

# THE RETURN OF BOB TRAVERS! SEE INSIDE!

# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>d</sup> 1/2

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THREE HALFPENCE.

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## ROUGH ON ROOKWOOD!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Knowles Shows His Hand.

Tubby Muffin put his head in at the end study, in great excitement.

"Jimmy Silver—you fellows—"  
"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver, looking round.

"The list's up!" announced Tubby.

"Oh!"  
"Nearly all Moderns!" said Tubby.

"Just as we expected, you know. Come and look at it! The fellows are grousing, I can tell you!"

And Tubby Muffin vanished, to carry the news further.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were at prep in the end study, but they rose to their feet at once.

Prep on such an occasion could wait.

All Rookwood, in fact, was waiting to see the list of the First Eleven for the St. Jim's match—the first big fixture of the cricket season at Rookwood.

Classicals and Moderns alike were eager to see the kind of eleven Knowles of the Sixth intended to put into the field.

By that list it could be seen how the new captain of Rookwood intended to set to work.

Fellows knew pretty well what players Bulkeley, the former captain, would have selected for that important match.

But "old Bulkeley" was gone from Rookwood, and Knowles, of the Modern side, had been elected in his place.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were strongly of opinion that Knowles would favour his own side, and his own friends, and in that case the St. Jim's match would, as Arthur Edward Lovell elegantly expressed it, "go to pot."

"Just like Knowles!" said Lovell. "And just what we expected! Pity the Classical Sixth don't know Knowles as well as we do! They'd never have given him a vote then."

"They'll be sorry for it yet," said Raby oracularly.

"If what Tubby says is true, I'll bet you they're sorry for it already," remarked Newcome. "Let's go and see."

The Fistical Four quitted their study, and hurried towards the stairs. They found a good many more of the Classical Fourth bound in the same direction.

"I hear Knowles has done it!" said Mornington, as he came out of his study with Erroll, and joined the Fistical Four.

"Looks like it," answered Jimmy Silver. "But let's see the list!"

The juniors hurried downstairs. Strictly speaking, the St. Jim's match, being a First Eleven match, did not concern the heroes of the Fourth.

They played St. Jim's themselves—the junior team; and, truth to tell, the junior match loomed larger in their eyes than the senior match did.

But all Rookwood took a pride in the exploits of the Rookwood First, which had done great things under Bulkeley's leadership.

It would be a blow to all, senior and junior alike, if the First Eleven should really "go to pot" under the new leadership.

Jimmy Silver & Co. found a crowd already collected before the notice-board in the hall, where the 'cricket list was posted up for all to read.

The crowd were nearly all of Classicals, and their comments were decidedly unfavourable.

"Rotten!"

"What a set of tripe!"

"It's a joke!"

"Knowles must be potty!"

"This is asking St. Jim's for a licking!"

Such were the remarks Jimmy Silver & Co. heard as they came up.

They heard other remarks, too, as they shoved their way through the crowd by a liberal use of elbows.

But they did not heed them.

They were anxious to see the list.

"Who are you shoving, bedad?" roared Flynn.

"You, old chap," answered Jimmy Silver cheerily.

And he won his way to the board, followed by his chums.

"What do you think of that, Jimmy Silver?" shouted Rawson.

"Let's read it," answered Jimmy.

And he read it, with a frowning brow.

The list of players given for the first big match of the season ran:

- C. KNOWLES.
- R. CATESBY.
- S. FRAMPTON.
- T. HOKE.
- H. TRESHAM.
- M. MYERS.
- T. LISTER.
- K. BRAYE.
- L. NEVILLE.
- E. JONES.
- M. CARTHEW.

Jimmy Silver fairly blinked at that list.

Eight names in it belonged to the Modern side of Rookwood.

The final three were Classicals.

Several of them were fellows who had never been selected for the Rookwood First at all, even as reserves.

Of the three Classicals, Neville and Jones major were first-rate men, but Mark Carthew certainly was not.

But he was a friend of Knowles', and that accounted for his selection.

Jimmy rubbed his eyes.

"My only hat!" he said. "That isn't a Rookwood team—that's a Modern side team. Lonsdale's left out, and Hansom, and Scott—My hat!"

"It's asking for a licking," said Raby.

"An' gettin' it, by gad!" remarked Mornington. "Knowles is beginnin' well!"



## KNOWLES HITS OUT! See Our Grand School Tale!

"Here comes Neville!" murmured Oswald.

The juniors made way for Neville of the Sixth, as he came along with Lonsdale.

Neville had put up for the captaincy after Bulkeley's departure; not so much from ambition, as from a desire to keep the place warm, as it were, for his old chum, whom he hoped to see return some day.

Knowles had carried the election, however, partly by means that were not quite open to inspection.

Neville glanced at the excited crowd of juniors.

"What's on?" he asked.

"It's the cricket-list," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh!"

"Your name's in it, Neville," grinned Smythe of the Shell.

Neville took no notice of that remark.

He read the list through quietly.

Lonsdale read it, too, and his brow darkened.

Lonsdale had been one of Bulkeley's best men, and he could not be spared from the First Eleven in a big fixture.

But Knowles had evidently considered that he could spare him.

"My hat!" said Neville at last.

"What a team!" said Lonsdale, his lip curling.

"Well, the Classical chaps who voted for Knowles are gettin' what they asked for, now. That list is simply a disgrace!"

The two seniors walked away.

"We know what the Sixth think of it now!" grinned Oswald.

Hansom of the Fifth came up with Lumsden.

Both of them generally played for the Rookwood First in Bulkeley's time.

Both of them were left out of Knowles' team.

"Did you ever?" gasped Hansom, as he stared at the list.

"Well, hardly ever!" remarked Lumsden.

"It must be a joke!"

"A jolly bad joke!"

"Knowles will have to be talked to about this!" exclaimed Hansom hotly.

"I voted for the fellow. It was understood that he was going to play the game. This isn't playing the game. This is favouring the Modern side, and chucking away First Eleven matches."

The Fifth-Formers stalked away in great wrath.

Jimmy Silver & Co. returned to the end study.

Prep had to be done. But that evening the Classical juniors certainly did not give so much thought to prep as they should have given.

The way Knowles had started, as captain of Rookwood, filled all thoughts.

It was not only that he was going to put into the field a team that couldn't beat St. Jim's. That was bad enough!

But it was clear that, in Knowles' eyes, the Modern side—his own side—was the only side that mattered, and that under the new captain the Classicals were to be left out in the cold in every way.

And that was serious.

"They're going to remonstrate with Knowles, I believe," said Jimmy Silver, with a sniff.

"Fat lot of good that will be! Knowles will only grin. He's got the whip-hand now, and he's going to use it."

"And Rookwood First will go to pot!" said Lovell.

"Well, it does look like it! Serve the fellows right for electing Knowles!" growled Jimmy.

"Come in!" said Knowles very politely, as a tap came at the door.

Neville and his companions entered. Knowles greeted them with a cheery nod.

The Classicals—even some of those

who had voted for Knowles in the captain's election—would have given a great deal to see George Bulkeley in his old place at Rookwood again.

### The 2nd Chapter. Knowles Knows Best.

Cecil Knowles was standing by the window in his study.

He turned from the window, with a smile to Catesby and Frampton, who were in the study.

"We're goin' to have visitors," he remarked.

The two Modern seniors grinned.

"I thought the cricket list would stir 'em up a bit," remarked Frampton.

"Bound to!" smiled Catesby.

They joined Knowles at the window. Through the dusk of the quad they discerned Neville and Jones major of the Sixth, and Hansom and Lumsden of the Fifth, coming to the House.

The four Classical seniors looked very serious.

There was no doubt that it was Knowles' selection of the First Eleven that was the cause of their coming.

"Shall we clear off, Knowles?" asked Catesby.

"No; stay where you are. I shall speak pretty plainly if there's any nonsense."

"Good! Let them understand that the captaincy is on this side of Rookwood now!"

"I intend to. We had to do a lot of knucklin' under while Bulkeley was skipper. It's their turn now."

"Hear, hear!" chuckled Knowles' two supporters.

In a very cheery mood the three Modern seniors waited for the visitors.

"Come in!" said Knowles very politely, as a tap came at the door.

Neville and his companions entered. Knowles greeted them with a cheery nod.

(Continued on the next page.)



"Glad to see you fellows!" he said affably. "Sit down!"

"We shan't be staying long," said Neville. "The fact is, we've come to see you about the team for the St. Jim's match, Knowles."

"Any suggestions to offer?"

"Yes; if you care to hear them."

"Certainly! You are on the committee, Neville, and you have a right to make any suggestion you think fit. Of course, the decision rests with the captain of the school."

"I don't dispute that," said Neville drily; while Hansom of the Fifth gave utterance to an expressive grunt. "We've seen the notice you've posted up, Knowles. It was the first I'd seen of it when I found it on the board. Are we to take that cricket-list seriously?"

Knowles elevated his eyebrows.

"Naturally!" he replied.

"That's the eleven you intend to play against St. Jim's?"

"Yes."

"And you expect to win?" broke in Jones major.

"I hope to," answered Knowles calmly.

"With that team?" snorted Hansom.

"You think it could be improved?" asked Knowles.

"What! I know it could."

"Well, I don't think I ought to leave out Neville or Jones major," said Knowles, with a shake of the head. "They're good men."

"Eh! I'm not suggesting anything of the sort. Leave out some of the Modern crocks you're loading up the team with," said Hansom.

Knowles smiled.

"I'm afraid you're a bit prejudiced, as a Classical, Hansom. You must really allow me to use my own judgment, especially in connection with fellows in my own house, that I know thoroughly well."

"I should jolly well think so," said Catesby warmly.

"If you're determined to play this team, Knowles, I suppose there's nothing more to be said," said Neville quietly. "But as head of the Classical side, I feel bound to protest. It's practically a House team, not a School team at all, and it can't possibly meet St. Jim's on anything like equal terms. It means a defeat for the First Eleven."

"Why?"

"Because half the men you have selected are no good," answered Neville bluntly.

"Because they are Moderns?" sneered Frampton.

"Because they can't play cricket up to the standard required for a first-class match, I mean, and you know it."

"I don't know it," said Frampton. "I know the Modern side produces better cricketers than the other side, though Bulkeley didn't think so in his time."

"Oh, come out into the open!" said Lumsden. "Now Knowles is captain, the Classical side is to be left in the shade. That's it."

"Not at all," said Knowles smoothly. "You remember what Bulkeley used to say. In matters affecting the School, we must forget that there are two sides to Rookwood, and think only of the school."

"That's right enough."

"Well, that's what I'm doing. Bulkeley worked on that principle, and it always led him to select the majority of players from the Classical side. It just happened that way, of course. Working on the same principle, I happen to find the best men on the Modern side."

"Only you don't find the best men there; you find a set of crocks."

"I might have said the same to Bulkeley, in his time. I certainly thought so," said Knowles calmly. "The fact is, since you force me to speak plainly, I'm not satisfied with Classical cricket."

"What?"

"I want to see a general improvement in your form," went on Knowles. "I want to see you stick to practice, and buck up generally. When you produce men fit to play for Rookwood, I'll play them with pleasure. Until then I've got to win matches somehow with the material I've got in hand. That's how the matter stands."

Knowles spoke with perfect gravity, though the effect was somewhat spoiled by the lurking grins of his two comrades.

The Classical seniors stared at him almost open-mouthed.

Knowles' statement was so directly contrary to the facts, that it quite took their breath away.

"So—so that's how you look at it, is it?" gasped Jones major, at last.

"Yes, that's it."

"Then we may as well get out. Come on, you fellows!"

"We protest!" said Hansom.

Knowles nodded.

"I will make a note of your protest," he replied.

"And you are going to play that team of duds all the same?"

"I am going to play the Rookwood First, if that is what you mean."

"Then I'm dashed if I'll play in a team that goes out hunting for a thumping licking," exclaimed Jones major angrily.

"If you choose to resign your place, of course you are at liberty to do so," said Knowles unmoved. "I daresay I can fill it—we've got plenty of good men in this House. Only don't say it was my

doing, to make the First Eleven entirely Modern. The responsibility for that will be yours."

Jones major strode out of the study without replying.

His companions followed him.

Knowles had them in a cleft stick, as it were.

The Classical players could either share in the match, foredoomed to defeat, or they could resign, and put it in Knowles' power to say that defeat was brought about by their desertion.

They were breathing hard as they crossed the quad back to the school-house.

Knowles smiled as the door closed.

"I don't think our dear friends got much change out of me," he remarked.

"Not much!" grinned Frampton. "By gad, this is like Bulkeley's time over again, but with the boot on the other leg!"

And Catesby chuckled.

**The 3rd Chapter.**  
**Tubby Muffin Has His Suspicions.**

Tubby Muffin insinuated himself into the end study, where the Fistical Four were starting their preparation.

Tubby ought to have been at prep himself, but he was apparently putting it off, as he often did, sometimes with dire results to himself when he had to deal with Mr. Bootles in the morning.

"I say, Jimmy—" he began.

Jimmy waved a hand at him.

"Can't you see I'm busy? Buzz!"

"Clear!" grunted Lovell.

"Scat!" said Raby.

"Absquatulate!" howled Newcome.

Tubby Muffin remained entirely unmoved by those four objurgations, all delivered at once.

He only waited for silence, and recommenced:

"I say, Jimmy, Catesby's gone out!"

"Bother Catesby! What the dickens does it matter to us whether a blessed Modern bouncer stays in or goes out?" snapped Jimmy. "Let a fellow work!"

"But I say—"

"Go and do your prep, you fat duffer! You'll have Bootles on your track in the morning!"

"Never mind prep now," said Tubby. "Catesby's gone out, I tell you! It's a jolly good chance for one of you fellows to nip into his study!"

Jimmy looked up from his work at last and stared at the fat Classical.

"What on earth should anybody nip into Catesby's study for, you owl?" he demanded. "Have you gone off your rocker?"

"I've got a strong suspicion—"

"Bow-wow!"

"That he's a food-hog!"

"Rats!"

"Then what is it he keeps in his desk?" demanded Tubby.

"Eh? Any old thing, I suppose!"

"I mean that big mahogany desk in his study," said Muffin eagerly. "He keeps it locked, and always takes the key out."

"He may be afraid of a fat, little, inquisitive beast nosing among his papers!" remarked Raby caustically.

"His fag's noticed it—in fact, he told me," said Tubby, unheeding. "One day Catesby found him near the desk, and cuffed him. Taverner wasn't going to touch his old desk, but Catesby cuffed him. He thought he was. Looks suspicious, don't it?"

"Oh, rot!"

"You see, Catesby never used to keep that desk locked."

"How do you know?"

