

# THE ROOKWOOD REBELS! SEE BELOW!

## The BOYS' FRIEND Id.

"FRANK RICHARDS' SCHOOLDAYS!" "THE BOYS OF THE 'BOMBAY CASTLE'!" "TALES OF THE DORMITORY!"

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ONE PENNY.

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### STICKING IT OUT!

A MAGNIFICENT NEW LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. AT ROOKWOOD SCHOOL

By OWEN CONQUEST.

#### The 1st Chapter.

##### Startling News!

Tap!  
Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, was alone in his study.

He was seated at his writing-table, his elbow resting on the table before him, his chin in his hand, his brows lined with deep thought.

The Head of Rookwood was plunged in a deep and sombre reverie, and he did not hear the timid tap at his door till it was repeated.

Tap!  
The doctor started.

"Come in!" he rapped out.

The door opened, and Mark Lattrey of the Fourth Form entered.

The Head's eyes were fixed upon him at once, as he came slowly across the room.

Lattrey's manner was scared and hesitating.

The cad of Rookwood was not generally lacking in nerve. But the position in which he now found himself had made even Mark Lattrey uneasy.

He was the outcast of the school, and at present he was in the Head's house because he could not venture to trust himself among his school-fellows.

Matters at the old school were in a strange state.

Lattrey was wondering uneasily how it would all end.

Dr. Chisholm's brow became darker as his eyes rested on Lattrey.

"You sent for me, sir," faltered the junior.

"Yes. As you are aware, Lattrey, I have decided to allow you to remain at Rookwood," said the Head, in a cold, hard voice.

For a moment a faint smile curved Lattrey's thin lips.

He was well aware that it was against the Head's will that he was allowed to remain.

What influence his father possessed over the Head of Rookwood he did not know; but he knew that that influence existed.

The Head could not send him away, much as he had desired to do so.

Dr. Chisholm's face became harder.

"Your father desires you to remain at the school, Lattrey, and I have consented."

"Yes, sir."

"If, however, you should positively desire to leave Rookwood, and should make a request to your father to that effect, I have no doubt that Mr. Lattrey would see fit to remove you."

"I don't want to leave Rookwood, sir."

"You cannot be very happy here, Lattrey. Your Form-fellows resent your presence in the school since the accident by which Mornington of the Fourth lost his sight. They have even gone to the length of throwing you out of the school, for which I intend to punish them severely, certainly. However, it would surely be more agreeable to you to leave."

"That is for my father to decide, sir," said Lattrey coolly.

"You do not wish to go?"

"No, sir."

"Very well," said Dr. Chisholm. "You will remain. At present it appears that you cannot take your place in your Form, so great is the dislike your Form-fellows feel towards you. I have given my housekeeper instructions to prepare a room for you in this house—for to-night, at all events. Doubtless, after their punishment to-morrow, the Fourth Form will be in a more reasonable mood. You may go."

"Yes, sir."

Lattrey left the study, and the door closed behind him. But it remained closed only a moment or two.

Then it was suddenly hurled open.

Dr. Chisholm started, and spun round, with a dark frown.

"What—what— Bless my soul! It is Mr. Manders!"

The Head stared at the Modern master blankly.

Mr. Manders rushed breathlessly in.

As a rule, Mr. Manders was a very stiff and severe gentleman, with a great dignity of deportment.

He did not look very dignified now.

He was smothered from head to foot with mud and clay, and his face was hardly recognisable, so thickly was it coated.

He stood before the astonished Head, gasping for breath, and shedding mud and clay round him in chunks as he stood.

Dr. Chisholm rose majestically to his feet.

"Mr. Manders!"

"Groogh!"

"What—"

"Look—look at me, sir!" panted Mr. Manders. "Look at me!"

"I am looking at you, Mr. Manders," replied the Head icily.

"I cannot understand why you should present yourself in my study in that extraordinary state!"

"I have been assaulted, sir!" shrieked Mr. Manders. "I have been treated like this, sir, by the boys of the Fourth Form!"

"Impossible!"

"I have been rolled in the mud, sir! I have been pelted with clods! I—I have—"

Words failed Mr. Manders. He stood and gasped.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Manders," said the Head coldly. "Kindly tell me in a few words what has occurred."

The Modern master spluttered.

"The Fourth Form are in a state of revolt, sir!"

"Nonsense!"

Another splutter from Mr. Manders.

"It is so, sir! Mr. Bootles was a witness to my treatment! Groogh! I—I have a considerable quantity of clay in my mouth, sir! Gerrrh! The Fourth Form, headed by Silver and Dodd, have broken out into mutiny! They have proclaimed a barring-out!"

"A what?" thundered the Head.

"A barring-out!" shouted Mr. Manders. "They intend to keep up this revolt, sir, until Lattrey of the Fourth is expelled from Rookwood, according to their statements! That,



### THE REBELS ON THE DEFENCE!

sir, is what they have the impudence to state! And I, sir, attempting to reduce these young rascals to order, have been seized and rolled in a muddy trench, sir!"

And Mr. Manders spluttered and gasped.

The expression on the Head's face was extraordinary as he listened.

"I—I must be dreaming!" he murmured. "A barring-out at Rookwood! A revolt in the Fourth! Incredible! Where are the juniors now, Mr. Manders? They should be in their dormitory at this hour!"

"They are in the school grounds—on the site of the allotments. They are digging themselves in!" gasped Mr. Manders.

"They are—what?"

"I do not wonder that you are astounded, sir! They are actually digging trenches and—fortifying themselves, sir, in order to bid defiance to everyone! Groogh!"

Dr. Chisholm stood rooted to the floor for some moments.

He moved at last.

"I shall see into this personally, Mr. Manders," he said, in a grinding voice. "I have no doubt that the juniors will obey my commands to return to their duty at once. You, sir, I recommend to retire to your room and remove the mud from your person. You are making my carpet very untidy."

The Head quitted the study, leaving Mr. Manders still spluttering.

With a brow like thunder, Dr. Chisholm strode out of the house.

#### The 2nd Chapter.

##### Defied!

Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, rested upon his spade, breathing hard.

Brilliant moonlight streamed down upon the old buildings of Rookwood School, and upon the school allotments where the rebels of Rookwood had taken up their quarters.

The Fourth Form were all there, Moderns and Classics. Only Tubby Muffin was missing from the ranks, and Mornington, who was away.

The blind junior, who had lost his sight as the result of Lattrey's cruel

act, had been taken to London to see a specialist.

And the Fourth Form were in revolt—in a state of revolution, as Lovell described it rather proudly.

It was a risky proceeding, and nobody knew that better than Jimmy Silver, the leader of the mutiny.

But Jimmy was not the fellow to hesitate.

He was convinced of the justice of the cause, and that was enough for him.

And, with the exception of Townsend & Co., the Fourth were backing him up to a man.

Townsend & Co. had been "conscripted," and they were working with the rest in the trenches, though with a bad grace.

It was Jimmy's intention to "hold the fort" against all-comers, and remain on strike with the Fourth till the Head came round to their terms.

It was quite certain that force would be used against the rebels, and they had lost no time in preparing for it.

Already the trench round the rebel camp was three feet deep, and wider than it was deep, the displaced earth being stacked up in a parapet round the outer rim of the trenches.

Jimmy Silver had borrowed that "wheeze" from Flanders.

It was not feasible to "bar out" in the school buildings, but an entrenched camp appealed even more to the imagination of the reckless juniors.

They felt a good deal like British Tommies holding the line against the Huns.

There had been no slacking, and the work was going rapidly ahead. Already the position was a strong one.

But Jimmy paused as he caught sight of the Head's stately figure approaching in the moonlight.

With Mr. Manders, the unpopular Modern master, the rebels had already dealt very effectively.

But the Head was a very different proposition, as even Jimmy Silver admitted.

Even the Fistical Four—Jimmy and Lovell, Raby and Newcome—

looked grave as Dr. Chisholm arrived at the earthen wall in front of the trench.

He stared over it at the muddy juniors in the excavation, his eyes glinting over his glasses.

"Boys!" he gasped.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy Silver respectfully.

"What does this mean?"

"We have decided to go on strike, sir, until Lattrey is expelled from Rookwood," answered Jimmy Silver.

"Are you insane, boy?"

"I hope not, sir."

"You dare to dictate to me, your headmaster?" ejaculated Dr. Chisholm.

"In this matter, sir, we cannot give in," said Jimmy Silver quietly and steadily. "Mornington was blinded by what Lattrey did. That's a serious matter. The cad ought to be sent to prison. At least he's got to get out of Rookwood. The Fourth Form can't stand him."

"And won't!" said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I—I—I hardly know what to reply to such insolence!" said the Head in a gasping voice. "It is time you were in your dormitory. I order you to return there at once."

"Is Lattrey to be expelled, sir?"

"No!" thundered the Head.

"Then we shall remain here."

"You will be expelled for this insolence, Silver."

"I shall not go, sir."

"Wha-a-at?"

