

# The BOYS' FRIEND 1 1/2

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending July 20th, 1918.

## Tit for Tat!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

### The 1st Chapter.

#### Tommy Dodd is Too Funny!

"Turn to the right!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Left!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Right!"

"Left!"

"Fathead!"

"Duffer!"

The Rookwood caravanners halted at the cross-roads.

Jimmy Silver & Co., Classics, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, were ahead with their van.

Dodd and Cook and Doyle, the three Tommies of the Modern Side at Rookwood, were close behind.

Classicals and Moderns had fallen in with one another, and for a day or two they had travelled together with unusual harmony.

But there had been arguments.

Now there was evidently going to be another.

Jimmy Silver decided to turn to the right at the cross-roads, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome backed him up, simply because the Moderns demurred.

Even Tubby Muffin, the fat Classical, gave a slow nod in support of Jimmy.

Cook and Doyle, of course, backed up Tommy Dodd at once.

"Better keep to the right," said Jimmy Silver. "There's a ruin or something that's worth seeing over yonder."

"Better keep to the left," answered Tommy Dodd. "Who cares for mouldy old ruins?"

"Faith, there's ruins at Rookwood, and we can see them in the term," said Tommy Doyle. "Blow the ruins!"

"It's an easier road," said Jimmy Silver.

Tommy Dodd gave a superior sniff.

"Just like you Classical slackers, wanting to take an easy road," he said.

"Just like!" agreed Tommy Cook.

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Look here, you blessed Modern asses, you turn when you're told!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell indignantly.

"Rats!"

"Classical ass!"

"If you want me to mop up the road with you, Tommy Dodd—"

"I do—I do!" said Tommy Dodd instantly. "If you want your features altered, old nut, come on! They couldn't be altered for the worse!"

"Impossible!" said Cook.

Lovell pushed back his cuffs. But Jimmy Silver interposed.

"Peace, my children!"

"I'm going to lick that cheeky Modern ass!" roared Lovell.

"Let him come on!" urged Tommy Dodd. "I've often thought that a really good licking would do Lovell good."

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"My dear asses, let's settle it by

taking one road each," he said. "We've enjoyed your company, Tommy, and we'll give it up with dry eyes. Turn to the left, and be blown to you!"

"Turn to the right, and be bothered!" said Cook.

"Well, so long as the Modern chumps clear off, I don't mind," said Lovell. "We're turning to the right, I know that!"

"Right-ho!" said Tommy Dodd. "Blessed if I know how you'll get on without us to look after you!"

"Why, we've been looking after you!" exclaimed Raby indignantly.

"Oh, don't be funny, you know!"

"You cheeky ass!"

"Shut up, the lot of you!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Get that blessed van round, and don't jaw. Good-bye, Modern asses!"

"Good-bye, Classical chumps!"

The Classical van took the turning to the right.

Jimmy Silver led the horse, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome marched with him, Tubby Muffin sitting half-asleep on the van.

Tommy Dodd obligingly gave the Classical van a shove behind, as the horse negotiated the corner.

But his intention was not wholly obliging.

As the Classical van rumbled on, leaving the Moderns behind, a placard was visible on the back of the van.

Evidently Tommy Dodd had prepared for the hour of parting.

It was a square of cardboard, which Tommy Dodd had hidden under his jacket in readiness, and large black letters on a white ground stared out for all to see.

**SUGAR WITHOUT COUPONS!  
Our Price, 4d. per lb.  
ENOUGH FOR EVERYBODY!  
NO COUPONS REQUIRED!**

"Oh, howly mother av Moses!" gurgled Tommy Doyle, as he blinked after the Classical van. "That'll bring them a crowd in the next village!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Cook.

Tommy Dodd smiled a sweet smile of satisfaction.

"We couldn't leave 'em without a friendly little souvenir," he remarked. "I rather think that notice will attract some attention. Well, those Classical chaps like getting into the limelight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Modern caravan turned to the left, and proceeded on its way, with the three merry Moderns in the greatest of spirits.

The Classical van rumbled on, with the Classical caravanners in complete ignorance of the notice stuck on the back of the van.

About ten minutes after leaving the cross-roads a trap came up behind the Classical van, with a stout farmer driving.

He slackened down as he was passing, and called to the juniors.

"Hi, there!"



## CLARENCE CUFFY GETS THE BOOT!

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver, looking round.

"It's against the law!" said the farmer severely.

The Fistical Four of Rookwood blinked at him.

"What's against the law?" demanded Lovell.

"What you're doing!"

"Eh?"

"My advice to you is to stop it, before the police get hold of you!" said the farmer sternly. And he shook out his reins and trotted on.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared after him blankly, and then stared at one another.

"Is he a lunatic?" said Raby, in wonder.

"Against the law!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's the first time I've ever heard that caravanning was against the law!"

"May be a new law," said Newcome. "They're making 'em every day, you know, and nobody can remember the whole lot."

"Oh, the man's potty!" said Jimmy.

And the caravanners went on, the farmer's trap disappearing in the dust ahead.

The incident, curious as it was, passed from their minds, but it was soon to be brought back again.

### The 2nd Chapter. Too Many Lunatics!

Buzz!

Zip-p-p!

"Blessed motor!" growled Lovell, as the familiar sounds came from behind.

The Classical caravan drew to the left, to allow the motor behind room to pass.

Jimmy Silver carefully held Robinson Crusoe, the caravan-horse; Robinson Crusoe did not like motors. The car came grunting on behind.

It was going at a good speed, but it slackened down as it was passing the caravan.

The car had a woman driver, who glanced rather curiously at the juniors.

In the car, a fat and puffy man was sitting, whose side-whiskers and lofty expression had a very official look.

He jammed a pair of gold-rimmed glasses on a fat little red nose, and transfixed Jimmy Silver & Co. with an accusing stare.

"Halt!" he rapped out.

"Oh, my hat, is this another blessed lunatic?" ejaculated Lovell.

"Boy!"

"Hallo!"

"Have you a special permit to sell sugar without coupons?"

If the gentleman with the whiskers had asked the juniors whether they had a special permit to go caravanning in the moon, he could not have astonished them more.

"A—a-a whatter?" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Don't prevaricate!" exclaimed the whiskery gentleman sternly. "I asked you whether you have a special permit to sell sugar without coupons?"

"N-n-no!" stammered Jimmy Silver dazedly.

"I was quite sure of it—I asked the question in order to convict you out of your own mouths!" exclaimed the motorist, with a fierce glare through his glasses.

"Mad as a hatter!" murmured Raby.

"I shall see that this is stopped! You may not be aware who I am!"

"Not at all, sir, unless you're Mr. Potty from Colney Hatch," answered Lovell.

The puffy gentleman turned purple. "I am Mr. Tweasel, chairman of the Food Committee of Ponders Hatch!" he exclaimed.

"Ponders Hatch!" murmured Jimmy. "That's the next village on this road. Must be a near relation of Colney Hatch."

"You are selling sugar without coupons!" pursued Mr. Tweasel. "I shall take the matter up. Four—five of you—I shall remember your faces! Beware!"

The car buzzed on. Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose.

"Well, I'm—blowed!" he said. "Either there's a lot of practical jokers in this part of Kent, or else there's an epidemic of insanity. Why should that old merchant think we're selling sugar?"

"Goodness knows!"

"And without coupons!" said Newcome, in wonder. "Do we look like sugar-merchants?"

"I give it up!" The car had disappeared, and the juniors had followed the trail of dust and petrol, in great perplexity.

A man sitting on a fence by the road, a little later, called after the caravan.

"Hi, there!"

"Hallo!"

"I'll have two pounds, please!"

"Two pounds?" said Jimmy.

"Yes; three if you like!"

"Another lunatic!" ejaculated Lovell. "Why the thump should any body give him two pounds?"

The caravanners went on without stopping, leaving the man staring after them.

"Do the tramps in this part of the country ask you for pounds?" said Raby, in utter wonder.

"That chap wasn't a tramp—he looked like a labourer," said Jimmy. "Blessed if I know what it all means!"

"Hallo! There's somebody yelling from the field!"

The juniors looked round. A woman was waving to them over a hedge frantically.

"What's wanted?" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Stop! I'll take a pound!"

"A—a-a pound?" yelled Jimmy.

"Yes, white if you've got it; but any kind will do."

"White what?" gasped Jimmy.

"Sugar, of course!"

"S-s-s-sugar?"

"Yes; ain't you selling sugar?"

"Selling sugar?" stammered Jimmy.

"No!"

"Sold out?" asked the woman, looking disappointed. "Well, you call at my cottage, young man, if you're round this way again."

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose hard as he walked on.

Apparently the population of the countryside had the impression that the Rookwood caravanners were itinerant merchants selling sugar.

What could have given them that impression was a mystery to Jimmy

(Continued on the next page.)



Silver & Co. Naturally, they did not think of looking on the back of their van for an explanation.

"Well, this beats the whole band!" said Lovell. "There's Ponders Hatch, Jimmy. I suppose we shall find some more lunatics there."

The village was in sight up the lane now. The caravanners intended to make some purchases of provisions there, to carry on to their camping-place, and they stopped in the village street, outside what looked like a general store.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell went into the shop, while Raby and Newcome remained with the horse.

