

The BOYS' FRIEND 1^d 1/2

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THREE HALFPENCE.

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THE CARAVAN CRICKETERS!

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

BY OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter. Old Acquaintances.

"By gad!"
"What a crowd!"
"Awful dusty lot!"
Those remarks fell upon the ears of the Rookwood caravanners as they jogged cheerily along in the drowsy warmth of the summer afternoon.
Jimmy Silver was leading the horse, and Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were sauntering along, while Tubby Muffin sat on the van.
The chums of Rookwood were following a deep lane between high hedges, and there was chalky dust in the lane in plentiful quantities.
Certainly Jimmy Silver & Co. were rather dusty.
The caravanners had been on the road since early morning, and a fastidious regard for appearances is not consistent with caravanning.
They were red, and they were dusty.
Lovell, indeed, had thrown his jacket on the van, and was walking in his shirt-sleeves.
Jimmy Silver had a panama on the back of his head, and a red spot of sunburn on the tip of his nose.
Perhaps the Fistical Four did look rather a dusty crowd.
Upon a stile by the roadside three extremely elegant-looking youths were seated in a row, and they made remarks as the caravanners came along.
The three elegant youths did not look dusty; in fact, they looked spotless, without speck or stain, from their straw hats to their white shoes.
Also, they had cigarettes in their mouths.
They made their remarks all at once, so that their opinions fell in a sort of chorus upon the caravanners, who looked round wrathfully.
"Smythe!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.
"Hallo, Rookwood chaps!" said Lovell.
The caravanners had felt hostile for a moment, but now they nodded cheerfully to the three youths on the stile.
For the three were Smythe, Howard, and Tracy, of the Shell at Rookwood School.
At Rookwood Jimmy Silver & Co. were far from chummy with Adolphus Smythe and his merry set.
But, having suddenly and unexpectedly fallen upon Adolphus & Co. on holiday, they were prepared to let bygones be bygones.
Jimmy Silver pulled Robinson Crusoe, the horse, to a halt.
"Hallo, Smythe!" he said.
"Fancy meeting you!" said Raby.
Adolphus Smythe extracted an eyeglass from the pocket of his fancy waistcoat, jammed it in his eye, and surveyed the caravanners with a lofty glance.
At school or on vacation, Adolphus was evidently the same Adolphus; in fact, his loftiness seemed more pronounced than ever.

"By gad!" he repeated. "That you, Jimmy Silver?"
"Little me, old birdy!" answered Jimmy.
"What are you sellin'?"
"Selling!" exclaimed Jimmy.
"Yaas. Brooms an' brushes an' things?" asked Smythe.
Howard and Tracy chortled.
"We're caravanning," answered Jimmy Silver.
"Yaas, I can see that," assented Adolphus. "Are you doin' it for pleasure, or sellin' things on the road?"
"Oh, don't be a funny ass!" answered Jimmy. "Sorry you've had such a bad accident, Smythe!"
Smythe of the Shell stared.
"Eh? I haven't had an accident," he answered. "What do you mean?"
"Oh, I thought somebody had trodden on your face!" said Jimmy cheerfully. "My mistake. Appearances are deceptive, I suppose."
"You dashed cheeky fag!" roared Smythe, in great wrath.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"By gad, you look a precious crowd for Rookwood fellows!" said Howard disdainfully. "When did you wash last?"
"No room in your caravan for soap, I suppose?" remarked Tracy.
"Don't let people know you belong to Rookwood, Silver!" implored Adolphus Smythe. "Think of the giddy reputation of the school, you know."
The Fistical Four glared at the nuts of the Shell.
The contrast between the trio of natty nuts and the dusty caravanners was certainly striking, and evidently made Smythe & Co. very pleased with themselves, and a little more insolent and supercilious than usual.
"I've got a lot of friends in this locality," continued Smythe. "If they saw you an' knew you belonged to my school, I should never recover from it—I shouldn't, really. Think of my feelings, Silver!"
"I'm sure Silver'll be obligin', an' get out of the neighbourhood as soon as possible," remarked Tracy.
"Begad, a bobby ought to move 'em on!" said Howard. "I must say they look a lot of suspicious characters."
"Yaas, begad!" said Adolphus, taking up the tale again, as it were. "I rather think the farmers'll be missin' their chickens with that crowd around!"
"I heard that some turnips had been stolen yesterday," observed Tracy, in a reflective sort of way.
"Move on, gipsies!" grinned Howard. "No brooms or saucepans wanted to-day, thanks!"
And the three nuts, delighted with their own humour, chortled in chorus.
Jimmy Silver & Co. did not smile, however. Perhaps they were lacking in appreciation of such delicate humour.
"You silly chumps!" said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones. "You'd



THE FALL OF THE DANDIES!

The 2nd Chapter. Lost Ball!

be doing much better caravanning than sitting on a stile smoking, like three silly owls. Have you anything more to say before we bump you over?"
"Here, none of your fag larks!" exclaimed Smythe, in alarm.
The Fistical Four did not heed.
Jimmy Silver rushed towards the stile, and his comrades followed him.
In a twinkling Smythe and Howard and Tracy were collared, and they went rolling off the stile into the field.
Three bumps and three loud yells followed.
"He, he, he!" came from Tubby Muffin, who was looking out of the van.
"Oh! Ow! Yaroo!" roared Adolphus Smythe, in anguish.
He had nearly swallowed his cigarette, and he found one end of it very hot.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
The three nuts of Rookwood sat in the grass on one side of the stile, gasping, while the Fistical Four stood in the road on the other side and roared with laughter.
The eclipse of Smythe & Co. had been sudden and complete.
The shout of laughter was echoed from the field.
A game of cricket was going on there, and the cricketers had seen Smythe & Co.'s sudden fall.
Adolphus Smythe spat out his cigarette, and groped wildly for his eyeglass.
"Ow! You rotters! Yoooop!" mumbled Adolphus.
"Have some more?" inquired Jimmy Silver.
"Yow-ow-ow!"
Apparently the nuts did not want any more.
Neither apparently had they any further disparaging remarks to make to the dusty caravanners.
Jimmy Silver went back to the horse, and the caravan rumbled on, the nuts of Rookwood being left to sort themselves out—somewhat dusty themselves now.

Bang!
Smash!
"Holy smoke!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.
"Silly asses!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell wrathfully.
The caravan window was in fragments.
A cricket-ball, evidently hard hit, had whizzed over the hedge, and smashed the little window fairly in the centre.
The ball dropped inside the van.
From within the van came a tinkling of crockery. The window was not the only casualty.
The caravan halted again. A shout was ringing from the cricket-field.
"Well hit, Sticker!"
"Lost ball!"
"Well, of all the howling idiots!" exclaimed Raby. "Look at that window!"
"I—I say, it might have biffed me, you know!" spluttered Tubby Muffin indignantly.
"That wouldn't have mattered, ass! Look at that window!"
Half a dozen faces looked over the hedge into the deep lane.
"Give us our ball, please!"
"What?"
"Would you mind giving us our ball?"
A sunburnt, cheery-looking fellow asked that polite question.
He had a bat under his arm, and was apparently the batsman who had made that effective drive.
The Rookwood caravanners glared at him.
"Do you see what you've done?" roared Lovell.
"Oh, crumbs! Your window busted?"
"Looks like it, doesn't it?" snorted Newcome.
"Sorry! I never expected to get a bullseye like that, I'm sure!"
"Buck up with that ball, Dick Sticker!" came a yell from behind the hedge.
"I suppose it's in your van," said Sticker. "I say, I'm really sorry! We'll pay for the damage if you like."