"If I go, the whole Fourth goes with me," said Jimmy quietly. "But we don't intend to go. We are going to stay here on strike until Lattrey is kicked out of the school, as he ought to have been long ago."

"Hear, hear!" chirped Tommy Dodd.

The Head gasped.

He raised his hand majestically at last, and pointed to the School House.

"I command you to return to the House at once, all of you!" he said.

Jimmy Silver did not move. His followers, with their eyes on Jimmy, remained firm.

(Continued on the next page.)





But there was a flutter among the nuts of the Fourth.

Townsend and Topham, Pele and Gower made a sudden run, and Leggett of the Modern Fourth, followed them. They plunged at the outer parapet to clamber over.

"Stop them!" roared Jimmy Silver. "Do not dare to touch those boys!" thundered the Head.

But the headmaster was not heeded. Van Ryn and Conroy and Pons, Erroll and Oswald, Tommy Dodd and Cook and Doyle grabbed the intended deserters, and dragged them back into the trench. Townsend & Co. collapsed into the newly-dug earth, roaring.

Dr. Chisholm looked on, scarcely believing his eyes.

He stood speechless, while the would-be deserters were rolled in the mud and tossed back into the camp.

He found his voice at last.

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy cheerfully.

"I shall expel you!"

"Indeed, sir!"

"I command you to leave this place at once, and go into the House."

"We cannot, sir."

"Can't be did!" remarked Raby.

"Do you understand that I am your headmaster?" thundered Dr. Chisholm.

"Not until you have expelled Lattrey, sir," said Jimmy Silver coolly. "It's your duty."

"My—my duty?"

"Yes, sir; and you know it as well as we do."

"Hear, hear!" gasped the delighted juniors.

The Head clenched his hands hard.

"You have refused to obey me," he said gaspingly. "You will understand that force will be used at once."

"If force is used, sir, we shall use force," answered Jimmy Silver.

"We're out to put down militarism, sir," grinned Lovell. "Force is not an argument, except for rotten Prussians."

"Silence, Lovell!"

"Oh, certainly! But if you send the prefects here, they'll get a jolly warm reception."

"I shall expel you with Silver, Lovell!"

"Thanks!"

"Wha-a-a-at?"

"Thanks awfully!"

"Oh!" gasped the Head, as the rebels chortled.

He did not waste any more words on the mutineers.

With rustling gown, he strode away, and disappeared round the School House.

Jimmy Silver set his lips.

"Now look out for squalls!" he said.

"We shall all be sacked for this!" wailed Gower.

"Silence that shirker!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Gower.

"I—I say, the Head means to send the prefects to drive us indoors," remarked Higgs, rather uneasily.

"Let 'em come!"

"Let 'em all come!" grinned Lovell.

"We're ready!"

And the mutineers prepared to resist the attack, which was not likely to be long delayed.

### The 3rd Chapter.

#### The Prefects Called In.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, the captain of Rookwood, came into the prefects' room with a glum brow.

The word had been passed round for the prefects to meet there, to see the Head, and those great Panjandrums of the Sixth Form were gathering.

Bulkeley and Neville, Carthew and Jones major and Nonsdale, the Classical prefects, were the first.

The Modern prefects came in a few minutes later, some of them grinning—Knowles and Frampton, and Catesby and Tresham.

"What on earth does this mean, Bulkeley?" Cecil Knowles asked, glancing at Bulkeley's frowning face.

"The Head will tell you, I suppose," grunted Bulkeley.

"Is it true that there's a mutiny among the juniors?" asked Frampton.

"I'm afraid so."

"Cheeky little wasters!" said Frampton, in wonder.

"About Lattrey, I suppose?" remarked Jones major.

Bulkeley nodded.

"Look here, why didn't the Head turn Lattrey out?" asked Neville bluntly.

"All the school knows that the young hooligan ought to have been turned out. He struck Mornington a cowardly blow, and the poor kid was blinded. That was an accident, of course. But the fags can't be expected to stand that dangerous young villain after it. It's his rot!" He ought to go."

"The Head decided otherwise."

"Well, I expected trouble in the Fourth about it, for one."

"The trouble's come," said Bulkeley.

"And the Head wants us to deal with it, I suppose," remarked Knowles, shrugging his shoulders. "I suppose we've got no choice."

"Looks like it!" grunted Jones major.

"I suppose my young rascal of a minor is among them. My hat! What a state of things for Rookwood! I must say I think it's the Head's fault."

"There's more in this than meets the eye," remarked Knowles. "I've heard of a yarn among the juniors that Lat-

trej senior has some hold over Dr. Chisholm."

"What rot!" said Bulkeley sharply.

"Why hasn't the Head sacked Lattrey, then?" sneered Knowles. "You know that he ought to do it."

"I—I don't know."

"Hush!" murmured Neville.

Dr. Chisholm appeared in the doorway, and the eyes of the gathered prefects all turned upon him.

The Head's face was hard and set, but he was quite calm.

"Ah, you are here!" he said, in a quiet, even voice. "A most extraordinary state of affairs has arisen. The Fourth Form refuse to go to their dormitory, and it is now past their bedtime. It is necessary to use coercion. I think I can rely upon you, Bulkeley, and the others, to see that the juniors are taken to their quarters at once."

"Very well, sir," said the Rookwood captain quietly.

The Head did not add one word of explanation.

He quitted the room, leaving the Sixth-Formers to carry out his order.

George Bulkeley looked round.

"Well, come on!" he said. "We've got to deal with the young rascals."

"It won't take us long, I expect," yawned Knowles. "I'll get my ashplant. It may be needed."

"I'll borrow Bootles' cane, I think," grinned Carthew, the bully of the Sixth. "I shall want it."

In a few minutes the Rookwood prefects were on their way to the mutineers' camp, all of them carrying a weapon of some sort.

They did not anticipate much difficulty in dealing with the mutinous juniors. The ashplants were for the infliction of punishment.

But the seniors stared as they came up to the entrenched camp on the allotment ground.

An earthwork three feet high confronted them, with a trench within, a "firing-step" being left inside the parapet, for the defenders to stand on to "fire."

They had plenty of munitions, in the shape of clods of earth, piled ready to hand.

The earthwork was lined with faces as the seniors came to a halt in a body. Jimmy Silver waved his hand to them.

"Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"Top of the evenin' to yez!" shouted Flynn.

"Hallo, Bertie!" sang out Jones minor of the Fourth, in greeting to his big brother of the Sixth.

There was a laugh, and Jones major frowned portentously.

"Come out of that, you young sweep!" he commanded.

"Bow-wow!" retorted Jones minor.

"Do you want your ear pulled?"

"Rats!"

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jones major.

"Will you kids go to your dormitories without further trouble?" asked Bulkeley patiently.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"Can't be done, Bulkeley. We've told the Head that."

"You've checked the Head, you mean."

"The Head's checked us, by letting Lattrey stay in the school."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled the rebels.

"Tell the Head that, Bulkeley."

"We've got orders to take you in," said Bulkeley.

"Sorry!"

"Mind, we shall use force," said the captain of Rookwood.

"We shall do the same," answered Jimmy Silver. "Sorry if you get damaged, but you know what to expect if you come over the top."

"Come on!" roared Lovell, with a big clod in either hand. "We're ready. No shell shortage here."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky young cad!" shouted Carthew. "If you chuck that stuff you'll get licked till you can't crawl!"

"I don't think we shall be the chaps to get licked," said Conroy. "But come on and see!"

"You can't be silly enough to resist!" exclaimed Neville, puzzled and nonplussed.

"Look here!" rapped out Bulkeley. "Enough said! Are you coming into the House or not?"

"Not!" chorused the juniors.

"Then we shall take you!"

"Pile in!"

Bulkeley looked at his comrades.

The Rookwood captain was determined; he had his duty to do, as he understood it.

The other seniors did not hesitate, though they had to admit that the task looked difficult.

"Come on!" said Bulkeley, at last.

And the Sixth-Formers charged, and came clambering "over the top."

### The 4th Chapter.

#### The Fight.

"Back up!"

"Fire!" roared Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The mutineers stood to their guns valiantly.

Clods of earth simply rained on the Sixth-Formers as they clambered furiously over the muddy parapet.

They gasped, and they yelled; even the good-natured Bulkeley being in a furiously exasperated frame of mind by this time.

Being pelted by fags was not flattering to the dignity of the Sixth.

The fire was deadly, but it did not stop the attack.

Gasping and panting, the seniors came sprawling over the parapet.

Jimmy Silver shouted to his comrades.

At close quarters the big seniors were difficult to handle, even with the odds against them.

But at Jimmy's order the rebels backed out of the trench, and stood on the verge of it, leaving the parapet and the firing-step to the enemy.

Bulkeley & Co. found themselves in a trench three feet deep, the edge of which was lined by excited juniors, brandishing sticks and mops and clods of earth.

"Come on!" roared Lovell.

Bulkeley plunged forward, grasping at the muddy earth to drag himself out of the trench into the camp.