In a few minutes a crowd had gathered round the caravan.

Raby and Newcome were the centre of attention.

Three or four women and a number of children came along, some of them with bags and some of them with baskets.

"Fourpence a pound—eh?" said one woman. "That's under Government price. I'll 'ave four pounds."

"Pound of sugar, please!" piped an urchin of six.

"Two pounds, please!"

"Six pounds!"

"Now then, don't shove!"

"Let me pass, there; I want some sugar."

"We haven't got any sugar!" roared Raby, in amazement and consternation.

"What are you getting at? Clear off!"

"Look 'ere, you ain't sold out yet; you ain't sold any since you came 'ere! I want three pounds!"

"And get a move on before the policeman comes, too!"

An excited crowd pressed round the two dazed juniors.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell hurried out of the shop as they heard the buzz of excited voices.

"What on earth's this?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Don't ask me!" gasped Raby. "They're all potty, I think! They want to buy sugar of us!"

"Sugar!"

"So they say. It beats me!"

"Look 'ere! You sell me that sugar before the policeman comes!" shouted one eager customer. "I s'pose you know you'll be stopped?"

"Three pounds, please!"

"Six pounds! They say there's enough for everybody, and I'm going to 'ave six pounds! Don't shove!"

"'Ere's my fourpence, now where's the sugar?"

"There isn't any sugar!" shrieked Jimmy Silver. "We've not got any sugar! We don't sell sugar! Oh, my hat!"

"Then wot do you say you do for?" demanded a dozen voices angrily.

"We—we don't! We didn't! We—we—"

"Mother says three pounds of sugar, and wrap it up!"

"Look here! Are you going to 'and out that here sugar?"

Jimmy Silver mopped his perspiring brow.

It was extraordinary to have dropped into a village of lunatics like this; but really that seemed the only explanation.

the van—the owdacity of it!" said Mr. Tweasel.

Jimmy Silver jumped. "A notice on the van! You're as potty as the Kaiser!"

"None of your impudence!" said Mr. Tweasel. "You had better take possession of that notice, officer. It's hevidence."

The constable went to the back of the van and blinked at the notice.

Jimmy Silver & Co., wondering whether they were on their heads or their heels, followed him.

At the sight of the placard stuck on the back of the van, the unhappy Rookwooders almost collapsed.

They understood now.

"Sugar without coupons!" murmured Jimmy Silver, rubbing his eyes. "Our price fourpence per pound! Enough for everybody! No coupons required! Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip! How did that come there?" stammered Lovell.

Raby gave a yell.

"Tommy Dodd! He was fooling round behind the van at the cross-roads! It was that Modern beast!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"Plain enough!" said the constable. "I never 'eard of such cheek! In the light of day, too! This is a serious case, Mr. Tweasel!"

"Serious! It's infamous!" said Mr. Tweasel. "Owdacious! Lawless! I desay we shall find that these young rascals are little better than pacifists! Take them into custody, officer!"

"You silly old chump!" roared Lovell, exasperated. "Can't you see that that card has been stuck on our van for a joke?"

"Oh!" said the constable.

"You can see how the matter stands, officer," said Jimmy Silver. "We've got no sugar; we've never sold sugar. Some silly idiot stuck that card on there without us knowing. It's a practical joke."

"Oh!"

"You can search the van, if you like," said Jimmy. "We never saw that card before this minute."

A grin dawned upon the face of the policeman.

Not being blinded by self-importance like Mr. Tweasel, he was able to see easily enough how the matter stood.

But even Mr. Tweasel realised that he had been too hasty.

He did not suggest again that the officer should take the Rookwooders into custody.

"Pr'aps I'd better look into the van," said the constable hesitatingly. "If you young gents 'ave no objection—"

"Search it thoroughly," said Mr. Tweasel.

"You're welcome!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Get out of the way, Muffin! Here you are, officer!"

The constable looked through the van. Naturally, there was nothing there for a representative of law and order to take exception to.

The officer stepped down from the van again, and looked for Mr. Tweasel.

But that important gentleman had vanished.

The chairman of the Food Committee of Ponders Hatch realised that he had put his podgy foot in it, and he had departed rather hurriedly.

"Sorry, gentlemen," said the constable, with a lurking grin. "I'd tear up that there notice if I was you. Good-evening, sir!"

And he walked away, much to the relief of the Rookwooders.

A crowd had gathered round, and the crimson juniors were the cynosure of all eyes.

"Get a move on, for goodness' sake!" muttered Jimmy Silver. "Let's get out of this!"

The Rookwood caravan rolled on, with a crowd following it to the extreme limits of Ponders Hatch, grinning, and freely passing remarks.

The Fistical Four were glad enough to get out on the country road again.

"Well, my hat!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, with a deep breath. "I don't want to go through that again! Blessed if I didn't think we'd landed on a lunatic asylum!"

"Tommy!" he exclaimed, as he jumped off his machine.

"Hallo, ass!" said Lovell politely.

Clarence Cuffy blinked at him through his big spectacles.

There was an expression of deep disappointment on his face.

"Is not Thomas here?" he exclaimed.

"Thomas! What Thomas?"

"My dear friend Thomas Dodd," said Cuffy, "I am searching for Thomas. I have come from Gander's Green looking for Thomas. I have missed him somehow. Dear me!"

Clarence fanned himself with his straw hat, and gasped.

"Oh, you're looking for Tommy Dodd!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, my dear James. I am going caravanning with dear Thomas," said Cuffy. "Mr. Dodd thought it would be so nice for me to be with dear Thomas. What are you laughing at, my dear Arthur?"

Lovell chuckled.

"Somehow I have missed his caravan," said Cuffy in great distress. "I heard news of a caravan at the village I have just left, and rode after it at great speed, my dear fellows, expecting to find dear Thomas."

"And you've found dear us instead!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "Never mind, we can tell you where to find dear Thomas."

Clarence Cuffy beamed.

"That is so kind of you, dear James!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, don't mench! Have you had your tea?" asked Jimmy Silver considerably.

"Indeed, no. From Thomas' last letter to his uncle I expected to meet the caravan at Burwood this morning," said Cuffy. "I have not seen it. I have been looking for it ever since. Thomas will be so distressed when he knows the trouble I have had."

"He'll be distressed when you find him, I'm sure!" said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I am sure of it, dear Arthur," said Clarence innocently. "If you can tell me where to find Thomas, dear James—"

"Better have tea with us first," said Jimmy. "Lots of time."

"I say, we're not stopping yet!" exclaimed Lovell warmly.

"We're stopping for tea, now Cuffy's with us," said Jimmy Silver severely. "Dear Thomas did us a good turn to-day, and we owe him one, and we may be able to reward dear Thomas through dear Clarence."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lovell.

The Co. understood, if Clarence Cuffy did not, and in great good-humour the Classical caravanners halted for tea.

The 4th Chapter.

Tit for Tat!

The Classical van was drawn up on a patch of grass beside the road, where Robinson Crusoe put his head over a fence and sampled a fine crop of artichokes growing on the other side.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were too busy to note how the horse was occupied, and it was to be hoped that the farmer to whom the field belonged would be too busy to note it also.

"Tea" did not exactly live up to its name, as there was no tea or sugar, but there was plenty of milk, lately purchased, which all the caravanners agreed was much better than tea.

There was cheese and there was war-bread, there were watercresses and lettuces, and there were cold potatoes. Cold potatoes were the great resource of the caravanners.

Clarence Cuffy was a guest whom the Classical juniors delighted to honour, to judge by the way they looked after him.

They nobly forbore to put mustard in his egg, and salt in his milk, and pepper on his cheese, remembering they were not at Rookwood now, and that the simple youth from Gander's Green was a guest.

But they firmly declined to allow Clarence to help in getting tea. They knew him too well.

"You just sit down, old chap," said Jimmy Silver. "You're our guest, you know. You're not going to work."

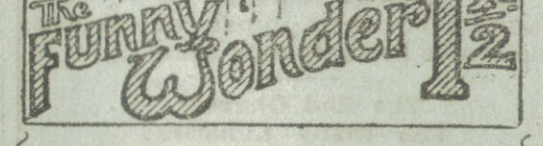
"But really, my dear James, I do not wish to eat the bread of idleness!" protested Clarence. "Pray allow me—"

"Not at all!"

"Let me at least set out the crockery." Crash!

"You howling ass!" roared Lovell, as

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the dish of lettuces crashed into the jam-jar, with disastrous results to both.

"Dear me!" said Clarence, blinking at the wreck through his enormous glasses.

"How ever did I come to drop that dish?"

"Don't you drop everything you lay hold of, ass?" grunted Raby.

"My dear George—"

"Shush, you fellows!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

The Classics made an heroic effort to recover their smiles, but they did not allow the duffer of Rookwood to touch the crocks again.

Clarence looked quite distressed. He always was distressed when he brought about a disaster.

But he recovered his smiles over tea, so cheery was the company he found himself in.

Lovell even refrained from bellowing when Cuffy passed him the milk and spilt it over his trousers; and Raby only breathed hard through his nose when Clarence upset the mustard over him.

Little things like that were bound to happen when Clarence Cuffy was about.

