stared at the fat schoolboy blankly.

"Faro," repeated Frank.

"Yes, Guntent's the banker, and it's going to be some sport," said Chunky Todgers. "Of course, it's a secret."

"My hat!"

"Ain't you coming?" demanded Todgers.

"I guess not," growled Bob.

"Well, look here! Lend me a few dollars—"

"I'll lend you my boot!" said Bob Lawless, lifting his foot to suit the action to the word.

Chunky Todgers dodged, and ran for the gate. Chunky did not mean to be left out of Kern Guntent's new enterprise.

Frank Richards and his chums looked at one another.

Well enough they knew the rascally nature of Kern Guntent, the Swiss; but this was a surprise to them.

"I think that's about the limit!" said Vere Beauclerc, setting his lips.

"That young scoundrel ought to be stopped!"

"I guess so."

Frank Richards' eyes flashed.

"Let's stop him!" he exclaimed.

"Come on, you fellows! Let's take a hand in the game. It's time that rotter was stopped."

"I'm on!" said Bob Lawless.

The chums of Cedar Creek followed in the footsteps of Chunky Todgers, who had disappeared through the timber.

Frank's brow was very dark.

Guntent, the son of the Swiss store-keeper at Thompson, was a rogue to the very finger-tips, and he was very unpopular in the lumber school. In spite of his unpopularity, however, he had a certain amount of influence.

He claimed to be a "sport," and certainly what Guntent didn't know about poker and euchre was not worth knowing.

The three schoolboys hurried through the timber and reached the abandoned clearing on the creek where the old corral stood.

There was a buzz of voices in the corral as they entered. A dozen or more of the Cedar Creek fellows were gathered there.

Kern Guntent was seated at a plank bench, with a German-silver box in his hand, containing the cards.

"Make your game, gentlemen!" the Swiss was saying as Frank Richards came up.

He spoke in the manner of the faro-banker, his keen, greedy glance passing from face to face.

"I guess I'm butting in," remarked Eben Hacke.

"Same here!" said Chunky Todgers. "Lend me a dollar, Hacke!"

"Go and chop chips!"

"Now then, gentlemen," said Guntent, "put up your dust! You don't often get a chance for a flutter like this!"

"Blessed if I want it, either!" said Dick Dawson.

"Keep out if you don't want to come in!" sneered the Swiss. "I'm talking to the sportsmen."

"Bet you it's a swindle!" said Hopkins, the Cockney. "I don't 'old with this 'ere!"

"You don't 'old with aitches, do you?" said Guntent; and there was a laugh.

Harold Hopkins' lack of aspirates was a source of great merriment to the Canadian schoolboys.

"Hallo! You fellows coming into the game?" asked Lawrence, as Frank Richards & Co. joined the crowd round the plank table.

Guntent gave them a dark look.

"No," said Frank curtly. "Look here, you fellows, keep out of this! What's the good of throwing your money to that foreign swindler, for one thing?"

"Who's a swindler?" shouted Guntent.

Frank looked him steadily in the face.

"You are!" he said directly. "It's a swindling game, any way; and I don't believe you would play it straight, either. You couldn't!"

"Stand back if you don't want to play!" said Guntent savagely. "I don't want your pennies! Gentlemen, make your game!"

Three or four coins rattled down.

"Game all made?" asked Guntent, taking no further heed of Frank Richards.

"I guess so. Pile in!"

"Go it, Guntent!"

Guntent began to pass out the cards. Frank Richards bit his lip hard.

He had no right to interfere with the other fellows, and he had a natural horror of appearing to "preach" to them.

But he was strongly inclined to take the rascally Swiss by the scruff of the neck and run him down to the creek and pitch him in.

He was aware that a great deal of this kind of thing went on in Guntent's store, at Thompson Town. But that the Swiss should venture to begin it among the fellows at Cedar Creek was exasperating.

Frank was standing undecided when there was a light step in the entrance to the old corral.

"By gum!" whispered Bob Lawless. "Miss Meadows!"

"Miss Meadows!" said Chunky Todgers faintly.

Chunky made a dive for a gap in the wall, and disappeared through it like a fat rabbit.

But the other fellows, with crimson faces, stood still as the schoolmistress advanced, with a stern brow. Kern Guntent sat frozen at the table, with the card-box in his thick fingers.

"What does this mean?"

Miss Meadows' voice was very quiet, but it was very grim. Never had the Cedar Creek fellows seen the schoolmistress look so angry.

There was no reply, and the silence in the old corral could almost be felt.

## The 2nd Chapter.

## The Way of the Transgressor.

Miss Meadows fixed her eyes upon Kern Guntent.

The Swiss rose clumsily to his feet. All his nerve had vanished at the sight of the cold, stern face of the Canadian schoolmistress.