Tommy Doyle charged with a mop, and it smote the captain of Rookwood on the chin with terrific force.

George Bulkeley was hurled backwards, and he landed on his back at the bottom of the trench.

The juniors were utterly reckless now.

Only victory in this strange contest could save them from expulsion or flogging, and they could not afford to be beaten.

The only resource was to "win the war," and they meant to win it.

The other seniors were clambering on savagely, and laying about them as they did so.

But with a sheer three feet to climb in the face of a fierce resistance, they had simply no chance.

If the rebels had been overawed by the mighty Sixth, and had lost their nerve, it would have been easy enough.

But they were not in the least overawed, and they had heaps of nerve.

And they did not stand upon ceremony; they could not afford to.

Jimmy Silver was armed with a stiff garden-broom, and that broom did great execution.

It smote Knowles on the chest, hurling him back.

Then Jimmy drove it under Carthew's chin, and Carthew clung hold of it with both hands, till his knuckles were forcibly rapped by Raby's cricket-stump, and he let go, howling with pain, and dropped back into the trench.

Bruises and bumps galore were distributed among the storming-party, and they were driven back helplessly into the trench.

Again and again they strove to clamber out of it, but they did not have the ghost of a chance.

After ten minutes of furious fighting, the prefects were sprawling in the muddy

bottom of the trench, smothered with mud and bumps, and completely beaten.

Above them the victorious juniors flourished their weapons, and yelled to them to come on.

George Bulkeley sat up dazedly.

He felt his head, as if to ascertain whether it was still there. It felt as if it wasn't.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Oh! Ah!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Jones major, in a dismal groan.

"Oh, the young fends!" panted Carthew.

"Yow-ow!"

"Oh, my head!" moaned Knowles. "M-m-my head! Ow!"

"My e-e-c-chin!" groaned Carthew.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"What a merry chorus!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Aren't you coming on to have some more, dear boys?"

"Pelt them!" shouted Lovell.

"Hurrah!"

Whiz, whiz, whiz! Smash!

"Yaroooh! Leave off, you young demons!" shrieked Carthew.

"Oh, my hat!"

Whiz, whiz!

Clods rained on the unhappy seniors in the trench, and they dodged wildly. Stumps and mops reached out to jab at them.

Knowles struggled away over the parapet. He had had enough.

Frampton and Catesby followed him, yelling as the whizzing clods caught them in the rear.

Bulkeley panted.

There was nothing doing, and he realised it.

The juniors were out of hand, and force was no use against them—such force as the Rookwood prefects could muster, at all events.

Bulkeley clambered out of the trench on the outer side, and the rest of the Classical prefects followed him.

Loud yells of derision from the rebels rang out from the camp.

"Go home!"

"Yah!"

"Come back and have some more!"

"Hurrah!"

Bulkeley & Co. tramped away dimly. They were caked with mud, and had more bruises than they could count.

And their tempers were not sweet.

In a dismal crowd they arrived at the School House.

Dr. Chisholm was waiting in the open doorway.

He was waiting majestically for a crowd of crestfallen rebels to be marched in by the prefects to immediate and severe punishment.

But it was a crowd of crestfallen prefects that arrived.

The Head stared at them as they came up, gasping for breath and exuding mud.

"Wha-a-at—" he stuttered.

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles, blinking out from behind the Head. "This is—is—is amazing! Bless my soul!"

"What does this mean, Bulkeley?" thundered the Head.

Bulkeley's cheeks were crimson, under the mud.

He felt keenly the humiliation of his position.

"We've done our best, sir!" he faltered.

"Do you mean to say that the juniors resisted?" exclaimed the Head.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Carthew.

"But why have you not brought them in?" demanded Dr. Chisholm.

"We—we couldn't, sir!"

"You could not!" exclaimed the Head, with a petrifying look.

"Nunno, sir."

"What do you mean, Bulkeley?"

"I mean what I say, sir," said Bulkeley, getting angry himself. "We did our best, and we're all jolly well damaged. They won't come, and we can't make them. That's all."

And Bulkeley tramped savagely in, followed by the Classical seniors.

Knowles & Co. tramped off to Mr. Manders' House.

Dr. Chisholm stood dumbfounded.

He had never dreamed of this.

What had come over the Fourth Form of Rookwood?

He stood for several minutes without speaking. Mr. Bootles hardly dared to look at him.

"Upon my word!" said the Head, at last.

"It is—is amazing!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

The Head gave him a grim look.

"Your Form is utterly out of hand, Mr. Bootles. You have failed to impress upon their minds the lesson of subordination to authority."

"Wha-a-at?"

"No other Form at Rookwood would act in this manner, sir!" rumbled the Head. "Your Form, and your Form alone, have been guilty of this outrageous conduct! I am surprised and shocked, Mr. Bootles!"

Even the patient little Form-master could not tolerate that. His Form had never got out of hand when justly dealt with. It was rather too much for the blame to be laid on him.

Mr. Bootles flushed, and his voice trembled with indignation as he replied: "Dr. Chisholm, my Form is one of the best behaved at Rookwood! I have never had any complaint to make of my Form. My boys have always treated me with the utmost respect and consideration."

"It is a pity, sir, that you have not instructed them to show the same respect and consideration to their headmaster!" snapped the Head.

"The fault is not mine," said Mr. Bootles, speaking more plainly than was his wont with the Head. "The fault, sir, lies on other shoulders!"

"What!"

"I do not excuse the conduct of the Fourth Form, sir. But I tell you plainly that I sympathise with their feelings on the subject of Lattrey. That boy ought not to be allowed to remain in the school."

"Mr. Bootles!"

"My boys cannot be expected to associate with such a young ruffian, sir! Their indignation is perfectly natural. If there is mutiny in the Fourth Form, sir, you have yourself to thank for it, not me!"

With that Mr. Bootles flounced away.

Dr. Chisholm looked after him, scarcely able to believe his ears.

Quiet, tame little Mr. Bootles had had the audacity to speak to him like that!

It was incredible—almost as incredible as the outbreak of the Rookwood Fourth.

Dr. Chisholm checked the words that rose to his lips.

Bitterly angry as he was, he realised the loss of dignity involved in an unseemly wrangle with his Form-master.

He strode away with a deeply-wrinkled brow and glinting eyes.



"The Head's bound to pay. But if he doesn't we'll square the sergeant afterwards. Never mind that now. Now, the question is to land the grub. I want a dozen chaps. You'll stay in charge of the camp, Duddy, and keep watch, and put up a scrap if there's an attack; not that it's likely."

"Right you are!" agreed Tommy Dodd. Jimmy Silver selected his men for the raiding-party.

The tool-shed, in the middle of the camp, was crowded with sleeping juniors, wrapped in coats and rugs. But there were plenty of volunteers.

The three Colonials and the Fistical Four made seven, and Erroll and Oswald joined them.

The three Tommies were left in charge of the camp.

A plank from the tool-shed was laid across the trench, and Jimmy Silver & Co. crossed, and marched away into the thickening darkness on the food-raid.

**The 6th Chapter. The Raiders.**

Sergeant Kettle awoke suddenly. The school sergeant kept the little shop in the old clock-tower of Rookwood, now disused.

He slept in the little room above the shop.

The old military gentleman was dreaming of the time when he had chased De Wet on the veldt, when he was suddenly awakened.

Clink, clink, clink! Stones were rattling on the diamond panes of the little windows.

The sergeant murmured a word he had learned in the Army and sat up.

Clink, clink!

Sergeant Kettle, greatly surprised, and still more greatly annoyed, rolled out of bed, and opened his little window and blinked down.

The moon was waning, but there was light enough for him to see nearly a dozen dim figures below.

"Who's there?" exclaimed the startled sergeant.

"Quick, sergeant—a raid!" called up Jimmy Silver's voice.

"By gum!"

The sergeant stayed only to shove his feet into his boots and jam on his old military greatcoat.

Then he went rushing down the little narrow stair and across the shop.

The bolt and the key clicked, and the door was opened.

"Where are they?" gasped the sergeant.

"The cowardly 'Uns. Where are they?"

"They who?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"The Germans!"

"The Germans!" repeated Jimmy.

"In Flanders, I suppose, unless they've been kicked out since the last news."

The sergeant blinked at him.

"You called out that it was a raid!" he snapped, beginning to think that this was a junior practical joke.

"So it is, sergeant."

"Well, then, where are the raiders!" grumbled Mr. Kettle.

"Here they are!"

"Wot!"

"We're the raiders!" explained Jimmy Silver.

"Wot!" yelled the sergeant.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sergeant was pinioned on all sides. He did not struggle. He was too astounded.

"By gum!" he murmured. "I'm dreaming this 'ere!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Did you think I meant it was a Hun air-raid, sergeant?" he asked.

"Course I did, you young hump!"

"Your mistake, old scout. I meant it was our raid—after the grub!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"I'd have explained in full, only you mightn't have come down if I had."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The sergeant began to wriggle.