"His fag says so. Taverner says the matches used to be kept in that desk, and he used to get them when he was going to light a fire for Catesby. Well, all of a sudden Catesby took to keeping it locked. Why should he? The key used to stick in the lock, but now Catesby wears it on his watchchain. He don't keep papers in it. It's never opened. Taverner knows that."

"And how does Taverner know that?" asked Newcome.

"He was rather curious about it, you see," grinned Tubby, "so I put him up to a dodge. He stuck some wax in the keyhole. It's never been disturbed, though it was a week ago. Catesby never unlocks that desk. Yet he's awfully careful about the key. He had a ring made specially to keep it on his watchchain. 'Tain't a key you'd wear on a chain, neither. It's rather big and clumsy, and must be awkward on a chain."

Tubby Muffin paused and looked inquiringly at the Fistical Four.

Evidently the Paul Pry of Rookwood considered that he had strong grounds for suspicion.

"What do you fellows think?" he asked.

"I think you'd better mind your own business, and let Catesby's desk alone!" said Lovell gruffly.

"But he's hiding something in it!" urged Tubby. "What can he be hiding there if not grub? He's a hoarder, you bet!"

"Nonsense!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Don't you think so, Jimmy?"

"No, I don't!"

"But he's hiding something there!" urged Tubby. "Isn't it plain enough?"

"Rats!"

"It's grub, right enough!" said Tubby with conviction. "Couldn't be anything else. Something he's putting away for a rainy day, you know. That's against

the law. I say, what a lark to scoff it, and leave him to find the desk empty when he goes to take it out—what?"

"You fat burglar!" said Lovell.

"Well, hoarders ought to be stopped!" urged Tubby. "I suggest one of you fellows going there. You could burst the desk open by—by accident, you know."

"I'll burst you, not by accident, if you don't mizzle!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly. "Buzz off, you fat Hun!"

"But I say—"

Lovell grasped the inkpot, and Tubby Muffin rolled hastily out of the end study without finishing his remarks.

The Fistical Four were not to be enlisted as amateur crackmen, whether Stephen Catesby was a food-hog or not.

"I say, that's jolly queer, all the same," remarked Newcome, as Lovell set down the inkpot. "Why should Catesby bother so much over his old desk. Looks as if Tubby is right."

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"I can guess what's in that desk," he answered.

"You can!" ejaculated Newcome.

"Yes."

"What the dickens is it, then?"

"Papers!" said Jimmy.

"But how do you know?"

"Don't you remember the day we were at Woodend?" said Jimmy, with a touch of impatience. "Catesby met his uncle there, and the old Johnny gave him a bundle of papers to mind. Ten to one it's that that's in the desk."

"I remember now," said Lovell, with a nod. "I'd forgotten. That was jolly queer, too. It puzzled me at the time."

"Not our business."

"No; that's so. But it was queer. I wonder what Catesby would say if he knew we knew!" said Lovell, with a grin.

"Just as well he doesn't. He would be down on us, though we couldn't help knowing, and as his pal is captain of Rookwood now he could make it warm for us," said Jimmy Silver. "Not a word about it. They want to keep it dark, according to what we heard them say. And it's not our bizcany. Pile in, or we shan't get done."

And the Fistical Four resumed their prep.

But Tubby Muffin was not thinking of prep.

The thought of Stephen Catesby's locked desk haunted him.

Tubby Muffin knew nothing of that mysterious meeting between the Modern prefect and his uncle, which Jimmy Silver & Co. had accidentally witnessed.

The only conclusion he could come to was that Catesby was concealing a secret store of food in the mahogany desk, all the more because Tubby's thoughts and dreams ran continually upon food.

The thought of that possible supply was so enticing to the fat Classical that he made up his mind at last to risk it himself, having failed to interest the Fistical Four in the matter.

With great caution Tubby made his way into Mr. Manders' House, and as most of the Modern fellows were at preparation at that hour he succeeded in reaching Catesby's study unobserved.

With bated breath the fat Classical tiptoed into the study.

It was in darkness.

Tubby groped his way to the desk in the far corner and struck a match.

His eyes lingered on the desk, but he tried in vain to force the locked lid.

His glance wandered to the poker in the grate, and he wondered whether he could risk it.

Certainly, if there was a food-hoard in the desk, Catesby wouldn't venture to make a fuss about finding his desk burst.

But if there wasn't—

The match went out, Tubby standing undecided.

The thought of food so near at hand made him feel ravenous.

He struck another match, his fat mind almost made up.

There was a step in the passage, and the door opened.

"Hallo! You're in, Catesby?" It was Tresham of the Modern Sixth. "Hallo! What—"

Tubby dropped the match in terror.

Tresham entered the study, switching on the electric light.

He stared sternly at the palpitating Fourth-Former.

"You young sweep, what are you up to?" he exclaimed. "What are you doing at that desk?"

"N-n-nothing!" stammered Tubby. "I—I wasn't touching it, you know. I—"

"What did you come here for?"

"N-nothing! I—I—"

Tresham grasped him by the collar.

"This way!" he said grimly.

"I—I say— Yaroooh!" roared Tubby. The Modern senior spun him out of the study, and planted a heavy boot behind him.

Tubby Muffin went down the passage as if he had been shot from a catapult.

Tresham burst into a roar of laughter as he went.

Tubby Muffin did not laugh; he roared in quite another way, and fled for his life.

**The 4th Chapter.**  
**Dark Doubts.**

"Well, Stephen?"

Mr. James Catesby removed the cigar from his mouth, regarding his nephew with a somewhat curious look.

There was a troubled expression on Catesby's face.

"You wished to see me, Stephen," continued the City gentleman. "I have not had time to come down before. I have been rather busy, owing to the unfortunate happenings at the bank."

"I understand that, uncle. But why couldn't you come to Rookwood to see me, as you used to do?"

"There are reasons, Stephen, why I do not wish to visit you at present."

"Is it anything to do with the bundle of papers you gave me to mind for you the other week, uncle?"

Mr. Catesby looked very sharply at his nephew.

"Hush!" he muttered.

"There's nobody to hear us here," said Catesby.

Uncle and nephew had stopped in the dusky lane, a little distance outside Coombe.

"You cannot be too careful, my boy. A great deal depends upon it."

"You have never told me what that bundle contains, uncle."

"Important legal papers," said Mr. Catesby.

"Yes. But—but—"

"My dear nephew, do not trouble your mind about them," said Mr. Catesby. "Is there anything else you wish to ask me?"

Stephen Catesby was silent, but it was evident that he was troubled.

The elder man's sharp eyes narrowed as he watched his nephew's face in the dusk.

"Bulkeley has left Rookwood?" he said suddenly.

"Yes. His father—"

"Mr. Bulkeley is on bail, but under close supervision, I believe," said the City gentleman.

"I understand that you believe in his innocence, uncle?"

"I try to do so, at all events, Stephen. I feel bound to defend my partner until he is actually condemned by the law."

"Is he guilty, uncle?"

"That I cannot say until his trial has taken place."

"Then—then he is going to be tried?"

"Certainly. He is now remanded on bail."

Mr. Catesby lighted another cigar.

"I've only heard imperfectly what happened at the bank, uncle," said Catesby at last. "As I heard it, a number of bonds were missing."

"About twenty thousand pounds' worth, Stephen. A large sum."

"They were taken away—"

"From the bank safe, yes."

"Why should Mr. Bulkeley be suspected of taking them?"

"Really, there seems little room for doubt," said Mr. Catesby, still watching his nephew closely. "Mr. Bulkeley had the key to the bank safe."

"But you are the junior partner, uncle; you had a key, too?"

"Quite so. But it happens that I was on business in Scotland at the time, and when I left I placed my key in Mr. Bulkeley's charge for safety," explained Mr. Catesby. "It was during my absence in Scotland that the bank was entered, and the safe opened with a key and the bonds abstracted. The night watchman was attacked from behind, and stricken senseless; and a heavy cane, the property of Mr. Bulkeley, was found lying near the safe the next morning. Apparently he had laid it down when opening the safe, and had forgotten to take it up afterwards. However, I trust he may be able to clear himself."

"And the bonds have not been found?"

"No."

"He denies knowing anything about them?"

"He protests his innocence, of course. I sincerely hope he will be able to prove it."

There was a slight infection of mockery in Mr. Catesby's tone, involuntary, but quite noticeable.

Catesby looked at him quickly.

"Uncle, I don't know whether you're aware what happened at Rookwood—why Bulkeley left. The police suspected that his father might have put the stolen property in his charge, and a detective came down and searched Bulkeley's quarters."

"Yes, I was aware of that."

"All the fellows back up Bulkeley, but he felt that he couldn't remain at Rookwood after it."

"I suppose so."

Catesby's lips opened again, but closed. There was something weighing on his mind, but it was something to which he did not care to give utterance.

His uncle regarded him quietly through the smoke-wreaths of the cigar.

"Have you nothing else to say to me, Stephen?"

"N-no."

"You have said very little, considering that you asked me to come down specially to see you," said Mr. Catesby sharply.

"I—I—"

"Well?"

"Nothing."

Mr. Catesby drew a deep breath.

"My dear Stephen, you must not think too much about matters that do not concern you," he said quietly. "Don't worry over the affair in any way. It is not your business, you know."

"I don't; only—"

"Only what?"

"Nothing," muttered the Rookwood prefect.

"Really, you are rather mysterious, Stephen," said Mr. Catesby sharply. "But I will not ask you to explain yourself further. Perhaps you have some little troubles of your own on your mind. Are you in need of money?"

"That's an old need with me, uncle."

"Well, you have a kind uncle to draw upon," said Mr. Catesby, laughing. "I put a five-pound note in my pocket-book for you, Stephen."

"You're very kind."

"You are my favourite nephew, my boy, and so long as I am prosperous you will never want," said Mr. Catesby.

He opened the pocket-book, and Catesby took the crisp fiver in his fingers.

But his face was still heavy and troubled.

"By the way, you have never mentioned those papers to anyone?" asked Mr. Catesby carelessly.

"You told me not to, uncle."

"And you have not done so?"

"No."

"Where do you keep them?"

"In the old mahogany desk in my study."

"And the key?"

"I wear it on my watchchain."

"Good. You cannot be too careful. If those papers were lost, I might get the worst of a law suit on a future occasion."

"Oh!" said Catesby, his face clearing a little. "They are really legal papers, then—something to do with a law suit?"

"Precisely."

"I should think they would be safer in a bank than in the desk in my study at Rookwood, uncle."

"I am the best judge of that, Stephen. In a few weeks I hope to be able to relieve you of your charge. Until then keep the matter secret."

"I will, uncle."

James Catesby looked at his watch.

"You have nothing else to ask me, Stephen?"

"Nothing, uncle."

"Then I will say good-bye. I have to take the next up train. Do not mention that I have visited you."

"Very well, uncle."

They parted, the City gentleman hurrying into the village.

Stephen Catesby took his way in the direction of Rookwood with a clouded brow.

There was a thought—a suspicion—lurking in the back of his mind that filled him with uneasiness, almost with fear.

He strove to dismiss it, but it would linger.

What were the papers that his uncle had handed him within twenty-four hours, as he knew, of the robbery of the bonds at the bank in London?

Was it possible—

The bare possibility was so terrifying that Catesby did not care to think of it.

He preferred to tell himself, and to try to believe, that it was impossible— incredible.

But his mind was still troubled when he came back to Rookwood and let himself in with the prefect's key at the side-gate.

There was a light burning in his study when he reached it.

Tresham of the Sixth was there.

"Waiting for you, old man!" said Tresham, as Catesby came in. "You seem to have forgotten that we were going to have the gloves on this evening."

"Sorry!" said Catesby. "I had forgotten, somehow."

"By the way, do you keep anything of value in that old desk?" asked Tresham, jerking his thumb towards the mahogany desk in the corner.

Catesby started violently.

"That—that desk! What do you mean?" he panted.

Tresham looked at him in astonishment.

"Hallo! Keep your wool on!" he said. "I was only going to tell you that I found Muffin of the Fourth nosing about the desk when I looked in for you some time ago."

"That inquisitive little beast! What did he want?"

"He was nosing over the desk. I kicked him out of the study," said Tresham.

Catesby crossed hurriedly to the desk and examined it.

He breathed more freely as he found that it was intact.

A fear oppressed him for a moment that the secret papers had been brought to light.

"How could Muffin know—?" He checked himself.

"How could he know what?" asked Tresham.

"Oh, nothing! I mean, what could he have been nosing about that desk for?" said Catesby. "There's nothing of value in it."

"I thought I'd mention it in case there was," said Tresham, with a smile. "Now, if you're ready, we'll go down to the gym."

Stephen Catesby left the study with his friend, his brow darker than ever.

The prying Tubby Muffin haunted him.

What did Muffin know? What could he know? What could he suspect?

It was some time before Catesby of the Sixth was able to dismiss the matter from his mind.

**The 5th Chapter.**  
**The St. Jim's Match.**

Jimmy Silver & Co. started for Big Side immediately after dinner on the following day.

They were looking very serious.

Though the First Eleven match was not, in their eyes, so important as their own matches, they still admitted that it was a matter of importance.

And they had no desire to see Rookwood First "walked-over" by Kildare and his merry men from St. Jim's.

But that was what they fully expected to see.

How could a team composed almost entirely of Moderns beat any lot that could play cricket at all?

That was the question the Classics asked themselves, and to which they could find only one answer.

Most of the Classics agreed that Knowles was simply chucking the match away for the sake of Modern swank.

The view taken by the Moderns was quite different.

Tommy Dodd & Co., the heroes of the Modern Fourth, opined that Rookwood was in for a successful season, now that the Modern side was really getting a chance in the games.

It was House patriotism that led to Tommy Dodd taking this view. It really was not founded on the facts.

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But Tommy Dodd and the rest held that view with great obstinacy. "Hallo, Duddy!" said Jimmy Silver, as he arrived on the cricket-ground and found the Moderns there. "Nice prospect for to-day—what?"

"Ripping!" agreed Tommy Dodd. "Faith, and we're going to see some cricket entirely!" said Tommy Doyle sturdily. "Real cricket, I mane!"

"I don't think!" snapped Lovell. "No need to tell us that, old scout," remarked Tommy Dodd kindly. "We know you don't. You can't, in fact!"

"Look here, you cheeky Modern chump!" roared Lovell belligerently. "Order!" said Kit Erroll, with a laugh. "Leave Tommy his opinion. He'll change it fast enough when the play begins."

"Well, that's so," agreed Lovell. "Rats!" said Tommy Dodd. "What a team!" said Jimmy Silver, with an extremely disparaging look at the First Eleven, who were standing by the pavilion. "Two good men—Jones major and Neville. Carthew's not much good."

"What do you expect of a Classical?" inquired Tommy Cook. "But the rest. What a crew!" said Raby.

"Silly ass!" answered Tommy Dodd. "The Classics have had the games in their hands too long. Now we're going to see some cricket, now that the Moderns have got a look-in."

