

The BOYS' FRIEND

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

No. 876, Vol. XVIII. New Series.]

ONE PENNY.

[Week Ending March 23rd, 1918.]

OUTCAST AND HERO!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

Cool Cheek!

"Cheeky cad!"

Peele of the Rookwood Fourth uttered that exclamation in wrathful and indignant tones.

He was standing by the letter-rack, with a letter in his hand, which he had just opened.

Several fellows glanced at him.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had just come in.

Jimmy was expecting a letter from Kit Erroll, who was away from Rookwood with Mornington of the Fourth.

Jimmy found his letter in the rack, much to his satisfaction.

He was about to open it, when Peele spoke.

"Hallo, what's biting you, Peele?" inquired Lovell.

"Cheeky worm!" said Peele.

"What?"

"I don't mean you, ass! This worm!" Peele held up the letter.

"The cheeky bounder! As if I want anything to do with him!"

"What's Lattrey got to say, Peele?" asked Tubby Muffin.

Jimmy Silver started at that name.

"Lattrey!" he exclaimed.

"I saw it was Lattrey's fist when I looked over the rack," said Tubby.

"I don't think a Rookwood chap ought to correspond with that fellow now he's been sacked. You oughtn't to do it, Peele!"

And Tubby Muffin wagged a fat forefinger at Cyril Peele reprovingly.

"Dash it all, you might draw a line at that, Peele," said Gower.

"I'm not corresponding with him!" exclaimed Peele angrily.

"The cad's got the cheek to write to me. I didn't ask him to!"

"Send him his letter back, then."

Peele and Gower had been chummy with Lattrey of the Fourth before the cad of Rookwood fell into disgrace, which had ended in his expulsion from the school.

But it was evident that they had no kindly feelings for their old associate.

"What's he got to say, though?" added Gower, on second thoughts.

"I don't mind everybody knowin'!" said Peele indignantly.

"As if I'd help him—the fellow who blinded Mornington! I don't set up to be a saint—"

"It wouldn't be much use," remarked Lovell.

"Oh, rats! I don't set up to be a specially particular chap, but I draw the line at a ruffian like that!"

"By gad, yes, I should say so!" chimed in Townsend of the Fourth.

"Must draw a line somewhere!"

"Read it out, Peele," said Topham.

"I'm goin' to. I want everybody to know that I don't have anythin' to do with an expelled cad!" exclaimed

Peele. "Listen to this! It fairly takes the cake, I can tell you!"

The juniors listened curiously enough as Cyril Peele proceeded to read out the letter from Lattrey.

It was a week since Mark Lattrey had been expelled from Rookwood and nobody there had ever expected to hear of him again.

Certainly he had left no one behind to regret him. His closest associates had been disgusted with him.

The letter ran:

"Dear Cyril,—You may be a bit surprised to hear from me. But I haven't forgotten Rookwood and my old friends there—"

"Cheek!" exclaimed Gower.

"He's got no friends here that I know of!"

"Go on, Peele."

Peele went on:

"I'm in low water now. You may have noticed how my pater looked when he took me away from Rookwood. He was in a rare wax, and he's been keeping it up. I've had a dog's life since—"

"I can jolly well believe that!" remarked Lovell. "Old Lattrey looked a bit of a Hun, and I fancy he's taken it out of the fellow for getting sacked."

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Newcome.

"Hear, hear!"

"More power to his elbow, bedad!" grinned Flynn.

"Go ahead, Peele! Get on with the washing!"

Peele started again:

"I simply can't stand it! It's jawing and ragging, ragging and jawing, from early morn to dewy eve. I've made up my mind to hook it—"

"Hook it!" exclaimed Raby.

"Great Scott!"

"He's running away from home!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in astonishment.

"Shouldn't have thought he'd have the nerve," said Conroy.

"I'm clearing off to-night; but, as you may guess, I'm stumped for cash. I want my old friends to help me. Will you stand by me—you and Gower and the rest—for the sake of old times? I'm going to give you a chance, by coming down to Coombe, and if you care to see me, I'll be waiting at the old stile every day till you come. Don't go back on an old pal who's down on his luck."

"Yours always,

"MARK LATTREY."

"Well, of all the nerve!" said Conroy.

Peele knitted his brows.

"He's got the cheek to write that to me, and to call me Cyril!" he cried.

"Why, the fellow never was a friend of mine. I just put up with him, that's all, because he was in the same study."



RESCUED FROM THE WRECKAGE!

The 2nd Chapter.

Good News—and Bad.

Jimmy Silver had held Erroll's letter unopened in his hand during that little scene.

He opened it now. He was eager for news from Erroll and Mornington.

Morny, the blind junior, was in London to consult a famous specialist, and his friends hoped that there would be good news of him.

Mornington had borne his terrible misfortune with unflinching courage, but that did not lessen the horror of it.

It was supposed that there was some hope of Mornington's recovery, and Jimmy Silver & Co. would have given a good deal to find that hope well founded.

Jimmy's face lighted up as he read the letter.

"By Jove, this is good!" he exclaimed.

"Let's hear it!" said Lovell.

"We all want news of Morny," remarked Van Ryn. "Is Erroll with him in London now?"

Jimmy nodded.

"Yes. This letter is written from London. Morny's in the hands of a specialist in Harley Street—a terrific big gun. Erroll's heard his report, and it's a good one. Morny's going to have an operation, and there's good reason to hope that he will get his sight back."

"Oh, ripping!"

"By gad, that's jolly good news!" said Townsend. "Morny was rather an uppish fellow, but I'd give a tenner to see him as he used to be."

"He did have cruel luck, and no mistake!" remarked Conroy. "First losing his money, and then his eyesight. That's ripping news!"

Jimmy Silver's face was glowing.

Jimmy had not been by any means a pal of Mornington's, and he had sometimes wondered a little why Erroll had so deep a friendship for the dandy of the Fourth.

But Morny had his good qualities, and Jimmy fully recognised them.

They had been friends, if not pals, since the old trouble between them had ended.

Jimmy felt his heart lighter after that good news.

He would have given a good deal more than a "tenner" to see Valentine Mornington his old self again.

"Anything else?" asked Lovell.

"Only that they're coming back to Rookwood together in a day or two," said Jimmy.

"We'll be jolly glad to see them!"

"What-ho!"

"I tell you what, you fellows," chimed in Tubby Muffin. "If Morny gets over it, we ought to celebrate the occasion. What do you fellows say to a stunning feed—a really terrific spread in the old style?"

"Topping!" said Lovell sarcastically. "Where are you going to get the grub from, Tubby?"

"Well, suppose you fellows subscribe all round, and place the money in my hands, and I'll—"

"Stick to it!" said Pons.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Tubby. "I'll see about the catering! I'm pretty good at catering, and it's not an easy bizney now. You can't do better than trust me. On such an occasion as this, I think we're entitled to dodge the grub rules."

"Hallo, what's that?" exclaimed Bulkeley of the Sixth, coming in at that moment, in time to hear Tubby's unpatriotic remark.

Tubby Muffin spun round in alarm.

(Continued on the next page.)



"Oh! Ah! Ow! I—I didn't see you, Bulkeley! I—I say, ripping afternoon, ain't it?"

"What?"

"Jolly nice spring weather, ain't it, Bulkeley?" said Tubby Muffin feebly. "I—I hope you've been—been enjoying your practice, Bulkeley?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's that about dodging the grub rules?" demanded the captain of Rookwood grimly.

"I—I was saying to these fellows that—that I couldn't approve of dodging the grub rules under any circumstances whatever," stammered Tubby Muffin.

"Oh! You were saying that, were you?"

"Ye-es! You—you see, it wouldn't be patriotic," said Tubby. "I'm a patriotic chap. I—I wouldn't forget that, even on an occasion like this, when poor old Mornny's got his peepers back—"

"What! Is that so, Silver?" asked Bulkeley; and Tubby Muffin breathed with relief at having succeeded in changing the subject.

"Yes, it looks like it now, Bulkeley," said Jimmy. "Erroll says the specialist thinks there's every chance."

"I'm glad to hear it!"

Bulkeley passed on, and Tubby Muffin waited till he was out of hearing before he began again.

"I say, Jimmy, now that beast's gone, what about the feed? Grub rules are all rot, you know. We can't have a feed by spreading our butter-cards on our war-bread, can we? Suppose you raise the tin, and leave it to me? I'll manage. I'm a managing chap, you know. Now, how much will you stand, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver glared at the fat Classical.

"I think I've stood about as much as I can stand," he replied. "Now I'm going to shut you up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, I say, Jimmy— Yarooooop!"

Tubby Muffin sat down on the floor with a heavy bump, and roared.

The Fistical Four left him roaring. Evidently Tubby's great idea was not to be acted upon, even in celebrating so great an occasion as Mornny's return to Rookwood.

There was a good deal of discussion in the Fourth that afternoon on the subject of the two letters—Lattrey's and Erroll's.

Erroll's letter, certainly, was the more welcome of the two, but Lattrey's roused a great deal of curiosity.

The juniors wondered whether the expelled junior would really have the nerve to show himself near Rookwood again.

There was soon information on that point.

Tommy Dodd, the Modern, came in with his bike, and instead of going to his own house, he came in to see Jimmy Silver.

The Fistical Four were at tea in the end study when Tommy Dodd looked in on them.

"What do you think?" asked Tommy. "I think Modern worms ought to learn to knock at study doors," was Lovell's reply.