"Look 'ere, you let me go!" he growled.

"I don't like these 'ere jokes, and I'll report yer! And off!"

"Sorry, old scout. Better take it quietly, or we shall have to tie you up. Hold him, you chaps!"

"Better tie him up, anyway!" said Pons.

"Look 'ere—"

"No; take him in and hold his fins!" said Jimmy.

The dazed sergeant was marched into the little parlour, where he sat down, with Van Ryn and Conroy holding his arms, and Pons his collar.

Sergeant Kettle wondered whether he was still dreaming.

But, dreaming or not, there was no help for him.

He resolved to take it quietly, and leave the young rascals for Dr. Chisholm to deal with on the morrow.

Jimmy Silver & Co. lost no time.

Baskets and bags and boxes were routed out of corners, and they were loaded up with eatables from the tuck-shop.

Under war conditions, the sergeant's stock was not so plentiful or so varied as of old.

But there was a good deal in a plain way.

There were potted meats and tins of biscuits and fruits, and so forth, and considerable numbers of ginger-beers and mineral-waters.

There were boxes of matches—a few—which were promptly packed in the bags.

There were nuts of some kinds, which Jimmy Silver said were good food. He had known a fellow who was a nut-eater.

There was no sugar or tea, but the juniors did not care for unnecessary luxuries of that sort.

There was plain food of a kind, anyway, and the tap in the tool-shed provided plenty of drink—of a healthy sort, if exceedingly plain.

Spartan fare was to be the rule in the rebel camp, but Jimmy had pointed out that the Spartans kept themselves very fit on their fare.

Quietly the juniors crossed the

shadowy quad and tramped round the School House to the camp, laden with their plunder.

And there the goods were taken in by Tommy Dodd & Co.

More than one journey was required, for not a single article that was eatable in the tuckshop was spared.

Jimmy Silver was prepared for a long siege, if necessary, and food was the most important requirement.

And after that night there was not likely to be any opportunity of replenishing the supplies of the rebels.

In a very short time Sergeant Kettle's little shop looked as bare as if the Crown Prince of Prussia had been there.

The unhappy sergeant sat quietly enough in his little parlour, with three juniors on guard.

He took it philosophically, as he had to take it somehow. And he was not alarmed as to the value of his goods.

Somebody had to pay for them; he knew that. And when the sergeant's bill came in it was certain not to err on the side of being too small.

Indeed, Mr. Kettle realised that this raid meant a generous stroke of business for him, with a chance of "doing his bit" in the war-profit line.

Perhaps that reflection helped him to bear it philosophically.

Not that the rebels troubled about Mr. Kettle's views and feelings on the subject.

They were proceeding with a strict attention to business.

Having cleared out the shop, they devoted their next attention to the coal-cellar.

Baskets and bags of coal were carried off in an almost endless procession to the camp, and dumped down inside the fortifications.

The sergeant's winter store of logs followed.

The rebels even went to the length of

"We're not finished yet," said Jimmy cooly.

"Oh, ye gods!" groaned Lovell. "What next?"

"The wood-shed. We want all the faggots and logs and all the timber we can lay hands on—for the dug-outs."

"Great pip!"

"No slacking, you know."

"All right!" groaned Lovell.

Sergeant Kettle went back to bed.

His report to the Head could wait till the morning; he did not care to wake up Dr. Chisholm at 3.30 a.m.

But there was no sleep yet for the active rebels.

The wood-shed was padlocked, but the padlock did not resist long.

The shed was well stocked, and again there was a procession, carrying off the contents.

Four o'clock had passed when Jimmy Silver & Co. finally entered the rebel camp, and stayed there.

Jimmy rubbed his eyes. They were closing, in spite of himself.

Cold as it was, most of the garrison were asleep in the allotment shed.

"Bed now, for goodness' sake!" murmured Raby.

Jimmy laughed sleepily.

"Sleep, at any rate," he said. "It doesn't run to beds. We could light a big camp fire—"

"Good idea!" said Newcome, with a shiver.

"Only it's against the lighting regulations."

"Oh, blow!" said Newcome crossly.

"There's too many blessed regulations in these times."

"Well, we don't want to guide German raiders to Rookwood," said Jimmy, laughing. "But there's a stove in the tool-shed, and we've got lots of logs and coal now. We'll soon get it going."

"Good!"

In a few minutes the iron stove in the

from having lost his rest the previous night.

The captain of the Fourth had an example to set, and he meant to set it.

It was up to a leader to face discomfort and hardship with a smiling face.

Jimmy Silver contrived to "keep smiling."

His chums followed his example, and only Townsend & Co. remained asleep in the shed.

They growled savagely when they were roused out.

But there was no help for them; Jimmy Silver was too strenuous a leader to allow slacking.

"Look here, you beast," howled Peele, as Jimmy dug him in the ribs with a stable broom. "I'm not goin' to wake up yet! I'm sleepy! Hang you! I s'pose you're not goin' to have Booties here givin' us lessons to-day, are you?"

"No fear!" grinned Jimmy.

"Well, then, let a fellow have his snooze out."

"Aren't you ashamed to slack about in war-time?" demanded Jimmy sternly.

"No slackers wanted here."

"I'd be jolly glad to get out!" growled Peele.

"You know the punishment for deserters," said Jimmy warningly.

"We're all standing together in this Field Punishment No. One if you try to bunk. And you're not going to slack: You'll feel quite wide awake after I've given you a touch or two with this broom—like this!"

"Yaroooh!"

"And like that!"

"Yah! Yoop! Help!"

Cyril Peele did not look very sleepy as he bounded up.

He gave Jimmy Silver a look that would have done credit to the Kaiser, but he did not try to go to sleep again.

Washing accommodation was limited;



"Look—look at me, sir!" panted Mr. Manders. "I am looking at you, Mr. Manders," replied the Head icily. "I cannot understand why you should present yourself in my study in that extraordinary state!"

borrowing a table and chairs, and all the mats and rugs they could find.

As they raided his parlour for these articles the sergeant's eyes grew wide as he watched them.

Jimmy Silver gave him an encouraging grin.

"All damage will be paid for, sergeant!" he assured him.

Sergeant Kettle snorted.

"I'll see to that, Master Silver!" he answered.

"Make up a list, old chap, and put in any fancy prices you like," grinned Conroy. "Then send it in to the Head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We'd better put payment of the sergeant's bill in our peace terms!" chortled Lovell.

And the juniors chuckled.

The raiders were finished at last.

Sergeant Kettle's quarters were cleaned out of all useful things as cleanly as if a swarm of locusts or Prussians had been there.

Then the raiders, tired but satisfied, took their leave.

"Good-night, sergeant!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Go back to bed, old chap, and pleasant dreams!"

"I'll dream of you being flogged, Master Silver!" answered the sergeant grimly.

"Ha, ha! Thanks!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. marched out, with their hands full of the last articles, and Jimmy closed the shop door.

The moon had disappeared, and the quadrangle was very dark. Lovell gave a deep yawn.

"I'm ready for bed," he remarked.

"Yaw-aw! Same here."

tool-shed was roaring, and disseminating a very agreeable warmth.

There was no room in the shed for all the garrison; but half a dozen fellows were roused, to take their turns on sentry-go, and the harder members of the garrison, including the Fistical Four and the Colonials, slept outside, wrapped in anything that came to hand, on a hard bed of faggots.

Jimmy Silver's bed was hard, but his eyes closed the moment he laid down, and they did not open again till the winter sun was glimmering down on Rookwood School.

**The 7th Chapter. No Surrender!**

Clang, clang!

The rising-bell rang out sharply through the frosty air.

Old Mack, the porter, whose duty it was to ring the matutinal bell, was going through his regular performance, in sublime ignorance of the state of affairs within the ancient walls of Rookwood.

In the school dormitories the fellows awakened and turned out as usual, but in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth there was only one fellow to turn out.

That was Tubby Muffin. And as the fat Classical dragged himself grumbling from his warm bed, he repented that he had not joined the rebels of the Fourth in the camp outside.

But, as a matter of fact, there were no late risers in the rebel camp.

Jimmy Silver turned out promptly at the clang of the bell, sleepy as he was

there was only the tap and sink in the allotment shed.

The juniors took it in turn, some of them being satisfied with turns that were remarkably brief.

But there was general good-humour, with few exceptions.

The strange state of affairs, the unaccustomed sense of freedom, had a very exhilarating effect on the Rookwooders.

There would be no lessons that day, no masters, no prefects—no need, as Lovell remarked, to keep on the customary "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and "Please, sir," and "Oh, sir!"

And that was much. The peculiar state of affairs appealed to the adventurous instincts of the juniors.

And the prospects of a "scrap" during the day did not dismay them at all.

"Hallo, here comes Hansom!" shouted Lovell.

Hansom of the Fifth came up to the camp, his eyes fairly goggling in his astonishment.

He was the first Rookwood fellow to discover the entrenchments.

He blinked at the grinning juniors over the trenches.