"I say, Jimmy!" Tubby Muffin tugged at Jimmy's sleeve, and the captain of the Fourth looked down at him. "What is it, Tubby?"

"Catesby's playing in the match." "I know that, porpoise!"

"I say," whispered Muffin, "what a chance to nip into his study—Yaroooh!" Tubby Muffin sat violently on the ground, and finished his whisper with a loud yell.

Jimmy Silver had heard enough of his scheme for burgling Catesby's study in search of a mythical food-hoard. The fat Classical squirmed away and approached Conroy & Co.

But the three Colonials were evidently not jumping at the chance Tubby Muffin pointed out to them. Conroy took Tubby by one fat ear, spun him round, and started him running.

And Tubby gave it up. "Here comes St. Jim's!" said Mornington. "They look a rippin' lot!"

There was a cheer for the St. Jim's cricketers. Jimmy Silver knew a good many of them by sight, having seen them when over at St. Jim's for the junior matches with Tom Merry's team.

Kildare, their captain, was a mighty cricketer; and Monteith, Darrell, Langton, Rushden, Lefevre, and the rest looked very fit and in great form.

They were a team that required the best men in Rookwood to be put into the field against them, and even the Moderns could hardly maintain that Knowles' eleven represented the best in Rookwood.

Knowles seemed to have no doubts, however. He was smiling and confident.

A victory over St. Jim's would certainly have been a great triumph for Cecil Knowles, and a proof of his contention that the Moderns had never been given a fair show under George Bulkeley's rule.

But it was a very great question whether he could win such a victory with his present team.

Knowles himself was a first-class man, and Catesby and Frampton were good; but most of the others could have been replaced with advantage from the ranks of the Classical seniors.

Knowles won the toss, and elected to bat, and he opened the innings for Rookwood with Frampton.

Kildare and his men went into the field. "What price duck's eggs to-day?" growled Lovell.

"Cheap!" said Jimmy Silver. "And Tommy Dodd snorted. Darrell bowled the first over for St. Jim's against Knowles.

The Moderns cheered loudly as Knowles dealt with the bowling. The Modern captain was certainly at the top of his form, and at such times he was decidedly good.

Jimmy Silver felt his hopes rise as he watched him. Angry as he was with Knowles, Jimmy could have tolerated his triumph if only he could have bagged a victory for Rookwood School.

Catesby detached himself from the group of batsmen waiting their turn, and came to the ropes towards the juniors. He called to Tommy Dodd.

"Dodd!" "Yes, Catesby." "Run into the House and see whether any fag is messing about my study!" said Catesby. "If there is one there, lather him."

"Certainly!" said Tommy, in great surprise. Tommy Dodd was loth to leave the opening match, but he had to obey a prefect.

He ran off to Mr. Manders' House. Catesby rejoined the batsmen, but his glance was turned incessantly towards the distant House.

The Fistical Four exchanged glances. They were well aware of what Catesby was uneasy about, little as the Modern prefect guessed it.

A few minutes later Tubby Muffin came out of Mr. Manders' House at top speed, with Tommy Dodd behind him, dribbling him as if he were a very fat football. Tubby fled to the School House for refuge, and Tommy Dodd came back to the cricket-ground, grinning, and rather out of breath.

Knowles' wicket was down for twenty-five runs. It was a good innings, against good bowling, and Catesby was called in to take his captain's place.

"Catesby will never stand that bowling," said Mornington sagely. "Morny was right. After a few overs, Catesby's wicket fell to Langton of St. Jim's.

A few minutes later Frampton was caught out by Kildare. The Rookwood score stood at fifty. "A jolly good beginning!" said Tommy Dodd, with a defiant look at Jimmy Silver and the disparaging Classics.

"But what price the ending?" snorted Lovell. "Look out for the procession!" And a "procession" it soon proved to be, and Jimmy Silver's misgivings were more than realised.

**The 6th Chapter.**

**Something Like a Licking!**

Knowles looked grim as he watched the "procession."

The Rookwood batsmen went to the wickets, and came away—they had little time to stay.

Knowles had set down Neville and Jones major at tenth and eleventh, much to the disgust of the Classics.

After the third wicket fell not a single run was taken till the tenth man went on.

That was Neville. Six batsmen had gone in and gone out, ingloriously. They had no chance against the St. Jim's bowling and fielding.

The Saints, by that time, were grinning. This was not the cricket they had expected at Rookwood, and they were already looking on the great match as a walk-over.

The game did not wake up again till Neville and Jones major were at the wickets, doing their best for Rookwood. The Modern crowd looked on grimly.

As the runs piled up, the faces of the Rookwood crowd grew longer and longer. Lonsdale of the Sixth fairly groaned as he watched.

"Couldn't I bowl him, Hanson?" he said to the Fifth-Former, almost in despairing tones. "They've put on Catesby. Now, can't I bowl Catesby's head off?"

"You can, old man," said Hanson. "And can't I bat Catesby's head off?" "You can!" groaned Lonsdale. "I tell you what, Hanson—that man Kildare will be not out, as well as first in. Knowles can't beat him. They'll declare."

"What a game!" grunted Lovell. "Bet you they'll declare!" grinned Mornington. "Why, they could keep it up till dark, if they liked! Knowles is the only really good man, beside Neville and Jones, and he won't give Neville the bowling."

Cecil Knowles seemed quite determined on that. But when the St. Jim's score amounted to a hundred runs for two wickets, the Classics in the crowd lost all patience, and they fairly yelled at Knowles.

"Give Neville the ball!" "Yah!" "Let Neville have a chance!" "Neville can bowl! Yah!"

Knowles flushed with rage, but he could not resist the appeal in which many of the Moderns were joining.

Neville was put on to bowl. Matters looked up a little for Rookwood then; two wickets falling quickly. But even Neville could not touch Kildare.

The runs went on piling up. It was Jones major who caught Kildare out at last, amid thunderous cheers of great relief from the Rookwood crowd.

Jimmy Silver & Co. shouted till they were almost husky. "Well caught!" "Bravo, Jones!" "Good man, Jonesy!"

"That was a good catch," said Tommy

Knowles went out after his twentieth run, and Neville secured only fifteen. Catesby was down for six, and Carthew for two.

Frampton had had luck, and was dismissed for a duck's egg. Rookwood still wanted seventeen to tie, of which Jones major contributed eleven.

But Lister added only one; and after that there was once more a "procession." Jimmy Silver looked at his chums with feelings too deep for words.

"They won't have to bat again, even!" he gasped. "No fear!" said Lovell gloomily. "What rot!" snapped Tommy Dodd fiercely. "There's Braye to go yet, and Tresham, and Hoke!"

"Tuppence the lot!" said Mornington. "Fathead!" "What a merry job-lot!" said Oswald. "It's all over bar shouting. Why don't those Moderns chuck it and go home?"

"They might as well!" grinned Smythe of the Shell. Smythe was right. The rest of the story was duck's eggs, and the innings closed for fifty-five.

Five were wanted to tie, to make St. Jim's bat again, but five hundred might just as well have been wanted; they were not to be had.

St. Jim's had won the match with an innings to spare. Knowles' face was like thunder. He was not a good loser, and this defeat, too, was especially humiliating.

It was a defeat of his plans and schemes, as well as a cricket defeat. It was seldom that Rookwood First had ever experienced such a crushing reverse on the cricket-field, and it was impossible to deny that the reverse was due to Knowles' selection of the players, and to that alone.

The crowd broke up in utter disgust. Kildare and his men were smiling when they started on their homeward journey. They could not help it. They had been very keen on that match,

Thump! Bang! Thump! The sudden din from the dusky quadrangle startled him out of a very unpleasant reverie. He stepped to the window, and looked out.

Then his glance became fixed, with surprise and rage. Outside, in the dusk, a crowd was gathering.

Foremost among them were the Fistical Four, of the Fourth. They were supported by the Colonial Co., and Oswald, Flynn, Rawson, Mornington, Erroll—in fact, nearly all the Classical Fourth.

Smythe of the Shell was with them, with several more Shell fellows, and Algy Silver and a mob of Third Form fags.

And among them, too, a good many Modern juniors could be seen. It was not wholly a Classical demonstration.

The Fistical Four bore a banner aloft. It was made of a sheet stretched between two poles. On the sheet words were daubed in paint with a brush, in huge capitals, and several fellows carried electric torches, of which they flashed the light on the banner, so that everybody could read.

And the inscription on the banner, though brief, was to the point. It ran: "WHO CHUCKS AWAY MATCHES? KNOWLES! WHO'S A SILLY ASS? KNOWLES! WHO'S GOT TO RESIGN? KNOWLES! RESIGN! RESIGN! RESIGN!"

Knowles ground his teeth as he looked. He realised that this was a demonstration entirely for his benefit.

This was one of the first results of his policy. The seniors had not taken action yet, though doubtless they would do so.

But the juniors were not so slow to express their feelings. Thump, thump, thump! Bang!

Conroy was beating a tin can with a cricket-stump, and Oswald was thumping a pair of saucer-pans together in the style of cymbals.

The demonstrators intended to let all Rookwood know what was on. They did not mean to leave Knowles or anyone else in the dark as to their opinions.

Knowles' face was white with rage as he threw up his window. A shout greeted his appearance there. "There he is!" "Yah!" "Booh!"

"Who chucks away matches?" "Resign!" "Resign! Resign! Resign!" roared the crowd.

"Clear off!" shouted Knowles. "By gad, I'll—I'll—I'll—" He choked with wrath.

"Yah!" "Resign!" Never in the history of Rookwood had a captain of the school been treated with such contumely before.

It was unheard of. Knowles had brought it on himself! This was the outcome of his first exercise of authority; the captaincy of the school was held up to derision!

For a few moments he stood at the window, almost choking. Then he grabbed a cane from the table and rushed downstairs.

A yell greeted him as he rushed out of the house, cane in hand. "Yah!" "Resign!" "Lash, lash!" "Yaroooh!" "Collar him!"

Then followed an unprecedented scene. The captain of Rookwood was collared and hustled on all sides, his cane jerked away, and himself bumped down on the ground.

He lay there gasping for breath, while the demonstration marched away at last, perhaps feeling that they had made their meaning clear.

"Ow, ow! Ooof!" gasped Knowles, as he sat up dazedly. Catesby came and gave him a hand up. "I—I—I'll smash them!" gasped Knowles, as he scrambled to his feet.

"I'll—I'll—Ow! Groogh! Laying hands on the captain of the school, by Jove! Ow! I'll—I'll—I'll—" "Better come in!" said Catesby.

Knowles gave him a savage look, but on second thoughts he decided that the advice was good. And he went in.

The exercise of authority had not brought much satisfaction, so far, to the new captain of Rookwood. In the end study, on the Classical Side, the Fistical Four chuckled loud and long.

"Knowles knows what Rookwood thinks of him now!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "I think we made it plain." "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "I think we did!"

"Captain of Rookwood!" grinned Raby. "Captain of Colney Hatch! Knowles won't remain captain long if he doesn't change his ways! We've given him a hint."

"Ha, ha, ha!" And the Fistical Four sat down to their prep that evening in a mood of satisfaction. Rookwood was not to go to the dogs under its new captain if Jimmy Silver & Co. could help it, and they meant to do their best.

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**

**"BROUGHT TO LIGHT!"**

By OWEN CONQUEST. DON'T MISS IT!



Knowles ground his teeth as he looked at the words on the banner held by the juniors. He realised that this was a demonstration entirely for his benefit, and that it was one of the first results of his policy.

The collapse of Knowles' new men dismayed them. Even Tommy Dodd was silent and dismayed.

The most patriotic Modern had to admit that in Bulkeley's time no Rookwood First team had ever collapsed in this deplorable style.

Even Tommy Dodd murmured to his chums that perhaps Knowles had overdone it a little.

The opinion of the Classics was that Knowles had over-done it a lot. Probably Knowles himself realised it by this time, now that it was too late.

He had given more attention to exercising his new powers, and humiliating the rival Classics, than to selecting a winning team.

Now he was getting the result with a vengeance. It was not much consolation to him that Neville and Jones major were making a great stand in their innings for Rookwood.

Both were Classics, and their stand was only too plain a hint of what might have happened if he had played more of Bulkeley's men.

The two Classical seniors brought the score up to ninety between them before Jones major was caught out by Monteith, Neville carrying out his bat.

"All down for ninety!" said Mornington. "Why don't you Moderns cheer? Cheer, you beggars!"

But the Moderns did not feel like cheering. The innings had ended very early, and it had ended badly.

And when the St. Jim's men went to the wickets they showed that their batting was quite equal to their bowling and fielding. Kildare remained at the wicket while other batsmen came and went, even Knowles' best bowling failing to touch him.

Dodd. "Jolly queer a Classical making a catch like that."

"Lucky there was a Classical to do it!" snorted Lovell. "Not that it makes any difference. The Moderns have lost the match."

"Rot!" answered Tommy, but he spoke without assurance. The most sanguine Rookwooder had to admit that prospects were very dubious for the home team.

At 150 runs, Kildare declared the innings closed, as a good many of the Rookwooders expected him to do.

The opinion among the St. Jim's men was that they would not have to bat again. Knowles was not looking happy.

Even if he made St. Jim's bat again he could scarcely hope to beat their innings. The new captain of Rookwood was already repenting him that he had allowed pride and prejudice to carry him so far.

The match was as good as thrown away, and there would certainly be a reckoning afterwards.

Even on the Modern side there would be serious complaints—the Moderns were not lacking in school patriotism. To exalt his own side, at the expense of losing school matches, was not the conduct they expected even of their own captain.

Knowles opened the Rookwood second innings in a dogged mood, hoping yet to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

He let Neville open the innings with him, with Jones major down third on the list. This was an improvement, and showed that Knowles was beginning to see reason, at least.

The few good men in the Rookwood team put up a great fight. But their opponents' bowling was as good as ever, and their fielding superb.

but they would hardly have taken so much trouble if they had known what it was to be like.

Knowles went to his study in a thunderous mood. He went there alone. Catesby and Frampton had backed up their chief all along the line, but they had not expected this.

And even Knowles' most faithful followers were fed up now. He had realised his long ambition, and had become captain of Rookwood; and in the first exercise of his new authority he had come a "mucker," and he had himself to thank for it—which did not make it any the pleasanter!