"Guntent, what are you doing with those cards?"

The schoolmistress' voice was like ice.

"I—I—"

Guntent stammered helplessly. "It—it—it's only a game, ma'am," stammered Eben Hacke.

"And what is the game called?"

"F-f-faro, I guess."

"Take up your money!"

With crimson faces, the discomfited "sports" took up their stakes from the board.

"Give me those cards, Guntent!" Without a word, Kern Guntent handed over the German-silver box to Miss Meadows.

"Richards!"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Take this box and throw it into the creek!"

"Yes, ma'am."

A minute later there was a splash, and Frank Richards came back into the corral. The amateur faro-banker's stock-in-trade had vanished in the muddy depths of Cedar Creek.

Miss Meadows' clear glance travelled over the ashamed faces

before her. No one was anxious to meet her eyes.

Frank Richards & Co. were feeling especially uncomfortable.

They had not come there to join in the rascally game, but with a half-formed intention of stopping it by ragging the Swiss.

That, of course, could not be explained to Miss Meadows.

To explain to the schoolmistress smacked a little too much of the Pharisee, who claimed that he was not as others were.

They were silent, with flushed faces. They knew that in Miss Meadows' eyes all the fellows present were tarred with the same brush, and they had to be silent.

"I am ashamed of you," said Miss Meadows quietly. "I hope that, when you think a little over this, you will be ashamed of yourselves. You are all well aware that gambling is wrong and base, and very harmful."

Silence.

"You are the worst, Guntent," continued Miss Meadows.

"I—I—"

"More than once, Guntent, I have suspected you of this kind of rascality," said Miss Meadows. "I could not be sure, and I hoped that it was not the case. Now I have found you in the act of inducing your school-fellows to gamble."

Guntent bit his thick lip hard. Apparently Miss Meadows had not been so blind to his real character as he had supposed.

"You," continued Miss Meadows, "I must punish. The others I shall leave to their consciences."

"We—we were all in it, ma'am, I reckon," stammered Hacke—"all but Richards and Dawson and Lawless and the Cherub. They was against it."

"Indeed? I am glad to hear that," said Miss Meadows. "If you were against this, Richards, why are you here?"

Frank was silent.

"He was the same as the rest," said Guntent, speaking at last.

There was some comfort in the thought of involving the fellow he hated in his own punishment.

But Hopkins spoke up at once.

"That's a lie!" he said. "Richards was 'ere to chip in agin it, and you knows it, Guntent. So was the other chaps."

"Yes, ma'am."

Bob came back in a few minutes with the switch.

Guntent eyed it uneasily. He could guess to what use that instrument of punishment was to be applied.

The Cedar Creek fellows almost held their breath.

Corporal punishment was practically unknown at the lumber school. But evidently Miss Meadows considered it necessary, in this extreme case, to depart from her usual rule. And undoubtedly she was right.

"I shall punish you, Guntent," said Miss Meadows. "It is the only way, I fear, to bring you to a sense of your wickedness. Hold out your hand!"

The Swiss' eyes glittered. He clenched his hands hard.

"Do you hear me, Guntent?" said Miss Meadows, very quietly. "Unless you obey me at once, I shall send you home, and you will not be allowed to return to school."

Guntent drew a hard breath and held out his hand. He winced and panted as he received the cut. The weedy, unfit Swiss could not bear pain.

It would not have hurt one of the hardy Canadian lads much, but it was different with Guntent.

"The other hand!"

Swish!

Guntent clasped his hands and yelled.

Miss Meadows threw away the switch.

"Guntent, I shall send a report of your conduct to your father. The rest of you, I trust, will think over this, and come to understand how contemptible such conduct is."

"I—I say, wa—we're sorry, ma'am," blurted out Eben Hacke. "We—we never meant any harm!"

"Indeed we didn't," Miss Meadows, said Lawrence. "It was only a lark."

"I believe you, so far as you boys were concerned," said Miss Meadows.

"With Guntent, I fear—it was much worse. You may go back to the school."

The crowd of fellows cleared off, and Miss Meadows followed them from the corral.

In the school that afternoon Kern Guntent sat with a face like a demon. The caning had hurt him, but the quiet contempt of the schoolmistress had probably cut still deeper.

And Guntent was looking forward with dismay to that report which was to go home to his father.

Guntent senior was well known in Thompson for his sharp practices, but it was likely that he would regard in a very different light such practices on the part of his son.

Guntent dreaded a vigorous application of the parental cowhide, and the covert glances he bestowed on Miss Meadows were full of hatred and malice.

It was not a happy afternoon for the "sport" of the lumber school, and it was very unlikely that the game of faro would ever be played again at Cedar Creek with Kern Guntent in the rôle of banker.