"Will you mend the window?" snapped Lovell.
"Well, I dare say I could," said Sticker. "My father could, anyway. He's a glazier. If you like to hang around till this evening I'll get my father to mend it for you free of charge—honest."
Jimmy Silver smiled genially.
After all, accidents would happen, and Master Sticker was sorry for the damage done, anyway.
Besides, Jimmy had a fellow-feeling for a cricketer.
"All serene!" he answered. "I'll get your ball."
He disappeared into the caravan, and returned in a few moments with the cricket-ball.
"Catch!"
From a spirit of mischief he gave Dick Sticker a very difficult catch.
Somewhat to his surprise, Sticker caught the ball quite easily, using only one hand for the purpose.
"Thanks!" said Sticker.
"I say, that chap would be useful in the field," remarked Lovell, his wrath quite evaporating at the sight of that neat catch.
Sticker tossed the ball to someone in the field, but he did not return to the pitch.
He seemed really concerned about the accident to the caravan.
"About your window?" he began.
"Oh, never mind that," said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Can't be helped. Don't keep away from your game."
"That's all right; only practice," answered Sticker. "Look here, I meant what I said. My father will mend your window if you can stop for it. If you're going to camp in this part—"
"We're looking for a camping-ground," said Jimmy Silver. The Rookwooders were feeling quite friendly now. "As you're a native, I dare say you can tell us of a good place."
"Certainly I can. If you keep on nearly to Deepden you'll find a first-rate place—a little meadow close by the river," said Sticker. "You'll

(Continued on the next page.)



THE CARAVAN CRICKETERS!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Smythe!" said Lovell. "Great pip!" As they came past the lawn the two juniors came in view of the straw hats again, and their wearers. They were not pleased to recognise Smythe, Howard, and Tracy, lolling more or less gracefully in garden-chairs on the lawn.

Smythe & Co. had restored their elegance since the encounter with the caravaners that afternoon. They looked as nobby and natty as ever.

Several other fellows were with them, two of them being Townsend and Topham of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, and the others fellows whom Jimmy Silver did not know.

A fat man, with a bald head and a purple complexion, and gold-rimmed glasses perched on a podgy little nose, was seated in a big chair, and he blinked at the two dusty juniors on the drive.

Smythe & Co. stared at them. Jimmy Silver and Lovell halted. They guessed that the purple-faced man was the colonel, though there was nothing at all military in his appearance.

By sheer chance, or, rather, sheer ill-luck, the caravaners had dropped into the home of Adolphus Smythe of Rookwood.

Smythe's father, as Jimmy knew, was, in point of fact, a "rich City gent," who lived in the country, and affected the manners and customs of a country gentleman.

Evidently he was one of the wealthy "gents" who had picked up a military title somehow or other during the war.

"By gad!" ejaculated Adolphus Smythe. "That lot again!"

"Check, to come here!" said Tracy, in wonder. "By Jove, you know, this is pillin' it on too thick!"

"Who are they?" asked Townsend, affecting not to recognise the caravaners.

"I've seen 'em somewhere before," said Topham, reflectively. The purple gentleman sat up in his chair.

His red and podgy face wore a frown as he looked at the dusty pair on the drive. "Adolphus!" he rapped out. "Yaas, dad!"

"Who are these—these young persons?" asked "Colonel" Smythe irritably. "Do you know them?"

"Yaas, I—"

"I presume that they belong to the—ah—village team you are—ah—playin' at cricket," said the fat gentleman.

"Really, Adolphus, you should have more—ah—circumspection than to ask them heah!"

This exceeding civil speech was quite audible to the happy visitors.

"I didn't ask them, dad," said Adolphus warmly. "But they're not the village chaps. They wouldn't have the cheek to come here. I'm not likely to allow them to take liberties."

"Then who are they, Adolphus?" "Rookwood fellows," said Adolphus reluctantly. "They're the gang that bumped us off the stile this afternoon. I told you, dad."

"Good gad!" said Mr. Smythe. Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell were quite crimson, and they were not feeling happy.

The colonel raised a podgy finger, and beckoned to them to approach. They came across the lawn.

"What are you—ah—doin' heah?" demanded Mr. Smythe. Jimmy suppressed his feelings.

"We came in to see the master of the house," he said.

"I am the—ah!—master of the house," said Mr. Smythe. "If you have any business here—"

"None at all, dad," interjected Adolphus. "I never asked them to call. It's sheer cheek, and nothin' else!"

"We are caravaning, sir," explained Jimmy Silver quietly, though his cheeks were burning. "We called to ask permission to camp in the meadow up the road, which we were told belongs to you."

"Good gad!" said Mr. Smythe. "Of course, we undertake to do no damage in the field," added Jimmy Silver. "There are five of us, one caravan, and one horse."

"Well, of all the cheek!" said Adolphus. Jimmy Silver did not care to add that the caravaners were willing to pay for the use of the meadow.

A few shillings could not be an object to Mr. Smythe, who counted his cash by the thousand pounds.

"If you will kindly permit us to camp in the field, sir—"

"Bless my soul! Certainly not!" "Oh!"

"I consider it—ah—impertinence to make such a request!" said Mr. Smythe. "I shall certainly not allow anythin' of the sort!"

"Very well!" said Jimmy. "Better tell Plummer to see them off the premises, dad," said Smythe.

"Did you say that these—ah—young persons belong to your school, Adolphus?"

"Yaas. All sorts at Rookwood," explained Adolphus.

"Good gad! I am surprised! I am certainly—ah—surprised!"

Lovell was turning away with Jimmy Silver, but he turned back at that.

He had been suppressing his wrath with difficulty, and now it refused to be suppressed any longer.

"Nothing to be surprised about, Mr.

Smythe," said Lovell distinctly. "There are decent fellows at Rookwood, as well as rank outsiders like Smythe!"

"Wha-at?" "Come on, Lovell!" murmured Jimmy. "Besides, we'll pay you for the field," went on Lovell unheeding. "Five bob if you like."

"Good gad!" "Get out, you cheeky cad!" shouted Adolphus, jumping up.

"Kick 'em out!" said Tracy. "Plummer!" roared Mr. Smythe. A plump man in livery approached.

Mr. Smythe pointed a fat forefinger at the caravaners.

"See those persons off the premises, Plummer!"

"Yessir."

"Oh, we're going!" said Lovell disdainfully. "Don't burst your crop, colonel!"

"Wha-a-at?" "By the way, what are you colonel of?" pursued Lovell deliberately. "The Bandy Battalion of the Slocum's Pond Guards—what?"

Mr. Smythe's purple complexion intensified, until he seemed on the verge of a severe attack of apoplexy.

Some of Smythe's nutty comrades grinned at Lovell's question.

"Turn them out, Plummer!" gasped Mr. Smythe. "Turn them out! Kick them out! Good gad! Throw them out!"

"Now then, out you go!" said Plummer, hustling the caravaners officiously.

Jimmy Silver and Lovell were in an exasperated frame of mind, which was very natural in the circumstances, and they were not safe to hustle just then.

They collared the plump Plummer, and sat him down on the lawn with a crash that completely winded him.

"Yooooop!" spluttered the unhappy Plummer.

"Turn them out!" shrieked Mr. Smythe.

"Grooogh!" "Do you hear me, Plummer? Get up! Turn them out!"

"Gerrooogh!" "Perhaps you'd like to try your hand, Adolphus?" asked Lovell.

"Get out, you rotter!" gasped Adolphus.

"Come on, Lovell, for goodness' sake," said Jimmy Silver, and he fairly dragged his warlike chum away.

A mocking cackle of laughter from Smythe & Co. followed them.

Adolphus Smythe felt that he had certainly scored this time, and Jimmy Silver and Lovell felt that it was so, as they tramped back with burning ears to the spot where they had left the caravan.

The 4th Chapter. A Friend in Need.

"All serene?" asked Raby. "Not quite," answered Jimmy Silver grimly.

"Not got permission to camp?" inquired Newcome.

"No."

"Anything happened?" added Raby, with a curious look at his chums.

"It turns out to be Smythe's place," said Jimmy Silver. "And old Smythe and young Smythe were—were—well, Smythical!"

Jimmy coined that new word on the spot to explain the situation, but it conveyed his meaning.

"Rotten luck!" said Raby. "Never mind, we can camp somewhere else. We don't want to ask favours of a worm like Smythe."

Lovell spat into the air. "Let that worm wait till we get back to Rookwood!" he said. "I'll make him sit up for his cheek! They treated us like dashed tramps! That purse-proud old fool doesn't know a decent chap when he sees one; but Smythe knows better. I'll warn him at Rookwood next term."