"Oh, rats! I've seen somebody," said Tommy Dodd. "Guess whom?"

Jimmy Silver started.

"Not Lattrey!" he exclaimed.

"Blessed if I know how you guessed!"

"Then you've seen him?"

"Large as life!" said the Modern junior. "I was buzzing along on my bike, and I saw him sitting on the old stile, smoking a cigarette. I didn't stop. But there he was, cool as a cucumber. He waved his cigarette to me."

"My hat! Then he's really come."

"What a nerve, to come back here!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Oh, the rotter's got nerve enough!" growled Jimmy Silver. "But if I come across him I'll try to make him understand that the neighbourhood of Rookwood isn't a healthy one for him."

"Hear, hear!" said Lovell.

And when the news spread, there were a good many other fellows who came to the same determination.

The 3rd Chapter.

Trouble for Adolphus.

"Hallo, Smythe!"

Adolphus Smythe stopped.

It was the following day, and Adolphus of the Shell was sauntering gracefully along Coombe Lane with his chums, Howard and Tracy.

Adolphus was thinking about anything but Lattrey.

In fact, he was discussing Cyril Peele's phenomenal luck at nap, at which noble game Peele had relieved Smythe of two "quids" the evening before.

Lattrey, late of the Rookwood Fourth, was seated on the old stile, and he nodded and smiled at the three surprised Rookwooders.

They stared at him.

The junior who had been expelled from Rookwood did not seem to be suffering under any sense of shame.

His manner was cool and somewhat mocking.

But though shame did not touch him, his face showed that he had not been enjoying himself since his forced departure from Rookwood.

Lattrey senior was not a pleasant gentleman, and no doubt he had made

his son squirm for having brought disgrace upon himself and his family.

"By gad!" said Adolphus. "So you're really here?"

"Yes, an' glad to see an old pal," smiled Lattrey.

Smythe gave a sniff.

"Don't call me an old pal!" he answered, with utter disdain. "I never was a pal of yours!"

"Blessed if I can understand your cheek in coming back here!" said Howard. "How you've got the nerve to look a Rookwood fellow in the face, beats me! What are you doing here?"

"Sittin' on this stile, at present."

"You've left home?" Tracy asked curiously.

"Yes."

"What a nerve!"

Lattrey laughed bitterly.

"It wanted more nerve to stay there," he replied. "You don't know my pater. He's simply furious at my being sacked, and he's made me feel it. I wouldn't go through another week like that for a fortune. There was simply nothin' to do but to hook it."

"You must be potty," said Smythe. "What on earth are you going to do? You're not old enough to start as a billiard-sharper. That's about your mark, if you were."

"I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'm not goin' home," said Lattrey. "I've got to live somehow."

"You'll have to go home."

"I can't, and won't! I can't stand it!"

"Won't your pater get after you?" asked Tracy.

"I shall dodge him if he does."

"Well, I wish you luck," yawned Smythe. "Come on, dear boys! Ta-ta!"

"Hold on a minute," said Lattrey. "I've been waitin' here on the chance of seein' some of you."

"Well, you've seen us," said Smythe, with a grin.

"Do you know whether Peele got my letter?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Is he comin' to see me?"

"I fancy not."

"He sent the letter back to you," said Howard.

Lattrey knitted his brows.

"I supposed he would!" he said bitterly. "He was the fellow I was palliest with at Rookwood, too. By gad, if I had my time over again, I shouldn't be such a fool! I can see now that I was a fool."

"Time you saw it."

"Oh, you weren't much better, if you come to that! We were in the same boat," said Lattrey, with a sneer. "As for Mornny goin' blind, that was an accident. I own that I hit him recklessly, but I never meant to hurt him, really. But for that I could have got through, an' that was an accident."

"Well, good-bye!"

Lattrey slipped off the stile.

"Don't go!" he snapped. "I haven't finished yet."

"We have," said Smythe coolly.

"What I want to know is, are you going to lend me a hand now I'm down?" said Lattrey savagely.

"Turnin' beggar?" sneered Tracy.

"I'm down on my luck. It wouldn't be much, if you fellows stood me enough to see me through for a few weeks till I could turn round."

"Hard times," said Smythe. "I've got nothin' to spare for one. And, to be quite candid, Lattrey, I don't like you claimin' me as an acquaintance, and I don't mean to have a hand in keepin' you near Rookwood. The Head would be in a fearful wax if he knew that you were here."

"Hang the Head!"

Smythe laughed.

"Hang him as high as Haman, if you like. But I'm not goin' to get in the old buck's black books. Can't afford to."

The three nuts made a move to depart, and Lattrey stepped into their path, with an extremely ugly expression on his hard, thin face.

They halted again.

"Look here, get out of the way, Lattrey!" said Smythe, his anger rising. "We've told you we don't want anythin' to do with you. Isn't that plain enough?"

"You cad!" snarled Lattrey. "It's plain enough, but it's not good enough! I'm no worse than you are, at any rate, you sneaking, gambling worm!"

"That's enough! Get aside!"

"You're not goin' yet!" said Lattrey, his eyes gleaming. "I'm badly in want of help, an' you're goin' to help me."

"By gad!"

"Settin' up as a highwayman?" sneered Tracy.

Lattrey clenched his hands.

"You keep out; I'm talkin' to Smythe! Smythe, you cad, you've played cards with me, and broken bounds with me, and you're as big a blackguard as you are fool, which is sayin' a lot. Don't you put on airs of superiority; they won't wash with me! Lend me a hand when I'm down on my luck."

"Oh, get out!"

"I'm a bad enemy to make," said Lattrey.

"I think I'd rather have you as an enemy than a friend," said Smythe contemptuously.

"You won't lend me a hand?"

"No, I won't."

"Then I'll take it out of your hide, you sneerin' cad, at any rate!"

Smythe jumped back as Lattrey rushed at him.

"Here, hands off!" he yelled. "Oh, my hat! Yah!"

Lattrey, his eyes blazing, attacked the Shell fellow savagely.

The dandy of the Shell defended himself feebly, as Lattrey's savage fists crashed on him.

His defence was not much use.

There was a crash, as Adolphus went down on his back in the road.

"Ow, ow, ow!" he roared.

"Now, then, you cad—"

"Help a fellow, you rotters!" howled Smythe. "Why don't you help a fellow?"

Tracy and Howard came to the rescue.

Smythe staggered to his feet, and joined them, and the three nuts attacked Lattrey together.

All three were savagely angry now, and they had no mercy on the expelled junior.

Lattrey, throwing all restraint to the winds, fought like a wild-cat, but the trio were too many for him.

He was bumped in the road, and dragged along to the ditch and pitched in.

He squashed into a foot of mud.

"There, you cad!" gasped Smythe.

"That's for you!"

The three nuts—not looking quite so neat and nutty after the conflict—walked away, leaving Lattrey in the ditch.

The expelled junior crawled out, muddy and panting, and with a face like a demon.

His return to the neighbourhood of Rookwood had not profited him much, so far.

The 4th Chapter.

The Outcast.

Jimmy Silver & Co. met Smythe and his friends, as they came back into the school, flushed and breathless and dusty.

They looked so unlike their usual nutty selves, that the Fistical Four stopped to look at them.

"Hallo, wherefore this thushness?" inquired Jimmy Silver. "Where did you pick up all that dust?"

"We've been raggin' a cad!" gasped Smythe. "That cad Lattrey—"

"Oh, you've seen him?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Yaas! Oh, dear, my nose!"

"Did Lattrey give you that nose?" grinned Newcome. "It's rather a corker, Smythe!"

"Quite a prize nose!" chuckled Raby.

"We left the cad in the ditch," said Adolphus, rubbing his reddened and swollen nose. "I fancy he won't bother Rookwood fellows in a hurry, after this. I'm goin' to tell the Head he's here."

Jimmy Silver looked grave.

"I wouldn't do that," he said.

"Oh, rats! Do you think it's the right thing for that cad to be hangin' round Rookwood, assaultin' a fellow, after he's been expelled?"

"No. But—"

"His father ought to know where he is, an' take him back!" growled Howard.

"We don't want him here. Let's go to the Head, Smythe."

"Yaas, I'm goin'!"

The three nuts went into the School House, and the Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Perhaps it's best," remarked Lovell, after a pause. "It's a bit like sneaking, but the fellow ought to be shifted away from here. It's simply disgraceful, his coming back like this!"

"Well, he ought to go," agreed Jimmy. "But I should think that he knows now that he's got no help to expect from here."

"Waitin' to see Peele, most likely."

"Peele won't help him."

"Then he'll very likely get what Smythe has got!" chuckled Lovell. "This kind of thing is a bit thick, even for Lattrey."

Smythe & Co., dusty as they were, went directly to the Head's study.

Dr. Chisholm glanced at them somewhat severely when they presented themselves.

"Why have you come to my study in that state?" he snapped.

"We felt we ought to tell you about Lattrey, sir," said Smythe.

The Head started.

"Lattrey! Do you know anything about the movements of that wretched boy?"

"Yaas, sir!"

"Oh, that alters the case. I received a telephone-call from Mr. Lattrey, who informs me that his son has left home without permission," said the Head. "He had some idea that the boy might have been seen in this vicinity. If you can give me any information—"

"He's in Coombe, sir," said Howard.

"You have seen him?"

"He tried to get money out of us, sir, and went for us when we refused to give him any," said Smythe bitterly.