**The 7th Chapter.**  
**Plain English.**

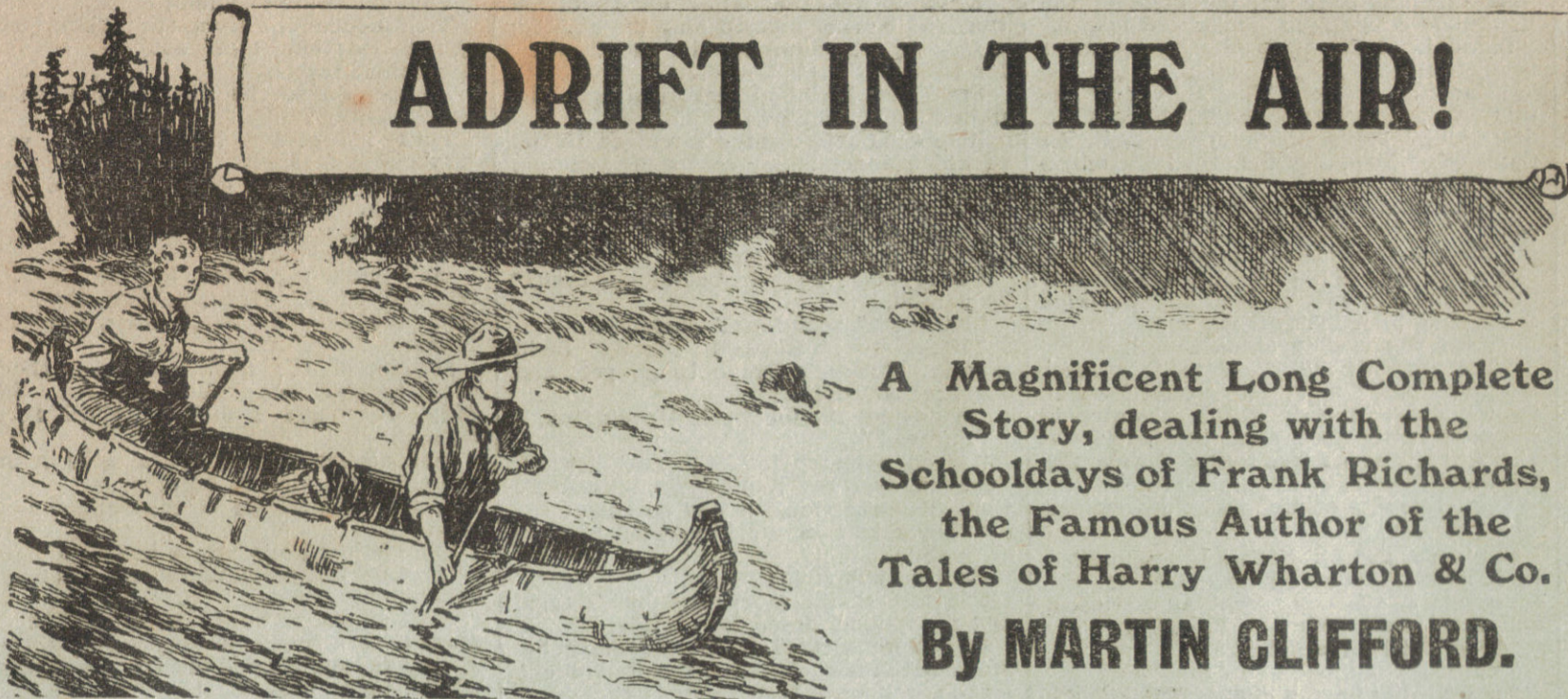
Bang! Knowles started. He was alone in his study, in a gloomy mood.

He rather expected Frampton and Catesby to come in; but they did not. Probably they would have been ready to concert with his plans against the "enemy," but the dissatisfaction on the Modern side was as great as on the Classical side, and Knowles' chums had no idea of further supporting him in the line he had taken.

Knowles' reflections were bitter. To do him justice, he had not quite realised how he was throwing away Rookwood's cricket reputation in his keen desire to score over the rival side, and exercise the authority he had inherited from Bulkeley in spite of Classical criticism and opposition.

He had thought chiefly of having his own way, and humiliating those he regarded as rivals and enemies, and, as far as the match was concerned, he had hoped for the best.

Unfortunately, it was the worst that had happened.



# ADRIFT IN THE AIR!

**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.

### In the Clouds!

"We're in for it!" Bob Lawless broke a long silence with that remark.

Frank Richards nodded, and Vere Beauclerc gave an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

There was no doubt that the chums of Cedar Creek school were "in for it."

Darkness had fallen on the hills and the plains.

Through the deep gloom the runaway balloon drifted on the wind, keeping on, hour after hour, to the north-west, as the wind blew it.

Many a long mile behind lay Cedar Creek school—and somewhere in the great distance was Hiram K. Chowder, the American gentleman to whom the balloon belonged.

Whether Mr. Chowder would ever see his balloon again was a question, and whether Frank Richards & Co. would ever see their homes again was a still more serious question.

Seated in the swinging car, holding on as it rocked in the wind, they had watched plain and hill and forest glide away beneath them.

Long since they had crossed the Fraser River, the last landmark they knew.

Before them lay the boundless North-West, far away the great Cascade Mountains, and beyond them the Pacific slope and the great ocean.

"The jay!" went on Bob morosely.

"What did he want to get blown away in his silly balloon for, and get landed in the Thompson Valley, hay?"

Frank Richards smiled faintly.

"Mr. Chowder couldn't help that, Bob."

"I guess he ought to have helped it," growled Bob. "And I guess we were a set of jays to bother about catching his old balloon for him. And we were a bigger set of jays to get into the blessed car at all. And as for that villain, Gunten, who cut us adrift, I'll make his face look like a clam pie when I get back."

"When!" sighed Frank.

"Oh, we'll get back," said Bob, who had the great gift of never being depressed by any kind of circumstances. "We're not dead yet. If we only had something to eat!"

"If!"

"I've searched round the car," said Beauclerc. "There's nothing to eat—nothing at all in the way of food. Mr. Chowder wasn't provided for a voyage when he went up in this balloon."

"I'm hungry!"

"Same here!" said Frank feelingly.

"Still, it's a lark!" said Bob.

"I don't feel very larky just now."

"I wouldn't mind, only they'll be anxious about us at home," said Bob, with a cloud on his brow. "They may think we've come to harm."

"Pretty sure to, I should say."

"That's rotten."

"Beastly!"

"Still, they will be chippy when we get safe back," said Bob, looking on the bright side again. "And it's no end of a lark to be carried off in a runaway balloon."

"M-m-m-m-m!"

"It's the first time a balloon's ever been seen in this part of the country," said Bob. "We're the first balloonists in the Thompson Valley."

"Oh, rats!" said Frank. "I jolly well wish we were in the Thompson Valley now, instead of in the balloon. Thompson must be a hundred miles behind by this time."

"A good bit more than that, I guess," said Bob coolly. "I don't know the rate this thing travels at, but there's been a strong wind behind us for twelve hours or more. We shall see the Cascade Mountains in the morning, you can bet your boots!"

"And if we pass over them—"

Bob grinned.

"The Pacific!" he said. "After all, you've never seen the Pacific Ocean, Franky. It's a great sight."

"I'd rather not see it from a balloon," growled Frank. "You duffer, if we should drift as far as that, we're done for. I suppose you don't think the contraption could keep on as far as Japan, do you?"

"That would be a lark, if you like."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Well, I'm going to sleep," said Bob, yawning. "No good ever came of worrying and grousing. Wake me up if we fall and break our necks, will you?"

"Fathead!" said Frank, laughing.

Bob Lawless rolled himself in the rugs in the bottom of the car.

It was weary work, sitting in the car and watching the blank darkness below. The swelling mass of the great gas

envelope hid the stars from their sight overhead.

It was safe enough to lie down in the car; it was swinging with a gentle motion as the balloon rolled onward.

Deep and steady breathing announced in a few minutes that the cheery Bob was fast asleep.

Frank Richards looked down on him with a smile.

"May as well do the same, Beau," he remarked.

"I was just thinking so," said Beauclerc. "Nothing to keep awake for."

"There's a rug apiece, anyway," said Frank. "It's jolly cold up here. I think I can sleep, though."

The two schoolboys joined Bob Lawless on the floor of the car.

Frank Richards, however, took the precaution to run a rope across the car, over them, in case of dangerous oscillations.

Then he settled down to sleep.

Through the darkness of the night the balloon drifted onward.

The three schoolboys slept soundly.

They were fatigued, and hunger could not keep them awake.

They slept on through long hours of darkness.

The balloon drifted on.

When Frank Richards opened his eyes at last he blinked in dazing sunlight.

It was morning—the bright, keen morning of Canadian spring.

Frank sat up in the car.

For a moment or two he hardly remembered where he was, and he expected to see round him the familiar walls of his room at the Lawless Ranch.

But recollection returned at once.

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Frank.

He threw off the rug and scrambled to his feet.

It was chilly, but the sun was growing warmer.

Bob Lawless yawned and sat up.

"Hallo! Where are we?" he murmured.

"Goodness knows!" answered Frank. He looked over the rim of the car.

Rocky uplands, intersected by streams, patched with dark forest, met his eyes, and in the distance, in the west, great mountains barred the horizon.

"Oh, I'm hungry!" said Bob.

"No breakfast this morning," remarked Beauclerc.

"Looks like it. There's one comfort, though," said Bob, "no school to-day."

Evidently Bob Lawless, at least, was determined to keep an eye on the silver lining to the cloud.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### Landed at Last!

Frank Richards gazed downward at the vast panorama outspread below the drifting balloon.

It was a magnificent sight, one of the wildest and most picturesque regions of British Columbia.

There was no sign of settlements. All was wild, untrodden, as if fresh from Nature's hand.

Bob Lawless jerked his thumb to the west.

"The Cascade Mountains," he said. "There's no other range that size between the Fraser and the sea."

Frank whistled.

"Then we're a good way from home," he said.

"We've got to get something to eat," said Bob. "I shall begin on one of you if we don't get something soon. We've got to go down somehow, Franky."

Frank knitted his brows thoughtfully.

"There don't seem to be any settlements," he said. "Not much good landing there, Bob, if we could do it. We couldn't walk home, hundreds of miles, I suppose. And there's nothing to eat."

Bob grunted.

"Put me down there, and I'll soon find something to eat," he answered. "I wish I had my gun here. But I can snare any animal that ever hopped or crawled. And there's plenty of game, at any rate. But how are we going down? That valve thing won't work."

"Suppose we wait till we come in sight of settlements?" asked Beauclerc.

"And suppose we don't sight any till we're carried into the Cascade Mountains?" answered Bob. "It's safe to land hereabouts, anyway. Besides, we can ascend again if we want to by pitching out some of those sacks of sand."

"Yes, that's so."

"We'll try again," said Frank.

Frank took hold of the valve-cord and pulled it.

But the valve was jammed, and did not move.

"Same as before," he said.

"Look here, we've got to work the dashed thing!" said Bob. "Let's all grab it and lug. Something's bound to go!"

Frank and Beauclerc looked very grave.

"The whole contraption might collapse, and let us down with a rush," said Frank. "I don't want to land in a jelly."

"It's a good thousand feet to drop," said Beauclerc.

"But we can't keep in the air for the rest of our natural lives. Let's try it, and chance our luck. Don't I keep on telling you that I'm hungry?" said Bob pathetically.

"I—I suppose we'd better," said Frank.

"You bet!"

"What do you say, Beau?"

"Oh, let's try it!" said Beauclerc.

"All together, then!"

The three schoolboys grasped the valve-cord and tugged, putting all their strength into it.

This time they were successful.

There was a cracking sound, and it was followed by a sudden rush down of the balloon.

"Hold on!" yelled Bob.

They held on for their lives.

The balloon was spinning downwards.

Below them the earth seemed rushing up to meet them.

Thin silver streaks suddenly loomed into streams and creeks, dark patches into great forests.

The sudden descent made them giddy.

Frank caught at the cord again.

It occurred to him that the valve could be closed to make the descent slower.

There were several cords, and which to pull he did not know.

He dragged at them all in turn while the car rushed downward.

Fortunately, the descent was arrested.

Right down to within fifty feet of the solid earth the car rushed, and then it slowed and steadied and floated.

Bob Lawless gasped. Even his face was white.

"I—I guess that was a close call!" he panted.

"We're still going down," said Beauclerc.

"Not so fast, though!" gasped Frank.

"Oh, my hat! I—I don't want to go through that again!"

Under the car the earth was close now.

A green plain lay beneath them, dotted with clumps of trees, and they caught sight of gophers among the grass.

An antelope looked up from a creek where it stood drinking, stared at the balloon, and bolted.

"There's our breakfast, if I had my rifle!" said Bob Lawless regretfully.

"Nothing here but an axe," said Frank. "You'd better get after the next one with the axe, Bob."

"Oh, rats!" answered Bob. "I say, we're landing all right. We shall touch earth in a few minutes."

The balloon was drifting on slowly, and approaching the earth gradually but surely.

It touched at last, but the contact gave it a fresh impetus, and from the bump on

the ground it shot up to a height of fifty feet.

"Sold!" grinned Bob, holding on to the netting. "Next time does it slick!"

But the next time did not do it.

The balloon bumped and rose three times in succession before the car finally touched the ground and rested there, almost on the verge of a silvery creek in a sunny woodland glade.

But it rested at last.

Bob Lawless put one leg over the rim of the great wicker-basket, but Frank caught him hastily by the shoulder.

"Hold on, fathead!"

"What's the row?"

"You don't want to land alone, do you? When your weight's gone the dashed thing will jump up, to a cert, and it mayn't land again for miles!"

Bob whistled.

"Right as rain, Franky!" he said. "I dare say that's how Chowder lost his balloon—jumping out too soon. We've got to fasten the contraption first, somehow. The grapnel's lost."

"There's bound to be a spare one in the car," said Frank.

A hurried search disclosed a big iron hook with a rope attached.

Frank lowered the hook over the side of the car, and caught it in a gnarled root of a tree by the creek.

The rope was fastened to the car.

"All safe now," said Bob. "But I'll run a rope down to that root; that hook might pull loose."

The car was safely held, and Bob jumped out now, with another rope in his hand.

He ran it round the big root that cropped out of the earth, and knotted it securely.

Then he detached the hook and threw it into the car.

"Safely anchored!" he said cheerfully.

"Jump out, chaps!"

Frank and Beauclerc joined him on the greensward, glad enough to stretch their legs again on solid earth.

The balloon, lightened of their weight, strained at the rope, but it firmly held.

There were loops and dents in the gas-envelope, no longer fully distended; but the valve was closed, and ample gas remained to carry the balloon into the clouds if it had broken loose.

"I guess this is better," remarked Bob. "Anybody got any idea where we are?"

"Give it up," answered Frank.

"After all, that's not the important question. Grub comes first," said Bob. "This wood is full of birds, and I know how to cook. You fellows build a fire while I look for game."

And the hungry three were soon busy.

## The 3rd Chapter.

### The Man with the Ear-Rings.

"I guess I feel better!"

Bob Lawless made that remark a couple of hours later.

He was lying on his back in the grass, with his hands beneath his head, staring up at the blue sky, across which a great eagle was winging its flight.