"Never mind; keep smiling!" said Jimmy. "The question is, Where are we going to camp? Hallo, here's that chap!"

Dick Sticker was coming along the road, with a ruddy face, and a bat under his arm.

He stopped as he came up to the caravan.

"Camping?" he asked. "No; can't get leave to use the meadow," said Jimmy Silver. "Perhaps you can tell us of another place?"

"Well, there's the common," said Sticker. "Anybody can camp on Deepden Common, of course. It's a bit farther on. I'll show you, if you like. You'll have to fetch water rather a long way, but there's a pond for your horse."

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"Good man!" said Jimmy Silver. "Get on, old hoss!" Robinson Crusoe was set in motion again, and the caravan rumbled on, Dick Sticker walking with the Rookwood fellows.

They chatted very agreeably on the way. The Rookwooders had taken rather a fancy to Master Sticker.

They found him keen on cricket, which was a subject they naturally had in common, and they learned that he was captain of the Deepden village club.

"You chaps play cricket, of course?" said Sticker.

"Well, a little!" smiled Jimmy Silver. "We're rather keen on cricket at Rookwood!"

"Rookwood! The school?" asked Dick. "Yes."

"I've heard of Rookwood School," explained Sticker. "Young Mr. Smythe belongs to it. You're his school-fellows, then?"

Jimmy Silver nodded. "I should have thought they'd let you use the meadow, in that case," said Sticker, in surprise.

"We're not on good terms with Smythe at Rookwood," explained Jimmy Silver. "In fact, quite the reverse."

"Oh, I see! I'm sorry I sent you to his place, then. Of course, I didn't know. I—I shouldn't have thought—"

Sticker paused and coloured. "What wouldn't you have thought?"

"Well, I naturally supposed that Rookwood fellows were like Smythe," said Sticker. "I shouldn't have expected them to be civil to a chap like me—a workman's son."

Jimmy Silver frowned. "Smythe isn't a fair specimen of Rookwood," he said. "There are silly snobs like Smythe everywhere, as well as at Rookwood. Smythe is more or less of a butt at Rookwood—simply a silly ass!"

"Yet he's captain of the junior eleven," said Sticker.

"Nothing of the kind!" "I understood—"

"The cheeky ass!" exclaimed Lovell indignantly. "He was captain of the junior eleven once, and was turned out because he couldn't play the game. Jimmy Silver's junior captain of Rookwood."

"Little me!" explained Jimmy, with a smile.

"Oh!" said Sticker, with visibly increased respect. "I understood from Smythe—he didn't exactly say so, but that was what he made me think. Of course, I don't see much of Smythe." He laughed. "Smythe wouldn't touch me with a barge-pole, personally. But he's fixed up a match with my club because there's nothing else doing, I suppose, and he wants to entertain his friends."

"Oh, you're playing that crowd, then?" said Jimmy, with interest, remembering a remark of Colonel Smythe's.

"Yes, to-morrow. I didn't care for it specially," said Sticker. "But, naturally, we liked the idea of playing a public school team. We don't get a chance often, you may be sure. We don't expect to win, but I thought the match would be a good experience for us—first-class cricket."

"You won't get first-class cricket from that lot!" grunted Lovell. "They slack at cricket, same as at everything else."

"Still, they're bound to be in better form than my crowd," said Sticker. "You see, we all have to work. Every member of my club works at helping the farmers, and at this time of the year there's lots to do. We don't get much time for practice; and, to be candid, we don't play much of a game. We do our best, but we haven't much chance."

"I suppose so," assented Jimmy. The captain of the Rookwood Fourth understood even better than Dick Sticker did.

"You ought to beat Smythe's lot, though," remarked Newcome.

Sticker shook his head. "We might have had a chance," he said. "But I've just lost some of my men. Six chaps have been called away to work on a farm fifteen miles from here, and they couldn't get over for the match, you see. They were the best of the bunch, too. I really don't know how I shall be able to make up a full eleven at all to-morrow. I shall have to put in some kids. Here's the place for you chaps."

The common was reached. The obliging Sticker guided the caravaners to a suitable spot, where Robinson Crusoe was allowed to halt once more.

It was certainly not so favourable a spot for camping as the meadow belonging to Mr. Smythe; but the caravaners had learned not to be particular.

"This will be all right," said Jimmy Silver. "We're much obliged."

"Not a bit! I'll bring my father along this evening to mend your window," said Sticker. "Ta-ta!"

And Dick Sticker went on to the village, leaving the caravaners to camp.

The 5th Chapter. Tubby Muffin Has an Idea.

Tubby Muffin wore a thoughtful expression.

The caravaners were sitting round a fire, fed with brushwood, over which the kettle was slung to boil.

Supper had been disposed of—a really tip-top stew, which all had helped to cook, and which had been finished with great gusto.

Lovell had mixed the cocoa in the cups, which was to wind up supper, and the juniors stretched themselves comfortably in the grass while they waited for the kettle to boil.

"I say, Jimmy—" began Tubby Muffin, after a silence that had lasted several minutes—quite a phenomenon for Tubby.

"Hallo!" yawned Jimmy Silver. "That chap Sticker was very obliging, wasn't he?"

"Yes. He's a good sort," said Jimmy. "Well, I think I know a way of making it up to him," announced Tubby. "I'm going to do him a favour, Jimmy."

"What are you going to do for him?" demanded Lovell. "Hide your face in the bucket when he's around?"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Well, that would be a favour to anybody. I don't see anything else you can do."

"I'm going to play cricket for him," said Muffin, with dignity.

The Fistical Four sat up as if moved by the same spring, and ejaculated together: "What!"

"You heard what he said," continued Tubby. "He's got a very so-so team to play those swanking cads to-morrow, and he's lost some of his men, too. They'll walk all over his lot, and swank no end. Well, he's bound to be glad if a good cricketer offers his services."

"A good cricketer!" repeated Newcome. "Me!" explained Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I don't know what you fellows are laughing at!" exclaimed Muffin indignantly. "I think it's up to me to help him out as he's been so obliging. We can stay here over to-morrow. We don't want to be always on the go."

"You fat slacker!" said Jimmy Silver. "You've only thought of this dodge to be able to lie on your back to-morrow, instead of getting along."

"I haven't, you know!" "Bow-wow!"

Tubby Muffin blinked indignantly at the Co.

As a matter of fact, Tubby Muffin was incessantly proposing long halts for one reason or another, his real reason being a very strong disinclination to exert himself in any way.

Tubby did not believe in caravaning on strenuous lines.

"But, by Jove," said Jimmy Silver, "it's a good idea, though Tubby thought of it! Of course, that duffer can't play cricket."

"Look here, Jimmy—"

"But we can," continued Jimmy Silver. "I think it's very likely that Sticker would be glad of four jolly good recruits."

"Five!" yelled Tubby wrathfully.

"Four!" said Jimmy Silver. "What do you chaps say? Sticker's coming along soon, and we can ask him. If he'd like us to play for his team, we can hang out here for a day, can't we?"

"Jolly good idea!" said Lovell heartily. "My hat! What a surprise for the merry Adolphus, to see us in the team!"

"It would mean a licking for him, instead of the easy victory he's expecting," said Jimmy Silver eagerly. "We're four of the best junior cricketers at Rookwood."

"Hear, hear!" "I wish old Ertoll or Mornington could be here to lend a hand! But we four could knock spots off Smythe & Co. on our own. I'd undertake to play four against their eleven, and beat them with an innings to spare, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "I'll put it to Sticker," said Jimmy. "We were thinking of knocking up some cricket here, if we could—and this looks like a good chance."

"What about me?" demanded Tubby Muffin.

Jimmy Silver laughed. "You can lie in the grass and look on, Tubby. That's your mark."

Tubby sniffed; but the prospect of lying in the grass for a whole day consoled him.

It was really Tubby's idea, but the Fistical Four took it up keenly.

The prospect of playing against Adolphus' nutty crowd and inflicting a severe defeat on them was very attractive.

That was a way of punishing Adolphus for his insolence which was after their own hearts.

Adolphus was fully expecting to swank at the wicket, impregnable to the bowling of the village crowd, and his feelings when he found himself up against the champion bowler of Rookwood could be imagined.