Dr. Chisholm compressed his lips.

"You did quite rightly in refusing to help him," he said. "The boy must return home at once. I will speak to his father immediately. Where is Lattrey to be found in Coombe?"

"I don't know where he's puttin' up, sir, but he waits every day after lessons at the old stile, hopin' to meet Rookwood chaps."

"Bless my soul!"

"He wants money to live on, sir, and he thinks he can get it out of some of us he knew here. Of course, we refuse

absolutely to have anythin' to do with him."

"That is quite right. Any boy holding communication with Lattrey will be severely punished," said the Head, frowning. "Thank you for telling me this. You may go!"

Smythe & Co. left the study.

Dr. Chisholm turned to the telephone at once, and asked for Mr. Lattrey's number.

His face was dark and frowning.

Mark Lattrey had given him more trouble than any other fellow at Rookwood had ever given, and when he was sent away the Head had hoped and expected to see and hear nothing more of him.

It was bitterly annoying to be troubled again, in this way, by a fellow who had been expelled from the school.

When the number came through, on the trunk call, Dr. Chisholm heard Mr. Lattrey's sharp, unpleasant voice on the wires.

"Is that Mr. Lattrey?" asked the Head.

"Yes."

"This is Dr. Chisholm, Rookwood."

"Oh! Have you heard anything of my son? He has not returned to his home."

"I learn that he has arrived in the village near here."

"Coombe?"

"Yes. He has attempted to borrow money from some of the boys here," said the Head tartly. "There has been a scene."

"Is he still there?" snapped Mr. Lattrey. For the "scene," Lattrey's father evidently cared nothing.

"He is still there."

"His abode?"

"I do not know, but it appears that he waits every day at the stile in Coombe Lane to meet Rookwood boys."

"I know the place."

"I presume, Mr. Lattrey, that you will see that the boy is removed at once from this neighbourhood. It is distinctly unpleasant—"

"I shall remove him, because it is my intention to make him return home, and punish him for his disobedience," said Mr. Lattrey coldly. "For the unpleasantness to yourself, I care nothing!"

"Ahem! Well, that is all!"

"Very well."

Mr. Lattrey rang off.

Dr. Chisholm put up the receiver, with a frowning brow.

Mr. Lattrey was not polite. Still, that was a small matter, so long as the expelled junior was taken promptly away from the neighbourhood of Rookwood.

Meanwhile, the story of Smythe's encounter with Mark Lattrey had become the talk of the Lower School.

Some of the fellows made it a point to stroll along the lane and look for the outcast.

The three Tommies, of the Modern side, were the first.

They were quite anxious for Lattrey to "go for" them, in order to give the expelled junior a lesson he needed.

A dozen other fellows went sooner or later. But all of them returned disappointed.

Lattrey was not at the place of appointment.

Neither was he to be seen about Coombe.

Jimmy Silver hoped that he had given the matter up, and gone away of his own accord, though that idea was not much in keeping with what he knew of Mark Lattrey's obstinate, perverse character.

Lattrey had gone.

On the following day, the Fistical Four walked down to Coombe after morning lessons, and as they came in sight of the stile, they spotted a figure upon it, blowing out clouds of smoke from a cigarette.

"There he is!" said Lovell grimly.

The chums of the Fourth walked on, intending to pass Lattrey unnoticed, but the outcast called out to them.

"Hallo, Jimmy Silver!"

"Don't talk to me!" snapped Jimmy.

"Oh, hold on a minute!"

Jimmy paused.

"Look here, Lattrey," he said abruptly. "You'd better get off. I think I'd better tell you that your pater knows you're here now."

"Smythe gave me away, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"It's like him!" sneered Lattrey. "And Peele won't come out and see me, I suppose?"

"Not likely!"

Lattrey looked at him sneeringly.

"I suppose you don't feel inclined to help a chap who's down on his luck?" he suggested.

"I don't want to have anything to do with you!" growled Jimmy Silver. "But if you're in want of tin, I've got five bob you can have."

"Ass!" grunted Lovell.

"Five bob isn't as good as five quid, but it's better than nothing," said Lattrey coolly. "Smythe could stand me five quid if he liked. Thanks! I'll settle this up some day, Silver."

"You needn't trouble!" growled the captain of the Fourth. "Only take yourself off. That's all you can do."

Lattrey shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll stick it out here till I've seen Peele!" he answered.

"Peele won't see you."

"He's got to!"

"Your pater's sure to be along to-day," said Raby, with a feeling of something like compassion for the wretched outcast.

Truly, Mark Lattrey was paying heavily for his sins.

"I shall keep an eye open and keep out of his way," said Lattrey moodily. "I—I say, you needn't be so jolly hard on me. I'm sorry for having come such a mucker at Rookwood."

"Rather late for that!" grunted Lovell.

"Any news of Mornny?" asked Lattrey. "Is he likely to recover, I mean?"

"The specialist says it's possible."

"Well, I'm glad of that! You know I never meant to blind him. I was as hit by it as any fellow when it happened. Is he at Rookwood now?"

"Not back yet."

"Staying away till the doctor Johnny has done with him?" asked Lattrey.

"No; I think he's coming back soon, any way. There's going to be an operation, but it doesn't take place yet."

"When it does he may recover his sight?"

"So they hope."

Lattrey looked thoughtful.

"I wonder—" He began.

The Fistical Four walked on, leaving him with his remark unfinished.

The thought had crossed Lattrey's mind that, if Mornny recovered his sight, he might have a chance of getting back to Rookwood.

But he knew that there was no hope of that.

As Jimmy Silver & Co. walked on towards Coombe they sighted a thin, hard-featured man in a black frock-coat coming from the direction of the village.

They recognised Mr. Lattrey at once.

"That's the old bird!" remarked Newcome.

Jimmy Silver paused.

Bad as Lattrey was—thoroughly bad—Jimmy did not feel so hard towards him since he had seen him so cruelly down on his luck.

The sight of Mr. Lattrey's cold, unfeeling face made Jimmy turn back.

He ran towards the stile.

"Your pater's coming, Lattrey!" he said.

Then he rejoined his chums, and he went on.

Jimmy had not been able to refrain from giving Lattrey that warning.

They raised their caps as they passed Lucas Lattrey, and he gave them a hard stare.

Looking back a few minutes later, they caught sight of Mark Lattrey running across the fields.

Evidently he did not want to meet that hard-faced, inexorable-looking gentleman.

"Bolting!" murmured Lovell.

"And there goes his pater!" grinned Newcome.

Mr. Lattrey was seen, a moment later, striding across the fields, with an angry, set face. The two of them disappeared in the direction of the Latcham road.

"Poor rotter!" muttered Jimmy Silver.

The chums of the Fourth went on their way.

A little later, in the village, they saw Mr. Lattrey striding to the railway-station alone.

Evidently he had not succeeded in capturing the runaway.

And, after a glance at Mr. Lattrey's face, the Fistical Four could not help feeling glad of it.

The 5th Chapter.

An Unexpected Meeting.

"Here you are, Mornny!"

It was Kit Erroll who spoke.

He held open the door of a carriage in Latcham Junction Station.

The carriage was empty; there was little traffic on the local line that sunny afternoon.

Erroll's kind hand helped his blind companion into the carriage.

Looking at Mornnington, it was hard to realise that he was blind.

His handsome, dark eyes looked much the same as of old.

And his face was quite calm and cheerful—more cheerful, perhaps, than it had been in the days before that misfortune fell upon him.

The heavy burden he had to bear had called out all that was best and strongest in his nature.

Mornnington sat down in the carriage.

The chums were on their way back to Rookwood School, Mornny under Erroll's care.

Lattrey stared in at the carriage doorway blankly.

Mornington was the last fellow he had expected to see there.

A grim smile came over his face. He stepped in and drew the door shut.

"Don't shut the door!" growled Mornington. "Erroll will be here in a minute."

"Will he?" smiled Lattrey.

He snapped the door shut, and held on to the handle.

"You're going back to Rookwood now?" he asked.

"Yes. What on earth are you doing here?" exclaimed Mornington.

Lattrey laughed.

"I'm going back to Coombe," he answered. "I've run away from home, dear boy, and my beloved pater ran me down in Coombe this afternoon."

"Oh, by gad!"

"I dodged him across the fields and walked to Latcham," grinned Lattrey. "I'm going back by the afternoon train. The pater isn't likely to stick there. He's a busy man. Fancy meetin' you!"

Mornington grunted.

"Can't you find another carriage?" he demanded.

"Easily; the train's nearly empty."

"Find it, then."

"My dear man, I'm going to enjoy your company as far as Coombe," laughed Lattrey.

"Look here, Lattrey, your company isn't wanted in this carriage."

"Go on!"

"Get out!" exclaimed Mornington angrily. "If I could see you, you cad, I'd pitch you out fast enough!"

"But you can't see me, old sport."

"Wait till Erroll comes!" growled Mornington.

"I'm waitin'," said Lattrey, with an evil grin.

There was a hurried footstep on the platform, and Kit Erroll came up to the carriage, with the early "Evening News" in his hand.

He grasped the handle of the door. But it did not turn.

Lattrey was holding it fast on the inside.

He grinned evilly through the window at Erroll, who stared at him in amazement.

"You here!" he exclaimed.

"Glad to see you, dear boy!"

"Let me in!"

"Not just yet."