"Wha-a-at are you kids doing here?" he gasped.

"Holding the fort, old son!" answered Jimmy Silver. "Seen the Head this morning?"

"The Head? He's down," said Hansom. "Looked a bit like a gargoyle, I thought. Something's annoyed him."

"Ha, ha!"

"So it was you making that row last night," said Hansom. "You've been scrapping with the prefects."

"And licking them!" grinned Conroy.

"Licking the prefects!" murmured Hansom. "Oh, my hat!"

He walked away like a fellow in a dream.

The news soon spread.

Fellows of all Forms, Modern and Classical, came swarming round the School House to the allotments, to view the entrenched camp.

There were exclamations of amazement on all sides.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were feeling elated.

There was no doubt that they were making a tremendous sensation in Rookwood—no doubt whatever on that point.

Some of the fags of the Third and Second showed a disposition to join them, actuated chiefly, most likely, by a desire to escape lessons in the Form-rooms.

But recruits from the fag Forms were not wanted, and Jimmy politely but firmly declined to let them into the camp.

They could look on as much as they liked, but they could not enter.

"You'll all clear off like a lot of bunny rabbits when the Head comes down on you!" jeered Snooks of the Second.

"Here he comes!" howled Smythe of the Shell.

The crowd backed away rapidly as the Head was seen striding from the direction of the School House.

The expression on Dr. Chisholm's face was not agreeable.

"Here comes the dear man!" grinned Lovell. "Don't look so blessed sick, Peele; he can't eat you!"

"He'll sack us!" growled Peele.

"Sack the whole Fourth Form!" said Jimmy Silver, with a laugh. "I fancy he would stop short of that! The governors would have something to say about it, I opine."

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!" chortled Lovell. "We've only got to stick together. Unity in war-time, you know."

But the juniors, though mutinous, were respectful, and they "capped" the Head as usual as his stately form loomed over the outer parapet.

Dr. Chisholm looked over the mud wall into the crowded camp.

His eyes noted the change that had taken place since his last visit—the strengthening of the defences, and the stacks of logs and faggots, the fruits of the midnight raid.

His lips came together hard.

"Silver!" he rapped out.

"Yes, sir?" said Jimmy very respectfully.

"I offer you a last opportunity of returning to your duty."

"Is Lattrey gone, sir?"

"No!" thundered the Head.

"Then I'm afraid there's nothing doing, sir."

The Head's eyes glistened.

"Last night you assaulted the prefects I sent to take you indoors," he said.

"We defended ourselves, sir."

"I am not here to argue with you, Silver. You have chosen to defy authority; you will take the consequences. You I shall expel from the school, and every other boy here will be severely flogged, and deprived of his holidays for the remainder of the term. And—the Head raised his voice a little—"you have doubtless not considered that while you are here you will be deprived of food. I have no doubt that you will shortly return to the House, in order to obtain your meals. Until that time you will remain here. I shall see to it that no one is allowed to bring you food."

Jimmy Silver smiled.

He had expected that, as a matter of course; he was not quite so reckless as the Head supposed.

His measures were taken, and the Head's dire threat had no weight.

The Head's frown grew darker as Jimmy smiled.

"You understand, Silver, that no food will be brought here—not a morsel of food of any description."

"Very well, sir."

"Sure, and it's hungry I am already!" said Tommy Doyle pathetically.

"When you are a little more hungry you will doubtless return to your duty!" said the Head, with sardonic grimness.

"We are doing our duty now, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Enough!"

The Head strode away, his gown rustling in the wind.

Jimmy Silver smiled softly.

"So we're going to be starved out!" he remarked. "Well, I fancy we can play that game as long as the Head can, as we're provisioned for a siege. Isn't it rather lucky I wouldn't let you slacking bouncers sleep last night?"

"Bravo, Jimmy!"

"Starved out, intirely!" grinned Tommy Doyle. "Sure the Head expects us to turn up for dinner, repentant and ready for a floggin'. Ha, ha!"

"And now brekker!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"



# THREE ON A TRAIL!



**A Magnificent Long Complete Story, dealing with the Schooldays of Frank Richards, the Famous Author of the Tales of Harry Wharton & Co. By MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

## The 1st Chapter. Vamoosed!

It was growing late. Frank Richards & Co. stood in the irregular main street of Thompson town, looking tired and exasperated. Gunten's store was already closed, and the naphtha-lamps at the Red Dog Saloon were being extinguished by the Chinese bar-keeper.

"Thompson's going to bed," said Frank Richards, with a faint grin. "It's about time we did the same."

"I guess so," said Bob Lawless dimly. "Better get home, I suppose," said Vere Beauclerc slowly. "But—"

"But what, Cherub?"

"We're pretty late, as it is," remarked Beauclerc. "We've taken an inch, so we may as well take an ell."

"But the game's up!" said Frank Richards. "We've hunted through the town for that rascal Lopez. He's gone, plain enough."

"Vamoosed the ranch," grunted Bob; "and our fifty dollars gone with him! He's lit out, Cherub. Didn't Lawrence tell us he saw him taking the trail, mounted on Mulligan's old hoss, bother him!"

"Why shouldn't we take the trail, too?"

"Oh!"

"It's a clear moon to-night," said Beauclerc. "And there's still a good bit of snow on the trail. That horse of Lopez's isn't fit for much. We've got good horses. And if we catch that Mexican rascal, we can handle him easily enough—the three of us."

Beauclerc's chums exchanged a glance. They were quite ready to act on the suggestion of the Cherub.

It was an exasperating position for Frank Richards & Co.

"Frisco Jo, the Mexican, had sold them a share in a gold-mine for fifty dollars. He had departed with the cash, leaving them to discover that the gold-mine was a swindle, and worth no more than the rest of the rocks in the Thompson foothills.

The chums of Cedar Creek School were not simpletons, but they had been taken in by a "salted" mine, as many another had been taken in before.

They had not suspected that the gold grains they had discerned in the rock were made by a cheap bronze powder carefully dusted there by the astute Mexican.

They would have given a good deal more than the fifty dollars to get to close quarters with Jose Lopez, and tell him what they thought of him—with appropriate action.

"Why not try it?" continued Beauclerc. "You fellows will get into a row for being so late, anyway."

"I guess so!" assented Bob.

"May as well put in another hour or two, if there's a chance of roping in that swindling Greaser."

"What about you?" asked Frank.

"I sha'n't be missed at home," said Beauclerc quietly. "My father will most likely be absent all night."

Frank was sorry the next moment that he had asked the question.

He knew something of the habits of Bean's father, the remittance-man of Cedar Camp.

"Right-ho!" exclaimed Bob Lawless hastily. "Let's try it! If we run down that rotten Greaser, we'll make him hand back the dollars fast enough!"

"And Mulligan's horse," added Beauclerc. "He's stolen that. Mulligan was hiring it to him, but he won't see it again now."

"I reckon not. Come on!"

"Hold on a minute," said Beauclerc quietly. "There'll be a good many hoof-tracks on the trail. We can get an old shoe from Mulligan. You remember he told us his horse was shod this week."

"Good old Cherub; you've got the brains!"

The three chums made their way at once to Mulligan's cabin, which lay back from the street behind Gunten's store.

A light was still burning there, and the door was opened by Mulligan himself when Bob Lawless knocked.

"You young gossoons again!" exclaimed Mr. Mulligan. The chums had been there before that evening, inquiring after Jose Lopez.

"Us!" said Bob Lawless. "We're going after that Greaser, Mr. Mulligan, and if we rope him in we'll bring your hoss home for you."

The big Irishman grinned.

"Sure, Frisco Jo will be too slippery for yez," he said. "But I wish you luck!"

"Your horse was fresh shod this week."

"Thru for yez! The yaller villain was already thinkin' of lightin' out, I can see that now," said Mr. Mulligan ruefully.

"Is the old shoe knocking about?"

"It's in the yard."

"I suppose we can take it?"

"Take it an' welcome!" said Mr. Mulligan, smiling. "I'll show yez a light."

He came out with a lantern, and in a couple of minutes Bob Lawless picked up the discarded shoe of "Frisco Jo's" horse.

"It that it, Mr. Mulligan?"

"That's it."

"Thanks! Good-night!"

"Good-night to yez, and good luck!" grinned Mr. Mulligan, and he went back into his cabin, evidently not placing much faith in the ability of the three schoolboys to run down the elusive Greaser.

The chums returned to their horses, which were hitched on one of the posts outside Gunten's store.

They mounted, and rode out of the town to the south, the trail taken by the Mexican, according to the information they had received from Bill Lawrence, the older brother of one of their friends at Cedar Creek School.

Outside the town there was snow from a late fall on the rough trail, and the ruts were thick with it.

But near the town the trampling of many hoofs and boots had obliterated the tracks they were looking for.

They did not expect to pick up the Mexican's trail so near at hand.

They rode on at a trot.

Overhead, the full, clear moon sailed high in a velvet sky, shining down in a flood of silver light upon the valley and the wide river and the foothills beyond.

