



JIMMY SILVER & CO.'S VICTORY!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story
of the Rookwood Caravanners.

BY
OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

First in the Field!

"Halt!" Jimmy Silver & Co. started, and Tubby Muffin blinked sleepily out of the caravan.

That sudden challenge surprised the Rookwood caravanners.

The Rookwooders were following a steep and winding path up the chalk cliffs, and the van was proceeding at a snail's pace.

Close at hand was the blue Channel, but it was out of sight behind the cliffs at present.

The path was steep and tiring, and difficult for a caravan, and Jimmy Silver & Co. were giving the van an occasional shove, to help Robinson Crusoe, the horse, in his task.

Occasionally, too, they had to put stones behind the wheels, to keep the caravan from slipping back.

It was a path that few caravanners would have cared to follow, but the heroes of Rookwood were not common-ordinary caravanners, as Arthur Edward Lovell had remarked.

At the end of the winding path, high up, was an old Roman camp, with a splendid view of the sea, and on fine days even the French coast opposite could be seen.

Natives of the district had given them information about the old camp, and they had decided that it was an excellent place for camping.

If the old Romans could get there, as Jimmy Silver remarked, with their war-chariots and things, the Rookwood caravan could get there, too.

The spot was a very solitary one, and they had not expected to meet anyone on the path, unless it was some chance tourist.

The sudden shout of "Halt!" astonished them.

Robinson Crusoe came to a stop of his own accord, just as if he understood the order.

Robinson Crusoe was never sorry to halt.

"What the dickens—" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"There was a yell from Raby.

"The Moderns!"

"Tommy Dodd!" shouted Lovell.

Three grinning faces looked down on them from higher up the path.

In the middle of the path a great boulder had been rolled, blocking the way.

Tommy Dodd, Tommy Cook, and Tommy Doyle, the rival caravanners, were first in the field, evidently.

Where the Classical caravan was going the Modern caravan had already gone, and the rival juniors of Rookwood School were face to face on the steep path—with the three Tommies in possession of the summit.

The Classical chums of Rookwood stared wrathfully at the trio above them.

"Halt!" repeated Tommy Dodd. "No admittance for dogs or Classical!"

"Go back, dear boys," said Cook, with a chuckle. "We've taken possession."

"You silly asses!" roared Lovell.

"We're going to camp in the old Roman camp at the top."

Tommy Dodd shook his head.

"Your mistake," he answered; "you're not. There isn't room for two caravan parties; it's too limited. Besides, we can't have measly Classics hanging round our camp."

"If there's not room for two, you Modern cads can clear off!" growled Newcome.

"Catch us, bedad!" said Tommy Doyle.

There was a pause.

The Modern caravan was not in sight. It was evidently halted at the Roman camp at the top of the path, and hidden by the chalky boulders.

The Moderns had seen the Classics coming, and descended the path half-way—to stop them.

They were masters of the situation.

It was difficult enough to get the Classical van up that steep cliff-path at all, and impossible in face of opposition from above.

But the Fistical Four, of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, were not disposed to retreat.

In school or out of school, they were "up against" the Moderns all the time.

The three Tommies grinned down at them, greatly elated at having the whip-hand of their old rivals at Rookwood.

"You can come on, if you like, of course," said Tommy Dodd. "If you can argue with this broom, I instance, you can get by—perhaps."

"And, sure, this mop will talk to yez!" grinned Doyle.

"We're not going back!" roared Lovell.

"Look here—" began Jimmy Silver.

"I say, we want to camp, you know,"

said Tubby Muffin, from the van. "I'm hungry, Tommy Dodd."

"You generally are, my fat tulip!" answered Tommy. "You were hungry when we broke up at Rookwood, and you'll be hungry when we get there next term."

"We haven't had lunch yet," said Tubby pathetically. "I say, Jimmy, had I better start on something in the van?"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"But I'm hungry!"

"Shut up!" roared Lovell.

The Classical Four were not disposed to worry just then about Tubby Muffin's enormous appetite.

There were more important matters than that to be considered.

The business in hand was to clear the Modern juniors off the path, and get the Classical van up to the Roman camp.

Jimmy Silver debated that matter in his mind.

The big boulder planted in the path by the Moderns prevented the passage of the van until it was moved.

And to move it the three Moderns had to be defeated in combat.

In any other place that would not have been a difficult task to the Fistical Four, all of them great fighting-men, and with the odds on their side.

But the Moderns were in a very strong position, and they had brought weapons from their caravan—a broom, a mop, and a big stick.

Lovell and Raby and Newcome fixed their eyes on Jimmy Silver.

"Uncle James" was the leader, and it was up to Uncle James to say what was to be done.

"Well?" said Lovell.

"We're not going back," said Jimmy decidedly.

"No fear!" agreed three voices in unison.

"We're going on. Rookwood never retreats."

"Hear, hear!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Tommy Dodd, you're to clear out of the van!" announced Jimmy Silver. "If you don't, we shall come and shift you!"