And the Fistical Four wished Tommy Dodd joy of his future comrade in the Modern caravan.

"And you have seen dear Thomas lately?" remarked Clarence, when Jimmy told him of the meeting.

"Oh, yes; it was no end of a pleasure!" said Jimmy Silver. "You'll overtake them quite easily before dark. They'll be so pleased to see you!"

"I am sure dear Thomas will be delighted," said Clarence, beaming.

"I suppose you're going to take the party under your wing, and look after them a bit?" suggested Jimmy.

"Certainly it is my wish to do so, James. I hope that my presence may keep the dear fellows from indulging in any tendencies to extravagance of spirits or any reckless proceedings," said Cuffy. "My dear papa said it should be my object to exercise a thoughtful restraint upon the exuberance of their youthful spirits."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell.

"I'm sure you'll do that, Cuffy," said Jimmy Silver cordially. "I can't imagine any great exuberance of spirits when you're around."

"I am so glad you think so, dear James!"

"If you really want to be useful and kind to Tommy Dodd, I can put you up to some tips," suggested Jimmy.

"That is very, very kind of you!"

"Not at all, Cuffy, old chap! You are one of the chaps that do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame," said Jimmy. "I think of you as a sort of guardian angel in the Modern caravan."

"How very kind of you to say so!"

"As an old hand, there are a few things I can tell you, Cuffy. Frinstance, the milk is liable to go off in this hot weather. That would be rather serious, so what you've got to do is to mix a certain amount of mustard with it."

"Mustard, my dear James?"

"Yes—about one ounce of mustard to every pint of milk. I'll give you a tin of mustard in case the Moderns are short of it."

"Thank you so much!"

"Then there's the grub," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "Tommy Dodd was laying in stuff to-day for a stew this evening. I think—in fact, I'm pretty sure—that he forgot the ammoniated quinine."

"Ammoniated quinine, my dear James?"

"Yes, I really think he forgot it."

"I am aware that Thomas is sometimes a little thoughtless, James. It will be my aim to remedy this defect," said Clarence simply.

"Exactly! Drop in at the chemist's as you go through the village, Cuffy, and buy a bottle of the quinine. Don't tell Tommy. Just slip it into the stew when it's on the fire, so as to surprise him with your thoughtfulness."

"What a very pleasant thought, James!"

"Mention to him what you've done, as soon as you've done it, and see his smile," said Jimmy Silver. "It's so delightful to see a chap look pleased over some thoughtful, friendly act!"

"How very nice!" said Clarence.

"Then about the horse," continued Jimmy Silver, in the same reflective way. "He has to have a good range for cropping the grass during the night. If you camp in a field, see that the gate's left open. If on a common, Tommy may tether the horse—he's so thoughtless. Don't say a word to him, but just get up quietly and see that the geegee's allowed to roam. It is worth while even to make a horse happy, Cuffy."

"I quite agree with you, James."

"Then about airing the caravan," said Jimmy Silver. "Caravans have to be kept well aired and disinfected, Cuffy. I suppose you know that there's danger of the beds being infected by the—the—the collywobbles microbe?"

"I was not aware of it, James."

"Collywobbles," said James, "is a serious thing. It may lead to a general outbreak of collywobbles."

a bit excited when we parted with the Modern chaps. I should like you to do the kind things I've mentioned, but don't let Tommy know it comes from me till to-morrow. Then you can tell him, and I am sure it will make him feel kindly towards us."

"Certainly, my dear James!"

"In fact, don't tell him you've met me till to-morrow," said Jimmy thoughtfully.

"Tell him in the morning, after you've done all the things I've mentioned. Because it will be so nice for Thomas to learn all at once that he owes these kind attentions to my thoughtful friendship. It will make me very happy to think of it, Cuffy. I shall picture that pleasant little scene in the morning, when you tell him that he owes these little kindnesses to my suggestion. I am only sorry that I shall not be present to receive his thanks."

"My dear papa would be delighted with you, James," said Cuffy, his eyes almost moist with emotion. "This kind and friendly thoughtfulness would make him very happy if he could behold it."

"If it makes Tommy Dodd happy I shall be satisfied, dear Clarence."

"So—so—say all of us!" gasped Newcome.

And when Clarence Cuffy took his departure, climbing on his bike after shaking hands all round twice over, the Classical juniors watched him start, with smiling faces.

They gave him ample directions for finding the Modern caravan, and they gave him a tin of mustard and a tin of pepper, which he put in inside pockets to keep them out of sight till he started doing good by stealth.

They watched Clarence Cuffy fading away down the road, and gurgled.

"Of all the sublime asses!" murmured Lovell.

"Jimmy, do you think that howling chump is chump enough to do as you've told him?" gasped Raby.

"My dear man, he's chump enough for anything," answered Jimmy Silver. "He will do it like a bird!"

"He, he, he!" chortled Tubby Muffin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classical caravanners resumed their march with many chuckles.

Their only regret was that they would not be present at the Modern camp when Clarence Cuffy was doing good by stealth.

The 5th Chapter.

Cuffy Makes Himself Useful.

"Ye gods! He's found us!"

"Oh, what luck!"

"How's smoke!"

Three merry Moderns looked a little less merry when they glanced back along the road at the cyclist who was pumping after them.

It was Cuffy of the Fourth.

The three Tommies had not exactly been trying to elude Cuffy.

Tommy's Uncle Dodd had wished his old friend's son to join the caravanners, and Tommy did not like to say no, though he viewed with dismay the addition to the party.

Tommy Dodd certainly had hoped that Clarence would miss the Modern caravan and trek home to Gander's Green.

Probably Clarence would have done so, but for the kind directions he had received from Jimmy Silver.

But here he was now, as large as life, and his face beamed with satisfaction as he overtook the Modern van.

Naturally, he ran into Tommy Dodd as he stopped, and bowled him over, and when he jumped off his bike he landed on Cook's feet.

It would not have been Clarence Cuffy if he had not done those things, or something like them.

Then he stood panting for breath.

"My dear, dear fellows, I'm so glad I've found you!" gasped Clarence.

"Yow-ow-ow!" said Cook.

"Is anything the matter, my dear friend?"

"Yoop! You've squashed my toes, you thumping ass!" roared Tommy Cook.

"I'm so sorry! I hope my front wheel did not hurt you, Dodd?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "It was nice and pleasant. I like being run into by a bike."

"I am so glad," said Cuffy simply.

"Oh, you—you—you—I mean, I'm glad to see you, Cuffy!" said Tommy Dodd manfully. "Wheel your bike for a bit; we're stopping soon. Don't wheel it into the horse, fathead!"

"I really did not mean—"

"Well, don't do it without meaning it. And not into me, either!" roared Tommy. "I am so sorry!"

"Br-r-r!"

Clarence Cuffy got his machine under control at last, and wheeled it on with the caravan.

The 3rd Chapter.

Light at Last!

Jimmy Silver & Co. blinked at Mr. Tweasel.

The chairman of the Food Committee of Ponders Hatch pointed a podgy and accusing forefinger at them.

"Caught in the back, officer!" he exclaimed. "Caught in the very back—selling sugar without coupons! Under Government price, too! I'm not sure whether that's an offence."

"We're not selling sugar!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Pah! Prevarication will not serve you now!" exclaimed Mr. Tweasel. "Take them into custody, officer, on my responsibility! The owdacious impudence of it! Selling sugar without coupons in the open street! Take them into custody!"

"I suppose we're dreaming this!" murmured Lovell dazedly. "We shall wake up in the dormitory at Rookwood."

"There seems to be no doubt about it, Mr. Tweasel, sir," said the constable.

"None at all! There's the notice on

"When we meet Tommy Dodd again" growled Jimmy Silver.

"We'll scalp him!"

"And boll him in off, the Modern worm!"

And it was quite some time before the harassed caravanners could see the humorous side of the matter.

They were a couple of miles from the village when Lovell glanced back.

"There's a blessed bikist after us!" he grunted.

From the direction of Ponders Hatch a cyclist was riding fast, and he waved his hand to the caravanners as they looked back, evidently as a signal to stop.

"I know that chap!" said Jimmy, starting at the cyclist. "My only hat! It's Cuffy, of the Modern Fourth!"

"Clarence Cuffy!" exclaimed Lovell in wonder.

All the Classics recognised the cyclist as he came nearer. Well they knew the duffer of the Modern Fourth at Rookwood. They were surprised to see him there. Cuffy was not an athletic youth, and he was not likely to be on a cycle tour.

the evening stew, Clarence Cuffy explored the van.

He found the big tin can of milk, and in the privacy of the van he mixed the mustard in it, as he had been instructed by Jimmy Silver.

He had just finished when Tommy Dodd shouted to him.

"Bring out the milkcan, Cuffy."

"Certainly, my dear Thomas."

"Get the tin cups, too," said Cook.

"You can't break them."

"My dear Cook, I had no intention of breaking—"

"Bow-wow!"

"I say, this milk looks a bit queer," said Tommy Doyle, as he dipped in his tin cup. "Ought to have boiled it, I think."

"All serene; it hasn't turned," said Tommy Dodd.

"It cannot, my dear friends," smiled Clarence Cuffy.

"Eh? It could, I suppose, in this hot weather," said Dodd. "Still, it hasn't."