It was almost as light as day on the trail.

Half a mile from the town the three schoolboys halted, and jumped down.

Here the trail was clear of the many tracks that had gathered near the settlement, and only a few tracks were to be seen in the velvety carpet of snow.

Bob Lawless, who was skilled from childhood in woodcraft and scoutcraft, examined the tracks attentively.

"Only three horsemen have been along here since sun-down, coming away from the town," he remarked.

"And one of them was Lopez!" said Frank Richards.

"You bet!"

"Pick out the trail, then."

"I guess I can do it; and, by gum, here it is!"

With the cast shoe of Mulligan's horse in his hand, Bob easily identified the track of that animal.

"Lucky there hasn't been a later fall of snow," he said. "Look! Here it is, clean cut as a die! Follow on!"

Leading their horses, the schoolboys followed the track.

Here and there it disappeared, as on higher or rougher ground the snow was thinner, or had been scattered by the wind.

But it was always easy to pick up again where the snow lay deeper.

For a good mile the chums of Cedar Creek tramped on, and then Bob Lawless halted with a sudden exclamation.

"The rotter left the trail here!"

The hoof-track turned off abruptly from the snowy trail, and was lost on a rising ridge of stony ground that left no trace.

For ten minutes the three chums sought for a further track, but the hard stones held no trace, and they gathered in the trail again, angry and disappointed.

## The 2nd Chapter. Not Beaten Yet!

Frank Richards frowned, and Beauclerc compressed his lips.

It looked as if the pursuit had come to a sudden and disappointing end.

Bob Lawless knitted his brows in deep thought.

"No go, Bob?" asked Frank, at last.

"I'm not so sure," answered Bob Lawless slowly. "The Mexican cleared off the trail at this point, and there's no track at hand, that's a cinch. But—"

"He guessed he might be followed," remarked Beauclerc.

"Yes; he might have reckoned that Mulligan would come looking for his hoss," grinned Bob. "But he may have had another reason, too. He's crossed this ridge to the eastward, and there's no known trail over that ground. But about six miles away, if he keeps on, he comes to Kootenay Creek, and I guess that's where he's making for."

"But—"

"Figure it out," said Bob. "He won't be camping out on a night like this. He's a Mexican, too, and those southern galoots don't like cold. Depend on it, he won't camp out at night. He's heading for Kootenay Creek because it's off the known trail, and he calculates he'll be safe there. I guess he'll sell Mulligan's hoss there, and light out again to-morrow."

"Likely enough," assented Beauclerc. "We couldn't get to Kootenay Creek to-night, though—unless you fellows are ready to make a night of it."

"No good if we did," replied Bob. "The place would be fast asleep, and we couldn't wake up all the town asking after a Mexican horse-thief."

"Ha, ha! No!"

"But we can get there to-morrow morning bright and early," said Bob, with a glint in his eyes. "Lopez isn't the kind of pilgrim to be an early-riser; and it's likely enough he'll stay on to sell the horse before he goes farther. He won't want to keep a stolen horse with him in the section."

"He may light out for the States," suggested Beauclerc.

Bob shook his head.

"There's that salted mine in the



The startled horse jumped, and ran, and the Mexican, flinging himself across the saddle, was borne away down the street. "After him!" shouted Frank Richards.

Thompson Hills, Cherub. Lopez didn't fix that up simply to corral fifty dollars. He's going to sell a share in that mine to every greenhorn in the Thompson valley before he leaves this section. I guess he will keep within easy riding-distance of that salted mine for some time to come."

"Right-ho!" agreed Frank.

"Anyway, we'll look for him at Kootenay Creek to-morrow," decided Bob Lawless. "If he's there, he certainly won't be expecting us, and we may catch him napping. Is it a go?"

"You bet!"

And the three chums remounted and rode homewards.

"What about this gee-gee?" asked Beauclerc, when they came to the fork in the valley-trail where their paths divided.

Beauclerc's horse belonged to the Lawless ranch, and Bob had lent it to him for that evening's ride to Thompson.

"Get home on it," said Bob. "Meet us here at dawn."

"Right you are!"

And the chums parted.

It was long past midnight as Frank and Bob galloped off to the Lawless ranch in the bright moonlight.

"The popper will be rather wild," Bob remarked, as they drew near the ranch. "We've fairly made a night of it this time. I suppose we shall have to ex-

## The 3rd Chapter. Taking the Trail.

Early next morning Bob Lawless led the way to Billy Cook's cabin.

It was Sunday morning, and the hour was early, but the ranch foreman was already up, and a kettle was singing on his stove as the chums looked in at his open doorway.

"Hallo, hallo!" boomed the foreman. "You up already! What's your little game?"

"Off on a ride for the day," said Bob. "We'll have some of your coffee and

crackers, Billy, if you feel inclined to be hospitable."

The ranchman grinned.

"I'll shove in some more coffee for you," he answered. "And there's crackers and ham. Help yourselves."

"Good man!"

The schoolboys ate standing beside their ponies. They had no time to wait for the breakfast in the ranch-house.

The ranchman's fare was homely, but ranch-life spelt keen appetite and good digestion.

Frank and Bob enjoyed that hurried breakfast, washed down by draughts of nearly boiling coffee in tin pannikins.

"And here's your twenty-five, old scout," said Bob Lawless. "And thanks very much for the loan."

"You didn't want it after all?" asked Billy Cook.

"Well, yes; but—" Bob coloured—"Frisco Jo of Thompson sold us a part share in a gold-mine."

"Haw, haw, haw!" roared the ranch foreman.

"Funny, ain't it?" said Bob dimly. "The popper's given me the tin to square you, Billy; but we're going to get it back from Jose Lopez and square popper."

"Not in a month of Sundays!" grinned Billy Cook.

"You'll jolly well see, you doubting Thomas!"

"Haw, haw! Are you going gunning after Jose Lopez this morning?" spluttered Billy Cook.

"That's the game."

"I guess I'd corral you here, an' not let you go, only I know you'll never get inside a ten-mile ride of him!" chuckled Billy Cook.

"Oh, rats!"

The chums helped themselves to a goodly portion of Billy Cook's supply of provisions, which they crammed in their saddle-bags.

How long the day's trail might last they did not know.

If they did not find the Mexican at Kootenay Creek they intended to trail him farther.

The complete way in which Frisco Jo had spoofted them, could only be wiped out by roping in the Mexican, and forcing him to disgorge his plunder, and that they were determined upon.

When that had happened, the laugh would not be quite so much against them.

"Tell the popper we've gone after the Greaser, Billy," said Bob, as he finished packing his saddle-bags. "He won't be alarmed—he won't think we shall find him. Tell him we want him to let us off the Mission to-day, under the circs."

"Haw, haw, haw!" was Billy Cook's reply.

And the chums rode away, leaving the big ranchman still guffawing.

They soon reached the forked trail, where they found Vere Beauclerc waiting for them with his horse.

He mounted at once, and the three rode on together.

"Are we going Thompson way?" asked Frank.

"I guess not—we're not following any trail," answered Bob. "We've got to cut across country—rough country, too. It won't hurt us."

"Not a bit," agreed Frank cheerily.

To Frank, and perhaps to Beauclerc, it was a mystery how Bob Lawless found his way, which he did almost unerringly.

Belts of forest, stretches of rolling plain, rocky ridges and deep creeks, seemed all the same to him. He rode on without a halt, and, so far as Frank could see, without any guidance, and his chums rode with him unquestioningly.

Once or twice they met and exchanged greetings with some rider, but for the most part that early morning ride was solitary.

The sun was getting high when they came in sight of Kootenay Creek at last.

The camp, busy enough in the summer time, was almost dead now; deserted by more than half its inhabitants, and little going on, on the busiest day of the week.

The store was open, and several horses



THREE ON A TRAIL!



(Continued from the previous page.)

hitched outside it, and Bob Lawless dismounted there, to look at the animals. "Good luck!" he exclaimed. "What is it, Bob?" "Mulligan's horse!" "Oh, good egg!" The three chums had seen the horse before, but only Bob had recognised it. Mulligan's horse had changed somewhat in appearance. It had brown with some white-grey patches before. Now it had a white muzzle, white patches on the neck, and one leg was half white. Only a keen eye would have detected that the colouring was assisted by paint skillfully applied. Jose Lopez, dealer in salted mines, was evidently an experienced horse-thief also, and well up in the tricks of his peculiar trade. "Sure that's the gee?" asked Frank, a little doubtfully. "You bet your sweet life!" said Bob Lawless emphatically. "Look here—he knows me, don't you, old hoss?" The horse whinnied softly as Bob caressed his nose. "Yes, that's the gee right enough," said Vere Beauclerc, with a nod. "It's got up pretty skilfully, though. Has Lopez sold it already, I wonder?" Bob knitted his brows. "He got here too late for that last night," he said, "and the morning is still young. However, we'll see. Whoever's got possession of the horse now, is in the store, as the gee's hitched up here. Come on!" Bob quietly took the rifle from his saddle, and slipped in a cartridge. He dropped the weapon into the hollow of his arm, as he led the way into the camp store. Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc followed him in, their riding-whips in their hands, and their hearts beating a little. If the Mexican was there—and it was most probable that he was there—they were hooked for trouble, and it might turn out to be very serious trouble indeed. But they did not hesitate for a moment.