## The 3rd Chapter.

## Guntent's Scheme.

"Richards!"

"Yes, Miss Meadows."

"Please step in here."

Frank Richards stepped into Miss Meadows' little sitting-room, which opened off the hall.

The Canadian schoolmistress gave him a kind smile.

Evidently Frank was exonerated in Miss Meadows' mind from blame in connection with the amateur faro-bank.

"I wish this letter to be taken to the office of the 'Thompson Press,'" said Miss Meadows. "I had intended to trust it to Guntent, as he goes home to Thompson. I have decided not to do so, however. Would you care to ride over to Thompson and deliver the letter?"

"Certainly," said Frank.

"You know the office of the newspaper?"

"I passed it when I was in Thompson before," said Frank. "I'll take the letter with pleasure, Miss Meadows."

"Your uncle will not mind your being home a little later than usual?"

"Oh, no!" said Frank. "We weren't going home at once, anyway."

"Indeed?" said Miss Meadows, looking at him.

Frank coloured.

"We were going to stay and help Mr. Slimmey split logs, ma'am," he hastened to explain. "It's all right. Bob and Beauclerc can split the logs while I'm gone to Thompson."

"Very well," assented Miss Meadows. "Here is the letter, and here is a dollar. It is an advertisement for the paper, and you will pay for it and take a receipt."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Tell them I specially want it to appear this week, if possible," said Miss Meadows. "There is no one to do Black Sam's work while he is ill unless I can get a man from Thompson."

"Yes, ma'am."

Frank took the envelope and the dollar, and slipped both into his pocket. As he quitted the room, he almost ran into Kern Guntent. He gave the Swiss a look of contempt. He could see that Guntent had been listening close by the open door of Miss Meadows' room.

"Get out of the way!" muttered Frank.

He pushed past the Swiss and went out of the schoolhouse.

Guntent cast a bitter look after him, and then stepped into Miss Meadows' doorway.

The schoolmistress gave him a cold glance.

"Here is the letter for your father, Guntent. You will take care that you deliver it to him?"

"You can trust me, ma'am."

"I hope so," said Miss Meadows. "In any case, I shall communicate with your father afterwards. You may go, Guntent."

"Good-night, Miss Meadows," said the Swiss, in his most oily tones.

"Good-night," said Miss Meadows curtly.

Guntent left the schoolhouse, with knitted brows. He had to deliver Miss Meadows' report to his father, and he was apprehensive of the result.

At the school gate he joined Keller, the only fellow at the lumber school he was friendly with.

Keller was a Swiss like himself, the son of an emigrant from Europe who had left his country for his country's good.

Keller was holding two horses. Guntent took his own, dragging the animal's head round savagely.

"Got the letter?" Keller asked, with a grin.

"Yes," snarled Guntent.

"It means a lambasting at home," grinned Keller. "Your popper will be mad!"

"I guess so. The popper wants to keep in with Miss Meadows and the mission and all the respectable folk in the section," said Guntent, with a sour smile. "It makes it easier to run his business in Thompson. Sheriff Henderson has been nosin' into things, and popper doesn't want to lose the post-mastership. And the post-master isn't supposed to allow a faro-bank in his back parlour. I guess I shall get the cowhide."

"For following in your popper's footsteps!" chuckled Keller.

Guntent grunted and vaulted on his horse.

"Richards isn't gone yet?" he asked.

"No; he went over towards Slimmey's cabin."

"Good! Ride faster," said Guntent.

The two Swiss rode away on the trail through the timber in the thickly falling dusk. Guntent's brows were knitted, and there was a glitter in his narrow, deep-set eyes.

About a mile from the lumber school he drew rein.

"Hold on!" he called out.



GUNTEN'S LITTLE GAME!

(Continued from the previous page.)

Keller stopped. "What's the game?" he asked. "Get down!" Keller dismounted. Gunten led the two horses into the timber, and tethered them at some distance from the trail. He removed the trail-rope from his own saddle, and prepared a running noose at the end of the rope. Keller watched him in astonishment. "What the thunder is the game?" he exclaimed. "What are you making a lasso for?" "For Frank Richards!" said Gunten, between his teeth. "What the dickens—?" "Frank Richards is going to Thompson for Miss Meadows. She's given him the advertisement to take to the 'Press' office," explained Gunten. "I heard her telling him when I went to her room for her letter to my father. He's going to ride to Thompson, and he must pass this spot."