"You confounded ass, the train's just going to start!" exclaimed Erroll angrily.

"Let go the door!"

"You're not comin' in," smiled Lattrey.

"Leave Morny to me. We'll have a game of banker en route. It will be quite like old times."

"You cad! Open the door!"

"Rats!"

Mornington started to his feet, groping for Lattrey.

The latter pushed him back with one hand, grasping the door with the other.

The train-whistle shrilled out.

"Stand clear, there!"

Erroll ran to the next carriage.

It was impossible to get into Morny's carriage, and he had only just time to jump into the next as the train started.

A porter slammed the door on him with a growl.

"Lattrey, you cad!" shouted Mornington, as he felt the train in motion. "Is he left behind, you hound?"

"Not at all! He's jumped in the next."

"You rotter!"

"Thanks!"

Lattrey sat down, and lighted a cigarette. The blind junior sat on the seat opposite, with a dark and frowning brow.

He had Lattrey's company for the run to Coombe, instead of his chum's, and Lattrey was grinning with satisfaction over his petty triumph.

The 6th Chapter. In Deadly Peril.

The train ran on swiftly through the wide countryside, over which the early dusk was already gathering.

Lattrey smoked his cigarette, and smiled at his companion.

"Have a smoke, Morny?" he asked.

"No, you cad!"

"Quite given it up?"

"Yes, you rotter!"

"You're jolly complimentary!" grinned Lattrey.

"I owe you a good deal, Lattrey," said Mornington, his lips setting hard. "I wonder you're not afraid to trust yourself with me."

"I'm not afraid of a blind fellow," said Lattrey, laughing, but he kept a wary eye upon Mornington as he spoke.

He knew of old the savage and reckless temper of Valentine Mornington.

"We're alone here," said Mornington. "You're no match for me, Lattrey, though you can see and I can't! I could do to you as you did to me if I chose."

"Mornington!"

"Oh, I'm not goin' to!" said Mornington, with a grim laugh. "There was a time when I could have done it, and you wouldn't have been safe near me, Lattrey. If I don't feel as bitter as that now, you owe it to the chap you've just shut out of the carriage, more than anything else."

Lattrey moved a little farther along the seat.

His only object in forcing himself into the carriage, and shutting Erroll out, was to make himself unpleasant to the two fellows he disliked.

But he realised that it might have been a serious matter for him, if Mornington had chosen.

For it was true that he was no match for Mornington, blind as the latter was, once he was in Morny's grip; and in such close quarters there would have been no escape.

"Chuck that cigarette out of the window!" said Mornington.

"What?"

"I don't like smoke."

"You used to like it well enough," sneered Lattrey.

"Possibly! I don't like it now."

"My tastes haven't changed," yawned Lattrey. "I'll keep it on."

Mornington rose to his feet.

"You won't!" he said. "You've shoved yourself in here, Lattrey, where you're not wanted. I'll jolly soon make you toe the line, you cad!"

He groped along the carriage.

"Hold on! I'll chuck it away if you like."

"You'd better."

The cigarette whizzed out of the window, and Mornington sat down again. Lattrey eyed him savagely.

Blind as Mornington was, the cad of Rookwood had not lost his old fear of him.

"Like to try your luck again?" he sneered.

The train slowed down in a station.

Lattrey grasped the handle of the door and held it, and looked out of the window.

Erroll looked from the window of the next carriage.

Lattrey gave him a smile and a mocking nod.

"I'll deal with you at Coombe, at any rate," answered Erroll quietly.

"Go an' eat coke!"

The train started again.

"What price a game of banker, Morny?" asked Lattrey, after some minutes' silence.

"Oh, dry up!"

"You've quite given up such wicked ways?" sneered the outcast.

"If you had, too, you mightn't have come such a mucker at Rookwood," answered Mornington. "I'm fed up with you and your sort, Lattrey. You make me ill."

The dusk of the evening was broken by a sudden leap of flame. One of the smashed carriages was on fire.

Red lights danced across Lattrey's terrified eyes.

"Help! Help!"

He stared round him wildly.

The carriage, smashed and shapeless, was on its side, and a mass of wreckage was pressing Lattrey down from above.

Close by him lay Mornington.

Mornington was half unconscious.

A heavy beam lay across one leg, pinning him, and his feeble struggles could not free his limb.

"Keep still!" panted Lattrey. "Keep still, Morny! If you move that beam the whole lot will sink on us!"

Mornington lay still.

"Help! Help!"

"By gad! It's a smash!" Mornington's blind eyes wandered strangely. "It's a smash! Oh, if a chap could only see!"

It was a cry from his very heart.

"Lie still!" muttered Lattrey.

"I'm lyin' still!" snapped Mornington, who had recovered his wits after the shock, and was quite cool. "How are we fixed, Lattrey?"

Lattrey groaned.

"There's another carriage on top of this!" he muttered. "It may all go at any minute; it's jammed somehow. If it settles down on us we're killed!"

"Are you hurt?"

"No. But—"

"It's pressin' on you?" asked Mornington, comprehending, though he could not see.

"Yes."

"Can't you get out?"

Lattrey drew a deep breath.

The load of wreckage on his shoulders was pressing him down.

He had to exert every ounce of strength in his body to keep it from crushing him.

For he could see that Lattrey, if he chose, could squeeze his way out, but if he did so, he left the mass of wreckage to crash down on the helpless Mornington.

And Erroll did not expect the outcast of Rookwood to think of anyone but himself.

"Lattrey! Stand firm!" he panted, though without hope that Lattrey would obey.

Lattrey looked at him.

His face was chalky white, haggard and drawn with the terrible strain upon him. But the terror was gone from it.

It was calm—strangely calm. And Erroll, as he caught his look, breathed more freely.

"I can't stand this long, Erroll!" muttered Lattrey thickly. "Get help, for mercy's sake!"

"Erroll!" came Morny's quiet voice.

"Yes, Morny, old man—"

"Is Lattrey keepin' it off me? I can't see—and he's such a liar!"

Erroll's lips trembled.

"Hold fast, Lattrey!"

"I'm holdin' fast."

"Lattrey's keeping it off you, Morny!" groaned Erroll. "Keep your pecker up—help's comin'."

"Why don't he go, if he can go?" asked Mornington.

"Hush, Morny!"

Lattrey's look was bitter.

But he held on, though he knew—none better—that it was his life that was at stake.

Now, he could have forced his way free, leaving the debris to sink upon Mornington—but his strength was going, and as he was crushed lower and lower, he could not get free.

Even while Morny was speaking, Lattrey was forced down to one knee.

And then it was too late.



Lattrey was dragged along to the ditch and pitched in. "There, you cad!" gasped Adolphus Smythe. "That's for you!"

Lattrey grunted, and relapsed into silence.

He did not smoke again, and he began to read a sporting paper, though with a bored air.

Mornington sat silent in his corner, with a grim face.

Suddenly there was a jar of the train.

Lattrey started to his feet.

"What the dickens—"

Crash, crash!

Crash!

Lattrey's face went white.

The carriage was reeling under them, and from all parts of the train came loud cries of alarm and of pain.

"It's a collision!" exclaimed Mornington, springing up.

"Good heavens!" stammered Lattrey.

The next moment they were hurled over.

The carriage was toppling over a steep embankment, and Lattrey and Mornington were thrown in a heap.

Crash, crash!

Wild cries rang out on all sides, amid the fearful crashing of the wreckage.

Lattrey struggled furiously to free himself.

There was a faint groan from Mornington.

Crash, crash!

The shattered train, wrecked and smashed, rested at the bottom of the embankment.

The carriage was smashed in, and another carriage piled on top of it.

Broken beams and shattered glass surrounded the two dazed juniors.

Lattrey was shrieking, for the moment his nerve was quite gone.

Something heavy was upon him; but he was in darkness now, and he could not see what it was.

Something was crushing him down.

"Help, help, help!"

"Yes," said Lattrey quietly. "I could squeeze out, Mornington, and let the whole heap settle down."

"Why don't you?"

"Because you're under it."

"Oh! You mean it would fall on me?"

"Yes."

Mornington laughed—a strange, mocking laugh.

"Save yourself!" he said. "Let me alone! I'm not askin' for you to help me! Let me take my chance, an' get out!"

Lattrey did not answer.

The 7th Chapter. The Valley of the Shadow.

"Morny!"

It was Kit Erroll's voice, with a note of terror in it, calling.

It was for his chum that Erroll feared.

Kit Erroll had been thrown clear of the wreckage, as the train rolled over.

He picked himself up, dazed—but thinking of his chum.

The burning carriage cast a lurid light over the scene of wreckage and disaster.

There were cries and groans from the unfortunates injured in the collision.

Erroll rushed down the embankment.

"Morny! Morny!"

"Help!"

It was Lattrey's voice, and Erroll scrambled through the debris towards the sound.

"Take care!" shouted Lattrey, as the poised wreckage over him trembled.

Erroll stopped, his face white.

Lattrey, under the wreckage, was bending down, his back supporting a cruel burden.

Below him, as he stooped, lay Mornington, on his back, blind and helpless, with his leg pinned by the heavy beam.

Erroll's voice died in his throat.

Erroll was tearing madly at the wreckage, madly so far as energy went, yet with care, for there was danger of the wreck collapsing and burying both the juniors in death.

A guard and several passengers, two or three of them soldiers, came to his aid.

But it was slow work.

And the fire was spreading.