**The 4th Chapter.**  
**A Surprise for 'Frisco Jo.**

"Buen caballo, senores—a good horse! What do you say?" The hissing Spanish voice greeted the ears of Frank Richards & Co. as they entered the store of Kootenay Camp. There were half a dozen men in the store, cattlemen or lumbermen, some of them taking "nips" that cold morning, though Kootenay Camp whiskey was far from being the best means of keeping out the cold. 'Frisco Jo was talking to them, in his hissing English. It was the Mexican. His dusky face was partly turned from the newcomers, and he did not see them for a moment. And from his remark, they knew that they had arrived in time to prevent Mulligan's horse finding a new and illegal owner. "Buen caballo!" grinned one of the cattlemen. "Good hoss—spavined old bag of bones, you mean, Don Whiskers!" The Mexican made a deprecating gesture. "I ask not a thousand dollars for my horse," he said. "I sell him for ten dollars, because I have taken a job at the saw-mill, and do not want a horse any longer. Ten dollars, that is a bargain." "I guess I'll look at the critter!" "Same here!" Bob Lawless strode forward. "No need to look at the critter, boys!" he chimed in. "That horse is stolen, and that Greaser is a horse-thief!" 'Frisco Jo spun round with a gasp. His black eyes seemed to bulge from his swarthy face, as he stared at the chums of Cedar Creek. Evidently, the enterprising merchant in salted mines had never dreamed that his dupes would be able to track him to his new locality. He had intended to linger at Kootenay Camp only long enough to dispose of Mulligan's horse. But he had lingered a little too long. The loungers in the store stared at the three boys. "Hallo, where did you spring from, younker?" demanded the big fellow, who had announced his intention of looking at the "critter." "I guess I'm from the Lawless ranch, up the valley," answered Bob. "And I can swear that that horse outside belongs to Mr. Mulligan of Thompson." "And so can we!" said Frank Richards, at once. The Mexican recovered himself. "It is a lie!" he said coolly. "I have never seen these ninos before!" "Oh, my hat!" shouted Frank Richards. "You black-jowled rascal, didn't you sell us a salted mine yesterday in Thompson?"

"I have never seen you before, nino!" "You are a horse-thief and a swindler!" exclaimed Vere Beauclerc. "We are here for the fifty dollars you robbed us of yesterday, Jose Lopez!" "As well as Mulligan's horse!" said Frank. 'Frisco Jo shrugged his shoulders. "Senors, you are mad, or dreaming," he said coolly. "I am quite a stranger to you!" "You're not 'Frisco Jo?" demanded Bob. "My name is Enrique Garcia, of Montana!" "You were 'Frisco Jo, of Thompson, yesterday!" "It is false, pordios!" "I kinder calculate I'm not buying that hoss!" drawled the big cattleman, and there was a laugh. "I can sell my horse elsewhere!" said 'Frisco Jo. He made a movement towards the door. The Kootenay Camp men looked on, rather amused at the scene. Whether the accusation made by the boys was correct or not, they had no means of telling, only they certainly would not have taken the risk of buying the horse after it. Frank Richards & Co. stood grimly in the Mexican's way to the door. "Not yet!" said Bob. "You owe us fifty dollars, Jose Lopez!" "I owe you nothing!" exclaimed the Mexican, his black eyes glinting savagely. "Let me pass, boy!" "You don't pass till you've shelled out what you robbed us of," said Bob, "and if you make any bones about it, we'll collar you, and ride you back to Thompson, and hand you over to the sheriff!" "Let me pass!" shouted Lopez. "Stand where you are!" The Mexican panted. He was fearful that at any moment the onlookers might take a hand in the proceedings. Horse-thieves were not beloved in the Canadian West. He drew back a little, like a puma of his native country crouching for a spring. His hand went under his velvet jacket. "Let me pass!" "Rats!" The Mexican made a spring forward, and there was a gleam of steel. The ruffian fully expected the school-boys to break aside at the cold glitter of the poignard. But they did not. Bob Lawless thrust up his rifle, and the muzzle fairly struck the Mexican on the chest, and he stopped. The Canadian lad looked at the panting, furious Southerner along the barrel of the rifle. "Drop that knife!" he rapped out. 'Frisco Jo stood panting, the weapon gripped in his swarthy hand. Bob's eyes glittered. "By the Rockies, 'Frisco Jo, if you don't drop that stickey I'll put a bullet through your shoulder," he said, "and if you try to use it I'll put one through your heart!" The Mexican glared, but the knife clattered from his hand to the floor. "Bray-vo, sonny!" roared the big cattleman. Bob kept the rifle at a level. "Get out, Lopez!" he said. "Caramba! I—!" "Get out! We're going to take you back to Thompson!" said Bob determinedly. "I'll keep him covered, you chaps, and you touch him up with your whips if he won't move!" "What-ho!" said Frank Richards. 'Frisco Jo clenched his swarthy hands convulsively. But the levelled rifle and the cool, glittering eye along the barrel daunted him. He shuffled away to the door, the cattlemen in the store shouting with laughter as he went. In the street 'Frisco Jo fixed a savage glare upon the schoolboys. "Now—" he muttered. "You're coming back to Thompson!" said Bob. "You'll get on Mulligan's horse, and ride him home with us." "I—I—" panted Lopez. "Sharp's the word!" rapped out the Canadian lad. "Senorito!" The Mexican's manner changed. "I—I give in! I will hand you the money! I will repay the dollars! And let me go." "Oh, rather a different tune now!" grinned Bob. "What do you say, you fellows? Shall we take the dollars and let him vamoose?" Frank Richards nodded. "Let the rotter go!" said Beauclerc. "Shell out, Lopez!" said Bob laconically. "Fifty dollars!" "I have but forty!" whined Lopez. "Ten dollars were taken by my friends in Thompson. They would have betrayed that the mine was salted if I had not paid them." "Very likely," agreed Bob. "But you can't pay your precious friends with our money. You've got to hand over fifty dollars, or face the sheriff at Thompson!"

'Frisco Jo gritted his teeth. "Be it so!" he snarled. "It is in my saddle-bag. I will hand it to you." "Good!" The Mexican shambled towards Mulligan's horse and fumbled in the saddle-bag. Bob dropped the rifle under his arm, and the three schoolboys gathered round the Mexican, greatly elated at the successful result of their chase. The Mexican's surrender seemed complete. But he was not at the end of his resources yet. There was a cunning gleam in his eyes as he bent over the saddle. With a sudden movement he flung off the rope that hitched the horse to the post and struck the animal in the ribs. The startled horse jumped and ran, and the Mexican, flinging himself across the saddle, was borne away down the street, pommelling fiercely at the horse as he lay across its back, and urging it to greater speed.

**The 5th Chapter.**  
**Run Down.**

"Look out!" "After him!" Watchful as they were the chums had been taken by surprise. The Mexican could not have mounted under their eyes, but he had not troubled to mount; he had flung himself like a sack across the horse's back, and was thus carried on by the sudden rush of the startled horse. He was out of reach before the boys could grasp at him, and as they rushed after him they were left behind at once by the rushing horse. "Hold on! The horses!" shouted Frank. The chums rushed back to their horses. Bob Lawless, for a moment, was tempted to send a bullet after the fleeing Mexican. But it would have been more likely to hit the horse than the man sprawling on its back, and he did not want to risk shooting the horse-thief in a vital spot. He clambered on his pony instead, and rode in pursuit, with Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc galloping on either side of him. They left half Kootenay Camp staring after them as they went. 'Frisco Jo, after the first fifty yards, had scrambled into a sitting posture on the galloping horse. He glanced back over his shoulder, and his black eyes glittered, as he saw the three chums in hot pursuit only thirty yards behind.