Adolphus & Co., in fact, would be mopped off the face of the earth, and that prospect was very entertaining to the Fistical Four.

They were quite keen to see Dick Sticker again and put it to him.

The cocoa was disposed of, and a little later Sticker and his father arrived at the camp.

Mr. Sticker brought his tools with him, and the necessary glass, and after a few words with the caravaners, set to work on his task.

Sticker joined the caravaners at the camp-fire, and then Jimmy Silver broached the subject of cricket.

"You're short of men for your game to-morrow?" he began.

"Yes. It's rotten!" said Sticker ruefully. "What I'm afraid of is that that crowd will guy us. I'd give a week's wages to dish them!"

"Would you care to play us?" "You!" ejaculated Sticker.

"Us!" said Jimmy Silver. "We're pretty keen cricketers at Rookwood, and I'm skipper of the junior eleven. We can play. If you'd care for us as recruits, we'll stay here over to-morrow. Don't mind saying no, though. It's just as you like."

Sticker looked at him curiously. "I'd be glad," he said. "I don't know what your cricket's like, but it must be a bit above our form, anyhow. But—but—" He hesitated.

"Out with it!" said Jimmy, with a smile. "If you'd rather play your own village chaps, I understand. No bones broken."

"It isn't that. I don't quite know how I should get an eleven together, even playing duds. But we're a team of village working lads, and you fellows belong to a public school. You'd be rather out of your element. I don't know whether you've thought of that."

"My dear chap, what difference does that make?" said Jimmy Silver. "Don't put us down as being silly chumps like Smythe."

Sticker smiled. "Well, if you'd care to play, I'd be jolly glad to have you!" he said cheerily.

"Smythe couldn't object. I can play anybody I like in my team. If you really mean it, Silver—"

"Of course!"

"Then it's a go!" said Sticker, his ruddy face brightening. "I'll be jolly glad, and so will the fellows when I tell them. It'll save me no end of trouble. I should have had to put in two or three kids of twelve; and we should have looked a lot of duffers if Smythe mopped us up in one innings. All four of you going to play?"

"If you'll have us—rather!"

"Oh, I'll have you fast enough!" said Sticker, laughing.

"You'll have to lend us bats," said Jimmy Silver.

"That's easily done!"

"Then it's a go!" said Jimmy Silver.

"When do we play, and where?"

"The pitch is in that meadow where they wouldn't let you camp," said Sticker. "It's an afternoon match. We can't get off in the morning, even on Saturdays. Stumps are pitched at two."

"Right-ho!"

"We shall pass this way going there," added Sticker. "We'll call for you, if you like, about half-past one."

"We'll be ready."

There was great satisfaction on all sides when that arrangement was made.

Dick Sticker was evidently gratified. The juniors chatted cheerily until Mr. Sticker had finished his work at the caravan window, and then they walked home as far as the village with Dick and his father.

They returned to camp in great spirits. A dash of cricket was very welcome, by way of variety, on a caravaning tour, but still more welcome was the prospect of dishing the superb Adolphus and his nutty crowd.

Jimmy Silver & Co. chuckled a good deal over the prospect.

And when, returning to camp, they found Tubby Muffin scolding the last tin of pineapple, they magnanimously forgave him in consideration of the excellent idea he had suggested.

The 6th Chapter. A Surprise for the Nuts.

"Walkin'?" said Townsend.

"Yaas."

Adolphus Smythe polished his eyeglass, and put it in his eye and frowned over it.

"I'm sorry, dear old beans!" he said apologetically. "But for this dashed war, there'd be the car. But it appears that a man can't have petrol as he pleases, Rotten! But there you are! The poor people in the village yonder still get paraffin for their lamps, while we're short of petrol for the car! It's all this dashed Socialism, I suppose!" added Adolphus thoughtfully.

Towny grinned. Towny was an ass in his way, but he was not quite such an idiot as Adolphus.

"Awful!" he said. "Still, as it's only a couple of hundred yards, I dare say we can walk it."

"We'll try," said Tracy manfully.

"Plummer will be carryin' the things," said Adolphus. "Plummer, mind you don't forget my bat!"

"Yes, Master Adolphus."

"An' there's a man there gettin' the place ready," added Adolphus. "Wickets an' all that! An' a tent. I thought we should want a tent. You see, it's goin' to be sunny, an' we shall want cover."

"Oh, yaas!"

Adolphus looked at his big gold watch. "May as well be gettin' along," he remarked. "Awful shame to drag you fellows out so soon after lunch. But we agreed to have the stumps pitched at two, and it's past two now. The weird team we're playin' can't play in the mornin'. Workin' or somethin' at farmin' or somethin', or somethin' or other."

"Queer lot of beggars!" said Topham.

"Yaas. Really, I ought to apologise to you men for lettin' you in for a match with that lot," said Smythe. "But I thought it was kindness to them, you know, to take notice of them. And it's one way of killin' time, too."

"Oh, we don't mind!" said Howard liberally.

"Of course, we don't know them!" Smythe added hastily. "We simply meet them at cricket. We don't know them from Adam."

"Of course!"

"I believe they're respectable, in their way," said Smythe tolerantly. "Doin' a lot of useful things, I believe, such as hoein' potatoes an' rootin' up things, or else plantin' 'em, or somethin' of the sort. So long as they don't try to get familiar, I believe in encouragin' that kind of people to a certain extent."

"No harm done," agreed Tracy.

Adolphus & Co. in their natty cricketing things, looked quite cheery and very elegant as they started for the ground.

If cricket had consisted wholly in appearances, no doubt Adolphus & Co. would have beaten the M.C.C.

As it didn't, it was doubtful if Adolphus & Co. would beat even the Deepden village lads at the great summer game.

But they were full of airy confidence as they sauntered along, with Plummer in attendance laden with bats.

Dick Sticker and his men were waiting at the tent when the nuts arrived.

There were over a dozen fellows in all with Adolphus. The nut of Rookwood was entertaining quite a large party at the Lodge.

Eleven of them, including the great Adolphus himself, were in flannels.

Dick Sticker looked rather grimly at them as they came up, for it was past the time arranged for pitching stumps.

"Here we are, Sticker," said Smythe graciously.

"We've been waiting half an hour!" said Sticker, rather gruffly.

"By gad! Have you?"

"Yes."

"Then we'd better get goin'," said Smythe calmly.

"Got all your men here?" asked Tracy, looking round.

"Oh, yes!" answered Dick Sticker. "Some in the tent. They're not all Deepden chaps. Some of my men are away, you know, and I've taken in four chaps who don't usually play with my club."

"Yaas, really?" said Smythe, with a plentiful lack of interest.

"Here they are," added Sticker, as the Fistical Four came out of the tent. "You know them, I believe. School-fellows of yours."

Adolphus Smythe jumped.

He blinked at Jimmy Silver & Co. "By gad! You fellows again!" he exclaimed. "What are you doin' here?"

"Cricketing," answered Jimmy Silver. "You're not playing for Sticker?"

"You've hit it!"

"Oh, gad!"

The nuts of Rookwood stared at Jimmy Silver & Co., not by any means pleased.

The rest of Smythe's party, who did not know the Fistical Four, were quite indifferent.

"Look here, Smythe, we're not playin' those fellows!" muttered Tracy.

Smythe hesitated.

He had no grounds for raising any objection to Dick Sticker's recruits, of course, and as Sticker had no one on the ground to take their place, raising an objection meant the match falling through.

"Can't withdraw now, Tracy," he answered, in the same tone. "We don't want to scratch the match, after takin' the trouble of comin' here. Besides, I've got an idea. Those four can play a fair game, but they've got seven duds along with them, and we shall beat them easily enough. Rather amusin' to tell the fellows at Rookwood that we beat Jimmy Silver at cricket—what?"

Tracy nodded.

But Tracy's care was wasted. His leg-stump went out of the ground, his bat missing the ball by a yard.

"How's that?" called out Jimmy Silver. The umpire grinned.

"Out!"

Tracy gave Jimmy Silver a dark look as he carried out his bat.

Howard came in next.