The juniors were thirsty after their march, and milk was a grateful and comforting beverage.

But that milk did not prove to be either grateful or comforting.

Tommy Dodd filled his cup, and drank heartily, and half the milk was down his throat before he discovered that it had a remarkable flavour.

Then he stopped suddenly.

The expression on Tommy Dodd's face was extraordinary. His remark was:

"Gruggggg!"

"Ooooh!" came from Tommy Cook.

"Woooop!" howled Doyle.

"What's the matter with it?"

"Groooh!"

The three Moderns coughed violently.

"It—it—grooh!—tastes like—ooch!—mustard!" gurgled Tommy Dodd. "Has any silly ass been spilling mustard in it?"

"My dear Thomas—"

"Have you spilt mustard in the milk, Cuffy?" shrieked Cook.

"My dear Cook—"

"Kill him, somebody!" howled Tommy Doyle. "Yaroooh! It's poisoned! I am intirely! My throat's burning! Ooooh!"

"Groooh!"

"Woooff!"

"Goodness gracious!" ejaculated Cuffy.

"My dear friends—"

Tommy Dodd seized him by the throat.

"Have you spilt mustard in the milk?" he shrieked.

"Yow-ow! You are hurting my neck, Thomas. I put the mustard in the milk."

"You put it in?"

"Yes, to preserve it!"

"Pip-pip-pip-preserve it!"

"Certainly, my dear Thomas."

"Groooh!"

"Yurrggh!"

"Kill him!" moaned Tommy Doyle.

"Kill him intirely! What's he doin' outside a lunatic asylum? Oh! Ow! Wow!"

Tommy Dodd was nearly weeping.

He had had a good deal of the mustard which Clarence had so thoughtfully placed in the milk.

"Perhaps I have put it in a little too strong," said Clarence, in distress. "I am really sorry— Yaroooh!"

Three exasperated youths seized Clarence at once, and bumped him on the common.

They bumped him once, they bumped him twice, they bumped him thrice.

It was no use talking to Clarence; actions were needed, not words, and they gave him action.

Clarence Cuffy sat in the grass, gasping, when they had finished.

The three Tommies rushed down to the stream to wash out their tingling mouths.

Cuffy staggered to his feet.

"Oh, dear!" he gasped. "Goodness gracious! Oh, goodness! I am sure Tommy's Uncle Dodd would be shocked at this! My dear papa would be horrified! Ow! I fear that I shall not enjoy caravanning with Thomas! Ow!"

There was a sound of gurgling from the stream.

Clarence recovered from the bumping before the three Tommies recovered from the mustard.

He was a little hurt, but he was not resentful. He was still prepared to do good to his comrades.

And while the juniors were occupied at the stream, he had his opportunity to help with the stew.

The big pot was simmering over the fire, with all kinds of vegetables floating in it, and Clarence cheerfully poured in the large bottle of quinine, and stirred it industriously.

He was stirring away when Tommy Dodd & Co. came back.

"Oh, you're trying to be useful, anyway," said Tommy Dodd.

"Certainly, my dear Thomas."

"What's that blessed taste?" Tommy Dodd tasted the stew, and sniffed. A dreadful suspicion smote Tommy Dodd. "You—you—you frabjous villain, have you been putting anything in the stew?"

"Only the quinine, my dear Thomas," replied Cuffy innocently.

"The—the what?" asked Tommy faintly.

"Merely the quinine."

"Great Julius Caesar! You—you—you've put quinine in the stew?"

"Is not quinine a necessary ingredient in an Irish stew, my dear Thomas?"

The three Tommies fixed their eyes upon Clarence Cuffy, with looks that would have put Von Tirpitz to the blush.

"Quinine in the stew!" stuttered Cook.

"Where did you get it?"

"I brought it with me on purpose, my dear fellow," beamed Clarence. "I have put in half a pint. Do you think that sufficient?"

Tommy Cook's reply was extraordinary. It took the form of rushing upon Clarence Cuffy, and smiting him hip and thigh.

Clarence rolled in the grass in a dazed condition.

"Mum-mum-my dear fellow!" he spluttered. "What—what—"

"Pour the stew over him!" shrieked Doyle.

"Good! Lend a hand."

The stew was boiling, quinine and all. Clarence Cuffy leaped to his feet, and ran for his life.

**The 6th Chapter.**  
**Clarence is Too Good!**

Why Tommy Dodd & Co. were angry Clarence Cuffy did not know.

He was sure that he had done his best. Certainly he had carried out exactly the instructions he had received from Jimmy Silver, and what could he do more than that?

But neither the mustard in the milk, nor the ammoniated quinine in the stew, had pleased the Modern juniors.

Cuffy did not know why they were wild, but even Cuffy realised that they were wild, and that he had better keep away for a time.

He wandered sadly for a good hour before he ventured near the Modern camp again.

He found the three Tommies seated round the camp-fire, finishing a supper on things from tins.

Tommy Doyle shook a fist at him, and Cuffy decided not to join the circle round the fire.

Besides, he had other matters to attend to.

The beds in the caravan had not yet been treated with pepper as a disinfectant, and Cuffy remembered how solemnly Jimmy Silver had impressed upon him the necessity for that.

He disappeared into the caravan.

Some time later Tommy Dodd called out to him.

instructions, had not spared the pepper; he had been very generous with it.

There was enough, and to spare.

It had risen in clouds in the caravan as the beds were shaken out, and the three Tommies sneezed and coughed, and coughed and sneezed, as if for a wager.

In a frantic state of sneezing, with tears streaming from their smarting eyes, they leaped out of the caravan.

Clarence Cuffy surveyed them in consternation.

"My dear friends—" he began.

"Atchoo—atchoo!"

"Oh, howly smoke! Grooh—atchoooh!"

"I sincerely hope there was not too much pepper!" exclaimed Clarence in distress. "My dear Thomas—"

Tommy Dodd sat up in the grass, feebly. He was still sneezing, and he had sneezed till he felt that his nose had parted company with the rest of his features.

"You—you—you—" moaned Tommy.

"Did you put pepper in our beds, you mad villain?"

"Certainly, dear Thomas!"

"You—you did?" spluttered Cook.

"Yes," beamed Clarence. "I am sincerely sorry that you have had an attack of sneezing, my dear schoolfellows; but at all events you are safe—quite safe—from the collywobblers."

"The—atchoo!—the what?"

"Collywobblers, my dear Thomas."

"Collywobblers!" moaned Doyle. "Faith, and I'll give yez collywobblers!"

He staggered to his feet and started for Cuffy.

But an explosive sneeze caught him, and he had to stop.

"Groooh! Atchoo-choo-choooh!"

The unfortunate Modern was fairly doubled up.

Clarence himself began to sneeze a

"Ow! I don't want the other! Yow-ow!"

Cuffy quitted the spot in haste.

Really, Thomas' temper seemed very unreliable that evening.

The caravan was quite uninhabitable till the pepper cleared off.

Clarence Cuffy had to camp out for the night in a coat and a rug.

But this was fortunate in one way, as he did not sleep very soundly; and after all was silent in the tent he was able to rise and carry out Jimmy Silver's instructions with regard to the horse, after which he returned to his rug and slept the sleep of the just.

**The 7th Chapter.**  
**Black Ingratitude.**

Tommy Dodd & Co. had recovered their good-humour by the morning.

They had gone to bed feeling inclined to slaughter Clarence Cuffy, but in the sunny morning light they felt that they could forgive him.

They came out of the tent and found Clarence asleep, and Tommy genially awoke him with a dig in the ribs from his boot.

"Yow-ow!" said Cuffy, as he sat up.

"Time to get up, slacker!" said Tommy Dodd. "Lend a hand in getting sticks for the fire. Hallo!" Tommy Dodd noticed that the caravan horse was not in sight. "Where's the gee-gee?"

"Sure, it's a gossoon ye are, Tommy!" said Doyle. "You've let him loose!"

"I tethered him safely enough last night!" said Dodd warmly.

"Rats! He's got away!"

"That's jolly queer."

"And disinfecting the beds with pepper—"

"Wha-a-at?"

"And letting the horse loose, if you should be so careless as to leave him tied up," said Clarence brightly.

"Oh!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

"Jimmy Silver!" stuttered Cook.

"Yes; he said you had done him a good turn, and he owed you one, and might be able to reward you through me," said Clarence. "Was it not kind of dear James, Thomas?"

Dear Thomas could not reply; his feelings—perhaps of gratitude—were too deep for words.

"What a very pleasant thought of dear James, that I should tell you this in the morning as a happy surprise!" said Clarence, beaming. "He said he was sorry he would not be here for you to thank him personally, my dear Thomas."

Still Tommy Dodd did not speak.

He seemed to be able only to gaze fixedly at the ineffable Clarence.

Doyle gazed round wildly for a weapon. "Where's the chopper?" he gasped. "Sure I'm going to slaughter him intirely!"

"I hope you are not angry, my dear Thomas."

"Scalp him!" shrieked Cook.

He rushed at Clarence Cuffy, and got his head into chancery.

He felt that that was the least he could do.

Frantic yells rose from the unhappy Clarence.