**TO THE BOYS AT THE FRONT!**  
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The ranch ponies were better horse-flesh than Mulligan's horse, and there was not much doubt how the chase must end. "We've got him, I guess!" said Bob Lawless between his teeth. "I guess we've got the rotter! Put it on!" At almost every stride the long-limbed ranch ponies were gaining. 'Frisco Jo was urging on his sorry steed to its full power, and beyond it. The three chums rode hard and grimly. Closer and closer they drew to the furious Mexican. He glared over his shoulder again and again, grinding his white teeth as he saw his pursuers nearer and nearer at hand. If he had possessed a firearm there is little doubt that 'Frisco Jo would have tried a "pot-shot" at the schoolboys of Cedar Creek. But his only weapon, the Mexican knife, lay on the floor of the store in Kootenay Camp, and, fortunately, 'Frisco Jo had no other. Bob's pony's muzzle was only a couple of yards from the whisking tail of Mulligan's horse when the Mexican gave up the vain fight. It was a mile from Kootenay Camp now on the Thompson trail. By the side of the horsemen's track a steep acclivity rose, clothed in firs and larch. The Mexican, without drawing rein, suddenly leaped from the back of the gasping steed and plunged into the timber. Mulligan's horse ran on a dozen yards or more, and stopped, dead-beat. The Mexican had vanished in the trees. Frank Richards & Co. rode on, unable to stop for a minute or two, and passed the spot where the Mexican had dismounted. But they speedily spun their ponies round in the trail and drove them into the thin timber. Mulligan's horse was left contentedly cropping on the edge of the timber. That the dollars were not in the saddle-bag was pretty clear from the Mexican's flight without the stolen horse. He would not have parted with his plunder so easily. "Come on!" shouted Bob. "The thief's got the money on him, you chaps! He was fooling us with that yarn about its being in the saddle. Come on! He can't get through!"

They crashed through the thickets. Beyond the belt of thin timber by the trail the hillsides lay almost bare, and there they sighted the Mexican again, tramping desperately up the ascent. The rise was steep, but not too steep for the active, wiry-limbed Canadian ponies. The three riders gained rapidly on the desperate Mexican. Lopez halted, breathless, and turned. "Caramba!" he muttered between his teeth. "Surrender, or we'll ride you down!" shouted Bob. "Caramba!" The Mexican bounded aside and doubled back to the timber. The ponies were almost upon him as he ran. He reached the timber again, and then the pursuers had to slack. Once on the trail again the Mexican had no chance, and he knew it. Only a few yards ahead of the pursuers he clambered desperately into a big tree. Gasping for breath, he dragged himself into the branches, and Frank Richards & Co. halted under the tree, sitting their steaming horses there, and looking upward. A dusky fist was shaken a dozen yards above their heads. "Caramba!" shrieked the Mexican. "Follow me here if you dare!" "Treed!" said Bob Lawless laconically. He dismounted from his horse, and his chums followed his example. The ponies were hitched in the timber, and the schoolboys gathered under the big tree. 'Frisco Jo was cornered, but he was not yet captured. And how he was to be captured was a puzzle, for he could scarcely be "handed" in the branches of the tree without both parties falling and breaking their limbs, perhaps their necks. "He can't get away, anyhow!" said Frank Richards breathlessly. There was a yell of defiance from the Mexican. "Come up! Caramba! Come up, if you will, senoritos!" "I guess you can have that tree to yourself, Greaser," said Bob Lawless coolly. "But I reckon you won't keep it long." He examined the breach of his rifle with deadly calmness. Frank Richards caught his arm. "Bob! You don't mean—" "I mean to bring that Greaser down," said Bob. "We can't stay here for a day, or two days, waiting for him to fall like a ripe apple. He's coming down, or he's going to be brought down, and he can't take his choice." "I say—" "He's robbed us! Do you want him to get clear with the loot?" "No, you're right, Bob." Bob Lawless stood back from the tree, and pointed the rifle at the Mexican, crouched like a puma upon a high branch. "'Frisco Jo!" "Bah!" "Come down, or you'll be dropped! Take your choice." "You dare not!" "Are you coming?" "No!" yelled the Mexican. Bob Lawless did not speak again. He pulled the trigger. Crack!

**The 6th Chapter.**  
**Corralled.**

The report of the rifle rang through the timber, and far over the hillside. There was a fearful yell from the Mexican as his hat was spun away from his head by the bullet. Bob Lawless had handled a rifle from childhood, and he was a crack shot. He had knocked off the Mexican's hat with perfect ease. A ringlet of the black hair had gone with the hat. The latter fluttered down to the marksman's feet. From the branch he was extended upon the Mexican glared down with hate and rage and terror in his face. It was some moments before he realised that he was not hit. "Caramba!" he mumbled. "Por todos los santos! Oh!" Bob drew a fresh cartridge from his pouch. "Are you coming down, Lopez?" he asked. He threw up the barrel again. There was a gasping howl from the cornered horse-thief. "Stop! Stop! Hold your fire!" "Are you coming down?" "Si, si, senor!" "Get a move on, then!" Savagely, sullenly, the Mexican clambered down the tree. The game was up, and 'Frisco Jo realised it at last. "Collar him as he lands," said Bob. "If he puts up a fight, I'll let him have it in the legs." Frank Richards and Beauclerc stood ready to receive the Mexican. They grasped him as he dropped, at last, to the ground. 'Frisco Jo did not resist. He was beaten, and he knew it, and he did not want the rancher's son to "let him have it in the legs." He stood panting in the grasp of the schoolboys, his black eyes rolling, savage and sullen, but completely beaten. "I guess this lets you out, 'Frisco Jo," smiled Bob Lawless. "You should have stayed in Mexico to play your game; you're bound to run into trouble playing it in Canada. Where's that fifty dollars?" The Mexican fumbled in his velvet

jacket, and drew out a little buckskin sack. "Hand it over!" "There is more—" muttered Lopez. Bob gave a sniff of disgust. "We only want our own, you rotter! Give it to me!" The Mexican sullenly yielded the sack, and Bob opened it, dropping the rifle into the hollow of his arm, while his chums held the Mexican secure. There were sixty dollars in the buckskin bag. The Mexican apparently had found other victims as well as the chums of Cedar Creek. Bob Lawless took out the fifty he was entitled to, and tossed the bag, with the remainder, to the Mexican. "I guess that don't belong to you," he remarked. "But it don't belong to us, and we won't touch it. Now you can come along to Thompson, and see the sheriff. He will be glad to see you." "Senorito, mercy!" mumbled the Mexican, all his defiance gone now. "You have your money—you have the horse of Senor Mulligan—spare me! I—I shall get work at Kamloops, on the railway, and live an honest life." "Oh, come off!" growled Bob. "I guess we don't want the trouble of yanking you back to Thompson, if you come to that. You can vamoose, and get out of this section. If I see you again—" "I will go, senor!" "You'd better!" The Mexican was taken back to the trail, where the schoolboys secured Mulligan's horse, to make sure of it before they released Lopez. Then 'Frisco Jo was released. He tramped away down the trail with a black brow, and Frank Richards & Co. cheerfully remounted their horses and rode away homeward. It was late in the afternoon when Frank and Bob, having left Vere Beauclerc at his home, arrived at the Lawless Ranch. Mr. Lawless met them as they dismounted at the door. He was smiling. Evidently Billy Cook had given him his son's message, and the rancher fully expected the cousins to report a failure after a hopeless chase. "Well, what luck, sonnies?" asked the rancher good-humouredly. Bob smiled. He sorted out twenty-five dollars in bills, and extended that sum to the astonished rancher. "There's your twenty-five, dad." Mr. Lawless took the bills mechanically, and blinked at them. "The—the twenty-five!" he stammered. "That's right, isn't it?" "Great Scott!" shouted the rancher. "You don't mean to say that you've run down 'Frisco Jo?" "I guess we do!" grinned Bob. "Yes, rather!" said Frank Richards, laughing. "And made him pony up?" exclaimed Mr. Lawless blankly. "You bet!" "Well, by gum!" said the rancher, in great astonishment. And the chums of Cedar Creek chuckled. The next morning they rode off to school in great spirits. They knew that Chunky Todgers would have spread the story of the salted mine, on which he had lost his solitary dollar, before they arrived there. But they had something to add to Chunky's story now. There was a howl of laughter from a dozen Cedar Creek fellows when Frank and Bob and Vere Beauclerc came into the school ground. "Hyer come the innocent jays!" roared Eben Hacke. "Look at the merry mine-owners!" roared Hopkins. "Rolling in gold-dust! Ha, ha!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Nothing to laugh at, you dummies," said Chunky Todgers sorrowfully. "That Mexican villain had my last dollar—the last and only!" Bob Lawless felt in his pocket. "I guess we've got your dollar back, Chunky," he said calmly. "Did you get it out of the mine?" grinned Lawrence. "Ha, ha, ha!" "No, my son; we got it out of the Mexican," said Bob Lawless, as he tossed the dollar to the delighted and amazed Chunky. "It's right enough. 'Frisco Jo did us with a salted mine. But it's right enough too, that we ran him down, and made him disgorge, and we're not a penny the worse. So you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!" "You made that rustler shell out?" yelled Hacke. "You bet!" "Spin us the yarn," said Lawrence. The yarn was accordingly spun, and Cedar Creek had to admit that Frank Richards & Co. had "kenoed," as Eben Hacke called it, at the finish—though the story of the salted mine caused a good deal of merriment. Chunky Todgers was elated by the recovery of his dollar, which seemed to him more important than the recovery of the other forty-nine, but that was only Chunky's little way. Before sundown that day the dollar was expended in ministering to the demands of the inward Chunky—the plump youth evidently having decided to run no further risks with it.

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**  
**"STRIKING A BARGAIN!"**  
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