"And you're going to rope him in?" exclaimed Keller. "You bet!" "I guess I'd let him alone," said Keller uneasily. "That fellow is too hefty with his fists." "Never mind his fists," said Gunten. "I can stand that. I'm not doing it for fun. I'm after that letter of Miss Meadows." "What for?" "I guess I'm going to put a spoke in the wheel," said Gunten, with a malicious grin. "Frank Richards is high up in favour now, since Miss Meadows found out he was down on the faro game in the corral. That fool Hacke blurted it out. But suppose Frank Richards played a rotten trick on Miss Meadows, and caused her a lot of trouble—?" "He wouldn't!" "He might be made to seem to," said Gunten coolly. "I'm going to rope him in on the trail and take the letter. When Frank Richards gets it back, it won't be the same letter; but he won't know it. He's taking an advertisement to the 'Press' for an odd-job man. I guess it's going to be a different kind of advertisement when it appears."

"I—I say! It's risky!" muttered Keller. "What sort of an advertisement is it going to be?" "You know the new stunt they've started in the 'Thompson Press,'" grinned Gunten—"the matrimonial agency? Miss Meadows' advertisement is going in that column!" Keller gasped.

"Gunten, you jay, you wouldn't dare—?" "You'll see!" "But—but the risk!" "There's no risk," said Gunten coolly. "Frank Richards can tell a yarn about being roped up on the trail, if he likes; but how's he going to prove it? We shall deny it, and it's two against one. It will be supposed to be his doing."

"By gum!" "And if Miss Meadows isn't mad with him, you can call me a sucker," grinned Gunten. "There'll be a letter to Rancher Lawless and the cowhide for Master Frank, I guess, as well as for me."

Keller burst into a roar. "Ha, ha, ha!" "I guess it's a cinch!" said Gunten. "Come back to the trail!"

The two young rascals crept back to the trail, and waited in the timber, watching the hoof-beaten path under the trees.

The dusk was thickening. Frank Richards was certain to pass before long, and he was equally certain to fall a helpless victim to the ambush. "Hark!" muttered Keller, holding up his hand.

Thud, thud, thud! From the direction of the creek came the steady beat of hoofs. Gunten, with a grim smile, prepared the lasso for the cast.

The 4th Chapter. Roped on the Trail!

Frank Richards, after leaving Miss Meadows, went towards Mr. Slimmey's cabin by the creek. Mr. Slimmey, the assistant master of Cedar Creek, was there in his shirt-sleeves, splitting logs for the winter. Several of the Cedar Creek fellows had stayed behind to help him. It was the custom of the Canadian West, where everybody lends everybody else a helping hand when needed. Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc were busy with their axes already, with Dick Dawson and Tom Lawrence and Harold Hopkins.

"Wade in, you slacker!" called out Bob as his English cousin came up. "I'm going over to Thompson for Miss Meadows," said Frank. "I'll come back here, Bob, by the time you've finished."

"Right you are!" said Bob. Frank walked away for his horse. Only a few minutes after the two Swiss, he rode away from the lumber school—at a more leisurely pace, however. The two rascals were well ahead of him on the trail.

Frank Richards was thinking of anything but Kern Gunten as he trotted along the dusky trail to the distant town of Thompson. But suddenly there came a whiz under the shadows of the trees, and as he heard it Frank drew rein hastily. He knew the sound of a whizzing lariat.

But even as he pulled in his horse the noose settled over his shoulders, and the drag on the rope wrenched him from the saddle. Bump! The pony reared and whinnied as

"I guess we're going to leave you here all night to cool your heels," chuckled Gunten. "How do you like the prospect?"

"You dare not!" shouted Frank. "I guess that's the stunt," said Gunten. "We'll let you off if you beg for mercy." "Oh, shut up!" snapped Frank. Even if the rascal of Cedar Creek had meant his threat seriously, Frank Richards certainly would not have begged to be let off.

"Well, I guess I'll give you a night out," said Gunten. "Good-bye." "You know I've got a letter to take for Miss Meadows!"

"I'm going to take that for you. All serene! I'll deliver it safe and sound in Thompson," said Gunten. He felt in Frank's pockets and took the letter.

"Come on, Keller!" The two young rascals disappeared into the wood. Frank's pony came up to him, snuffing round him and whinnying.

Frank Richards struggled savagely with the rope that secured him to the tree, but he struggled in vain. Gunten had done his work carefully. Frank was a prisoner until the Swiss chose to come and release him.

Not for a moment did Frank believe

the envelope was loose enough to open easily.

"That's done!" grinned Gunten. He drew out Miss Meadows' letter to the "Press."

There were two enclosures. One was a letter from the school-mistress, and it ran, in Miss Meadows' well-known delicate handwriting:

"Dear Mr. Penrose,—Please insert the enclosed advertisement in this week's 'Press.' I should very much like it to appear this week, if possible, as the man is badly wanted here. Yours sincerely, E. MEADOWS."

Gunten chuckled explosively as he read that letter, which he did without the slightest scruple.

The other enclosure was the advertisement, which ran:

"Handy man wanted for a few weeks at Cedar Creek School. Cabin, firewood, and good wages for a suitable man.—Apply at once to Miss MEADOWS, Headmistress."