Howard stayed exactly long enough to score a duck's egg.

Townsend was next man in, and Towny earned a big round nought all for himself, and there was a cheer from the field for the bowler.

"The hat-trick!" grinned Lovell.

"That's bowling, if you like!" said Sticker.

"Jimmy isn't finished yet, my infant! I fancy this is going to be the double hat-trick," answered Lovell.

Lovell knew his chum's bowling, and the prophecy was a safe one to risk.

Topham came in next, and was dismissed without making a run.

Then two more of Smythe's nutty friends followed him, and went bootless home.

It was the double hat-trick, and not a single run had been taken for the over.

The nutty batsmen looked blue as they gathered at the tent.

Adolphus Smythe looked blue at his wicket.

This was the easy victory he had been mapping out!

Apparently, he wouldn't be able to tell the fellows at Rookwood, next term, how he had beaten Jimmy Silver at cricket in the vacation.

Dick Sticker and his friends were grinning.

They had not expected their new recruits to turn out like this.

One of the villagers bowled the next

"Just as you like."

Dick Sticker and one of his comrades went out to open the innings, the nutty cricketers going into the field.

The first innings had been finished with unexpected rapidity.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stood looking on from the tent, while Adolphus Smythe prepared in a leisurely way to bowl the first over.

"Why didn't you let us go on first, Jimmy, and put the silly asses out of their misery?" asked Lovell.

"We didn't come here to bag all the limelight, old chap," answered Jimmy Silver. "We should have knocked up enough runs to declare on. Let the village chaps have their game."

"Yes, I didn't think of that," admitted Arthur Edward.

"Trust your Uncle James to think for you," said Jimmy Silver benignantly.

"These chaps are enjoying seeing Smythe taken down a peg, but they came here to play cricket, not wholly for an entertainment."

Which was really thoughtful of Uncle James!

Dick Sticker was quite equal to Smythe's bowling, and he proceeded to make the running.

But as over succeeded over Smythe & Co. took wickets, and they looked more hopeful.

Sticker was out at last for fifteen runs on his own, and by that time the village team were down for thirty.

Only the Fistical Four remained to go to the wickets.

Dick handed his bat to Jimmy Silver.

"Man in," he said.

"Right you are!"

There was a villager at the other end when Jimmy came on the crease, and he had the bowling.



Jimmy Silver awoke the fat junior by gently jamming a boot into his fat ribs. "Tea-time!" said Jimmy. "Buckle to, Tubby—we've got guests!"

"Somethin' in that," he agreed.

"We're ready, if you fellows are," said Sticker pointedly.

"Yaas, we're ready."

The two skippers tossed for choice of innings, and it fell to Smythe & Co. to bat.

The villagers went into the field.

Dick Sticker had compared notes with the Fistical Four, and he kindly arranged the field to their liking.

He had not seen them play yet, but he was quite able to see that they were valuable recruits, and that their form was likely to be far above that of his own men.

His own men were keen enough, but want of leisure for practice, naturally, had kept them back.

Adolphus opened the innings with Tracy.

The two nuts of Rookwood strolled to the wickets, and Sticker himself bowled the first over.

Sticker was a good bat, but at bowling he was not so good, though in that he was the best of the bunch.

Smythe, poor bat as he was, was equal to the bowling, and he knocked it all over the field.

The over gave the nuts six runs, and the waiting batsmen, looking on, grinned at one another.

Had the nuts been playing only the villagers, the easy victory that Smythe desired would doubtless have been a foregone conclusion.

It was only the presence of the Fistical Four that made the result doubtful.

Jimmy Silver met Sticker's eyes as the field crossed over.

Sticker tossed him the ball.

over, and Smythe scored three before he was caught out by Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Seven down for nine!" murmured Raby. "Ye gods!"

Next man in was caught out by Newcome after taking two runs. It was eight down for eleven.

Then Jimmy Silver went on to bowl again.

Two wickets in succession fell to his bowling, and there would have been three if the laws of cricket had allowed it.

The "not out" batsman was not out for the excellent reason that he did not receive a ball to put him out.

Dick Sticker clapped Jimmy on the back, with a loud chuckle.

"You can bowl!" he said. "All down for eleven! Did you ever?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Quite a game, isn't it?" he said.

"Your schoolfellow doesn't seem to be enjoying it."

"Well, no; this isn't the cricket Smythe was looking for."

Adolphus Smythe was, as a matter of fact, looking daggers.

The procession to and from the wickets was so funny that even Smythe could see the comic side of it.

He would have been very glad, just then, to lay his handsome and expensive bat round Jimmy Silver.

"Looks like a win, I don't think!" grunted Tracy.

"Never mind! We'll beat 'em bowling!" said Adolphus. "You chaps know how I bowl!"

He fell to a catch by Tracy, and the score stood at seven down for thirty.

Arthur Edward Lovell joined Jimmy Silver at the wickets.

Lovell received the rest of the over, and made hay of it. Four runs rewarded his efforts.

Then the field crossed over, and Jimmy Silver had the bowling.

Jimmy Silver's batting was an eye-opener to the Deepden crowd.

Jimmy was not the best bat in the Rookwood Fourth by any means. Bowling was his strong point, and Erroll and Mornington were rather better at the wickets.

But his batting was miles above the heads of Smythe & Co.

Jimmy Silver knocked the ball all over the field, and the amount of leather-hunting the nuts had to do left them quite winded and breathless.

Smythe & Co. were looking decidedly ill-tempered by this time.

The runs piled up between Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell, while Raby and Newcome and Sticker & Co. grinned from the tent.

Raby and Newcome were not likely to be wanted. But they did not mind.

They had come there to see Smythe & Co. dished, and they were seeing it, and that was enough for them.

Jimmy Silver could have knocked up a century quite easily against the nutty bowling; but Uncle James was considerate, and he did not want to keep the Deepden fellows standing about watching him enjoying himself.

When the score was at a hundred for the innings he called out to Sticker:

"What price declaring, Sticker?"

Dick nodded at once.

"I was thinking so, but I wouldn't stop you!" he called back.

It gave him a rest, of which he was sorely in need.

With the scores eleven and a hundred respectively on the first innings, the result of the match did not seem in much doubt.

There was a long pause before Adolphus & Co. opened their second innings.

They simply could not begin for a while. They wanted a long rest, and they took it. But their opponents did not mind; the match was going unexpectedly rapidly, and there was plenty of time on their hands.

Adolphus and Howard went to the wickets at last.

Dick Sticker tossed the ball to Jimmy. "Wouldn't your fellows rather have a bit of a game first?" asked Jimmy, with a laugh.

"We want to watch you," answered Sticker. "Cricket like this doesn't often come our way, you know. Go in and scalp them."

"Right you are!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

There was a general grin round the field as the captain of the Rookwood Fourth went on to bowl. The fieldsmen knew what to expect, and they were not disappointed.

Jimmy Silver put his very best into that over, but he need hardly have taken the trouble.

Adolphus & Co. could not stand against his bowling when they were fresh, and now they were very far from fresh.

Smythe, with a desperate sort of feeling, stood very much on his guard against the first ball, determined to do or die.

But it booted not, as the poets say.

The first ball whipped out his middle stump, leaving his wicket with a toothless look.

"How's that?" cooed Jimmy Silver.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus Smythe, with feelings too deep for words, tramped back to the tent. He was fed up with that game.

A happy procession to the wicket followed.

After Adolphus five batsmen came and went, and without a single run being taken, they walked off again.

Then the field crossed over, chortling.

As if inspired by the example of Jimmy, Dick Sticker took a wicket with his first ball.

On the second there was a catch by Newcome in the field.

On the third there was a smart return by Lovell which ran out an unhappy batsman making a desperate attempt at a run.

On the fourth there seemed a chance of keeping the innings alive, at least, till Jimmy Silver's hand was seen to shoot up, and a smack announced that the ball was in his palm.

"Oh, gad!" murmured Smythe feebly.

"Oh, my hat!" mumbled Tracy. "Hang the rotters! You were a silly fool to play 'em, Smythe!"

"All down for nine!" chortled Arthur Edward Lovell. "Did you fellows ever see a game like this?"