Another carriage had caught, and the flames were licking closer and closer to the heap of debris under which Morny and Mark Lattrey were imprisoned.

They felt the terrible heat, and the smoke choked them, and both knew their fearful peril.

Yet Lattrey's courage did not fail.

What spirit was it that moved the cad of Rookwood—the outcast of the school, more despised than any other fellow in all the history of Rookwood?

Somewhere, somehow, there lurked in that hardened heart a spark of the old British pluck and generosity, and the terrible emergency had called it into being.

The junior blinded by his hand lay there, in the shadow of death, and in that fearful moment, what was best in Lattrey had come to the top, and he was risking his life to save the junior he had injured.

He was risking it—but it seemed rather a certainty than a risk.

He was down on both knees now, over Mornington, still keeping up the crushing weight above, but sinking under it in spite of all his efforts.

And creeping flames were licking within a yard of him.

His face was close to Mornington's now—and Morny could feel his burning breath.

Morny's face was calm; never yet had the courage of Valentine Mornington failed him, and it did not fail now.

"Lattrey!" he muttered.

Lattrey did not speak—he could not.

"Lattrey, old man," whispered Mornington. "I'm sorry I spoke as I did. I never thought you had it in you—I never dreamed of it. I'm sorry, old kid. If we both go together—"

Lattrey groaned, a groan forced from him by the anguish of the terrible effort he was making.

"Stick it out!" came Kit Erroll's voice. "A minute more, Lattrey!"

Lattrey braced his strength to the ordeal.

Active hands were dragging away the wreckage, and the burden was lighter now, though it crushed him.

Lattrey sank lower and lower under it, till he was touching the helpless junior pinned below.

Mornington understood what that touch meant, and his pale face became paler, though still calm.

"The game's up, then!" he muttered.

He shuddered as a tongue of flame licked his leg.

There was a crash, as a mass of debris rolled away.

The rescuers could reach them now.

Lattrey felt the burden suddenly moved, and he reeled drunkenly.

Like a log, helpless, he fell—and his head struck a beam.

Erroll's grasp was on Mornington.

The beam that pinned him down was moved in the grasp of two men in khaki, and Erroll dragged his chum out—out to safety, scorched but not yet touched by the licking flames.

"Thank Heaven!" panted Erroll, as he laid his chum on the cool grass. "Oh, thank Heaven!"

"Lattrey—where's Lattrey?"

"They're getting him out."

Lattrey was laid in the grass beside his former Form-fellow of Rookwood. He was quite insensible.

"He's alive," said Erroll, in a hushed voice. "Thank Heaven he's alive! I—I never dreamed he had so much pluck!"

"Is he hurt?" whispered Mornington.

"Stunned."

"By gad! And Lattrey's saved my life!" muttered Mornington. "The fellow who blinded me—he's saved my life! Good gad!"

And then Mornington, spent and dizzy, sank into unconsciousness, his head resting on the arm of his chum.

"What the dickens does it mean?"

Jimmy Silver asked that question, in great perplexity.

All the juniors at Rookwood shared his perplexity.

They knew that the Head had been called up on the telephone, and that he had left the school hurriedly.

They knew that he had come back in a hurrying car, and that Mornington and Erroll were in the car with him.

But there was another—someone unknown, wrapped in bandages—and who was that other?

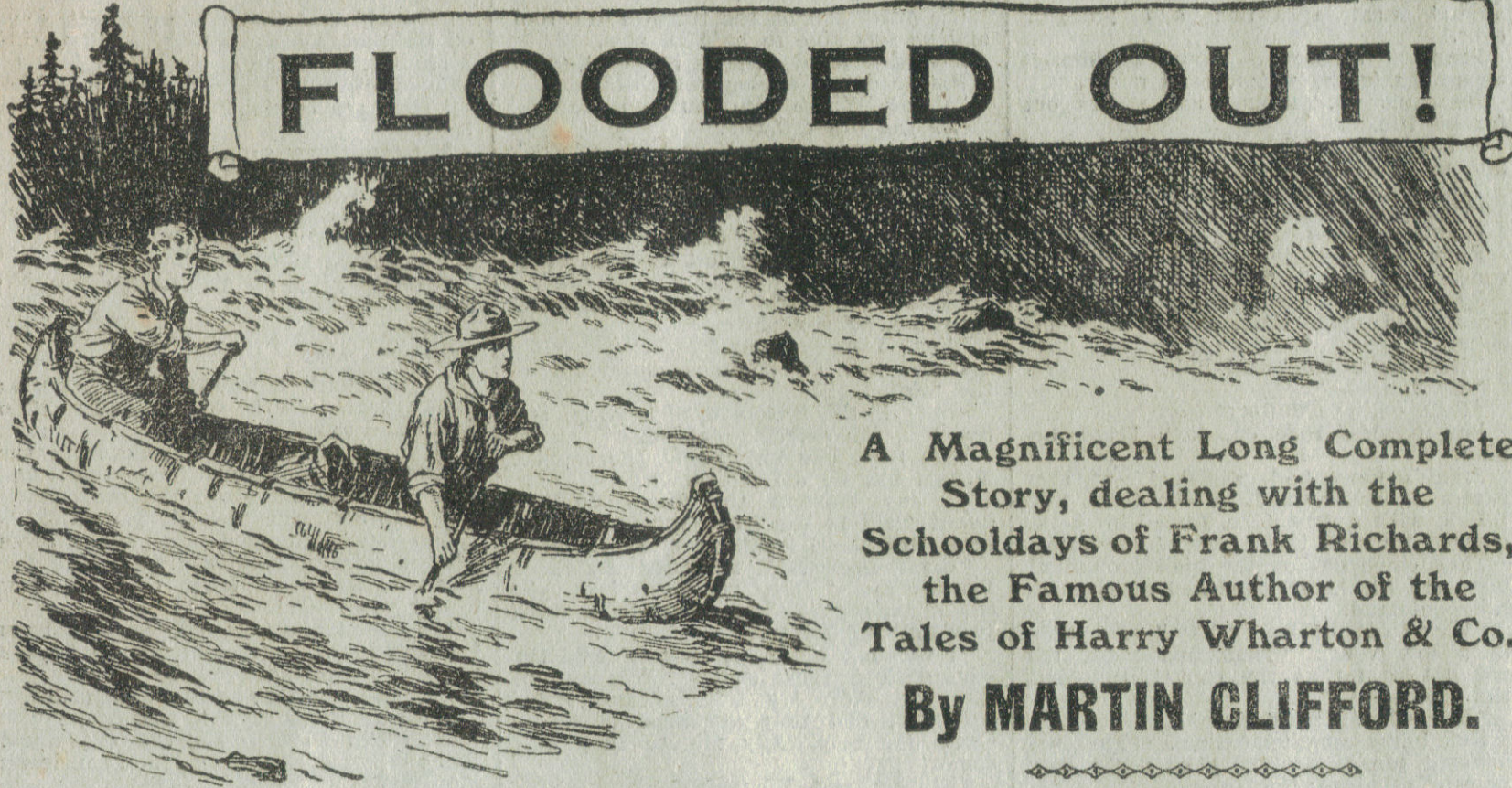
There had been an accident—a collision on the railway, as they guessed—and Mornington and Kit Erroll had been in it.

But who was the other?

An excited group was discussing the question, in the Hall, when Kit Erroll came in—pale, tired, and worn.

He was surrounded at once.

FLOODED OUT!



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.

Beaulerc's Father.

"A thaw, and no mistake!" said Bob Lawless.

"Too much of a good thing!" Frank Richards remarked ruefully.

It was after breakfast at the Lawless Ranch, and time to start for Cedar Creek School.

Frank and Bob looked out upon the drenched plain and the weeping trees, as the Kootenay "hand" brought their ponies round.

The snow was melting in the Thompson Hills, and the rain had come with the melting of the snow.

Every creek and stream was swollen, and the Thompson River rushed between its banks in a turbid, yellow flood.

Snowshoes were not wanted any longer. Indeed, Bob Lawless remarked that a swimming-costume would be more useful. But Bob grinned good-humouredly as he slipped on his "slicker."

Bob's cheerful spirits were not to be damped by bad weather.

Frank Richards put on his oilskin coat. The cousins mounted, and rode away down the wet trail in the rain.

"There'll be a small house at Cedar Creek to-day, I guess," remarked Bob. "Some of the kids won't come. I reckon there will be floods in the Thompson Valley if this goes on."

The timber was weeping as they entered the forest trail.

The chums halted at the fork in the trail, where they were accustomed to meeting Vere Beaulerc on his way from Cedar Camp to the school.

"Hallo! The Cherub's not here!" exclaimed Bob.

He scanned the branch-trail that led away through the timber towards Cedar Camp.

But there was no sign of Vere Beaulerc.

"Beau's usually here before us," remarked Frank.

"I guess we'll wait."

But the son of the remittance-man did not come in sight, and the cousins turned their ponies into the trail, to ride towards the camp and meet him.

"I guess we'll have to hustle to make up for this," said Bob. "But the Cherub will be mounted this morning, now he's got a geegee. Where the dickens can he be?"

Frank Richards was puzzled, too.

The schoolboys rode on till they came in sight of the shack outside Cedar Camp, where Vere Beaulerc lived with his father, the remittance-man.

They wondered whether there was any trouble at their chum's home.