That letter was in Mr. Slimmey's handwriting. The assistant-master had evidently drawn up the advertisement for Miss Meadows.

Gunten twisted the paper, and held

Gunten grinned over that remarkable composition.

"How does that strike you?" he asked.

"Great Jerusalem!" gasped Keller. "You—you won't dare to have that shoved into the paper, Gunten!" "You'll see!"

"But—but Miss Meadows will be as mad as a hornet!"

"And Frank Richards will get the benefit of it," chuckled Gunten. He slipped the precious advertisement into the envelope with Miss Meadows' letter, and carefully resealed it.

There was nothing about the envelope now to hint that it had been opened. The steam left no trace.

It was as cunning a scheme as even Kern Gunten had ever devised.

The bitter humiliation of his school-mistress when that advertisement appeared in print was nothing to Gunten. He rejoiced in the prospect.

It was upon Frank Richards' devoted head that her wrath would fall. Gunten meant to take good care of that.

He slipped the envelope into his pocket.

"Come on, Keller!" he yawned.

"Not a word, mind!" "Ha, ha! I guess not."

And the two rascals threaded their way through the wood towards the spot where Frank Richards was still struggling with the rope that fastened him to the tree.

The 5th Chapter. Tricked!

Frank Richards breathed more freely as he heard footsteps on the trail in the deep shadows.

He had been left nearly an hour tied to the tree, and he had begun to fear that the Swiss had ridden on to Thompson, really intending to leave him there for the night.

He peered through the darkness at the two shadowy forms that came along the trail.

"Is that you, Gunten?" "Yep."

"You hound! Let me loose!" "Did you think I was going to leave you all night?" chortled Gunten.

"Ha, ha! Were you scared?" "I was not frightened," said Frank contemptuously. "I'll make you pay for this when I get loose, you cad!"

"Then I reckon you won't get loose in a hurry," smiled Gunten. "I'm quite prepared to leave you here another hour. Come and have another game of poker while he cools down, Keller!"

"So you've been gambling?" said Frank scornfully. "Why not?"

Keller chuckled. It was easy enough for Gunten to give Frank Richards that false impression.

"Well, it's like you!" said Frank. "Now let me loose!"

"I'll let you loose if you agree not to make a fuss about the matter," said Gunten. "I'm not going to fight you."

"You rotten funk!" "Fank or not, that's the terms. Give me your word to let the matter drop, here and now, and you're free," said Gunten coolly. "No hammering a galoot, and no complaining to Miss Meadows to-morrow."

"I shouldn't complain to Miss Meadows in any case, and you know it!" snapped Frank Richards contemptuously. "I intended to give you a jolly good hiding!"

"Take another spell of it, then! Perhaps you'll cool down presently. We've got lots of time!" laughed Gunten.

Frank panted with wrath. He was already aching from his bonds, and his limbs were chilled by the night air, sharp and cold from the snow on the Rockies.

Even at the price of allowing Gunten to escape unpunished for his trick, Frank did not want to remain another hour tied to the tree. Gunten had the upper hand, and it was necessary to come to terms.

"Let me loose!" he said, between his teeth. "I'll let the matter drop, if you're afraid to put up your hands."

"Good enough!" Gunten picked open the knots and unwound the trail-rope.

Frank Richards stood free. He rubbed his numb wrists to restore the circulation.

But for his promise, Kern Gunten would certainly have received the biggest licking of his life during the next few minutes.

But Frank had given his word, and he had to keep it.

"So long!" smiled Gunten. "Come on, Keller! It's time we hustled on the home trail."

(Continued at foot of next page.)



Suddenly there came a whiz under the shadow of the trees, and even as Frank Richards pulled in his horse, the noose settled over his shoulders, and the drag on the rope wrenched him from the saddle.

the schoolboy rolled from its back and bumped heavily into the grass.

There was a shout under the dusky trees, and Gunten and Keller came running into the trail.

Frank struggled with the rope, but the tightening noose pinned his arms to his sides, and Gunten kept the rope taut.

The two Swiss reached him in a few moments, and then their grasp was laid upon him.

"Keno!" grinned Gunten. He jerked at the rope as Frank struggled, and the helpless boy rolled in the grass, amid loud chuckles from the Swiss.

"You rotter!" panted Frank. "Is that you, Gunten? Let me go, you hound!"

"I guess not!" smiled Gunten. He bent down and tightened the rope further and knotted it. Frank Richards was a helpless prisoner now.

The two Swiss dragged him aside from the trail, and Gunten ran the rope round a big trunk and fastened it there.