"Never!" grinned Raby.

"Hardly ever!" chortled Newcome.

"Hard cheese, Smythe, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily. "Lemme see, Deepden wins by an innings and eighty-eight runs by an innings and eighty-nine runs, I think. They'll be entertained when you tell them about this at Rookwood."

Smythe gritted his teeth.

"I've a jolly good mind—" he began, his hand closing on the cane handle of his bat.

Jimmy Silver smiled at him.

"You've a jolly good mind to—what?" he asked sweetly.

"Nothin'!" mumbled Adolphus.

And the nutty eleven took an inglorious departure, leaving the victors in that peculiar match, chortling in great spirits.

"I say, Silver, I'm jolly obliged to you fellows for helping us out," said Dick Sticker, laughing. "I didn't know you were in such form. You've won the match for us."

"Well, I think we've helped a little," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "It's closed rather early. Will you chaps come along to the caravan and join us at tea? We'd like you to."

"You bet!" said Dick cheerily.

Tubby Muffin was taking a nap—a very long nap—in the grass by the caravan when Jimmy Silver & Co. arrived with their guests.

Tubby had looked on at the beginning of the cricket match, but had soon returned to camp for an extra meal.

Jimmy Silver awoke him by gently jamming a boot into his fat ribs, and Tubby sat up with a yell:

"Yow-ow!"

"Tea-time!" said Jimmy Silver. "Buckle to, Tubby! We've got guests. Kill the fatted calf!"

"I jolly well wish there was a fatted calf!" grumbled Tubby. "I've done the shopping, and there's lots of bread, and milk, and—"

"Never mind the list. Get 'em going."

And, in spite of war-rations, there was a plentiful repast at the caravan camp, and enough and to spare for the numerous guests of the caravanners.

Jimmy Silver turned in that night in a very satisfied mood.

Bright and early in the morning Robinson Crusoe was harnessed, and the caravanners started on their way once more.

Their encounter with the nuts of Rookwood had not begun agreeably, but there was no doubt that the honours rested with the Caravan Cricketers.

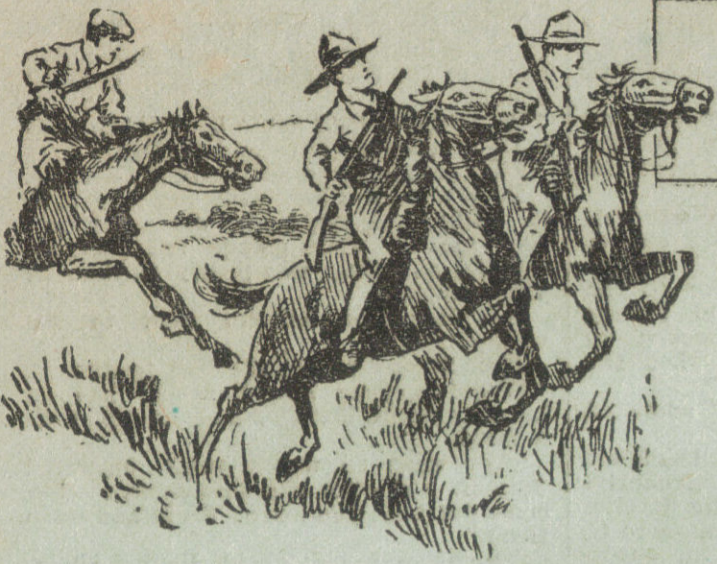
THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE HAUNTED CARAVAN!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!



IN A BORROWED NAME!

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.

A Mysterious Message.

“Franky!” called out Chunky Todgers, as Frank Richards & Co. rode up to the gate of Cedar Creek School in the summer morning.

“Hollo, fatty!” answered Frank Richards cheerily.

“There’s a galoot here waiting to see you.”

Frank jumped off his pony.

“Chap to see me?” he asked, in surprise.

Chunky Todgers grinned and nodded.

“Yep! It’s Injun Dick, from Thompson, and he’s got a note for you.”

“Blessed if I know whom it can be from, then,” said Frank. “I don’t know anybody at Thompson to send me notes. Take my pony, Bob, old chap.”

“Right you are,” said Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards walked towards the lumber schoolhouse, while Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc put the horses in the corral.

Frank was surprised and puzzled.

He knew Injun Dick, the Redskin loafer of Thompson, who was often employed to carry messages; but it was a puzzle who could have sent the Redskin over to Cedar Creek School with a letter for him.

He found the Apache sitting outside the porch, basking in the morning sunshine, his tattered blanket draped round him.

Injun Dick rose to his feet as Frank came up.

“You’ve got a note for me?” asked Frank.

“You bet! Paleface give red chief letter for young white chief,” answered Injun Dick. “You give Injun Dick twenty-five cents.”

“Let’s see the letter first,” said Frank, smiling. “It may not be worth it.”

Injun Dick fumbled among his rags, and produced a decidedly soiled envelope.

Scrawled on the outside was “Mister Frank Richards, Cedar Creek Skool.”

The handwriting was rough and stubby, and quite unknown to Frank Richards.

“Injun thirsty,” remarked the Apache. “Plenty of water in the pump, old man!” said Frank.

The Redskin made a wry face. He wanted something stronger to quench his thirst.

“You give Injun twenty-five cents,” he said, in an injured tone. “Injun hump it long way on trail to bring letter to young white chief. Injun thirsty.”

Frank Richards found a quarter in his pocket, and tossed it to the Redskin.

He had no doubt that Injun Dick had been paid for bringing the letter; he was not likely to bring it on the chance of a tip at the end.

But Injun Dick had been a great chief once, in the far-away land of Arizona, and Frank had some compassion for the fallen warrior.

The Apache grabbed the quarter, draped his tattered blanket round him, and stalked away with great dignity.

Frank Richards opened the soiled envelope.

There was a rough sheet of paper folded within; not notepaper, however, but evidently part of the paper wrapping of a whisky bottle.

Upon it a message was scribbled in pencil.

Frank read it, and jumped.

He read it again, staring blankly at the rough scrawl, and then he rubbed his eyes.

“My only hat!” he ejaculated, in blank astonishment.

“Hollo, what’s the trouble?” asked Bob Lawless, joining him with Beauclerc. “Somebody sent in a little bill?”

“Nunno.”

“By gum!” chimed in Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy. “You getting bills from the Red Dog saloon, Richards? Better not let Miss Meadows see it.”

Frank gave the Swiss an angry glance.

The Red Dog in Thompson was a decidedly malodorous establishment, which was very carefully avoided by the respectable citizens of Thompson.

Any Cedar Creek fellow who had visited the place would certainly have had the vials of wrath poured out upon him, if discovered by the schoolmistress.

“Nothing of the sort, Gunten, as you know jolly well!” exclaimed Frank.

“Well, you looked knocked into a heap,” grinned Gunten. “Fellows here don’t often get letters from the Red Dog.”

“Oh, rats!”

Frank Richards walked away with his chums, leaving Gunten looking after him very curiously.

“You fellows had better read this,” said Frank, stopping in the playground. “I’m blessed if I can make head or tail of it. Some chap off his rocker, I should think!”

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc read the letter together, and whistled.

It ran:

“Deer Mister Richards,—You ain’t come

like you promised. This yar won’t do, and so I tell you plane. If you’d ruther I come to your skool and see the missus, you can bet your sox that I’ll come. Now, no pesky nonsense! You come yar this evening, or thar’ll be trubble.

“Yours trooly,

“FOUR KINGS.”

“Great jumping gophers!” exclaimed Bob Lawless. “What does that mean, Franky?”

“That’s what I want to know, Bob.”

“Who’s Four Kings?” asked Beauclerc. “Ask me another!”

“You don’t know him?”

“No. Never heard of the name, if it is a name,” said Frank Richards. “I suppose it’s a name, or a nickname.”

“Four kings is a hand at poker,” said Bob Lawless. “It’s the nickname of some chap, of course. Some loafer at the Red Dog, I suppose, as he’s sent Injun Dick with this letter. He wants you to go to the Red Dog and see him.”

Frank Richards knitted his brows. The letter simply bewildered him.