Lascalles Beaulerc had lately received his remittance from the Old Country, upon which he lived, and the chums knew—as all the section knew—how Mr. Beaulerc was accustomed to spend it.

It was only too probable that he had been "on a bender" the previous night, and likely enough that he was ill in the morning.

Frank Richards glanced towards the creek, which flowed within a stone's throw of the shack.

The stream was rushing swiftly, and upon it were borne blocks and chips of ice not yet melted.

The water had overflowed the banks where they were low, and the draining-trench on the clearing was overflowing.

"I don't like the look of that, Bob," Frank remarked uneasily. "If the water rises much more the shack may be flooded."

"I guess it's been flooded before," assented Bob. "That was before I knew Beau, but I heard that they had had to clear out into the camp for a week in the autumn rains once. But where the thunder is the Cherub? We shall be thumping late, at this rate, and Miss Meadows will be wild!"

The cousins dismounted, and Bob crashed his riding-whip on the half-open door of the shack.

There was an exclamation within. "Father! Thank Heaven you've come!" Vere Beaulerc threw open the door from within.

At the sight of his chums a shade of disappointment overspread his handsome face.

Evidently it was his father he had expected and hoped to see.

"You fellows!" he exclaimed, a flush creeping into his pale cheeks.

Frank Richards compressed his lips a little.

He could see that Beaulerc had not been to bed.

Undoubtedly, the remittance-man was upon his accustomed "bender," and had not come home for the night.

His anxious son had stayed up for him, but he had waited in vain.

"We've come for you, you duffer!" exclaimed Bob. "Don't you know it's high time we were at school?"

"I—I'd forgotten school!" stammered Beaulerc.

"Better tell Miss Meadows that!" muttered Bob. "For goodness' sake, yank out your geegee and get a move on!"

"I—I—"

"Popper not come home?" asked Bob. "No," answered Beaulerc, his flush deepening.

"You look a bit yellow about the gills, Cherub. You've been sticking up all night."

"I—I was afraid of an accident!" muttered Beaulerc. "My father has been—been delayed, and—and the floods are out near the camp."

Bob's face became as grave as Frank's. He understood.

The remittance-man's vagaries did not, as a rule, interfere with his son's habits.

Often and often the boys had been sound asleep in the shack, when the wasterl came zig-zagging home from the camp.

But, with the floods out, there was danger for anyone tramping the trails under the influence of the potent fire-water sold at the Red Dog Saloon.

The chums could guess in what anxiety the Cherub had passed the long night, listening to the splashing of the rain and the swirl of the rushing creek.

"But you'll have to come to school, Cherub," said Bob, after an awkward pause.

Beaulerc shook his head. "You can ask Miss Meadows to excuse me to-day," he said. "I can't go."

"But—," said Frank.

"I can't!" said Beaulerc. "You fellows get off; you'll be late. I'm sure Miss Meadows will excuse me; anyway, I can't go. Good-bye!"

"Hallo! Here he comes!"

A figure came in sight among the spruces, moving with an unsteady step towards the shack.

Beaulerc's face lighted up. It was his father.

Mr. Beaulerc was wet and muddy from head to foot, and looked as if he had passed a considerable portion of the night on the trail.

His face was reddened, his eyes heavy, and his uncertain gait showed that the influence of the fire-water was still strong upon him.

"We'll vamoose now, Cherub; you come on," said Bob hastily.

The chums rode away quickly, feeling that Beaulerc would not want them to meet his father in his present state.

Beaulerc hurried to meet the remittance-man.

He gave the wretched man a helping hand into the shack.

Lascalles Beaulerc sat down heavily on a bench, and blinked at his son.

"Wharrer doing here?" he asked thickly. "Y'ought to be at school, you young vagabond!"

"I waited for you, father."

"Stuff'n nonsense! Get off with you!"

"Can I do anything for you, father?"

"Wharrer mean? Get off with you!"

The wretched man fired up angrily at the hint that he needed looking after.

Without a word the boy left the shack, a deep and angry grumbling following him.

He led his horse from the adjoining shed, and rode down the trail after his chums.

Frank Richards and Bob were half-way to the school when they heard a clatter of hoofs behind them, and Vere Beaulerc came up.

"Hallo! Here you are, Cherub!" exclaimed Bob, with forced cheeriness. "Now put it on, and we may be in time yet."

Beaulerc nodded, without speaking, and the three chums rode on to Cedar Creek School together.

The 2nd Chapter. At School.

The post-waggon from Thompson, with a crowd of boys and girls in it, drove up to the school, as Frank Richards & Co. arrived there.

There was mud on the wheels up to the axles.

Kern Gunten was driving.

Chunky Todgers grinned at the chums from the crowd in the waggon.

"Hallo, you fellows got through?" he called out.

"Looks like it," answered Bob.

"There's water out on the Thompson trail," said Dick Dawson. "Gunten's had to collect us up in the post-waggon, and here we are. Did you ever go to school like this in England, Richards?"

"No," said Frank, laughing. "It's fun, isn't it?"

"Well, it may be; but it's jolly wet."

Schoolboys and schoolgirls crowded out of the waggon.

Attendance at Cedar Creek was not quite full that morning.

But there was general cheerfulness, as they dried and warmed themselves at the blazing log fire in the lumber school.

"You galoots won't get home to-night, I reckon," remarked Eben Hacke, as he kicked mud from his big boots. "Folks in Thompson say that the creek is rising. The snow's melted on the divide."

"Oh, we'll get home all right," said Bob. "I've ridden through a foot of water before this."

"It won't be a foot—it will be a yard," said Hacke. "How's the creek looking at your shebang, Cherub?"

"It's rising," said Beaulerc.

"You'll be flooded out agin, I calculate, like you were last year," said Hacke. "I guess you'll have to swim home."

He paid more attention that morning to the rain than to Miss Meadows.

After morning school, most of the pupils collected in the wide porch, to look out; there was little to do out of doors.

The rain was coming down steadily, and they could hear the foaming of the creek beyond the timber.

"It's still rising," remarked Tom Lawrence. "Lucky we've got the waggon to go home in. There'll be deep water at the dip of the trail."

Bob Lawless tapped Beaulerc on the arm, as he stood at some distance from the rest, with a moody brow.

"Cheer-ho, Cherub!" he said. "Put a smile on, you know!"

Beaulerc smiled faintly. "I'm thinking about the shack," he said. "It's only too likely there'll be a flood."

"And you're anxious about your truck?" asked Bob.

"I haven't much there to be anxious about, in the way of property. But—but—"

"Your father will get off to the camp, if there's a flood, surely!"

"I—I suppose so."

"Not much supposing about it, I should reckon," said Bob, with a stare. "He won't stay in the shack to be drowned."

"Of course not," asserted Beaulerc. But the deep shade did not lift from his brow.

Bob Lawless joined Frank, who was in the school-room looking out of a window.

"What's the matter with the Cherub, Franky?" asked the rancher's son, in perplexity. "He can't be afraid his popper will be caught in the flood, if the creek cuts up rusty, can he?"

"I suppose it's possible," said Frank slowly.

"But there's rising ground all the way from the shack to Cedar Camp, and he's only got to walk his chucks."

Frank hesitated.

"Well?" said Bob.

"You remember the state he was in when we saw him this morning, Bob. I'm afraid Beau fears he mayn't be in a state to walk his chucks, as you call it."

Bob whistled expressively.

"But—but—" he said. "But—By gum, it's a rotten hard life for the Cherub, Franky. If—if the man wasn't the Cherub's popper, I guess I'd feel like laying a cowhide round him."

"I believe he isn't a bad sort," said Frank. "Nobody's enemy but his own, you know. When he gets any money he gets into the hands of a set of wasters—Poker Pete and that lot. It's a rotten pity—worst of all for poor Beau. That's what makes him what the fellows call touchy. But—but you can't help liking him for standing by his pater, whatever he is. It isn't a fellow's place to judge his father."

"No fear!" agreed Bob. "The Cherub's a bit of a duffer, but he's never likely to be a prig. I like him for still thinking a lot of his popper, but—but the old galoot ought to have a taste of the cowhide, all the same."

Frank Richards laughed.

Bob's ideas were always drastic; but it was very doubtful whether the cowhide would do the remittance-man any good.

The best thing that could have happened to him, would have been the stoppage of his remittance from his relations in England, which would have thrown him upon his own resources and compelled him to do steady work.

And in Canada there was ample provision for every man who chose to work.

Work, however, was the last resource Lascalles Beaulerc was likely to think of, so long as his noble relations were willing to pay to keep him at a safe distance from their nobility.

Afternoon lessons were cut short that day for the pupils who had a distance to travel home.

It was earlier than usual when Frank Richards & Co. came out of the lumber schoolhouse, and fetched their horses from the corral.

In a downpour of rain, with their "sickers" round them and the oilskin caps drawn down over their ears, the three chums rode away from Cedar Creek.

The 3rd Chapter. The Flood!

Splash! "By gum, it's wet!" grinned Bob Lawless.

Where the trail dipped it was flooded, and the schoolboys rode through a foot of water, till they reached the higher ground beyond.

Dim light came through the leafless branches over the trail.

Rain-clouds were lowering over the whole sky.

At the fork of the trail, Vere Beaulerc drew in his black horse, Demon.

Demon was the savage animal the Cherub had tamed, and which Mr. Lawless had insisted upon making him a present of.

"Good-bye, you fellows!" called out Beaulerc.