The camp-fire had died down, the sun blazed on the glade, and it was warm.

The three schoolboys had eaten a hearty meal.

It was a primitive one, but they were too hungry to mind that.

Bob Lawless had snared a couple of birds in the wood, and they had been cooked over the fire. Bob was a past-master at that kind of thing.

"Same here!" said Frank Richards. "If it wasn't for the people at home being anxious about us I shouldn't mind how long this lasted. It's better than school, though I like Cedar Creek."

"I've often thought of having a holiday up in the North-West," said Bob. "It's a splendid idea, hunting, fishing, shooting, canoeing—everything! What price coming this way in the summer holidays—not in a balloon, of course!"

"Ripping!" said Frank.

"Good idea!" assented Beauclerc. "I'd like to know where it is, though. It looks as if nobody has ever been here, not even an Indian!"

"Wrong!" said Bob.

"You've not seen anyone?" exclaimed Frank, sitting up.

"No; but I found a track in the wood when I was after the birds," answered Bob. "Somebody has been through these woods last night."

"A Redskin?"

"No; white man."

"How do you know?" asked Frank.

Frank Richards was not yet so well up in Western lore as he afterwards became.

Bob grunted.

"If it was a Redskin it would be a moccasin track," he answered. "It was a boot-track—a white man's boot, and a good size, too. I didn't pay much attention to it. I was after the gophers. But I guess a white man came down to the creek last night, and hoofed it off eastward in the morning. That's the way the trail went."

"I wish he'd stayed to see us," remarked Frank. "He might have given us a tip how to reach some kind of a town."

"The country mayn't be so lonely as it looks," observed Beauclerc. "If there's one white man about there may be others."

"Likely enough; and Redskins, too!"

"I—I suppose the Redskins will be all right if we happen on them," said Frank Richards doubtfully.

"Oh, I reckon so!" replied Bob. "Canadian Indians aren't great on the war-path these days. Of course, one might fall in with a plundering gang in the outlying parts. But they're mostly all right. Hallo!"

He sat up suddenly, shading his eyes with his hand, and looked away through the opening in the trees.

His chums followed his glance.

"A white man!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Not the man who made the track I saw," said Bob. "That galoot was on foot, and this pilgrim is mounted."

The schoolboys watched the stranger as he advanced.

The horseman had suddenly ridden into sight from behind a clump of timber.

He drew rein, staring blankly at the sight of the balloon, and then gave his horse a touch of the spur, and came on at a gallop.

The chums rose to their feet, waiting for his arrival.

They were glad to see a white man in that solitude, but as the horseman came closer their feelings were rather mixed.

He was a young man, with a dark, handsome face, and hair worn rather long in ringlets.

He was dressed in buckskin, with a velvet jacket and high boots, his face shaded by a wide-brimmed Stetson hat.

A glitter under the shadow of the hat puzzled the schoolboys at first, but as the man came nearer they found that the glitter came from ear-rings.

They had seen Mexicans with ear-rings before, but this fellow evidently was not a Mexican, but a Californian.

His face, handsome as it certainly was, was not one to inspire confidence.

There was a rifle attached to his saddle, and the butt of a revolver showed from a holster in his belt, as well as the handle of a knife.

He did not look like a hunter or trapper, or a trader, or a prospector. It was rather difficult to tell what he was.

But one thing could be guessed. Whatever his business was, he was what is called in the West a "bad" man.

His bold, reckless face, and gleaming eyes, the curve of his well-cut lips, told as much.

"By gum!" murmured Bob Lawless. "I guess I'd just as soon not meet that pilgrim. He looks like one of the sports from a frontier camp—a regular dandy, by gum! What can he be doing here?"

The stranger rode up with a clatter of hoofs, and drew rein close by the schoolboys, at the last moment.

He had made a pretence of riding them down, but the three did not budge an inch, standing grimly where they were, and the horse was snorting almost in their faces as the man drew in.

Each of the three was conscious of a feeling of hostility.

"Hallo!" said the horseman, as he halted and stared at the trio.

"Hallo to you!" answered Bob.

"How did you get here?"

Bob pointed to the balloon.

"I guess that beats me," said the horseman, staring at the balloon. "I've seen them down under, but never in this hyer region. I guess I haven't seen a balloon since I lit out from Frisco three years ago."

"There's your chance, then," said Bob gravely. "No charge for looking at it."

The man stared at him.

"Not too much of your lip, youngster!" he said. "I don't take lip from a kid of your left."

"No?" said Bob, with polite inquiry.

"No, sir!"

The dusky-faced man in the ear-rings slid from his horse, and stood for some moments staring at the balloon, and then about him.

There was a peculiar watchfulness in his keen face, and his eyes were never at rest.

"Had your breakfast?" asked Frank Richards, breaking the silence. "We've got a little left, if you haven't."

The Californian smiled.

"I guess I've fed," he said. "I guess I'm looking for a galoot, and I guess your children may have seen him. A galoot about six feet high—wounded, I reckon, and on foot. Have you seen such a critter?"

"We've seen nobody," answered Beauclerc.

"A friend of yours?" asked Frank.

The man grinned, showing a dazzling set of white teeth.

"I guess that's neither here nor there," he replied. "I guess I want to find Bill Lomax, alive or dead. The critter came this way. I calculate he must have struck this creek last sundown. And you've not seen him?"

"No."

The Californian knitted his brows.

His restless eyes watched the boys' faces, as if to read there whether they were speaking the truth.

"Did you say the man was wounded?" asked Bob Lawless very quietly.

"I reckon!"

"How was he wounded?"

The man with the ear-rings showed his white teeth again, in a smile that was not pleasant to see.

"I guess he was standing in front of a six-shooter when it went off, sonny," he answered.

Bob's eyes gleamed.

"Your six-shooter, perhaps?" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps," assented the Californian coolly.

Frank Richards uttered an exclamation.

"You shot him?" he cried.

"I guess, sonny, that the less questions you ask, the better it may be for your health," said the new-comer. "I don't savy where you come from, but if you've been in the camps up and down the Cascade Range, you've maybe heard my name—Alf Carson—you'd hear me spoken of as Handsome Alf."

Frank's lip curled a little.

He had never heard of the man, naturally, but he could guess that "Handsome Alf" enjoyed a certain amount of notoriety, of an unpleasant kind, in his own neighbourhood, and was conceited on the subject.

He was one of those peculiar characters found on the unsettled frontier of a new country, who rejoiced in the reputation of being a "bad" man, and a "hard case."

"Never heard the name—ch?" asked the Californian.

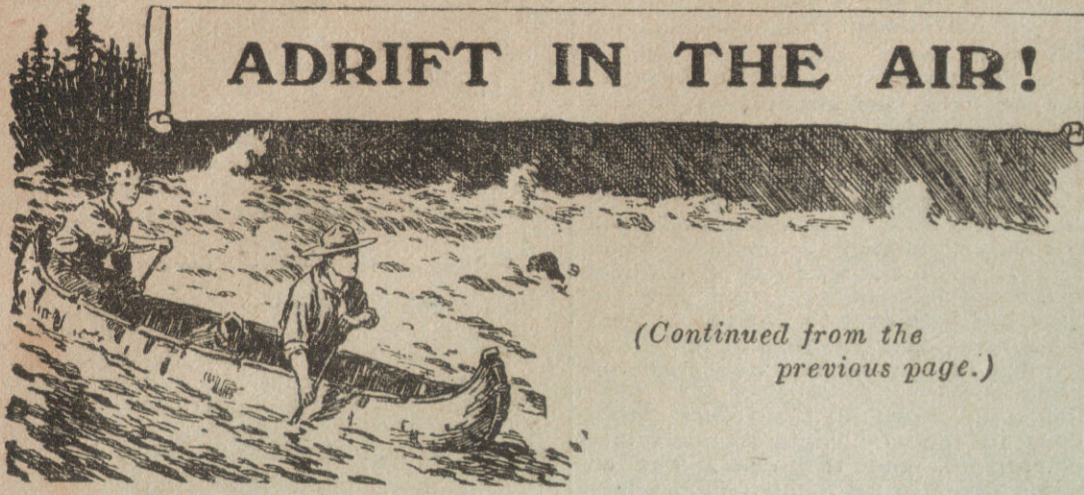
"Never!"

"Well, if you'd heard it, you'd know that Handsome Alf is not the galoot to be fooled with," said the man with the ear-rings. "I guess you're going to tell me what you know about Bill Lomax."

**BUY WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES—**

**—AND HELP TO CARRY ON THE WAR!**

ADRIFT IN THE AIR!



(Continued from the previous page.)

"But we know nothing about him."  
"He must have struck this creek about sundown. He had a Colt bullet in his carcass somewhere, and I guess he must have been almost done when he got this far. How long have you been here?"  
"Two or three hours."  
"Then you were here soon after sundown?"  
"Yes."  
"And you've seen nary critter?"  
"No."  
Carson pointed to the remainder of the breakfast.  
"I guess you went afield, looking for those birds," he remarked. "Didn't you see any sign in the wood?"  
No answer.  
The man's black eyes glittered.  
"You saw sign?" he snapped.  
"No good asking us questions," said Bob shortly. "You've as good as owned that you wounded the man you are looking for. Do you think we would help you find him, to finish your work, if we could?"  
"I guess you'll help me, sonny, if you can," said the man with the ear-rings, with a deadly look at the Canadian schoolboy. He loosened the revolver in his belt, and drew it out. "Do you see this shootin'-iron? Do you know that Alf Carson would pot you as soon as a turkey, if his dander was rized? You've seen Bill Lomax's trail. Where?"  
Bob Lawless shut his teeth, and faced the desperado calmly.  
He did not answer.  
"You've seen his trail?" shouted Carson.  
"Yes," answered Bob. "At any rate, I've seen a trail."  
"Big size in boots?"  
"Yes."  
"That's the galoot. Where?"  
"I'm not going to tell you," answered Bob quietly. "You can do your dirty work without any assistance from me, Mr. Handsome Alf Carson!"  
The man looked at him, and turned the cylinder of his revolver with a little click, as if to ascertain that it was in good order.  
Then his dusky hand rose, and the deadly tube was levelled at Bob Lawless.  
"You'll walk before me, sonny, and show me that trail," he said slowly and distinctly; "and if you don't get a move on I'll lay you dead in your tracks, just where you stand! Savvy?"

The 4th Chapter.  
"Hands Up!"

Bob Lawless drew a quick, hard breath.  
The three schoolboys were pale now. The trigger of the revolver rose slightly, the black eyes of the Californian gleaming behind it.  
"I guess you'd better speak!" he said, showing his teeth.  
Vere Beauclerc had fallen back a pace, and his right hand was behind him.  
His hand was groping in his hip-pocket, where he kept his clasp-knife.  
He knew that he could not get to close quarters with the ruffian to use that weapon.  
The revolver was levelled at Bob, but in a twinkling the ruffian could have changed the direction of the weapon, if Beauclerc had advanced towards him.  
Beauclerc was not thinking of that.  
He was thinking of using the closed knife as a missile.  
It was a terrible moment, but the Cherub was as cool as ice; his nerve never faltered.  
His hand came out of the hip-pocket with the clasp-knife gripped in it—still hidden behind him.  
The Californian's black eyes were fastened on Bob, though the other two were within his line of vision.  
"You hear me, sonny?" he said.  
"I hear you," answered Bob quietly.  
"I guess I'm after Bill Lomax. Why, I'll wing the three of you as soon as look at you," said Carson savagely. "I tell you, boy, that if you don't walk in front of me straight to that trail, I'll lay you on the ground as dead as John Brown! Do you think I'm fooling?"  
"No."  
"Get a move on, then!"  
Bob Lawless did not stir.  
"I'll count two!" said Handsome Alf, with an oath. "And then—One—"  
Whiz!  
Vere Beauclerc's hand shot up and forward.  
The closed clasp-knife shot through the air like a bullet, and struck the Californian fairly between the eyes.  
Crack!  
The impact of the heavy knife on the ruffian's brow was like the crack of a whip.  
With a yell of pain, the startled ruffian staggered back, his arm swaying downward.  
He pulled the trigger instinctively, but the bullet drove into the soil at his feet.  
With the spring of a tiger, Bob Lawless bounded at him, acting on the instant.  
His fist caught the staggering man well under the chin, and drove him backward.  
Alf Carson crashed on the ground, and even as he touched earth Frank Richards

was trampling furiously on his right arm.  
The revolver was kicked away in a twinkling.  
The ruffian, yelling with pain, scrambled up, his hand dragging at the knife in his belt.  
But Vere Beauclerc had pounced upon the revolver.  
His hand closed on it, and he raised it, and the tube bore full upon Alf Carson's breast.  
"Touch that knife, and you're a dead man!"  
Beauclerc's voice rang out sharply, with a deadly ring in it.  
He meant every word.  
The trigger was rising under the pressure of his finger, and in another instant the bullet would have sped.  
"Hold your hand!" panted the man with the ear-rings. "Hold!"  
"Put up your hands, you scoundrel!"  
"I—I—"  
"Up with them, I tell you!" rapped out Beauclerc. "I'll shoot you like a dog, if you don't!"  
Alf Carson's hands went up quick enough.  
"Clasp your hands over your head," said Beauclerc. "Sharp, now!"  
The ruffian, grinding his teeth, obeyed.  
"Keep them like that," said Beauclerc quietly. "I will kill you, you bound, like a wild beast, if you give any trouble. Take his knife away, Frank."  
"Good old Cherub!" gasped Bob.  
Frank Richards advanced towards the baffled ruffian, whose eyes glittered at him like a reptile's.  
But the levelled revolver was within four feet of him, and Beauclerc's look was deadly.  
Handsome Alf's life hung by a thread, and he knew it.  
He made no resistance as Frank Richards detached the hunting-knife, in its case, from his belt.  
"Take the rifle from his saddle, Bob."  
"You bet!" grinned Bob.  
"Take away his cartridges, too."  
"I'll see to that," said Frank. "Keep the rotter covered, Cherub."  
"Rely on me."  
The man with the ear-rings ground his teeth, but he made no move.  
Life was dear to Handsome Alf, and his life was trembling in the balance.  
Bob Lawless detached the rifle from the saddle, and a case of rifle-cartridges.  
Frank took a smaller case of revolver-cartridges from the man's belt.  
Bob slid a cartridge into the rifle.  
"I guess I'm ready for him now," he remarked. "No more of your monkey-tricks, Mr. Handsome Alf, or I'll make you look a little less handsome, by gum!"  
"I'll have your lives for this!" muttered the ruffian, choking with rage.  
"Your life is in our hands," said Beauclerc contemptuously. "You deserve to be shot down like a wild beast."  
Handsome Alf ground his teeth.  
"You've left him no weapons?" asked Beauclerc.  
"No fear!"  
"Good! You can get on your horse, Mr. Carson, and ride away," said Beauclerc. "And if you're not out of range in five minutes, I'll open fire."  
"Give me my rifle!"  
"I'll give you a bullet from it, if you like!" grinned Bob Lawless. "These tools are better out of your hands, my buck."  
"You young thief!"  
Smack!  
The Californian uttered a yell of rage as Bob's open hand smote him across his dusky face.  
He seemed about to spring on the schoolboy, and Vere Beauclerc pressed the trigger a little.  
The hammer rose, and the Californian, suddenly white, jumped back.  
"Stop!" he panted.  
"Just in time," said Beauclerc grimly. "Get on your horse, you scoundrel, and clear!"  
"And if you want your shooting-irons you can call at the Lawless Ranch, in the Thompson Valley, and ask for them," said Bob. "Now vamoose, you skunk, or I'll give you a hiding with your own trail-ropes before you go."  
Without another word the Californian stepped to his horse and mounted.  
He gave the chums of Cedar Creek one deadly look, and rode away.  
They watched him till a dip of the plain hid him from sight.