"Yoop! Yah! Yaroooh! Help! Oh, dear! Yoop! Goodness gracious! Yah! What ever are you—yaroooh!—thumping me for, my dear—yoop!—Thomas?"

"That's for the mustard!" roared Tommy Cook, with a terrific thump.

"And that's for the pepper! That's for the quinine! And that's for letting the boss go! And that's for being taken in by Jimmy Silver! And that's for being a silly chump! And that's for being a howling idiot! And that's for being a potty lunatic! And that's—"

Tommy Dodd dragged his excited chum off.

Clarence Cuffy dabbed his nose, and blinked at the Moderns, and gasped.

Cuffy was a forgiving youth; he was full of all the virtues. But he was roused to wrath at last.

"Yow-ow-ow! My nose! Oh, dear! Thomas, I am sorry—grooh!—to leave you—yow!—but I refuse—mmmmmm!—to remain with you—yow-ow—wow!—any longer! I will not—grooh!—be treated in this—yow-ow!—manner! Wow!"

Clarence Cuffy meant it. For once he was wrathful.

He dragged out his bicycle, mounted it, and pedalled away, without another word of farewell, and the three Tommies gazed after him, thinking it was too good to be true.

But it was true, and Clarence Cuffy was gone from their gaze like a beautiful dream.

And during the next three hours, while they were hunting for the elusive caravan horse, perhaps it was just as well for the ineffable Clarence that he was gone!



Clarence Cuffy surveyed the three juniors in consternation. "My dear friends—" he began. "Oh, howly smoke!" groaned Tommy Doyle. "Groooh—atchoooh!" "I sincerely hope there was not too much pepper!" exclaimed the duffer in distress.

Tommy charitably remembered that Cuffy couldn't help being a dummy, and he was disposed to forgive him.

"What are you up to, Cuffy?" he called out.

"Getting the beds ready, Thomas?" replied Clarence cheerfully.

"Oh, good! You'd better come and have some supper."

"Thank you, my dear Thomas, I will finish the beds first."

"Buck up, then! We've got to get the fire out before we turn in," said Tommy Dodd.

Clarence joined the three Moderns a little later, and they sniffed as he came up.

There was a scent of pepper about Clarence.

The duffer of Rookwood sat down to sardines and war-bread for his supper; the unfortunate Irish stew had disappeared.

"Two in the van, one in the tent with Cuffy," said Tommy Dodd, yawning. "Let's get the tent up."

The tent was erected while Cuffy was finishing his sardines, the three Tommies sternly declining his aid.

Dodd and Doyle were to sleep in the caravan, leaving the tent to the other two.

As Tommy Dodd shook out his bed he gave a sudden, convulsive jump.

"Wha-a-at—atchoo!—atchoo!—atchoo!"

"Atchoo!" came from Doyle. "Howly mother av Moses! Chew-chew-atchoo!"

There was a formidable outbreak of sneezing in the Modern caravan.

Cook came up the steps.

"What's the matter there?" he called out.

"Atchoo—atchoo-atchoo!"

"Caught a cold?" asked Cook in wonder. "Atchoo-atchoooh!"

"My hat!"

Tommy Cook climbed into the van, and then he joined in the chorus of sneezes, as he caught a whiff of the pepper Clarence had used with so liberal a hand.

Clarence, remembering Jimmy Silver's

little, catching a whiff of the pepper from the Tommies.

For some minutes nothing was heard on the common but the incessant sound of sneezing and snorting.

Tommy Dodd found his voice at last.

"This must be a jape!" he said weakly. "Even Cuffy couldn't be idiot enough to do that simply out of idiocy! Shove him in the van, and let him have the pepper! We three'll stick to the tent."

"My dear friends— Oh, dear!"

Clarence Cuffy was grasped by the three Moderns and pitched headlong into the caravan, the door being slammed on him.

He landed on a bed that was thick with pepper, and that cheery condiment rose round him in a cloud.

"Atchoo-atchoo-atchoo!"

The anguished sneezing from the van was music to the ears of the three Tommies outside.

Weeping with pepper, the Tommies turned in in the tent, leaving Cuffy to dispose himself for the night as he thought fit.

Cuffy opened the door of the van and rolled out, sneezing.

He lay in the grass and sneezed for a full quarter of an hour before he was able to get on his feet.

Then he approached the tent where Tommy Dodd & Co., having given up sneezing at last, were settling down to sleep.

"My dear friends," said Cuffy, blinking into the tent. "I fear that it is impossible to sleep in the van, owing to the thorough manner in which I have disinfected it. Have you any objection to my sharing this tent— Yaroooh!"

Crash!

A boot smote Clarence Cuffy on the chest, and he sat down suddenly.

"Yaroooh! Oh, dear! My dear Thomas—"

"Do you want the other?" came Tommy Dodd's sulphurous voice. "If you do, put your silly nose in this tent again!"

Tommy Dodd ran to the peg to which the horse had been tethered.

The rope was gone along with the horse, so it had evidently been untied.

"He's been let loose!" said Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, some thafe of the worruld has come along while we've been aslape!" said Doyle in dismay.

Tommy Dodd fixed his eyes upon Clarence Cuffy.

"Cuffy!" he rapped out.

"Yes, my dear Thomas."

"Have you let the horse loose?"

"Cuffy!" yelled Cook. "Of course! That potty chump—"

"There is nothing potty, as you term it, in kindness to animals, Cook," said Clarence Cuffy reprovingly. "Certainly, my dear Thomas, I let the horse loose, as you had forgotten to do so."

"Forgotten!" yelled Tommy.

"Yes. It is my aim to repair such thoughtless omissions on your part, my dear Thomas," said Cuffy, with a beaming smile. "I have given the horse plenty of room to roam."

"You—you—you mad idiot!" stuttered Tommy Dodd. "And how're we to get him back? He may be miles away now." Cuffy looked thoughtful.

"I did not think of that, my dear Thomas. Jimmy Silver did not mention that."

Tommy Dodd jumped.

"Jimmy Silver?"

"Yes, my dear Thomas," said Cuffy, with an effusive smile. "I will tell you now that I met Jimmy Silver on the road yesterday, and he gave me directions how to find you. And he very kindly gave me tips, from his experience as a caravanner, about preserving the milk—"

"Eh?"

"And improving the stew—"

"What?"

"Hollo!"

"Cuffy, by jove!"

The Classical caravan was on the road that sunny morning, when a cyclist came pedalling out of a side lane, and nearly ran into the caravan.

Jimmy Silver & Co. recognised Clarence Cuffy.

"Hallo! Not left the Moderns?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, dear! Yes," gasped Cuffy. "I did everything you told me, my dear James; and, instead of being grateful, or even commonly civil, they—they— Oh, dear! I have been assaulted and battered, my dear James! I have actually been smitten with violence upon the nose!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It is not a laughing matter, my dear fellows!" said Clarence warmly.

"Sorry—ha, ha!—not at all— Ha, ha!"

"The extreme roughness of Thomas and his friends, my dear James, contrasted very painfully with the kindness I experienced with you," said Cuffy. "This is a most fortunate meeting. I have lost my way; but it does not matter now. I will go caravanning with you instead of Thomas."

"Wha-a-at?"

The Fistical Four left off laughing suddenly.

"How very fortunate I met you!" exclaimed Clarence, falling into line with the Classical caravanners, and wheeling his bike cheerfully. "I am sure I shall enjoy the tour in your company, my dear James. How very, very pleasant for us to be together for the holiday, don't you think so, my dear James?"

James did not reply.

He couldn't!

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**

**CUFFY AND THE CARAVANNERS!**

By OWEN CONQUEST.

**DON'T MISS IT!**



# IN MERCILESS HANDS!

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.

### Called Away from School.

"Hallo! Who's that?" murmured Bob Lawless.

All Cedar Creek School looked round. Cedar Creek was at lessons in the big lumber school-room.

Doors and windows were wide open on the warm summer's afternoon to let in the breeze from the forest.

The big school-room door had suddenly been darkened, and a long shadow fell across the floor inside.

Miss Meadows glanced round, not looking very pleased.

The Canadian schoolmistress did not like interruptions in lesson-time.

On that point she differed from her pupils. All the members of her class—boys and girls—were quite willing to give geography a rest.

A man in riding-boots stood in the doorway—a rather tall, sunburnt man, with a thick, dark beard and spectacles.

He was looking into the school-room over his glasses, and he raised his Stetson hat as he met Miss Meadows' inquiring eyes.

"Stranger lost his way, you bet!" grinned Chunky Todgers. "He's dropped in to ask the trail to Thompson. Miss Meadows'll scalp him."

"Let's hope he'll take a long time asking questions," yawned Frank Richards. "If some boy's sent to show him the trail, I'm the man."

"No fear!" murmured Bob Lawless. "I'm the antelope. I'd guide him all the way to Toronto this afternoon with pleasure!"

"Same here!" said Vere Beauclerc, laughing.

"Silence in the class, please!" rapped out Miss Meadows severely.

And Frank Richards & Co. were mute. The bearded and spectacled stranger advanced into the school-room, hat in hand, his manner very civil and courteous.

"Please excuse this interruption, madam!" he said, addressing Miss Meadows. "I fear that I have interrupted a lesson."

"That is the case!" answered Miss Meadows, a little curtly.