"Hold on!" said Frank. "We'd better ride a way with you, Cherub. I want to see you're safe."

"No need—"

"Rot!" said Bob Lawless emphatically. "I guess we're going to sashay all the way to the shack, Cherub. I reckon it's most likely under water by this time. The creek's over its banks in a dozen places."

Beaulerc hesitated.

"Here comes somebody who can tell us," said Frank Richards, as a horseman came in sight on the branch trail.

The three schoolboys waited at the fork for the rider to come up.

As he came closer, they recognised Poker Pete of Thompson.

The chums were on the worst of terms with that sportive gentleman, but Bob Lawless called to him as he came within range.

"Hold on a minute, Poker Pete. You've come from Cedar Camp?"

"I guess so!" snapped the sport, without drawing rein.

"How's the creek at Beaulerc's shack?"

Poker Pete halted then, and grinned as he looked at the schoolboys.

"I've jest come from the shack," he answered. "The creek's over the bank, and spreading fast. I guess you won't get through. I rode through two feet of water to get away."

"You've been at the shack?" exclaimed Beaulerc, his eyes glinting.

"I guess so!"

Beaulerc did not need the telling what Poker Pete's business there had been.

The sport had been relieving the remittance-man of his cash, at the noble games of poker and euchre.

"Is my father there?" Beaulerc asked quietly, repressing the angry scorn he



The gleam of light came from a lantern in the bows of a canoe, and soon Vere Beaulerc could make out the little craft, with two occupants sturdily paddling.

Kern Gunten chuckled. "Ripping for Old Man Beaulerc, if he happens to be full of fire-water," he remarked.

Beaulerc turned fiercely on the Swiss. Only Kern Gunten was rotter enough to make any allusion, in the presence of the remittance-man's son, to Lascalles Beaulerc's unenviable reputation.

But before Beaulerc could speak, Bob Lawless had taken the Swiss by the back of his collar.

Gunten sat down on the floor with a heavy bump, and a loud yell.

"You silly coyote, what are you up to?" he shouted furiously.

"Keep your sneaking tongue between your teeth, you worm," answered Bob Lawless savagely. "Let a chap's father alone. The Cherub don't throw it at you that your popper is a swindling store-keeper—and he is, I guess!"

Gunten scrambled to his feet.

Miss Meadows entered the school-room at that moment, and the schoolboys went to their places.

Beaulerc did not glance at the Swiss; his brow was very thoughtful.

He was thinking of the shack, and of the rising creek close to it.

could not help feeling for the rascally sport of Thompson.

"Yep."

"Didn't he leave when you did?" exclaimed Frank.

"Nope."

"But if you rode through two feet of water the shack must be flooded!"

"You've hit it."

"But why—"

Poker Pete laughed, with utter unconcern for the bitter anxiety of the remittance-man's son.

"I guess Old Man Beaulerc had taken a little too much aboard," he said. "I warned him to get to the camp, and he offered to fight me. I guess he's pretty wet by this time."

"He may be drowned!" exclaimed Beaulerc.

"Oh, I reckon he'll crawl on the roof when the flood wakes him up!" answered Poker Pete coolly; and he rode on, grinning.

Bob gripped his riding-whip hard. He was greatly inclined to ride after the sport and lay the whip about his shoulders.

Vere Beaulerc, without speaking to him

FLOODED OUT!



(Continued from the previous page.)

chums, dashed away at a gallop down the dusky trail.

His chums followed him at once. Swiftly as Beauclerc rode, his chums kept pace with him.

"By gum, it's deep!" exclaimed Bob in dismay, as they reached the steep slope of ground near the shack.

The trail from that point ran on under water, and the flood was deeper as they progressed.

It was impossible to ride fast here, and they had to slacken almost to a walk.

In the last glimmer of daylight they sighted the shack at last.

The scene presented to their eyes was very different from that of the morning.

The creek, no longer confined within its banks, was spreading in a flood over the low land.

Water flowed and swirled round the shack, and it was up to the level of the little window.

The door was swinging open in the flood, and water swirled into the building, and a bench could be seen floating within.

With a white, set face Beauclerc rode on through the swirling waters towards the hut.

His father was there, helpless, in the midst of the swirling flood. What might not have happened to him already.

At the door he threw himself from his horse, sinking nearly to the armpits in water as he plunged into the shack.

"Father!"

It was a cry of misery and fear that rang in the ears of his chums, and in their hearts.

"Father!"

There was no answer to the call.

Beauclerc plunged in, reeling in the swirl, and stared wildly round the flooded hut in the dusky light.

"Father!"

The remittance man was seated at the table, his head leaning forward on his arms.

The water was nearly at the level of the plank table, swirling round him as he sat.

On the table were cards, scattered as they had been left, and a few coins.

Beauclerc caught the remittance man by the shoulder and shook him.

"Father!" he muttered huskily.

He lifted the man's head, and saw a dull, unconscious face.

The miserable man was plunged in so deep a sleep that even the water flowing round him had not awakened him.

Half an hour more and the flood would have been over him, and Lascelles Beauclerc would have been drowned like a rat in a trap.

He lurched heavily as his son drew him upright.

But for the schoolboy's grasp he would have slipped from the chair into the water.

Frank Richards and Bob peered in at the door.

"You've found him, Beau?"

"Yes," muttered Beauclerc huskily.

"Not—not—" stammered Frank.

"No; he is alive. Only—only—Beauclerc's tongue stammered—"only—only he's ill—unconscious."

"I—I see!" muttered Frank. It was not necessary for him to be told the nature of the wastrel's "illness."

"Get him out," said Bob. "You can hold him on your horse, Cherub, and carry him to the camp; and we'll help."

"Right!"

Beauclerc raised the unconscious man to his feet.

But carrying him in the swirling water was a task beyond his powers.

Bob Lawless plunged in and helped him, while Frank Richards held the three horses.

By their united efforts the insensible remittance man was got out of the shack and placed upon the black horse.

Beauclerc mounted behind him, holding him upright in the saddle and bearing his weight.

"Can you manage like that?" asked Frank dubiously.

"I've got to. It's the only way."

That was clear, but it was very doubtful whether the double-loaded horse could struggle through the flood.

It had to be chanced, and the three schoolboys pushed their steeds out into the water.

A good half-mile lay before them till the higher ground was reached, and the water was swirling in whirling currents.

Before twenty yards had been covered the black horse stepped into a gopher-hole, hidden by the water, and stumbled heavily.

There was a loud splash as Vere Beauclerc and the remittance man fell together into the flood.

The 4th Chapter. In Deadly Peril.

"Help!" Beauclerc was swimming now, supporting his father.

The black horse, with a loud whinny of terror, disappeared in the swirl of waters, swimming for safety, and vanished in a few moments in the gloom.

Frank Richards whirled round his pony towards his chum, and caught the remittance man by the collar, dragging his head up.

"I've got him, Beau!" he panted.

Beauclerc found his feet in the water, standing submerged nearly to the shoulders.

The swirl of the flood would have carried him off his feet, but he clung to Frank's saddle.

Holding on with one hand, he dashed the water out of his eyes with the other. His face was white now.

Half-floating, half-supported by Frank Richards, the remittance man hung beside the pony, still unconscious.

"Back to the shack!" breathed Beauclerc. "We can never get through this! I've lost my horse, too!"

"The gee will be all right," said Bob. "He'll get out. But you won't see him again till to-morrow, that's a cert!"

"Back to the shack!"

The chums plunged away to the hut again.

It was only too evident that the insensible man could not be taken away through the wild waters.

But they did not enter the hut.

Vere Beauclerc clambered to the roof, and his chums helped him to drag up his father after him.

There, for the present, they were safe, though for how long there was no telling, for the water was rising fast.

Mr. Beauclerc was laid on the sloping roof, and Beauclerc looked down at his chums.

"Get off, you fellows!" he said. "If it's long much longer you'll never get through on horseback!"

"But you—"

"I'm staying with my father."

Frank Richards set his teeth.

There were only two horses now, and it was plain that Beauclerc and his father could not be taken away on them.

It was not easy for the riders to save themselves, as it was, in the whirl of waters.

"You can ride to the camp and get out a canoe," said Beauclerc. "There's no other way. Don't lose a minute! Heaven knows whether you'll get through alive!"

"I—I guess it's all that can be done," said Bob Lawless grimly. "Wait till we come for you, Cherub! We won't lose a tick!"

Beauclerc's lips trembled.

"I—I'm sorry I've got you into this, you fellows," he muttered. "You shouldn't have come with me. I didn't think of the danger."

"Bust the danger!" growled Bob. "We shall get through O. K. If only the shack holds till we get back! Come on, Franky!"

Gladly enough the chums would have taken Beauclerc with them to share their chance, but they knew he would not even think of deserting his father.

But as they moved away their hearts were heavy with fear for him.

They had a fight before them to get out of the flood, and if they failed, it meant drowning and death—and still more certain death to the chum they left on the roof of the lonely shack.

But even if they won through, it was doubtful if they could return in time to save him.

The shack was a flimsy structure, and might be swept away bodily in the flood, and in any case, the water was evidently rising to a higher level than the roof.

Before the night was old the shack would be under at least three or four feet of water.

The sudden melting of the snows had swollen every stream.

The accumulated waters of the divide were rushing down to find their level on the plains, and on all sides low-lying land was flooded.

Frank looked back in the deepening gloom as he rode away with his chum, his heart like lead.