The 5th Chapter.  
A Narrow Escape.

"By gum!" said Bob Lawless, with a deep breath.  
The schoolboys' hearts were still beating fast after the horseman had vanished from sight.  
Frank Richards glanced at the balloon. "I fancy we'd better clear," he observed. "That rotter may not be alone here, and if he comes back with others—"  
"Just what I was thinking," said Bob. "This section isn't healthy."  
"Hold on!" said Beauclerc quietly. "What about the man he was speaking of—Bill Lomax? That must be the man whose trail you saw in the wood, Bob."  
"I reckon so!"

"If he was wounded, it is quite likely that he is still near at hand."  
"I shouldn't wonder."  
"Ought we not to look for him?" asked Beauclerc. "He may be lying helpless in the wood, within a mile of us. If that murderous villain has friends near, as is very likely, he will soon be on the track again. The man's life is threatened; you can see that."  
Bob Lawless nodded.  
"You're right, Cherub; but it means that we may get landed in a fight with a gang of rustlers," he said.  
"We are armed now."  
"Yes; but—" Bob nodded again.  
"You're right, old chap. It's up to us, if there's a wounded man in danger of his life. What do you say, Franky?"  
"Look for him," said Frank Richards at once.  
"It's a cinch," said Bob.  
"Let's hustle to where you found the trail, and follow it," said Beauclerc.  
"Right!"  
Leaving the balloon and the camp behind the three schoolboys started for the wood, Bob Lawless leading the way.  
In the heart of the wood they came upon the trail Bob had discovered hours before.  
It was still fresh and easily traced.  
A heavy man, with dragging feet, had passed that way; the track was deep in the soil.  
And as the schoolboys followed it Bob Lawless pointed to a clot of dark blood, here and there, on the leaves of the thickets.  
The wounded man had left traces of his passage as well as his footprints.  
"Badly hurt, I should say," said Bob,

"What! Who are you?"  
"Friends!" called out Frank Richards. "Don't shoot!"  
A bearded face, white and stained with blood, peered from the thicket, over a glimmering barrel.  
Two deeply-sunken eyes scanned the schoolboys.  
As the man discerned them clearly, he lowered his weapon.  
"I reckoned it was Handsome Alf and his gang," he muttered. "Did my bullet go near you?"  
"Not within ten yards," grinned Bob. "Your hand ain't steady, old man!"  
"Are you Bill Lomax?" asked Beauclerc.  
"That's my name, sonny. I've never seen you before."  
"Then you're the galoot Handsome Alf is after," said Bob. "And we've come to find you, uncle, and look after you. You're hurt?"  
"I'm wounded."  
"We've met your Handsome Alf," explained Bob. "We had a row with him, and took his shooting-irons away. You say he's got a gang with him?"  
"There are four of them."  
"My hat!" said Frank Richards. "The sooner we get away the better! We're not looking for a pitched battle!"  
"Can you walk, Mr. Lomax?" asked Beauclerc.  
"I guess I can crawl!" The man emerged from the thicket, dragging himself with an effort. "I had a bullet from Handsome Alf's revolver. I got it out last night by the creek; but I've lost blood. I crawled here, and could get no farther. When I heard your steps—"  
He shivered. "How did you get here?" he added.

Handsome Alf will not have much chance of getting on your trail. What is he trailing you for, anyway?"  
Lomax's eyes gleamed.  
"He's after my strike in the Cascade Mountains," he said. "I'm a prospector, and I've made a rich strike. Handsome Alf got wind of it. They've been on my trail for three days. And yesterday they found me; but I got away again. I guess I should never have got back to Last Chance, though, if you hadn't met me!"  
"Last Chance!" Bob repeated. "Is that far from here?"  
"Two days' ride, down the range."  
"No good to us, then. I reckon it will have to be the balloon," said Bob. "Come on! By gum, can you hear anything, Frank?"  
"Hoofs!" said Frank.  
"Hurry!"  
From the plain in the distance came the echoing sound of horses' hoofs, at a gallop.  
The wood hid the riders from sight, but it was clear that they were not far away. Gallop, gallop!  
The schoolboys hurried across the glade towards the camp.  
They knew that Alf Carson was returning with his companions, to avenge his defeat; they could guess with what intentions he was returning.  
"Cut ahead, Franky, and get in the car," breathed Bob. "Get ready to cast off. Get the axe to cut the rope—there'll be no time to untie it."  
Frank hesitated a moment, loth to leave the rest; but Bob was evidently right, and he obeyed.  
He ran his hardest for the balloon, and reached it, clambering into the car.  
Still the horsemen were not in sight, though the crashing hoof-strokes sounded louder and clearer.  
In a few minutes, Frank knew, they would come galloping into view, round the trees that still hid them from sight.  
His friends were much nearer; but they were on foot, and Lomax's pace was slow.  
Frank Richards, his heart throbbing, pitched out bag after bag of sand, and the balloon strained at the rope.  
With Lomax's additional weight in the car, it would not have risen, and it was necessary to get rid of the ballast, and there was no time to lose.  
The balloon was the one chance of escape, and Frank had to risk pitching out too much.  
The car had risen a foot from the ground, as the gas-envelope struggled to escape upward, but the rope held it there.  
Frank placed the axe in readiness to cut through the rope, and then stood, rifle in hand, waiting, with beating heart.  
Beauclerc was on Lomax's other side now, and he and Bob were helping the wounded man along.  
The big miner was making great efforts, the sweat pouring down his face, white under its bronze.  
Gallop, gallop!  
They had almost reached the car when the horseman came sweeping into sight, round the end of the wood.  
Handsome Alf rode ahead, spurring savagely.  
He had a rifle in his hand now.  
Behind him rode four rough horsemen, rifle in hand like their leader.  
Carson waved his hand towards the balloon, and called out to his followers.  
They spurred on.  
His voice came floating to Frank.  
"By thunder, Lomax—I guess we've got him! Ride like thunder!"  
The rustlers had seen their victim now.  
But now Lomax was at the car, and Bob and Beauclerc were helping him in.  
Frank Richards grasped him, and dragged him over the rim of the great wicker basket, and he sank down, gasping, into the bottom of the car.  
Crack!  
Carson's rifle rang out, and the bullet sang by.  
"Quick!" panted Frank.  
Bob Lawless rolled headlong into the car, and Vere Beauclerc sprang in after him. Frank Richards swung up the axe.  
Crash!  
The keen edge of the axe fell upon the rope where it passed over the edge of the car.  
The rope twanged, but did not part.  
Crack, crack! The rustlers were firing wildly as they galloped on, and the bullets came closer.  
Frank Richards slashed at the rope again, and it parted, with a loud twang.  
The next moment he stumbled over and fell, as the car, suddenly released, was dragged upward by the soaring balloon, as if a giant hand had plucked it away from the earth.  
Up, and up, and up, swinging and rocking; while below on the earth the baffled rustlers rode to and fro, firing into the air in impotent fury after the victims who had escaped them!



Up, and up, and up, swinging and rocking, soared the balloon, while below on the earth the baffled rustlers rode to and fro, firing into the air in impotent fury after the victims who had escaped them.

in a low voice. "I guess that he can't have got far in that state!"  
They pressed on.  
The trail led them down to the waters of the creek, about a quarter of a mile from their camp.  
There the deep tracks in the mud indicated what had happened.  
The wounded man had stopped there to drink, and doubtless to wash his wounds.  
In the mud, the trail led away again up the stream, and turned into the wood once more, taking the schoolboys nearer to their camp.  
"Hark!" exclaimed Frank suddenly.  
There was a thick cove ahead of the schoolboys, and the trail ceased there.  
From the thicket there came the sound of a rustle.  
As the schoolboys stopped a hoarse voice, faint with weakness, hailed them from the thicket.  
"Stand back, Handsome Alf! You've found me, you bound! But if you come in front of my shooter—"  
Crack!  
A random bullet sang through the foliage.  
"Hold on, man!" shouted Bob. "Friends!"

"Dropped from the sky," said Bob.  
"What?"  
"We were in a runaway balloon," explained Frank Richards.  
"By gosh!" ejaculated Bill Lomax.  
"If you'd care to trust yourself in it, we'll take you where Mr. Handsome Alf can't get after you," said Bob. "Is it a cinch?"  
"Bless you!" was the big American's answer.  
"Lean on me," said Bob. "Take the rifle, Franky; and if you see Handsome Alf, let fly without stopping to ask questions!"  
The bearded man leaned heavily upon Bob's sturdy shoulder.  
Without losing a moment the schoolboys headed for their camp.  
The creek was their guide, and in a quarter of an hour more they came to the edge of the wood.  
Bill Lomax's eyes opened wide as he caught sight of the balloon in the distance.  
It was evidently the first time his eyes had rested upon such a thing.  
"By gosh!" he repeated.  
"There it is," said Frank Richards, with a smile. "Once in that, Mr. Lomax,

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**  
**"DROPPED FROM THE CLOUDS!"**  
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## The 1st Chapter.

Introduces Jack Jackson.

"I won't go!"  
The speaker, a fair-haired, sullen-faced young fellow of fourteen or so, stamped his foot impatiently, as though to emphasise his remark.

Jack Jackson was big for his age—in fact, he was as broad as many grown men.

And yet, apart from his physique, there was nothing manly about Jack.

His face bore a sulky, wilful, disagreeable expression, and, in spite of the fact that his father was standing before him, his brows knitted in a deep frown, Jack's expression remained unchanged.

Herbert Jackson gave his defiant son a meaning glance.

"How dare you dictate to me, Jack?" he said in a severe voice. "I am your father, and I demand that you shall talk to me in a respectful manner. Many boys would leap at such a chance as I am offering to you!"

"They're welcome to it!" said Jack sulkily. "I never asked to be sent to school, and what's more, I don't want to go! I'm quite happy here. Everything was all right until—until—"

He paused.  
"Until I came home," said Mr. Jackson, with a questioning glance at his son. "Maybe you're right, Jack; but such happiness will benefit you little in the future. You have had too much of your own way—far too much. You have been permitted to do your lessons when you thought you would. You—"

"Mr. Vaughan made no objection!" struck in the boy, with a defiant flash of the eyes.

"Your tutor has failed to come up to my expectations," said Mr. Jackson coldly. "When I went to America I left you in his hands, thinking that upon my return I should find you had benefited by his instruction. I blame him, but not wholly. It is you, Jack, who are to blame!"

"I?" exclaimed the junior hotly.  
"Yes, Jack," continued Mr. Jackson. "Mr. Vaughan is, I am sorry to say, a very weak-willed man. You have taken advantage of this fact. You have worked when you have wanted to, and you have sulked whenever you have thought fit. I am inclined to think you sulked more often than Mr. Vaughan led me to believe."

"If he's been telling you—" began Jack, his face flushing with anger.

"Silence, Jack!" commanded Mr. Jackson, in a firm voice. "I will not allow you to raise your voice in my presence. I see no reason to doubt the truth of what Mr. Vaughan has told me concerning your behaviour. Why, your present actions bear out the truth of his statements! You are sulky, wilful, and rebellious! But a change—"

"I should be all right if I was left alone!" snapped the junior.

A faint smile crossed Mr. Jackson's face.

"No, Jack," he said; "you're wrong. Another twelve months, and you would be unmanageable. I cannot afford to run the risk of your declining in such a manner. I want you to be a son I can be proud of. I want you to achieve success in the world, and this you will never do whilst the present conditions continue. At Redclyffe—"

"I don't want to go to Redclyffe!" muttered Jack disagreeably.

"The decision does not rest with you, Jack," said Mr. Jackson frigidly. "You are not capable of acting to your own advantage. You give little thought to the future. You are content to idle your time away in a careless manner. That will never do. You have got to study, and study hard, too!"

"I have studied!" said Jack.  
"Yes, when you have thought fit," said Mr. Jackson. "At Redclyffe you will have to study regularly. You will have companionship. You will meet other boys of your own age—"

"I don't want to meet other boys! I'm quite contented as I am."

"You will play games, and—"

"I don't want to play games!" exclaimed Jack rebelliously. "I'd sooner take Rover out for a run over the moor!"  
"Yes, Jack, a run now and again over the moor with a dog is very enjoyable," said Mr. Jackson sternly. "But it's football and cricket you want. Why, with your physique you ought to be able to play both games well enough to secure your place in a junior school eleven! You've never played football—"

"I don't like it!" said the junior. "I can't make out what fun there is in the game."

"It develops your physique, Jack," said Mr. Jackson. "It's good for your health, and any right-minded boy would obtain a tremendous amount of enjoyment by playing the game. At Redclyffe you will be given every chance of playing both cricket and football, and it is my one ambition that you shall get your colours."

When I was your age I was madly keen on all sports, and I am very disappointed to discover that you are not."

"I don't care for the games!" said Jack.

"More's the pity!" said Mr. Jackson, with a sigh. "But you will soon think differently, Jack. When you find yourself in the company of other boys you will find yourself following their ways and habits. You will join the games club, and—"

"I won't!" exclaimed the junior hotly.

"You will have to, Jack!" said Mr. Jackson kindly. "Unless you are physically unfit—and you certainly are not that—you will have no excuse for not playing. Your Form-master will see that you do."

"Why should I play if I don't want to?" demanded Jack sullenly.

"Because it will be for your own good, my boy," said Mr. Jackson good-temperedly. "Now, then, don't let us argue any more about this matter. There are splendid times awaiting you at Redclyffe. If you were not so self-willed and obstinate you would long to go to school. I am sure, however, that in three months' time you will have altered your views."

"I sha'n't!" declared Jack miserably. "I hate the thought of going to school! I've got to say good-bye to Rover—"

"You cannot have a dog's company for ever," interrupted Mr. Jackson. "I am very glad to find that you possess a love for dumb animals. It is the one commendable trait in your character. But there are other things that matter besides pets of this sort."