"I beg a thousand pardons. Please allow me to explain. My name is Smith, and I am a stranger in this locality. Some distance from here I came upon a traveller who had been thrown from his horse and hurt. He appears to be a French-Canadian, and speaks only French. I want to convey him to his home, wherever it is, but I cannot understand a word he says. A man on the trail told me that I should find a school here; and I came here, madam, to ask whether any pupil who may be able to speak French would accompany me to where I left the Frenchman, to learn from him where he wishes to be taken."

Miss Meadows' face cleared at once.

"No doubt among your pupils, madam, there is one who understands that language, and can tell me what the poor fellow is trying to say," said Mr. Smith.

"Under the circumstances, I hope you will excuse this interruption."

"Most certainly!" said Miss Meadows.

"Is the man far from here?"

"About three miles," said Mr. Smith.

"I intend to convey him on my horse, if I can discover where he wishes to be taken. I simply need an interpreter. Perhaps some lad—"

He glanced at the class.

"Up jumped Chunky Todgers at once, and put up a fat hand eagerly.

Chunky knew little more of French than he knew of Sanskrit; but he did not think of that for the moment. What he was thinking of was a pleasant run in the shady woods on that warm afternoon.

"Please, Miss Meadows—"

"Silence, Todgers! I will certainly send someone with you at once, Mr. Smith. Todgers, you may sit down!"

"But I'll go, ma'am!" said Chunky eagerly. "I'm just the antelope the gentleman wants!"

"You do not speak French, Todgers?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; bully!" answered Chunky.

"Simply bully, ma'am! Common alley voo, mong amey—oui, oui—bonsoir and bonjour—and—and so on, ma'am!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sit down at once, Todgers!" said Miss Meadows, frowning. "Richards!"

"Yes, ma'am?" said Frank Richards, rising.

"I understand that you studied French in your former school before you came to Canada?"

"Certainly, Miss Meadows!"

"Do you think you could do as Mr. Smith requires?"

"Oh, yes. I think so, Miss Meadows!"

answered Frank honestly. "I can speak French quite well enough for that."

"Then you may go with Mr. Smith—if you are willing, of course?" added Miss Meadows considerably.

"Quite willing, ma'am!" answered Frank promptly.

Frank Richards was more than willing.

"Very well, Richards, you may go," said Miss Meadows graciously.

Envious glances followed Frank Richards as he left the class.

Chunky Todgers looked quite wrathful.

The spectacled stranger, after thanking Miss Meadows warmly, followed Frank Richards into the porch; and in Miss Meadows' class geography was again the order of the day.

Frank Richards took his hat from the peg, and walked out of the lumber school-room with Mr. Smith.

"Just wait a minute while I get my pony, sir," he said.

"Very good, my lad!"

Mr. Smith walked down to the gate, where his horse was tethered.

In a couple of minutes Frank had his pony out of the corral and saddled; and he joined the stranger at the gate.

They rode away together down the trail—a familiar trail to Frank Richards, for it led through the timber towards the Lawless ranch, his home, and was, in fact, his customary homeward way.

Until they started together Frank had hardly looked at Mr. Smith; but now, as they rode side by side, he glanced at him rather curiously.

His impression was that Mr. Smith must be a kind-hearted man to be taking so much trouble about a stranger he had found injured on the road.

But as he looked at the bearded man's face he could not help thinking that Mr. Smith did not look like a specially kind-hearted man.

His features were very hard, and his eyes very sharp and almost hawkish behind his glasses.

Outside the school, too, Mr. Smith allowed his spectacles to slip farther down his nose, and his glance was over them all the time, so that it did not seem very clear why he wore glasses at all.

Apparently he did not need them to assist his vision.

Mr. Smith rode in silence, without a word on the subject of the distressed Frenchman he had left in the wood.

He assuredly did not seem to be a chatty or very amiable man.

Frank Richards did not mind that, however. He was enjoying the canter along the trail under the great trees; it was a very pleasant change from the school-room.

Three miles had been covered before they left the trail.

Then the spectacled gentleman dismounted, and Frank Richards followed his example.

Mr. Smith led his horse into the wood, and Frank followed, leading his pony.

Frank expected at every moment now to come in sight of the distressed traveller, and as they penetrated farther and farther into the wood his surprise grew.

"Didn't you leave the chap near the trail, Mr. Smith?" he asked at last.

"No," answered Mr. Smith.

"But—"

Frank paused.

For the first time a feeling of uneasiness and suspicion came upon him.

If Mr. Smith had come upon a distressed traveller, it must have been upon the trail, not in the heart of the forest, where it was too thick for riding.

It was inconceivable that he had conveyed the injured man so far into the wood as this; there was no motive for having done so.

Yet Mr. Smith was pushing on deeper and deeper into the forest, and they were already nearly half a mile from the trail.

Frank Richards came to a halt.

Mr. Smith looked round, his sharp, searching eyes glinting over his glasses.

"Why are you stopping, my lad?" he asked.

"Where is the man we're looking for?" asked Frank.

Mr. Smith's eyes became sharper and brighter as he read the vague suspicion that had come into Frank's mind.

He stepped back towards the boy.

"Come!" he said.

"But—"

"You are to come with me," said Mr. Smith quietly. "Do not be alarmed. You will not be hurt, and I will give you a reward, if you wish, for your services. But you must come with me some little distance farther."

Frank breathed sharply.

"It's not a question of 'must'!" he answered.

"You are mistaken; it is. Come, I

tell you!" The man's voice rose. "Lose no time—come at once! I repeat that you will not be hurt, and I don't want to use force, but you've got to come!"

Frank Richards sprang back.

A heavy hand caught him by the shoulder as he did so, and the grip of the bearded man was so hard that he almost uttered a cry of pain.

In that muscular grasp the schoolboy was powerless.

"Come!" said Mr. Smith grimly.

And he led the boy on into the wood, and Frank Richards, helpless in that grasp of iron, tramped on, with wildly-beating heart.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### The Cabin in the Forest.

Not for a moment did the grasp on Frank's shoulder relax.

Mr. Smith did not speak again.

His eyes were about him, evidently watching for a sign that marked the route he was following through the forest.

The led horses tramped after them, through bush and bramble.

Frank's heart beat fast.

What this strange mystery could possibly mean he had no idea, but he knew that the man's story of an injured traveller on the trail was false.

That he needed an interpreter who could speak French seemed certain enough; otherwise Frank Richards was no use to him.

But it was not to learn from an injured traveller where he wished to be taken.

The French-Canadian, in short, was totally imaginary, and what Mr. Smith wanted was an interpreter for some other and quite different purpose.

What that purpose might be was a mystery, to which Frank Richards had no clue.

The man had invented the story of an injured Frenchman in order to obtain a French interpreter, that was all Frank knew.

He had kept up the pretence so long as it could be kept up, and as soon as the schoolboy became suspicious he had shown his hand plainly enough, and he was prepared to use force if necessary.

Frank Richards' face was dark and angry now, but his anger had to be controlled.

He was helpless in the hands of the muscular man by his side.

Angry as he was his curiosity was aroused, too.



## GET ONE OF THESE CARDS.

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What it could all mean was a puzzle, but it was pretty clear that the affair was not above-board.

If Mr. Smith had wanted an interpreter for any ordinary reason, he could have found one easily enough at Thompson or at Cedar Camp, where there were plenty of French-Canadians among the lumbermen.

He need not have come to Cedar Creek School to find one—save for one reason, that a schoolboy would be helpless in his hands.

A sense of danger was growing upon Frank.

But he was powerless, and he could only tramp on beside the silent, inscrutable man, with an inward determination that if he fell in with any rascality that afternoon, he would take care to let the sheriff of Thompson know about it at the earliest possible moment.

More than a mile more was covered before the strangely-assorted pair came to a halt at last.

From the thick forest they emerged into a rough clearing, and Frank saw before him a rudely-built log cabin.

The door of the cabin was closed, and outside it a man sat on a log, smoking a pipe, with a rifle across his knees.

He rose at once as Mr. Smith and Frank Richards emerged from the trees.

"You got him, boss?" he said, with a glance at the schoolboy.

"I reckon!" answered Mr. Smith laconically.

"Kin he talk the lingo?" asked the other, with a rather curious look at Frank.

"So the schoolmistress says."

"All O.K., then, I reckon!"

"Take the horses, Bill, and then follow me in."

"You bet!"

"Bill" led Mr. Smith's horse and Frank's pony away to the rear of the cabin.

Mr. Smith removed his spectacles, and slipped them carelessly into his pocket.

As Frank Richards had already guessed, he did not need them, and had worn them only to change his appearance.

Frank was already pretty certain, too, that the man's name was anything but Smith, and he suspected that the thick, dark beard would have become detached from the hard face if pulled.

"Now, my lad," said Mr. Smith quietly, "listen to me. As you know, I've brought you here to interpret between me and a Frenchman. You know now that the Frenchman isn't an injured traveller; that was a yarn, of course, you've guessed."

"A lie, you mean!" said Frank hotly.

Mr. Smith shrugged his shoulders.

"Never mind that," he said. "I wanted an interpreter, and I've got 'out' you're going to see a man in this cabin. You're going to ask him questions that I shall dictate to you, and tell me his answers. Understand?"