From the roof of the half-submerged hut Vere Beauclerc waved his hand, and then he disappeared from sight.

"Come on, Frank!"

"I'm with you, Bob!"

The chums were heading for Cedar Camp.

But the trail had vanished from sight under the whirling waters, and only by the branches emerging from the stream could they pick their way.

Again and again the horses stumbled, and plunged under, and they were drenched, but each time they righted, and kept on.

As the darkness thickened, and the rain fell more heavily, the lights of Cedar Camp came in sight at last in the distance.

Never had a sight been so gladdening to their eyes.

Those twinkling lights through the rainy gloom shone like beacons of hope.

"Look out, Franky!" yelled Bob. "The sense of his peril was borne into his dizzy brain, and it had a sobering effect on him."

He shuddered violently, but, to Vere's relief, the dazed look faded out of his face, and intelligence dawned in the heavy eyes.

animal went sprawling and plunging over.

Frank Richards found himself struggling in the water, head under.

He came up, gasping, and struck out for his life.

A hand grasped his collar, and dragged him up.

"Bob!" he panted.

"Hold on, Franky!"

Frank clutched wildly at his chum.

From the darkness came a distant squeal, the last he heard of the pony.

Bob Lawless dragged him up, and Frank slid upon the horse, behind his chum.

"Hold on to me," said Bob.

"My pony—"

"Hold on, you duffer!"

Bob Lawless rode on, with Frank behind.

Frank's pony had vanished, whether swimming or drowned, he could not tell.

Bob, with a grim face, forced his horse onward towards the lights of the camp.

They came out on the high ground at last, and the horse squelched on through rain and mud.

"We're out of it, Franky," said Bob, in a low voice. "Thank goodness, it's not got so far as the camp! But—but the Cherub—"

"Hurry!" muttered Frank.

But hurry was impossible. The exhausted horse, double-laden, could only proceed at a crawling pace.

Frank dropped to the ground as soon as he had recovered himself a little, and walked beside the horse.

Fatigued, almost worn-out, the chums arrived in Cedar Camp.

But there was no time for resting. Within ten minutes of their arrival they were in a birch canoe, and the lantern in its prow gleamed out over a wild waste of waters as they paddled up the creek.

It was slow work against the current, and every moment masses of driftwood or broken ice whirled round the canoe.

A dozen times their lives seemed to hang by a thread.

But their arms never rested as they paddled the canoe on through the darkness, scarcely heeding the dangers that beset them at every stroke of the paddle.

The 5th Chapter. In the Shadow of Death!

Darkness lay round the lonely shack, in the midst of the swirling flood.

Silent, pale, but calm, Vere Beauclerc crouched on the sloping roof close by the ridge, holding on to his uncon-

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scious father, lest by a movement the remittance man should slip from his precarious refuge.

From the darkness came only the gleam of foam on the wild waters, that rushed and hissed round the submerged shack.

Sometimes, from the distance, came a dull roar of a falling tree, washed out of the crumbling bank of the creek.

Past the shack, under the eyes of the schoolboy, floated torn branches and drift logs, and chunks of ice from the late freeze.

And still the water was rising, fed by the heavy flow from the slopes of the divide, and by the torrents of rain that turned every gully into a cataract.

Higher it crept, till it was at the eaves, and splashes invaded the shaly roof upon which Vere Beauclerc guarded his father—the father who, with all his faults and weaknesses, had never lost the love and respect of his son.

Higher and higher, like a wild animal creeping on its prey, with a dull, sullen murmur that sounded like a threat.

Beauclerc watched it as if fascinated. There was grim death for him in the rising waters, unless rescue came soon.

There was a long, shuddering sigh in the gloom, and Vere Beauclerc's grasp tightened upon his father's coat as he looked at him.

The insensible man was coming to himself.

Lascelles Beauclerc's eyes opened, and he stared upward strangely, stupidly.

He put his hand to his head and groaned.

"What—what is this?" he muttered.

"Who is there?"

"Father!"

"Vere! It is you! What has happened?"

"There's a flood from the divide, dad."

"Oh, gad!"

The remittance man lay silent for some minutes, trying to collect his dazed wits.

He sat up at last, and only his son's grasp kept him from rolling off the roof.

He started violently as he saw the white gleam of water licking at the edge of the roof.

"By gad!"

The sense of his peril was borne into his dizzy brain, and it had a sobering effect on him.

He shuddered violently, but, to Vere's relief, the dazed look faded out of his face, and intelligence dawned in the heavy eyes.

His grasp sought the ridge of the roof, and he was able to hold on now.

His other hand went to his head again. His head was aching and throbbing.

"Vere! Where did you find me?"

"In the shack, father."

"I was—was—must have been asleep."

"Yes," said Vere quietly.

The remittance man's face was red for a moment.

Even the wastrel of the Thompson Valley was not quite lost to a sense of shame.

"When you came home from school?" he asked, after a pause.

"Yes. I came early."

There was an ominous movement of the roof.

Under it the waters were beating, and round it the currents swirled.

Vere Beauclerc knew that the tremble meant, but he did not flinch.

At any moment the flimsy building might yield to the fierce pressure of the flood, and whirl headlong into the foam.

"Good heavens!" muttered Lascelles Beauclerc. "Vere, my dear boy, you should have gone—you should have saved yourself, and left me."

"I was not likely to, father," said the boy, with a faint smile. "We are not lost yet, dad. My friends came home with me, and they are gone to Cedar Camp for help. Any minute they may come."

"Lawless and Richards?"

"Yes, dad."

"They—they have seen me?" The white, wretched face reddened again.

"They helped me get you here, dad," said Beauclerc. "My horse was swept away. They will get back with a canoe as soon as they can."

"A canoe!" muttered the remittance man. "What craft could live in this flood? They will not come—they will not try to come."

"They will come," said Beauclerc confidently.

The remittance man groaned.

"Fool! Brute! Waster!" He was speaking half-audibly to himself. "Three lives—three young lives! Fool!"

"Father!" muttered Beauclerc miserably.

"You should have left me to my fate," said the remittance man bitterly. "What did it matter? Better to have drowned like a rat below there, than to have sacrificed your life, my poor boy! I have always been a misery and a burden to you, Vere! You were a fool to save me, if you have saved me!"

"Father!"

The wretched man was in the mood of repentance that follows the excesses of a weak nature; the repentance that accompanies sickness and pain and reaction.

Many times Vere Beauclerc had seen his father in that mood, and sometimes he had hoped that it would last—last till the unfortunate man sought a new and better way of life.

It had never lasted. Lascelles Beauclerc was no man's enemy but his own; but to himself he was a deadly enemy.

His glance turned wildly upon the licking waters, creeping now over the roof, and nearing the spot where the two clung to the ridge.

It seemed to the boy that he could read a desperate thought in his father's mind, and his grasp tightened convulsively upon his shoulder.

There was a long silence.

Beauclerc watched the black flood, eager to see a canoe shooting among the drift-logs, his ears strained to catch the beat of a paddle.

But it did not come.

His heart was heavy with fear for his friends.

What if they could not come? What if they had found their death in the flood before they could win to safety?

His heart sickened at the apprehension. The roof was trembling strangely under them.

Well Beauclerc remembered the last year's flood, when they had abandoned the shack, and had returned, after the subsidence of the waters, to find the little building a wreck.

He knew that the flimsy structure could not resist much longer.

"You do not see them?" asked the remittance man at last.

"Not yet, father."

"They cannot come."

"I hope—"

"The shack will not stand much longer, Vere. When it goes, you will get hold of a log and save yourself if you can."

"And you, father?" said Beauclerc.

The remittance man laughed harshly.

"I am as weak as a rat; I could not swim a yard," he said. "Save yourself, and leave me to take my chance, Vere, I command you!"

The boy did not answer, but his expression showed that he did not intend to obey that last command.

It was both or neither, and if the flood swallowed the remittance man and put a period to his misspent life, it would close, too, over the head of his son.

"Vere," muttered Lascelles Beauclerc, "you will obey me; and—and I have never told you before, my boy, but I have heard from my brother about you. He has asked about you, and if you care to go to him, in the Old Country, the way is open. I—I could not think of parting with you." His voice trembled a little.

"I have been a bad father to you, Vere, but—but I cared for you, my boy—Heaven knows! After—after it's all over you will have a home and friends—better than this. The letter—"

"I do not want a home better than this, and I could not have friends better than I have now, father," said Vere quietly. "I shall not go to my uncle. But—but we shall escape yet. At any moment—"

"I tell you, there is no hope now, Vere, and you must try to save yourself. I command you!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Vere, starting up on the roof, his heart beating wildly.

Faintly from the darkness of the night, came a distant "Hallo!"

"They are coming!" shouted Vere joyfully.

The remittance man raised himself upon one elbow, and stared into the darkness.

Like a will-o'-the-wisp, a light danced on the troubled waters in the distance.

"The canoe!" exclaimed Vere. He shouted back.

"Bob! Frank! This way! Hallo! Hallo!"

An answering shout came from the waters.

Vere Beauclerc watched the dancing light reflected on the waters, and shouted again and again.

The gleam of light came from the lantern in the bows of a birch canoe, and soon he could make out the little craft, with two occupants sturdily paddling.

Bob Lawless guided the canoe, with what seemed miraculous luck, amid the logs and uprooted trees, and it drew nearer and nearer.

The chums had