"And then there's Mr. Vaughan," went on the junior fervently. "He and I have been the best of friends."

"Too friendly, I am inclined to think!" said Mr. Jackson, pursing his lips. "If your tutor had been a little stricter you might possibly have developed on better lines."

"Why can't I stay with him?" muttered Jack disconsolately.

"Because I have decided that to do so would not be for your own good," explained Mr. Jackson. "I have found another situation for Mr. Vaughan, and he will not suffer by the change. I have made arrangements for him to take you to Redclyffe. You will catch the one-thirty train. You have half an hour in which to do your packing."

"Why can't I stay here!" protested Jack vehemently.

Mr. Jackson raised his hand for silence.

"Enough!" he said commandingly, and for the first time during the conversation he raised his voice. "I am surprised at you, Jack; disappointed in you. But I have hopes—very great hopes—of your reform. When you come home for your first vacation I feel sure that you will be a different boy. Now, let us continue this argument no further. Pack your box at once. Mr. Vaughan will be waiting for you."

"But—" began the junior in protest. But his father cut him short quickly.

"That is sufficient, Jack!" he said warningly. "I have treated you well. I have never administered punishment to you in any form. If you persist in bandying words with me I shall be compelled to depart from my usual practice. Now, go!"

Very disconsolately Jack Jackson slouched out of the room and strolled towards his own quarters.

On the stairs he came face to face with Vera, his sister.

The girl, some two years his senior, gave him an affectionate glance.

"Well, you do look glum, Jack!" she said. "Aren't you glad?"

Jack looked at his sister bitterly.

"Glad!" he exclaimed. "What have I got to be glad about?"

"You're going to school—"

"Oh, hang school!" growled Jack. "Why should I go to school if I don't want to? Why should Dad order me about just as he thinks fit? I'm old enough to know my own mind. I'd sooner stay here with you and Rover and old Vaughan."

"Oh, Jack!" said Vera, with a regretful sigh.

The boy looked at her questioningly.

"Do you mean to say you're glad I'm going?" he demanded.

"Not at all, Jack!" said the girl quickly.

"I'm not really glad, but—but—"

"You are glad!" snapped Jack impolitely. "I can see it in your face!"

"No, Jack, I'm not really glad," said Vera simply. "But—but it's for your own good, Jack."

"Rot!" exclaimed Jack. "You're as bad as Dad! But I don't care. You can all jolly well think what you like! I'm fed up—absolutely fed up—with everything and everybody!"

He stepped higher up the stairs.

"Aren't you going to say good-bye, Jack?" asked the girl affectionately. "I hear you're going in half an hour's time."

The boy turned round, and Vera noticed that there was rather a shame-faced expression on his face.

"Cheer up, Jack!" she said, in a kindly voice. "Don't forget to write to me, will you? Tell me how you like your school,

and all about your friends, and—and— Tell me everything, won't you, Jack?"

The boy did not answer.

He hung his head, and gazed aimlessly at the carpet on the stairs.

"Won't you promise, Jack?" asked Vera wistfully. "You don't mean to say you're going to forget all about me?"

"Oh, no!" replied Jack promptly.

"Well, promise to write to me, then!"

"All right," said the boy quietly. "I'll promise."

"Good-bye!" said the girl affectionately, and the next moment she passed on down the stairs.

Jack went on to his room, and for the next ten minutes he was busily engaged in packing his box.

The task was an unattractive one to the self-willed junior.

He was not careful in packing his box.

He packed the things in anyhow, quite unconcerned by the fact that he was spoiling the various articles by so doing.

Jack was not looking forward to his journey.

He had been quite contented at home. He had been pampered, and given his own way in everything, and he had no desire to go to school.

He could not see that a school life was the best thing for him.

But his father did, and it was for this reason that Mr. Jackson had decided to send the sulky, self-willed junior to Redclyffe.

At last Jack finished packing his box.

He went downstairs, his face knitted in a serious frown.

Straight out into the grounds he went, and over to where, by the side of its



"Get out, you cad!" yelled Hawkins. "I— Ow! Yow! Groooogh!" Jack Jackson's swinging fist caught the protesting junior full on the nose.

kennel, a big collie dog was pawing the ground excitedly.

Jack gave his pet an affectionate glance, and there was a dimness in his eyes as he patted the dog's shaggy head.

"Good-bye, Rover, old boy!" he said, with a regretful tone in his voice. "I'm going to leave you. I sha'n't forget you, though; you've been a good pal to me! But we'll have some good times yet. You don't want to lose me, do you?"

The big collie barked loudly, as though in sympathy with the boy.

"Never mind, old boy!" said Jack sympathetically. "It can't be helped. They'll all determined to make us both miserable. But don't worry. It won't be long before the holidays come round, and then we'll enjoy ourselves as we used to. Good-bye!"

Jack Jackson fondled the collie's head affectionately.

He was feeling the parting acutely. Rover was his best—his sole friend.

He would have parted with anything rather than his pet.

But his father's decree had gone forth. He was to go to school, and he and Rover were to part company.

Jack was determined that the parting should not be for long.

Mr. Jackson had watched the little scene from the porch of the house, and he smiled grimly.

"There's some good in that boy yet," he remarked to himself. "He is not all bad. He has bad qualities, but at Redclyffe they will knock them out of him, and make him a decent fellow."

Whether Mr. Jackson's hopes would be realised remained to be seen.

## The 2nd Chapter. At Loggerheads.

"Jump in, you fellows!"  
Bob Travers of the Fourth Form at Redclyffe made the remark, as he and his chums made their way towards a train which was standing in Meringham Station.

There were a dozen juniors in all, and each of them wore cricketer flannels, and carried a cricket-bag.

The Redclyffians were in a cheerful mood.

They had been over to Bagshot to meet the Junior Eleven there, and had succeeded in winning the match by two wickets.

Hence the reason for their cheerfulness. They all endeavoured to scramble into one carriage, and the result was an exciting tussle to get in first.

Bob Travers got in, and so did his chum, Dicky Turner; but there was not sufficient room for the whole of the team.

Jimmy Wren and his chums, Lucas and Lane, found themselves still on the platform when the compartment contained its full complement.

"Make way, you fellows!" sang out Jimmy Wren, pushing his way towards the compartment.

"Can't be did, Wren, old scout!" said Dicky Turner cheerily. "We're packed like sardines in a tin."

"Oh, rot!" said Jimmy Wren. "We've got to get back to Redclyffe!"

"Plenty of room up the other end of the train," said Dicky Turner. "You've got twenty or thirty compartments to choose from."

"But—"

"You'd better buck up and get seats!" warned Dicky Turner, with a grin. "The train's signalled."

"Open the door, you boulder!" roared Jimmy Wren.

"Yes, let us in, Turner, you rotter!" exclaimed Lucas wrathfully.

"Nothing doing!" said Dicky firmly. "We don't want these New House idiots in here, do we, Bob?"

Bob Travers smiled.

"No fear!" he said. "We must keep this carriage select. New House boulders are barred!"

"Yah! School House asses!" shrieked Jimmy Wren.

The rivalry between the two Houses at Redclyffe was intense.

The only time Bob Travers & Co. and Jimmy Wren & Co. pulled together was on the occasion of a school match.

During the game with Bagshot peace had reigned supreme.

But the match was over now, and the rivalry was revived once again.

Jimmy Wren & Co. were the only New House members of the junior team, and as there were nine School House juniors in

"I wonder whether the kid is the new fellow who's coming to Redclyffe?"

"Let's hope not," said Dicky Turner, with a sniff. "Can't say I exactly liked the look of him. He— Hallo, here he comes!"

A breathless junior came sprinting towards the compartment occupied by Bob Travers & Co., followed closely by a middle-aged, spectacled man.

"Stand away there!" sang out the guard.

But the junior did not stand away.

He grabbed the handle of the compartment occupied by the Redclyffians, and pulled open the door.

With a leap he was inside, and, before the man who was following him could get in, he had slammed the door in his face.

The train was already on the move.

The man glanced helplessly in the packed compartment, and then, as the train began to gather speed, he dragged open the door of the next carriage, and scrambled inside.

Bob Travers & Co. eyed the new junior critically.

"Can't you find a chap a seat?" demanded the latter ill-temperedly.

"What?" exclaimed the Redclyffe juniors in chorus.

"I want a seat. Can't you edge up a bit?"

"Look here," said Bob Travers wrathfully. "Haven't you ever been taught politeness?"

"Oh, rot!" sneered the new-comer. "I want a seat!"

"Well, ask for it properly!"

"Sha'n't!"

"Better stand up, then," said Dicky Turner blandly. "I'm hanged if I'm going to make room for you!"

"Not likely!" chorused the other juniors.

The new-comer gave them a steely glare. "I guessed as much," he said disagreeably. "I suppose you belong to Redclyffe. We do!"

The new-comer's lips curled in a bitter sneer.

"And I've got to put up with pigs like you!" he muttered. "I knew what the place would be like."

"My giddy aunt!" exclaimed Bob Travers, in surprise. "D'you mean to say you're coming to Redclyffe?"

"I suppose so," said the other carelessly. "But I'm hanged if I want to! I'd sooner have stayed where I was."

"Well, I must say I wish you had," remarked Bob Travers. "I can't say I'm exactly keen on your company."

"Nor I," agreed Dicky Turner. "If it wasn't for damaging the line, I'd chuck the young idiot out of the window!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jack Jackson gave the juniors a fierce look.

"Look here, you rotters!" he roared. "How much longer am I going to stand here?"

"Until we arrive at Redclyffe, I suppose," said Dicky Turner mildly. "If you care to ask properly, I dare say we might manage to squeeze you a seat."

"I sha'n't ask!" declared Jack defiantly. "Well, you can jolly well stand up!" declared Dicky flatly.

"I—I—I—" spluttered Jack, his temper rising quickly.

Next instant he had stepped forward, and was endeavouring to squeeze himself in between two juniors.

His face was red with anger, and he pushed at the juniors on either side of him in an endeavour to secure a seat.

"Here, where are you coming to?" demanded Hawkins of the Fourth indignantly.

Jack did not answer.

"Get out, you cad!" yelled Hawkins. "I— Ow! Yow! Groooogh!"

Jack's swinging fist had caught Hawkins on the nose.

The result was that, instead of defending his seat, Hawkins paid more attention to his nose.

Consequently the new boy wedged his way in.

"Beastly cad!" remarked one of the Redclyffians, with a look of contempt at Jack Jackson.

"I say, this is a bit too thick!" said Dicky Turner, his brows knitted in a frown. "The chap wants bumping!"

"Why not bump him?" asked Appleby. "Jolly good idea! Have the rotter out!"

"Good bizney!"

Several juniors rose from their seats, and moved towards Jack Jackson.

The new boy eyed them wonderingly.

"If you dare to touch me—" he began.

"Collar him!" exclaimed Bob Travers. Jack Jackson was promptly collared.

His hands and feet were held tightly, and although he roared with rage, he could not escape.

"Bump him!"

"Bump! Bump!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Two more for luck!"

Jack Jackson was given two more, and he shrieked in anguish at each bump.

"Now let the cad get up!" said Bob Travers, at length.

The juniors released their hold on the new boy.

Jack Jackson scrambled to his feet. His temper was at white heat, and his whole frame shook with uncontrollable rage.

His eyes glinted savagely as he surveyed the grinning juniors.

Next moment his temper got the better of him, and, rushing forward, he aimed a deliberate kick at Dicky Turner's legs.

There was a sudden crack as the kick got home, and Dicky Turner sank back on to a seat, his face pale with pain.

The faces of the Redclyffians became set and serious at once.

"You howling cad!" exclaimed Bob Travers hotly. "For two pins I'd give

(Continued in column 1 of next page.)

you the hiding of your life! Sit down and keep quiet!"

"I sha'n't!"

"Well, I'll jolly well make you!" declared Bob; and, forcing the new boy on to the seat, he held him there.

Bob Travers possessed considerable strength for his age, and, with the assistance of Hawkins, he had no difficulty in keeping the new boy captive.

Jack Jackson quietened down considerably, and he sat back in his seat, a sullen, defiant look on his face.

At length the train rolled into the station, and, glad to get away from Jack Jackson, the Redclyffe junior jumped out. The new boy was the last to leave.

No sooner had the latter got on to the platform than a short, middle-aged, spectacled man came rushing up. It was Mr. Vaughan, Jack's old tutor.

"Oh, Jack!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "What—"

"Shut up!" growled Jack Jackson tersely.

"But, Jack," went on Mr. Vaughan, "what ever have you been doing? I heard the sound of a quarrel in your carriage. I do so hope you have got on well with your school friends."

"Well, I haven't!" said Jack Jackson disagreeably.

"But—"

"I hate them all—every blessed one of them!" muttered the junior. "They're a set of rotten cads!" He stamped his foot on the platform. "I hate them, and—and I hate you for bringing me here!"

A shocked expression came over the man's face.

"Jack—Jack," he said feebly, "do be reasonable, my dear boy. You don't realise the pleasures of a school life, and—"

"I don't want to."

"You don't think how you will enjoy yourself when you get to know your schoolfellows," went on Mr. Vaughan. "Redclyffe is a fine school, and—"

"It isn't! It's a rotten place!"

"But, Jack, you haven't seen it. You—"

"I don't care if I never do!" growled the junior. "I've a jolly good mind to go home again!"

"You can't, Jack," said the bewildered man. "Your father would be annoyed. In fact—"

"He'd have no right to be annoyed!" exclaimed Jack Jackson hotly. "Why should I be sent to a school I don't like? Why should I be compelled to live amongst a lot of fellows I hate, and—"

Jack paused, for he had suddenly caught sight of Bob Travers and his chums in the distance, their faces expanded in broad grins.

The wilful junior pointed to the laughing Redclyffians.

"Look at them!" he exclaimed angrily. "Look at the cads! They're laughing at me! They're—"

"Come along, Jack, my boy," urged Mr. Vaughan helplessly.

"I'm hanged if I will!" exclaimed Jack Jackson. "I'm going back home. I won't go to that rotten school, and live amongst cads of that sort!"

Mr. Vaughan's temper was rising, and he took a firm grip on Jack's arm.

"I can't allow you to dictate to me in that manner, Jack!" he said resolutely. "You must do as you're told. Behave yourself, otherwise—"

"Let me go!" roared the junior, struggling hard.

"Help!" shouted Mr. Vaughan, waving his hand to Bob Travers & Co.

With a whoop, the Redclyffe juniors came rushing up.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Dicky Turner, laying hold of the new fellow.

"Won't he go to school?"

"N-n-no," faltered the man, shaking from sheer excitement. "He is a most wilful boy. I do so wish you would assist me in getting him to Redclyffe!"