Frank eyed them in helpless anger. "What does this mean?" he panted. "What game are you playing?"

that even the revengeful Swiss would dare to leave him tied to the tree all night. He concluded that Gunten was attempting to frighten him, and was waiting in the wood to hear him appeal to be released.

Frank did not utter a word. He was under-dog at present, but he mentally promised the Swiss the hiding of his life when he had his hands free.

Meanwhile, Gunten and Keller plunged deeper into the wood. It was very necessary to keep Gunten's next action safe from chance observation.

From his saddle the Swiss took a small lantern. He lighted it, and set it on a log amid the thickets. Keller watched him with much curiosity.

Gunten's next step was to fill a tin dipper with water from the spring in the timber.

Opening the top of the lantern, he set the tin dipper over the flame.

In ten minutes the water was nearly boiling, and a thick steam rose from it.

"Hold it for me, Keller!"

Taking Miss Meadows' letter, Gunten held it carefully over the steam, and in a couple of minutes the flap of

it in the flame of the lantern. It was consumed in a moment or two.

"Phew!" murmured Keller.

"All serene! I guess I'm going to draw up a better advertisement than that for Miss Meadows," said Gunten coolly.

He opened his pocket-book and took out a sheet of notepaper and an indelible pencil.

Keller watched him breathlessly. The cunning Swiss spread the paper on the cover of the book and rested it on his knee.

With the other letter before him, he wrote with the pencil, and his hand bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Miss Meadows. Skill of this kind was one of the gifts of Kern Gunten.

Keller fairly gasped as he read, over Gunten's shoulder, what was written, for the new advertisement ran:

"Schoolmistress, age twenty-three, tall, considered good-looking, would be glad to hear from a bachelor of equal position with a view to matrimony. Photographs exchanged.—Miss MEADOWS, Cedar Creek School, Thompson Valley."



# IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

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

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

**THE COMPANION PAPERS:**

**THE "BOYS' FRIEND,"** 1d. Every Monday.

**THE "MAGNET" LIBRARY,** 1d. Every Monday.

**THE "GEM" LIBRARY,** 1d. Every Wednesday.

**THE "BOYS' FRIEND" COMPLETE LIBRARY.**

**THE "PENNY POPULAR,"** Every Friday.

**"CHUCKLES,"** PRICE 1d. Every Friday.

## NEXT MONDAY'S PROGRAMME!

As I told my readers a week or so ago, more would be heard of Jimmy Silver's scapegrace cousin, Algy. Algy makes his appearance next Monday at Rookwood in a splendid story entitled

### "ALGY OF THE THIRD!"

By Owen Conquest.

Algy goes to Rookwood with Jimmy Silver, and causes the Classical captain any amount of trouble. In short, Algy does not want Jimmy's company; association with a cad like Lattrey is more in Algy's line. The goey ways of fellows like Lattrey, Peele, and Gower greatly appeal to the self-willed youngster.

The cads of Rookwood revel in leading the youngster astray, and when they all arrive at Rookwood there are ructions with a vengeance. Thoroughly concerned for the scapegrace, Jimmy Silver is compelled to take a bold step. And then there are some exciting incidents. You will like this story.

The story in next Monday's issue dealing with the schooldays of Frank Richards, the famous author, is entitled

### "A PECULIAR PERSECUTION!"

By Martin Clifford.

There are some uproarious incidents in this fine tale. As you will see in this week's story, Frank Richards is sent to the offices of the "Thompson Press" with an advertise-

ment for Miss Meadows. The advertisement which appears in the paper, however, is not the one Miss Meadows sent; it is one stating that Miss Meadows is desirous of receiving offers of marriage.

The upshot of this is that men come from far and near to propose to the schoolmistress. Naturally, Miss Meadows is very indignant about the affair, but some of the men are not easily put off, and then there is great excitement. You will laugh heartily over this yarn.

There are also any number of laughable scenes in the next instalment of

### "THE BOYS OF THE BOMBAY CASTLE!"

By Duncan Storm.

The boys go on shore, and take Cecil Simmonds, the orang-utang with them. Then—'Nuff said! Needless to say, the expedition is not an uneventful one. In fact, a great deal happens, as you will learn when you read this magnificent instalment.

Next Monday's splendid long tale of Dick, Frank, and Joe, dealing with their quest for King Nadur's Diamonds, is entitled

### "THE CITY OF THE SUN GOD!"

By Maurice Everard.

A more thrilling story Mr. Maurice Everard has never written. Dick, Frank, and Joe's journey to the city of the Sun God is a most perilous one, and they come face to face with great danger. They face the danger determinedly, however, and they reap the reward that is rightly theirs. A big surprise is awaiting

for you in this yarn. Mind you do not fail to read it.