"I understand."

"You're not to tell him anything, or to ask him any questions on your own. Simply translate what I say, and his replies. Savvy?"

"Yes."

"Do as I want, and after you've done the business you shall be set free, to return to your school, or anywhere you like, with twenty dollars in your pocket. I guess that's good pay."

"I don't want your money," answered Frank. "I won't touch it, either! You've got me here on false pretences, and if your business was honest, you wouldn't have needed to do that. If you think I'm going to help you in any rascality, you're making a mistake."

Mr. Smith gave him a grim look.

"Bocus Bill!" he called out.

"Comin', boss."

The man came round the cabin, having tethered up the horses.

"You've got your gun, Bill?"

"You bet!" grinned Bocus Bill.

A thrill ran through Frank Richards as the ruffian drew the "gun" from his leather belt—a large-sized Colt's revolver.

"You see that, boy?" said Mr. Smith.

"Well, at a word from me this galoot will let drive a bullet through your head, as if you were a prairie rabbit! Get that into your brain, and think over it!"

Frank's heart thumped.

"You're in desperate hands, my boy," said Mr. Smith. "But I tell you, once more, that if you serve me faithfully you shall not suffer. But no more of your chin-music, or you will be sorry for it!"

Frank Richards did not reply.

Mr. Smith unbarred the cabin door—it was barred outside—and threw it open, and stepped in.

Frank Richards followed him, and after him came Bocus Bill, with the gun in his hand.

The door was closed again.

Frank Richards looked quickly round him inside the cabin.

It had one occupant.

A man was seated on a rough stool, to which he was bound by a strong knotted cord.

His hands were shackled by a rope looped to his wrists, allowing him to move them to some extent, but not to get them free.

A bandage was tied over his head and part of his forehead, and there was a dark stain on the bandage, showing that he had been wounded.

His face was pale and worn, and it had the dark complexion and Gallic features of the French-Canadian.

He looked about twenty-five, a sturdy and rather handsome fellow.

His dark eyes glittered as the three came in.

He did not speak, but the look he cast at Mr. Smith spoke volumes.

"I have returned, you see," said Mr. Smith grimly.

"Je ne comprends pas."

"I think you understand some English, my buck," said Mr. Smith, "whether you can speak it or not."

The French-Canadian wrenched at the bonds on his wrists. But they held fast.

"Coquin — lache!" he muttered.

"Quelque jour, je—"

"That's enough! Now, Richards—your name's Richards, I guess?"

"Yes," said Frank.

"Listen to me, Richards. You will repeat my questions to this man in French. You understand?"

"I understand."

The French-Canadian seemed to observe Frank Richards for the first time, and his glance dwelt on the schoolboy in evident astonishment.

"Mais vous!" he exclaimed. "Vous etes garcon—ecolier, je crois—vous n'etes pas—"

"Silence!"

Bocus Bill thrust his revolver forward, till the muzzle jammed on the mouth of the French-Canadian.

"Cut it out!" he snapped.

The man was perforce silent.

Frank Richards clenched his hands hard.

"Monsieur—" he began quickly.

He wanted to tell the prisoner of the log cabin that he was a friend, and not an enemy.

But the hand of Mr. Smith was thrust across his mouth before he could say more than one word.

"Hold your tongue!" The man's eyes burned at him. "By hokey, if you say a word apart from my orders, I'll lay a trail-rope round you till you can't crawl!"

Frank Richards' eyes gleamed, but he was silent.

## The 3rd Chapter.

### In Merciless Hands!

"Sit down!"

Smith rapped out the words.

Frank Richards sat on the log stool that was pushed forward for him, facing the prisoner.

"Now, repeat my questions to him," growled Smith. "Mind, I know enough of the lingo to tell whether you do it correct or not, and whether you put anything in."

Frank Richards had his own opinion about that.

If the man had had even a smattering of French he would not have been likely to take the trouble and risk of bringing an interpreter to the lonely cabin.

It was, in fact, a falsehood, and it betrayed that Smith was uneasy as to what Frank Richards might say in the tongue unknown to him.

But Frank did not allow his face to express his thoughts; it was more prudent to leave the rascal in the belief that the schoolboy interpreter was quite amenable to his orders.

"First, ask him: Are you willing now to tell me what I want to know?" said Smith.

Frank Richards put the question into French.

"Monsieur, voulez vous dire maintenant ce que monsieur desire savoir?"

"Non!" rapped out the Canadian.

That reply did not need translating. Smith scowled.

"Tell him he will die here if he does not answer, boy."

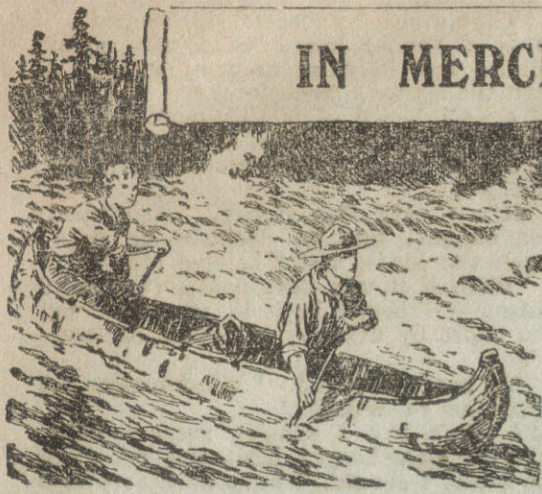
"Monsieur dit, repondez, ou vous mourrez ici."

"Alors, je meurs ici," said the Canadian.

"What does he say, boy?"

"He says he will die here, then."

"Obstinate fool!



IN MERCILESS HANDS!

(Continued from the previous page.)

of money somewhere in the forest," snarled Smith.

"Monsieur sait que vous avez laisse le sac d'argent dans le foret—votre nom?" said Frank, the last words being "Your name?"

"Alors, monsieur sait assez—Jules Clement."

"He says you know enough," said Frank. He did not add that the Canadian had told him his name was Jules Clement.

"We want to know more," said Smith savagely. "We want to know all about it."

"On veut tout savoir," said Frank. "Peut-on faire quelque-chose pour vous?"

He kept one eye on Smith as he spoke, but it was evident that the kidnapper did not suspect that the second sentence meant "Can I do anything for you?"

Frank Richards felt quite certain of his ground now, and to every question from that moment he added something of his own.

To give only the English, question and answer now ran as follows, the first part of the sentence being dictated by Smith, the second part being added by the schoolboy interpreter.

"They want to know just where you left the bag of money. Where are you from?"

"Let them find it if they can. I am from the Cascade mines."

"They will force you to speak. How did you get here?"

"They cannot force me. I received news that my father was ill in Quebec, and I sold my claim and started home with the money."

"Your life is at stake. Are you wounded?"

"Let them take it. These scoundrels followed me from the mines, and yesterday they attacked me in the forest. I have a cut on the head."

"You are warned that they are in deadly earnest. Have you any friends in this section?"

"I defy them. I am a stranger here, on my way to the railway."

"You are lost if you do not answer. Don't trust them; they will not release you if you give up the money."

"Let it be so. I know that, my boy; I hid the bag safely while they were tracking me in the wood, and they will never find it."

"For the last time, will you speak? What can I do to help you?"

"I will not speak. If you are allowed to go free, take information to the nearest sheriff."

"Their patience is running out. I will do so if I can."

"I repeat that I will tell them nothing. Be careful, he is watching you."

"He says he will put you to the torture to make you speak. If I am kept a prisoner, too, my friends will search for me, and may find us both."

"His tortures will not open my lips. I hope it may be so."

"You will speak under the torture. Is the bag hidden far from here?"

"I will not speak. About ten miles."

"No food will be given you. Could you not put them on a false scent to gain time?"

"I will starve, then. That is a good idea; let me think. But if they find the money I fear they will murder us both."

"You will be beaten with a trail-ropes till you tell them where the bag is hidden. Spin them a yarn to keep them busy until to-morrow; if I do not return to-night there will be a search."

At this point the French-Canadian's eyes gleamed, and Frank could see that the suggested idea was working in his mind.

"Tell them I could find the place where I hid the money, but only in the daylight."

Smith's scowling face cleared a little when that reply was translated.

From the looks of the two ruffians, it was easy to see that they believed that the threat of torture had caused the French-Canadian to weaken.

"I guessed the galoot would come to his senses," remarked Bocus Bill.

"I reckoned so," said Smith.

Question and answer in French went on:

"They want you to give directions, not to guide them. Don't agree."

"It is impossible to give directions, but I could find the place. This will gain time till to-morrow, at least."

"If you lead them on a wild-goose chase your punishment will be terrible. Until they have found the money I believe both our lives are safe."

"I will guide them to-morrow if they promise me my liberty. Be satisfied that they will never find it."

"You shall have your liberty as soon as they have the bag of money. Don't trust them."

"If they keep their word I am satisfied. I know they would take my life for their safety, if they found the money."

"I guess that's a cinch," said Smith, rising to his feet. "Tell the galoot he shall guide us at sun-up, and if he doesn't take us to the right spot, Heaven help him!"

Frank translated that threat into French, adding:

"There's a good chance that my pals may find me before morning; and you, too."