He had passed the Red Dog in the street at Thompson, but certainly he had never crossed the threshold of that establishment.

So far as he knew, he was unacquainted with any of the shady habitues of the place, with the exception of Injun Dick.

Why the gentleman who rejoiced in the peculiar name of Four Kings should write him such a letter as this was a deep mystery to him.

“He says you promised to go there,” said Beauclerc, with another glance at the letter.

“He says so,” agreed Frank. “Potty, I suppose. I don’t even know the man.”

“And if you don’t go, he’s coming to the school to see Miss Meadows,” said Bob Lawless, in wonder.

“He can come if he likes.”

“It’s an invitation for this evening, anyhow,” grinned Bob. “Chance for you to go on a bender, and paint the town red, Franky.”

Frank Richards laughed.

“The man must be mad,” he said. “If my name wasn’t written here, I should think the Indian had given me a letter intended for somebody else. Gunten’s much more likely to know people at the Red Dog.”

“I guess that’s so.”

“But here’s the name. What on earth can it all mean?” exclaimed Frank Richards, in utter perplexity.

“The man’s mistaken somebody else for you, I should think,” remarked Vere Beauclerc. “That’s the only explanation. Anyway, you’re not going.”

“No fear!”

“Perhaps Injun Dick knows something about it,” suggested Bob Lawless. “Let’s see whether he’s gone.”

“Good idea!”

The three chums ran down to the gates to look for the messenger.

But Injun Dick had vanished.

Doubtless the noble red man was in a hurry to get back to the Red Dog with his twenty-five cents, and expend it in the purchase of the potent fire-water.

“Hallo, there’s the bell!” said Bob.

Frank Richards & Co. turned back to the lumber school, and went in with the rest of the Cedar Creek crowd for morning lessons.

The letter from Four Kings was left in the playground, torn into a dozen pieces and scattered to the wind.

But Frank was thinking a good deal about it during the day.

The incident was quite inexplicable.

He did not know Four Kings, but it was clear that the man knew him, or believed that he knew him, and expected him at the Red Dog that evening.

Frank Richards, of course, had not the slightest intention of going there.

But he wondered what step Four Kings would take, if he did not come.

If the man carried out his threat of visiting the lumber school there would be a scene, and Frank wondered what would come of it.

“Please go away at once!” she exclaimed. “You have no business here!”

“Injun bring letter,” explained the Redskin, ducking his head to the schoolmistress.

“A letter for me?” asked Miss Meadows.

“Letter for young white chief,” answered Injun Dick, pointing a grubby forefinger at Frank Richards.

“You must not come here during lesson-time,” said Miss Meadows severely. “You must leave the letter on the table in the passage.”

“Injun want answer.”

“Then you must wait.”

“All O.K., missy!” said Injun Dick. “Injun wait, you bet! Injun Dick bully boy with a glass eye. Thirsty.”

Miss Meadows took no notice of that strong hint, but turned back to her class.

Injun Dick gave her a sorrowful look, and stepped out of the doorway, and sat down on the bench in the porch to wait.

The lesson went on.

A good many glances were turned upon Frank Richards, who sat with a slightly flushed face.

This was the second time Injun Dick had brought him a letter, and the fact was enough to excite curiosity.

Frank did not need telling whom the letter was from, and he was feeling puzzled and angry.

He was glad when lessons were over that morning, and he left the school-room with the rest.

Injun Dick was leaning back on the bench, his head resting on the wall of the porch, snoring.

It was probable that the Apache had already sampled the tanglefoot at the Red Dog that day, early as it was.

Bob Lawless shook him by the shoulder, and the Indian awoke.

“You’ve got a letter for me,” said Frank, rather gruffly.

“Co-rect!” answered Injun Dick, dividing the word in the middle, in the slangy way of the mining-camps.

“Hand it over, then.”

Injun Dick handed over the letter, and his brown hand remained extended.

“You give Injun twenty-five cents,” he suggested.

Frank Richards did not heed. He had no more quarters to bestow upon the fallen chief of the Apaches.

He stepped out of the porch with the letter, and opened it hastily. Injun Dick followed him out.

“You give Injun answer,” he said.

“Wait a minute.”

“Injun wait. All O.K.! Injun Dick bully rook!” said the Red man.

Frank Richards read the letter, and passed it to Bob and Beauclerc, his face dark with anger.

“That galoot again?” asked Bob.

“Yes; read it.”

The two schoolboys read the letter with keen interest, and its contents made them open their eyes. It was as surprising as the former missive:

The 2nd Chapter.

Four Kings Means Business.

“Maybe there’ll be a visitor for you, Franky,” grinned Bob Lawless, as the chums of Cedar Creek trotted up to the lumber school on the following morning.

“I wonder!” said Frank.

Frank Richards was feeling just a little excited as he arrived at the lumber school.

He glanced round quickly as he entered the gates.

But there was no stranger in sight.

If Four Kings intended to carry out his threat he had not done so yet, at all events.

There was a group of fellows inside the gates, engaged in an animated discussion, and Frank Richards & Co. joined them.

“Anything on?” asked Bob Lawless.

“I guess there’s somethin’ on at Thompson,” said Eben Hacke. “It’s that claim-robber agin.”

“Haven’t they caught him yet?”

“Nope.”

“What’s that?” asked Frank Richards.

“It’s been going on for two or three weeks, from what I hear,” explained Hacke. “Some galoot goes moseying round the claims on the creek at night, lifting the dust from the cradles. I guess there’ll be shooting if the boys spot him!”

“It’s a dirty trick,” said Tom Lawrence.

“The miners can’t be watching their claims all night. When the pay-dirt’s left in the cradles overnight, there’s a chance for a claim-robber. One of the Red Dog gang, very likely. They’ve called in Sheriff Henderson, but he hasn’t found the man.”

“Injun Dick, very likely,” remarked Kern Gunten. “He’s the sort of galoot that would rob a claim, or anything else.”

Frank Richards frowned.

“It’s not quite fair to say it’s Injun Dick, if there isn’t any evidence on the subject,” he said.

Gunten grinned.

“Sorry; I forgot he was a friend of yours!” he answered. “And there was a laugh from the Cedar Creek fellows.

“Bosh!” said Frank. “He’s not a friend of mine; but I don’t see why a theft should be put down to him. There are a good many fellows in Thompson who might be doing it.”

“Some galoot who’s had hard luck at poker, and wants to raise the wind, perhaps, Gunten,” said Bob Lawless, with a grin.

Gunten flushed crimson.

He was about to make an angry reply, but he turned away instead, and left the group.

Bob looked after him rather curiously.

Gunten’s gambling propensities were well known, and Bob had been making a playful allusion to them, but without any serious intention.

He had no thought for a moment of connecting Kern Gunten with the mysterious claim-robber.

But the startled flush of the Swiss struck him very strangely.

“My word!” murmured Bob, as he left the group of schoolboys with his chums. “It isn’t possible that Gunten—”

He paused.

“Impossible!” said Beauclerc hastily.

“He seemed struck all of a heap with what I said, and I was only joking,” said Bob; “and he seems jolly keen to give the impression that it’s the Redskin who moseys round at night lifting pay-dust from the claims. But I guess even Gunten would draw the line at that.”

“I should hope so,” said Frank Richards.

“Your visitor isn’t here this morning, Franky. Looks as if Four Kings is going to neglect us, after all,” said Bob laughing.

“Well, I’m rather glad,” said Frank. “We don’t want a scene here, though I suppose if the man came he would see that he’s made a mistake.”

Frank dismissed the matter from his mind as he went in to lessons.

But before morning lessons were over at Cedar Creek there came an interruption.

A coppersy face and a tattered blanket appeared in the open doorway of the schoolroom.

“Injun Dick!” murmured Bob Lawless. Miss Meadows looked round sharply.

“You won’t go, Frank, surely?” exclaimed Vere Beauclerc.

“Well,” said Frank slowly, “I’m fed up with getting letters from the man. If I seek him, perhaps he’ll see that he’s making a mistake. And, anyway, I can tell him to chuck it. Suppose we ride over there after lessons? The fact is, I’d like to know what claim the man thinks he has on me. It looks to me as if somebody’s been using my name in some way.”