The concluding item in next Monday's issue will be a grand tale told in the dormitory by Charles Pons, the Canadian junior at Rookwood, entitled

### "THE CHRISTMAS MAIL!"

This is a story of adventure in Canada, and in it Pons describes a very thrilling adventure he had whilst at home in the Far West. Pong—as the Rookwood juniors call the young Canadian—writes in a very gripping style, and I am sure you will all enjoy this little story.

Don't forget, my chums, you must order your copy in advance if you wish to avoid disappointment. I realise I am continually harping on this matter, but from the letters I receive I know that there are still a number of readers who do not take this necessary precaution. It is, indeed, one that you should all take.

## THE BOOK FOR CHRISTMAS!

What shall I have for Christmas? Such is the question a number of boys will be asking themselves during the next few days. No doubt your father, your mother, your brother, your sister will all be asking you what sort of Christmas present you want.

Possibly many of you have already made up your minds what you are going to ask for. On the other hand, there are bound to be a number of boys who will have to wrack their brains before they will be able to decide what they really want.

Give a boy a book and he's satisfied! It is an old saying, but, nevertheless, a very true one. Boys love books, and rightly, too. Therefore, if any of you are in doubt as to what to ask your friends and relations to give you for Christmas, get them to buy you a copy of "Action!" by John S. Margerison. This is a magnificent book, containing thrilling stories of the sea. There is a fine, breezy touch about these yarns; they grip you and hold you from start to finish, and there is not a dull line anywhere.

Mr. Margerison knows the sea as well as you know your own homes. The greater part of his life has been spent on the ocean wave, and therefore you can rest assured that "Action!" has been written by a man who is thoroughly acquainted with the subject about which he has written. In short, "Action!" is a magnificent book, a book that should be given a place on every boy's bookshelf.

The price of this book is five shillings, and it is obtainable through all booksellers, or from Messrs.

Hodder & Stoughton, 20, Warwick Square, London, E.C.

## THE "MAGNET" & THE "GEM."

Do you read these papers? You ought to, you know; for, if you are keen on Jimmy Silver & Co.—which is scarcely in doubt—you could not help liking Harry Wharton & Co. in the "Magnet." And then there is "Frank Richards' Schooldays." It is Frank Richards who writes the "Magnet" stories, you know; while Martin Clifford, who tells the yarns about Frank Richards, is the author of the "Gem" stories. This week's numbers are great. The long story in the "Magnet" is entitled

### "FLAP'S BROTHER!"

and it deals with Flip and Flap Derwent, who also appear in the serial in the "Gem."

### "THE TWINS FROM TASMANIA!"

The "Gem" long story is

### "RIVALS IN SPORT!"

and it tells of the rivalry between School and New House at St. Jim's.

Your Editor



## GUNTEN'S LITTLE GAME!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Give me my letter!" exclaimed Frank.

"What letter?"

"Miss Meadows' letter. You took it from me."

"Oh, by gum, I'd forgotten that! I hope I haven't dropped it somewhere!" exclaimed Gunten, feeling in his pockets.

"If you've lost it—" began Frank savagely.

"All O K. Here it is!"

Gunten drew the letter from his pocket, and Frank Richards almost snatched it from him. Not for a moment did it cross Frank's mind that the letter had been opened and reread in the wood.

If the suspicion had crossed his mind, he would not have been able to think of any motive Gunten could have for tampering with Miss Meadows' advertisement.

He was glad to recover the letter. It presented exactly the same appearance as before, and he had no suspicion.

Frank slipped the letter into his pocket, and called to his pony.

Without another word to the Swiss, though his hands were fairly itching to be upon Gunten, he jumped upon his pony and rode away down the trail.

Gunten grinned as the hoof-beats died away in the darkness ahead. Frank Richards was riding fast. He had a great deal of lost time to make up for.

"Come on!" said Keller.

"The dear John Bull doesn't smell a rat!" grinned Gunten. "Not the faintest idea that the letter's been opened, eh?"

"Not the least!" said Keller, laughing. "But, by Jerusalem, what will Miss Meadows say? Richards can't deny that he handed in that advertisement at the 'Press' office, and he won't be able to prove that that letter was ever out of his hands."

"Let him try!" said Gunten. "Who's going to believe him? Miss Meadows doesn't even know that I

know that he's got the letter. I sha'n't mind the cowhide so much now if I get it at home. Frank Richards will get something worse than a cowhide after this."

And Gunten and his worthy comrade rode after Frank Richards, chuckling with satisfaction.

### The 6th Chapter. Handed In!

Frank lost no time in getting to Thompson.

It was risky riding fast on the dark trail, but Frank rode hard, anxious to make up for lost time.

He reached the town at last.

He rode past the well-lighted store kept by Gunten's father, and stopped at the office of the "Thompson Press."

The "Press" was not an ambitious publication.