"This way, younker!" said Smith roughly.

Frank Richards was led from the cabin. The door closed, and was barred again on the outside.

Bocus Bill proceeded to knot the end of a trail-ropes about the schoolboy, with the evident intention of securing him for the night.

"You told me I was to go after we had finished, Mr. Smith!" exclaimed Frank.

The man grinned evilly.

"I guess I can't spare you yet," he answered. "The galoot may be fooling. And, if he is, you'll be wanted to talk again, sonny. But don't you be afraid. After we've done with you all your troubles will be over."

Frank's face did not betray his feelings as he heard that remark, the hidden meaning of which was not hidden from his quick intelligence.

It was his game to affect the simple and unsuspecting schoolboy; and he did it well.

"You want me to stay here to-night?" he asked.

"Correct!"

"Where can I sleep, then?"

"I guess the airth's good enough for you!" answered Smith. "Fasten him to that tree, Bill."

"You bet, boss!"

"Well, I don't mind camping out on a summer's night," said Frank, with an



A man was seated on a rough stool, to which he was bound by a strong knotted cord. His hands were shackled, allowing him to move them to some extent, but not to get them free.

assumption of cheerfulness. "I've done it before."

The rope was knotted behind Frank's back where he could not reach it, and the other end fastened to a trunk above the reach of his hands.

He was a secure prisoner.

A blanket was thrown to him, and when the two ruffians prepared their supper a portion was given to the schoolboy, and he ate it with what appetite he could.

But it needed all his nerve and courage to keep up an appearance of unsuspecting confidence.

For he knew that he was in the hands of utterly desperate and unscrupulous rascals; and that his life and the other prisoner's were not worth a pin's head in comparison with their safety.

If the two rascals who had tracked the unfortunate Canadian from the mines, to rob him on his homeward way, succeeded in getting possession of the bag of money, what would follow?

The returning miner, tracked by the two desperadoes, had hidden the bag in the forest before they ran him down, and thus made it impossible for them to silence him for ever without losing their plunder.

But when the plunder was safe in their hands would they leave these two witnesses to bring them to justice?

As he looked at the two evil, brutal faces Frank Richards felt that there was only one answer to that question.

Time had been gained—until to-morrow. On that interval and what happened in it depended the life of Frank Richards and the prisoner of the log cabin.

The 4th Chapter. Missing!

"Queer that Frank's not back!"

"Jolly queer!" said Beauclerc, with a troubled look.

Cedar Creek School had long been dismissed.

Boys and girls had gone their homeward ways, but Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc remained.

They had waited for Frank Richards to return; but the dusk of the Canadian evening was thickening, and he had not come.

What could be detaining him was a mystery to his chums.

From what "Mr. Smith" had said, they had supposed that Frank had only to ride a few miles down the trail, and then return.

He should have been back at Cedar Creek soon after lessons were over.

The chums stood at the gates, looking away down the dusky trail, with anxiety growing in their faces.

Black Sam came out to bar the gate for the night, and he blinked at the two in surprise as he found them still there.

"Mass' Lawless go home," said the negro. "Mass' Beauclerc, you go home."

"Oh, bother!" said Bob. "Let's go and speak to Miss Meadows, Cherub. This is jolly queer about Frank!"

The chums went into the school-house again, and found Miss Meadows sitting in the porch chatting with Mr. Slimmy.

The schoolmistress looked at them in surprise.

"My dear boys, why have you not gone home?" she exclaimed.

"Frank hasn't come back, ma'am," said Bob.

"Richards has not returned?"

"No."

"That is extraordinary!" exclaimed Miss Meadows, in astonishment. "But probably he has gone straight home, instead of coming back here."

"I—I don't guess he would, as we didn't know," said Bob. "He wouldn't leave us waiting for him."

"My dear Lawless, he must have gone home, as he has not come back here," said Miss Meadows. "His talk with the French-Canadian traveller cannot have occupied him long."

"I—I suppose not."

"You had better go home at once, or your parents will be anxious," said Miss Meadows. "You should not have waited so long."

"Very well, ma'am!"

"But something's happened to Franky, that's jolly clear!"

"Come in and tell me!" said the rancher shortly.

The two schoolboys followed him into the house.

There Bob Lawless explained what had happened in the afternoon—the visit of Mr. Smith to the lumber school in search of someone who could speak French for the purpose of aiding a French-Canadian traveller injured on the trail.

"Was the man known?" interjected the rancher.

"No; I guess he was a stranger in this section."

The rancher knitted his brows.

"I guess it must have been O.K.," he said. "A stranger couldn't be supposed to have any grudge against Frank. I suppose Frank hadn't anything about him worth stealing?"

"Only his pony," said Bob.

The rancher smiled.

"It's not a hoss-thief job," he said. "That's clear enough. Besides, Frank could have got home on foot long ago if it was that."

"I know, father. But—but what can have become of Frank?"

"I guess that beats me—unless he's been thrown."

"His pony would have come home, popper. He's found his way home alone before now."

"True! Get your suppers, boys, and I'll send Billy Cook and some of the Kootenays to look for him," said Mr. Lawless abruptly.

"You're going to stay, Cherub?" asked Bob, as his father quitted the room.

"I'd like to, if a message could be sent to my father."

"I can fix that."

"Then I'll be glad to stay. I'm anxious about Frank."

The chums sat down to a rather dismal supper.

Frank Richards did not appear.

Mr. Lawless came in, after despatching Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, with

work had been thoroughly done, and he could not even get his fingers on the knots.

He was a helpless prisoner where he lay.

The danger had been averted till the morrow.

When the rascals found that Clement was leading them on a false scent—what then?

If they found him resolute in his refusal to place the money in their hands, his life would be worth little, and Frank's as little.

Unless help came in the interval there was but slight hope for him.

Could help come?

Frank knew that his chums would be thinking of him, that they would be alarmed by his failure to return, and that he would be searched for.

But the search would be on the trail; they had no reason to suppose that he had penetrated miles into the forest.

Midnight had come, and faintly through the great branches overhead glimmers of moonlight filtered down.

There was a sound on the grass near Frank Richards, and he turned his head quickly, a thrill running through him at the thought that it might be a wild animal.

But a soft muzzle was thrust into his hand, and there was a low, affectionate whinny.

Frank's heart throbbed.

It was his pony, Brownie.

A length of rope still trailed from Brownie's neck.

Frank sat up, his heart beating.

The intelligent animal, tethered in a strange place, had known that something was amiss, and he had gnawed through the tether-ropes.

He had found his master, and was showing equine delight at having found him, snuggling his soft muzzle into Frank's hand as he sat in the grass.

Frank Richards cast a quick look towards the motionless figure rolled in a blanket a few yards from him.

Smith did not move; he was evidently sleeping soundly.

Frank's hands were free, and he stroked the pony's nose softly, murmuring endearing words.

But there was no time to lose—every second was precious.

Brownie was free, if he was not, and that knowledge had brought into Frank's mind, like a flash, a new hope and a new plan.

He rose softly and cautiously to his feet, still stroking the horse's neck and murmuring to him.

Silently he turned the pony, patted his head, and pointed to the forest.

The pony's intelligent eyes turned upon him questioningly; he knew that something was wanted, but he did not understand what.

The bridle jingled, and Frank's heart thumped.

He looked quickly, almost in agony, towards the sleeping ruffian.

But the man did not move.

Frank pushed the pony away from him, and struck him a smart blow on the flank with his hand.

Brownie swerved away, whinnying. He turned back, and there was reproach in his glistening eyes.

Frank Richards raised his hand again. Then the pony understood the gesture.

He threw up his head, and trotted away into the forest, his footfalls almost inaudible on the grass.

Frank laid down again, his heart beating almost to suffocation.

He listened with tense anxiety. A rustle came from the forest—a sound of brushing twigs and brambles, and it died away.

Brownie was gone. A fear oppressed him that the affectionate animal might creep back to him, but Brownie evidently understood at last.

The last faint sound of the pony brushing through the thickets died away in the silence of the night.

Frank's throbbing heart grew calmer. Far away in the forest, the pony was threading his way homeward, and as soon as he reached the plain he would gallop.

Long before morning he would be at the Lawless Ranch, and he would come as a messenger from the prisoner at the log-cabin.

From the lone cabin in the heart of the forest to the corral of the Lawless Ranch would lie the fresh trail of the pony's hoofs.

Where Brownie forced his way through the underwood the broken twigs and crushed foliage would tell their tale, and on the open plain, wet now with the night-dews, the tracks would remain to reward the keen eyes of a skilled trailer.

Would Bob understand? Frank Richards thought that he would. There was the gnawed rope still round Brownie's neck to show that he had been tied up, and had freed himself, and that would show that the pony had been in strange hands.

And where the pony had been tied up, Bob would expect to find traces, at least, of Brownie's master, and if he followed the trail—

Perhaps the hope was faint, but Frank knew well his Canadian cousin's skill, and he trusted to it.

There was hope—a gleam where all had been darkness. Frank Richards closed his eyes at last. Sleep came fitfully to him through the long hours, but ever, sleeping or waking, the hope was in his breast that even in this terrible extremity his chums would find him and save him.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY

"TRACKED BY TWO!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

DON'T MISS IT!