"Come on!" chorused the three Moderns, and the broom, the mop, and the stick were brandished in the air invitingly.

The Fistical Four blocked the wheels of the caravan with stones, and prepared for war.

A broom, a stick, and a couple of tent-pegs were taken from the caravan, the three Moderns watching those preparations with grinning faces.

They were three against four, but they were confident in the strength of their position.

They had selected the most difficult point in the steep path, where the ascent was quite abrupt, and the enemy charging up would be under very serious disadvantages.

But it was the only thing for Jimmy Silver & Co. to do—on the theory that Rookwood never retreated.

"Come on!" said Jimmy.

"Charge!" rapped out Lovell. "Come on, Tubby!"

"I—I'm coming!" stammered Tubby Muffin, but he did not leave the van. Tubby's opinion was that discretion was the better part of valour, and for the present he was quite satisfied to be a "looker-on in Vienna."

But the Fistical Four charged gallantly. They came up the steep path with a rush, and in a moment more there was a battle in progress.

The 2nd Chapter.

Drive On!

"Back up, Classics!"

"Ow!"

"Sock it to them!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Oh, my hat!"

It was a gallant charge, but the difficulties were too great. The fellows above had all the advantage.

A shove of Tommy Dodd's long broom caught Jimmy Silver on the chest, and sent him spinning backwards.

He rolled on the chalky path, with a loud yell.

Raby caught the mop with his nose, and sat down suddenly.

Lovell's tent-peg crashed against Tommy Doyle's stick, and went flying from his hand.

He jumped back, and Doyle lunged out with the stick, and nearly punctured Newcome, who sat down with a howl.

Lovell rushed on fiercely, got round the big boulder, and grasped Doyle.

They rolled over together in terrific combat.

"Pin him!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Sure, I've got him!" gasped Doyle.

Doyle had certainly got Lovell, but Lovell had equally certainly got Doyle,

and they seemed about equally matched as they rolled on the ground, clutching one another with terrific vim.

Dodd and Cook, with broom and mop to the fore, still held the pass.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome struggled up, panting and crimson and dusty, and came on again.

But it was unavailing.

The disadvantage was too great, and they could not get to close-quarters. The defence from above was too strong for the attack.

Lunges from above sent them spinning, again and again, and they retreated at last, with a good many bumps, and in a very excited state of temper.

Tommy Dodd brandished his broom victoriously.

"Come on!" he yelled.

"This way!" shouted Cook. "Come on, you Classical duffers!"

"Rescue!" bawled Lovell.

But there was no rescue just then for Lovell.

In the pause of hostilities, Cook went to Doyle's assistance, and Arthur Edward Lovell was quite overcome.

Cook ran a whipcord round his wrists, and knotted it, and did the same for his ankles, and Lovell lay helpless in the path.

The three Tommies, thus relieved of one of their foes, gathered round the big boulder, ready for another attack.

The odds were even now, and the Classics had less chance than ever.

Jimmy Silver rubbed several bruises.

"Well, are we going on?" panted Newcome.

Jimmy shook his head.

"N.G." he answered.

"We're not going to be licked by rotten Moderns!" howled Newcome.

"Fathead!" grunted Jimmy. "We're licked already! They've got the advantage, and they've downed Lovell. If four couldn't do it, three can't! It's U.P."

"U.P."

Raby and Newcome had to admit the truth of that observation, exasperated as they were.

"Are you coming?" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Go and eat coke!" was Jimmy Silver's answer.

"Ha, ha, ha! Who's got licked?" shouted Tommy Dodd.

"Classicals!" hooted Doyle and Cook.

"Who sings small?"

"Classicals!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, Jimmy," came Tubby Muffin's voice from the van, "what about lunch?"

Jimmy Silver did not answer that question in words.

He made a lunge with his broom, and Tubby Muffin disappeared into the van with a fiendish yell.

"Going back—what?" grinned Tommy Dodd.

"Let Lovell come back, you Modern rotters!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"No fear!" answered Tommy coolly.

"Lovell's a prisoner of war. We'll send him back later. You can come and rescue him if you like."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We're not going without Lovell!" shouted Jimmy.

"Well, come and fetch him!"

The three Classics, quite exasperated, charged up the path again, in spite of prudence.

But their case was more hopeless than ever.

They were bowled over at once by the lunges from above, and they rolled down.

A yell of laughter followed them. The three Tommies were in great feather.

At Rookwood they did not often get the better of the Fistical Four. That made their present victory all the more satisfactory.

"Ow, ow, wow!" murmured Raby. "I—I say, I'm fed up, if you are, you fellows!"

There was no help for it.

It was a defeat, and Lovell had to be left in the hands of the enemy for the present. It was strategy that was required to effect his rescue.

"We'll tackle the rotters some other way," murmured Jimmy Silver. "Just at present—Ahem!"

Whiz!

A chunk of chalk came from up the path, and Jimmy Silver gave a yelp.

"Oh! You Modern rotters!"