“Well, it won’t do any harm to see him, I suppose,” said Bob thoughtfully.

Beauclerc nodded.

He was a little curious, too. The matter was so strange and inexplicable that all three of the chums were curious to know who Four Kings was, and what he wanted.

“I’m coming, Injun Dick,” said Frank, making up his mind. “Tell Four Kings that I’m coming at seven, and my friends with me.”

“You bet!”

“That’s all,” said Frank.

“Injun thirsty!”

“There’s the creek,” said Bob Lawless, jerking his thumb towards it.

Injun Dick gave him a reproachful look, and stalked away.

Gunten joined the three chums.

“Do you mind if I give you a tip, Richards?” he said, in quite a friendly way. “Miss Meadows has been keeping an eye on you.”

“I don’t see why!” answered Frank tartly.

“Well, of course, she knows that Injun Dick hangs out at the Red Dog,” said Gunten. “It’s a bit queer for a fellow here to be receiving letters from that rotten caboose. Of course, you know your own business best, but if I were you I’d keep it a bit dark.”

Frank Richards flushed with anger.

“I’m not receiving letters from the Red Dog!” he exclaimed hotly. “I don’t know a soul there! I’ve been written to twice by a man I’ve never even heard of before, and that’s all.”

Gunten whistled.

“That’s a queer yarn,” he said. “I don’t think Miss Meadows would swallow that. If you’ve been on a bender, and got mixed up with the Red Dog crowd, it would be only wise to keep it dark. That’s my advice.”

“Keep your advice till I ask for it, then!” exclaimed Frank angrily. “You know perfectly well that I’ve done nothing of the sort!”

“I guess I’m only going by what it looks like,” answered Gunten, with a shrug of the shoulders. And he walked away.

Frank Richards breathed hard.

“You fellows can see that this man Four Kings has got to be bottled up,” he said. “At this rate, I shall have all the fellows thinking that I’ve been playing faro at the Red Dog.”

“We’ll bottle him up!” said Bob Lawless cheerily. “Keep your wool on, Franky. We’ll take a trail-rop, and lay it round the galoot if you like!”

Frank Richards laughed, and the matter dropped.

The 3rd Chapter.

Not Nice for Frank.

Frank Richards could not help observing that day that there was a good deal of curiosity in the lumber school on the subject of Injun Dick’s visits.

Perhaps Gunten had been spreading his own peculiar view of the matter. It was very probable that Frank’s old enemy was not letting this opportunity pass him by.

After lessons Chunky Todgers rolled up to the chums as they were going to the corral for their horses.

Chunky’s fat face wore a very serious expression—an expression that was quite owl-like in its solemnity.

“Going home, Richards?” he asked.

“Not now,” answered Frank.

“Look here, I wouldn’t do it if I were you, Franky,” said Todgers.

“Eh? You wouldn’t do what?”

“You won’t get any good at the Red Dog,” said Chunky, wagging his head sagely. “Go straight home, old fellow, and let it slide.”

Frank Richards gave him an angry look, but Chunky’s evident concern for him disarmed him.

Chunky was intending to give him a friendly warning.

“You ass!” exclaimed Frank, half amused and half vexed. “What do you think I am going to do, then?”

“Well, folks go to the Red Dog to play faro, I believe,” answered Chunky. “I guess I’ve heard that old Boss-Eye runs a faro-table there.”

“Who’s old Boss-Eye, you duffer?”

“The galoot that keeps the place,” answered Chunky. “Don’t you know him?”

“Of course I don’t!” roared Frank.

“Yet you’re going there!”

“Oh, rats!”

“Don’t do it, old chap!” urged Chunky.

“Oh, dry up, and don’t be a silly young ass!” exclaimed Frank Richards irritably.

“Well, I reckon I’ve only spoken to you as a friend,” said Chunky, in an injured tone. “Gunten says—”

“Bother Gunten!”

Tom and Molly Lawrence passed them, leading their horses from the corral.

Lawrence gave Frank Richards a rather odd look, and Molly coloured as she caught his glance.

Frank set his lips.

It was evident that the story was going round the school that he had boon companions at the Red Dog, and the thought that Molly Lawrence had heard it, and believed it, was bitterly annoying to him.

He stepped quickly towards Tom and his sister.

“Hold on a minute,” he said. “I suppose you’ve heard the silly talk about me, and about Injun Dick bringing me letters.”

“I don’t believe it, Frank,” said Molly Lawrence quickly. “I’m sure you don’t know any of those wretched people at the Red Dog.”

“I don’t,” said Frank.

“You’re going there,” Tom Lawrence



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IN A BORROWED NAME!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Are you Four Kings?" he asked directly. "I guess I'm that same galoot," drawled the man with the bitten ear. "Then you're the man who wrote to me at Cedar Creek School! I'm Frank Richards!"

The 4th Chapter. A Startling Accusation.

Four Kings rose to his feet as Frank Richards gave his name, his glance resting very keenly on the schoolboy of Cedar Creek. "Ho! You're young Richards, are you?" he said. "Yes. You've written to me twice," said Frank. "I've come here—"

"I reckon you'd have hoss-sense enough to come hyer," said Four Kings. "You'd have done wiser to come yesterday, 'cording to your promise, my antelope. I ain't a galoot to be played with, and don't you furgit it!" "I've come here to ask you what the dickens you mean by it!" exclaimed Frank hotly. "What do you mean by saying that I promised to come here? I've never even seen you before!"

Four Kings grinned. "Come off!" he answered. "I guess we know one another pretty well, Mister Frank Richards. But what have you brought these hyer fellows along for? They ain't no business here." "They've come with me to see what it means," said Frank. "I want to know what fool-game you're playing!" "You ain't keeping it secret, then?" "Keeping what secret?" "That business that I know about." "Are you mad?" exclaimed Frank hotly.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed Frank. "What do I owe you fifty dollars for?" "For not taking you to the sheriff the night I spotted you down by the creek," answered Four Kings. Frank Richards stared at the man, dumbfounded. "The—the—the night you spotted me down by the creek!" he stuttered. "I guess so."

off for fifty dollars, and you told me you could raise the money easy the next day. Wot's the good of telling lies? I'm waiting for that fifty!" Frank Richards gave the man a look of utter contempt. "On your own showing you are acting like a scoundrel," he said. "If you found a fellow robbing the claims, you ought to have informed the sheriff at once. You were willing to let off a thief for a bribe. Well, you've made a mistake. The fellow you collared was not me, and he gave you my name to get clear himself. If you hadn't been a fool, you wouldn't have expected him to give his right name."



The Redskin's arm was thrown round Four Kings' neck in the very nick of time, and the ruffian was dragged backwards to the floor.

"I guess that was the game," he answered. "I reckon I was moseying along the creek when I heard him shifting the cradles. I reckoned at once what he was doing, and I collared him in the dark. I'd heard a good bit about the claim-robber, and I got my hands on him, sry."

The 5th Chapter. Injun Dick Takes a Hand.

Frank Richards & Co. stood, breathing hard, facing the ruffian. "Four Kings' eyes gleamed at them savagely over the six-shooter. "I guess you'll pony up!" he said between his teeth. "Don't be a fool, man!" said Bob Lawless, as calmly as he could. "I mean business!" said Four Kings grimly. "I let the galoot off for fifty dollars on his word. I'm going to finger them spondulicks, or I'll know the reason why!"

Four Kings had been drinking, and he was in an ugly mood. His disappointment had roused all the evil in his brutal nature. The three schoolboys kept their eyes tensely on the leveled revolver. The ruffian's finger was on the trigger, and with so much of the fiery Red Dog whisky inside him, it was quite possible that the pistol might go off, under his clumsy finger, without his intending it. "I ain't waiting long," said Four Kings, with a savage scowl. "I'm going to count three, Mister Richards, and if you ain't ponied up then, I'm goin' out for your ear. You won't look quite so handsome with a ear missin'! That's your funeral! Pay up and look pleasant!"

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE CLAIM ROBBER!"
By MARTIN CLIFFORD.
DON'T MISS IT!