Mr. Penrose, the editor, publisher, and printer—he was all those things rolled into one—dwelt in a two-roomed cabin near Gunten's store.

One room was Mr. Penrose's living room, and the other was the editorial and publishing office and the printing works.

After his editorial labours were done, Mr. Penrose became a compositor, and set up the type, and then he became a machine man, and turned off the copies of the local paper on a hand-press.

Primitive as the arrangements were, Thompson was rather proud of its local paper. There was nothing else in that line nearer than Kamloops.

A third part of the paper consisted of advertisements, chiefly of whisky, weapons, and agricultural implements, mixed with demands for "hands" for the fruit farms and ranches of the valley and tempting appeals to try Hop Chung's Chinese laundry, or to visit McNab's dance hall for a jolly evening.

When advertisements were short, Mr. Penrose's editorial remarks were long. When advertisements were plentiful, the editor compressed his personal observations into a remarkably small space.

Mr. Penrose was an enterprising gentleman. His latest "stunt" was a matrimonial column, copied from the Chicago papers.

Humorous citizens of Thompson inserted "spoo" advertisements in that column, which were read out with roars of laughter round the stove in Gunten's store.

But there were a good many genuine advertisements, too, at a dollar each. All was grist that came to the editorial mill.

Lonely bachelors up country tried their luck, in the hope of finding a helpmate, and there were generally two or three notices from members of the gentler sex.

But in a section where bachelors were plenty and spinsters were few, it was highly probable that the gentle advertisers possessed few of the attractions mentioned in the descriptions given.

There was a light burning in the editorial office as Frank Richards jumped off his pony and knocked at the door.

"Walk right in!" came a deep voice.

Frank Richards walked right in.

Mr. Penrose was a little, fat gentleman, with rubicund nose. The colour of that organ hinted that he often sampled the fire-water at Gunten's store, not wisely but too well.

He was in his shirtsleeves at present, dabbed with printer's ink, setting up type in the formes. There was a dab of ink on his red nose and another on his stubbly chin.

"Good-evening, Mr. Penrose," said Frank. "Not too late for an advertisement for this week, is it?"

"I guess it is some," said Mr. Penrose. "Office closed an hour ago. But I've got a corner left. I calculate I can leave out Bill Hitchcock's poem on 'Sunrise on the Rockies.'"

"Eh?"

Mr. Penrose grinned genially.

"That poem has been left over for three weeks owing to ads turning up," he remarked. "Bill is getting impatient. P'raps it'll dawn on him later to pay for it at advertisement rates; then it goes in, with a click! Chuck your ad. over here, sonny! It's all O K."

Frank laid the letter on the bench and felt in his pocket for the dollar. Mr. Penrose opened the envelope by the simple process of sticking an inky thumb into it.

He took out the letter and glanced

at it and nodded. He knew Miss Meadows' handwriting well, having often received school notices for insertion in the "Thompson Press."

"Right as rain!" he said.

But as he unfolded the enclosed advertisement and looked at it, Mr. Penrose gave a jump.

"Jehoshaphat!" he ejaculated.

He held the paper in his hand and stared at it blankly, rubbing his nose with the other hand in his amazement.

As his hand was daubed with printer's ink, he changed the colour of his nose in the process from fiery red to a deep black. Frank Richards grinned as he watched him.

"Jehoshaphat!" gasped Mr. Penrose.

"All right?" asked Frank.

"Well, carry me home to die!" said Mr. Penrose, still in a state of the greatest astonishment. "This beats the Dutch!"

"How much?" asked Frank, surprised by the editorial gentleman's surprise.

"Oh, a dollar!"

"Right! Here you are!"

Mr. Penrose blinked at the advertisement, and blinked at Frank Richards as he mechanically took the dollar.

"You belong to Cedar Creek school?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Miss Meadows gave you this to bring to me?"

"Yes," said Frank, in wonder.

"All O K. If Miss Meadows says go, it goes. But—carry me home to die!" said the astonished Mr. Penrose. "Have you read this, sonny?"

"Of course not!" said Frank.

"The envelope was sealed when Miss Meadows gave it to me at the school."

"All right! Leave it with me! There's your receipt!"

"The advertisement will appear this week?" asked Frank, wondering what might be the cause of the editorial astonishment.

"You bet! I'm going to set it up now," said Mr. Penrose. "I guess I'll give it a good place at the top of the column, too. I'd never have thought— Never mind! Ladies have their own ways, and it isn't much good a mere man trying to understand 'em. It goes in, sonny."

"Right-ho!" said Frank. "Good-night, Mr. Penrose."

"Good-night, sonny! Shut the door after you."

THE END.

## NEXT MONDAY!

### "A PECULIAR PERSECUTION!"

By MARTIN OLIFFORD.

DON'T MISS IT!