"Anything to oblige, sir!" said Dicky Turner exuberantly. "Lend a hand, you fellows!"

"What—ho!"

The Redclyffians laid hands on the struggling new boy, and dragged him out of the station.

"Quick march!" shouted Dicky Turner. "Let me go, you cads!" shrieked Jack Jackson savagely. "I'll kick you! I'll—"

"No, you won't!" declared Dicky Turner. "You're coming along to Redclyffe. Now then, get a move on!"

"I won't, I tell you!" yelled the new boy. "I—I won't go to the beastly place! I— Mr. Vaughan! Tell these cads to let me go! Tell them— Ow! Yow! Yarooogh!"

The Redclyffe juniors did not treat the wilful junior lightly.

They hustled him up the road to the school, and after many bumpings Jack Jackson's powers of resistance eventually reached an end.

It was a very sorry figure the new boy presented when at length he appeared before the Head.

Their task concluded, Bob Travers & Co. wended their way to their study, and over tea proceeded to discuss the new fellow.

Needless to say, their remarks were in no way complimentary towards Jack Jackson.

"I've never met such a cad in all my life," remarked Dicky Turner. "Between you and me, Bob, I shall give him a wide berth!"

"So shall I!" agreed Bob.

But neither Bob nor Dicky were to have the chance of giving the new boy a wide berth. They were fated to see a great deal of Jack Jackson in the near future.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"BARRED FROM THE STUDY!"  
By HERBERT BRITTON.  
DON'T MISS IT!

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

A Magnificent New Serial, dealing with the School Afloat, and introducing  
CY SPRAGUE, LAL TATA, CHIP, and CAPTAIN HANDYMAN.

BY DUNCAN STORM.



"Stop, Cecil, sar!" yelled Lal Tata, waving his umbrella at the orang-outang. "You silly monkey fellows! Do you not observe that you frighten these poor Arab gentlemen into jolly old fits?"

### THE LEADING CHARACTERS IN THIS AMAZING STORY ARE:

CAPTAIN HANDYMAN, who is commander of the Bombay Castle.  
CY SPRAGUE, the famous American detective.  
LAL TATA, a fat, genial Hindu, who is a master on board the Bombay Castle.  
TOM and FRED MORTON, CHIP PRODGERS, DICK DORRINGTON, PONGO WALKER, ARTY DOVE, and the SKELETON, high-spirited juniors, who belong to Dormitory No. 8 of the floating school.  
BULLY FLASHMAN and STOAT, two bullying juniors, in Dormitory No. 1.

In last week's instalment the boys journeyed to the Pyramids in Egypt. Everything would have gone off well had they left Cecil, the orang-outang, behind. But Cecil went with them, and when he caught sight of a number of Arabs in the vicinity of the Pyramids he immediately chased them.

(Read on from here.)

### All Through Cecil.

Cecil, the orang-outang, was chivvying the Arab guides of the Pyramids, together with their sheikh, like a sheep-dog chivvying a bunch of sheep.

Like an avalanche, the Arabs rolled down the mighty stairs of the Pyramid of Cheops, yelling and screaming that Eblees, the most dreaded of the djinns and efreets and devils of the Arab imagination, was after them.

Cecil certainly did look a bit of a nut with his grinning face, shadowed by a wide pith helmet, and his long, hairy paws sticking out from the arms of his white drill jacket.

He was barking like a dog, and showing his great teeth.

"Hi, Cecil!" yelled Dick. "Stop, you scoundrel! Stop!"

And, turning in their race up the pyramid, the boys ran along its sides, hoping to cut Cecil off.

But Cecil was going strong.

He was delighted to get off the ship, and the keen, pure, dry air of the desert had exhilarated him like strong wine.

The cries of the frightened Arabs and the shouts of the boys merely urged him on.

Down the side of the huge mountain of stone the guides came leaping like goats, Cecil bounding and skipping some twenty huge steps behind them.

It was a wonderful sight to see the mob race down four hundred feet of this giant's staircase, every step a good six feet high, without breaking their necks.

The sheikh seemed to be in the greatest hurry of all.

He was going strong, and leading the race about a hundred feet ahead of Cecil, when he leaped off the bottom tier of the mighty pyramid, and hit the sand.

Then, turning to the right, he ran along the base of the pyramid, with all his followers stringing out behind him.

Arty Dove and Dick Dorrington gave up the chase.

They sat in the side of the pyramid, and held their sides with laughter as the sheikh and his chattering mob streaked round the pyramid, running for dear life.

Cecil was somewhat hampered by a pair of patent-leather shoes, which gave him no grip on the sand.

Cecil was not used to having his feet— or, rather, his hind paws—shut up in patent-leather.

Otherwise, he would have overhauled the racing Arabs in no time.

But he came bounding along in great leaps behind them, sometimes running

on his great hands, sometimes leaping into the air.

Mr. Lal Tata tried in vain to butt in. He stood in front of Cecil with his turban cocked over his left eye, waving his white umbrella.

"Stop, Cecil, sar!" he yelled. "You silly monkey fellows! Do you not observe that you frighten these poor Arab gentlemen into jolly old fits?"

But Cecil took no notice of Lal. He thought that Lal was encouraging him as scratch man in the race, and shot by, running on feet and hands, in a whirl of sand.

In the next lap round the vast pile of stone Lal whacked him with his umbrella.

Thinking that he was getting whacked because he was not travelling fast enough, Cecil redoubled his efforts. The boys could do nothing.

They could only lean against the pyramid, and laugh till the tears rolled down their faces.

"I don't call it so jolly big fun!" exclaimed Lal Tata irritably, as he wiped his forehead with his new, pink silk turban. "That fool monkey of yours will agitate those Arab fellows to death. Then we shall have to pay great consolation prizes to sorrowing relatives. We are going to get into jolly, big old row about this!"

At the end of the third round—or, rather, of the third square—of the pyramid, the old sheikh's eyes were rolling wildly.

He had lost his turban in the race, and his white beard was streaming behind him as he legged it.

Then he gave up trying to shake Cecil off by dodging him round the pyramid, and made off in a straight bee-line across the sand.

The boys joined in the race now. They tried to collar Cecil, but they were so exhausted with laughing that they could not get near him.

Lal Tata toiled along in pursuit as the Arabs headed off across the sand to the Pyramid of Cephron.

"You mark my words, Mr. Pongo Walker," puffed Lal. "This monkey fellow of yours is going to get us into very serious embarrassments with the native peoples of Egypt."

"How was I to know that he would start chivvying old Arabi Pasha, sir?" demanded Pongo, as he legged it heavily over the sand. "They must have irritated the animal, or he wouldn't have run after them, and— My word, look at old Osman Digna, running up the pyramid, like a fly up a wall!"

Pongo had to give up the race. He sat in the sand, holding his sides with laughter.

The sheikh was travelling now. He had attacked the stiff slope of the Pyramid of Cephron with his fluttering crowd close on his heels, and he was going up it like a mountaineer.

The Pyramid of Cephron is not quite so high as its fellow, the Pyramid of Cheops.

But it is a tidy hill of stone some four hundred feet high, which, near its apex, is sheathed in smooth slabs of marble.

The sheikh and his crowd did all right until they reached this coating of marble. Then they climbed and slid at the same time.

With a yell they slid down the marble slope like a tobogganning party. Cecil perched himself up on the very point of the pyramid, and sat there, looking down calmly at the desert sunset and the scene of buzzing excitement below.

All the natives in the vicinity of the Pyramids—and there were hundreds of

these baksheesh hunters—were greatly upset by their sheikh being chased by the orang-outang in this fashion.

They shouted and waved their arms up at Cecil, who sat on the top of his pyramid fanning himself with his pith helmet.

They threatened him with a thousand deaths. They declared that Cecil was an evil djinn, and that the boys were responsible for bringing him to the Pyramids.

One truculent-looking native, swinging a big stick, loafed up to Pongo and Arty Dove, who were sitting in the sand, looking helplessly up at the speck on the top of the Pyramid of Cephron.

"S'pose you give me money," said he truculently, swinging his stick. "Your monka, he frighten sheikh too much! Sheikh, 'im very 'oly man!"

"Why should I give you money?" asked Pongo.

"If you no give me baksheesh," replied the Arab, who spoke English quite fluently, "plenty soon come big row. Your monka he chase sheikh. Sheikh 'im very 'oly man. Him been to Mecca ten time."

By this the loafer meant to indicate that the sheikh had made the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and the other holy places of the Mohammedan belief on ten occasions, and was therefore a person of standing and consideration.

But Pongo Walker was quite unimpressed.

"I don't care if your old sheikh has been to Jericho a dozen times," he said calmly. "You push off out of this, Hobson-Jobson. You won't get any baksheesh out of me. If your pals hadn't agitated my monkey he wouldn't have chivvied them."

"I want baksheesh!" said the ruffian, holding out his hand.

Pongo put his hand in his pocket slowly and drew forth with the air of a miser a French ha'penny, which he had taken in charge at Port Said.

"There you are, old Musty Mustapha," he said genially, placing the coin carefully in the expectant and dirty palm.

"There's your baksheesh. Take care of it. Treat your pals handsomely. Take them all round to the coffee-shop, and don't spend it all at once!"

The Arab looked at the coin.

Then he scowled, and threw it on the ground.

"Me want baksheesh! Good baksheesh, plenty a money!" he said threateningly.

"You'll get a thick ear if you don't keep that stick quiet!" replied Pongo Walker calmly, as he picked up the rejected halfpenny.

The Arab strode off, shouting loudly and insolently to his horde of ragged pals.

Pongo Walker followed him with his eye.

"I don't like the look of that John Hawkins," he said. "I believe he is out to put up a rough house for us, Arty, my boy. Let us hasten up to the top of yonder pyramid, and get Cecil down before the trouble begins."

They picked themselves up from the sand, and ran across to the base of the Pyramid of Cephron.

The sun was already setting below the straight line of the desert horizon, and the base of the great pyramid was wrapped in blue shadow.

But the apex stood out boldly in the afterglow, coloured by the sun as though it was red-hot.

were already swarming up the steep sides of the mighty monument, intent on calling Cecil down from his lofty perch.

These looked, like a lot of tiny ants against the huge pile of stone.

Pongo and Arty climbed up and up, overtaking their chums.

Dick Dorrington turned round, and caught sight of Pongo.

"Come on, Pongo; he's your orang-outang!" he exclaimed. "See if you can't get him to come down. We can't climb over that top crust of marble. It's as slippery as ice. It'd take a bluebottle to walk up it."

And Dick pointed to the wide expanse of the marble casing.

"Cecil!" called Pongo, in a cooing voice. "Come down, Cecil! Come to old Uncle Pongo, there's a good monkey!"

Cecil looked down amiably at the group of boys who were clustered at the lower edge of the marble slide fifty feet below him.

But he showed no inclination to come down.

"You come down and see what Uncle Pongo has got in his pocket for little Cecil!" called out Pongo persuasively.

But Cecil wasn't having any.

He sat perched on the pinnacle of the great pyramid, wistfully watching the fading rose of the last of the sunset.

Pongo was beginning to get cross.

Far away down below he could see the camp-fires sparkling amongst the tents of their camp, whilst straight columns of smoke, telling of fried rashers of ham and big pots of tea, rose in the still evening air.

"Look here, Cecil," he said, "don't you play the silly goat! If you don't come off that perch, I'll be getting very angry with you in a minute or two!"

"Pongo, my dear fellow," exclaimed the voice of Mr. Lal Tata, who had toiled up three hundred and fifty feet of the face of the pyramid like an elderly blue-bottle, "do not agitate the ape in angry tones! Do not agitate his feelings by rough words, or he will sit up there half the night like Patiences on monuments."

"All right, sir," replied Pongo, with a grin. "You have a shot to call him down!"

Lal clung on to the bottom of the stretch of marble casing, which crusted the apex of the pyramid like the icing on a wedding-cake.

"Observe me, boys!" he exclaimed. "I will show you how lower orders of animals respond to kind and gentle softnesses of words. Behold, I will talk to Cecil like the cooing of doves, and he will come to me!"

Lal looked up at the huge figure of Cecil.

"Cec-il!" he called out, "Cec-il! Cecil!"

Cecil responded with a noise in his throat like the drawing of a cork from a bottle, which Pongo knew was the orang-outang way of responding—"Go away, you old fool!"

"Peep-bo!" continued Lal, pretending to dodge behind Arty Dove's broad shoulders. "Peep-bo, Cecil! Cecil can't find me!"

Cecil yawned.

Then he turned round on the point of the pyramid, and turned his back on Lal.

as much as to say, "Cecil don't want to."

Far down below, the mob of natives standing on the sands at the foot of the pyramid gave derisive yells.

In spite of all his talk about soft words, Lal began to lose his temper with the stubborn Cecil.

"Come down, Cecil!" he called out sternly. "Come down! I am ashamed of you, sar! You are placing us in very awkward positions, sar!"

"I should think it was awkward!" muttered Dick Dorrington to Chip. "Here we are, hanging on up here like a lot of flies on a pane of glass, and supper spoiling down in the camp below. In a few minutes it will be dark."

"Come, Cecil!" snapped Lal. "Come down, I command you! If you do not come down speedily, I will give you great castigations—jolly good whackings, my buck! I will hit you great blows with canes! You shall take big swistings!"

Cecil turned again on the top of the point of marble, and looked down contemptuously through the twilight.

"Chuk!" was all he said.

Then Lal dropped his turban, which went bouncing down the side of the pyramid.

He also lost his temper.

He shook his fist at Cecil.

"Ha! You too wicked monkey fellow!" he shouted. "You put mud on my head. You try to make me objects for laughter. You refuse to obey ordinances. Behold! I will come up and fetch you by scruffs of neck!"

Cecil only grinned as Lal, seeking for handhold and foothold on the stiff, polished marble slope, started to crawl up the dangerous plane.

Lal got on pretty well till he was halfway up the slope.

He dug his fingers between the slabs of marble, and got holds with his toes in the places where the weather had eaten pot-holes in the polished stone.

The boys watched him.

"Be careful, sir!" called Pongo. "Mind you don't slip!"

"You make shut ups, Mr. Pongo!" responded Lal testily. "Do not agitate me with your advices when I am making this so dangerous ascents. If you make me fall, I shall fracture my neck-bone!"

Twenty-five feet up from where the marble slabs began, Lal came to a stop, hanging on like a great lizard in the midst of the wide triangle of marble.

Cecil danced round on the tip of the pyramid, looking very interested.

"Ha! You dance, evil one!" cried Lal, in a stifled voice. "You dance on your old pyramids, like monkey on barrel-organ! I will make you dance some other tunes when I get hold of you! I will give you jolly good, hard smacks!"

Thinking that Lal was having a game with him, Cecil crawled slowly down from the tip of the pyramid.

It was nearly dark now, for the swift