"Fire!" shouted Tommy Dodd.

Whiz, whiz, whiz!

"I—I say, we—we'd better get out of this for a bit!" exclaimed Newcome.

Although Rookwood never retreated, according to Jimmy Silver's statement, retreat had to be the order of the day just then.

It simply couldn't be helped.

To stand there and be pelted with chunks of chalk furnished entertainment

to the merry Moderns, but there was nothing in it from the Classical point of view.

The wheels were unlocked, and the defeated Classics backed the van away down the path.

Robinson Crusoe very willingly backed downward, though he had been reluctant to pull upward.

With a rumble, the Classical caravan receded, followed by triumphant howls from the Modern juniors above.

The van had to back a good distance before it reached a spot where the path was wide enough for the big vehicle to turn.

Then, with feelings too deep for words, Jimmy Silver & Co. turned the caravan, and retreated to the lower road.

The honours were with the Moderns—for the present.

It was "up" to Uncle James to change all that—if he could!

The 3rd Chapter.

Prisoner of War!

"Got 'em beat!" said Tommy Dodd gleefully.

"Hurrah for us!"

"Hip, hip!"

"When you've done making a shindy, perhaps you'll let me loose, you Modern Huns!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, in sulphurous tones.

"Not yet, my pippin!" grinned Tommy Dodd.

The three Moderns dragged half a dozen more chalky boulders into the path, effectually barricading it.

Then Lovell's feet were untied, and he was helped up.

His hands remained tied, however; his looks showed how he would use them if they were loosened.

Taking the captured Classical with them, the three Tommies tramped up the path to the Roman camp at the top.

There the Modern caravan was halted.

Of the Roman camp which had stood there in ancient times very few traces were left.

It had not been a large camp; probably something like an outpost for watching the coast.

Surrounded by chalky cliffs and boulders was a stretch of greensward, with here and there traces of ancient earthworks cropping up.

A spring bubbled up amid a pile of almost shapeless masonry, which might once have belonged to a well.

Space was limited, but there was plenty of room for the caravan party.

There were traces of more modern visitors than the Romans, in old condensed-milk tins and fish-paste tins, scattered about.

The spot had evidently been much used by picnickers in the summer, tourists who had braved the steep ascent to picnic in the fresh pure air high above the sea, with a view of the wide, blue Channel in the distance.

The Modern juniors were the only picnickers there now, however, and the traces of former visitors were not recent.

Doubtless the van had blocked that festivity on the hill so near the coast, where two or three places had been

where two or three places had been bombed by the sportive aeroplanes.

Tommy Dodd & Co. were glad enough to have it to themselves, and not sorry that the former tourists were conspicuous by their absence.

The Moderns looked very cheerful as they came into their camp, from which they could watch most of the path, and keep guard against any attempt of the Classics to surprise them by creeping up the path without their van.

If the enemy appeared in sight, they had only to rush down the path to hold it against all comers, which was easily to be done, as they had proved.

Lovell did not share the cheerful elation of the Moderns.

He was in a state of great exasperation, and he was well aware that he was not at the end of his troubles.

"Just going to lunch when we spotted your gang, old nut," remarked Tommy Dodd. "I suppose you'll join us at lunch—what?"

"Rats!" grunted Lovell.

"Let loose his left hand," continued Tommy Dodd. "He can wait at table with one hand."

"Wait at table!" roared Lovell furiously.

"That's your job," said Tommy Dodd calmly. "We haven't brought you up here for nothing. You've got to make yourself useful. I suppose you weren't labouring under the delusion that you were ornamental?"

"You Modern worm!"

"Buck up, waiter!" grinned Tommy Cook.

"I'll see you blowed first, you Modern ass!"

"You won't wait at table?" demanded Tommy Dodd.

"No, I won't!"

"That's bad!" said Tommy Dodd, shaking his head seriously. "You ought to know, Lovell, that prisoners of war are bound to work. You can't expect to eat the bread of idleness in war-time. Anybody got a pin?"

Cook, grinning, produced a pin.

Lovell glared at him.

"Only an inch to begin with," said Tommy Dodd thoughtfully. "Find a tender spot, and stick it in about an inch. Then we'll see whether Lovell will wait at table."

Lovell jumped back as Tommy Cook approached him.

"I'll kick!" he shouted.

"Catch his hoofs!" said Tommy Dodd.

Lovell was surrounded by the three Tommies, and he found himself in the grass, with three boots planted on him and keeping him there.

Then Cook advanced the pin towards him.

"Where will you have it?" he asked.

"Yah! You rotter!"

"What about your leg?"

"Yaroooh! Stoppit!"

"You'd prefer it in the arm, perhaps? All right!"

"Yooop!"

The pricks of the pin were only slight; it was not really an inch, but Lovell yelled as if it had been a yard.

"Try the tip of his nose!" suggested Doyle.

"Good egg!"

"Keep off!" yelled Lovell.

"Are you going to wait at table?" asked Tommy Dodd politely.

Arthur Edward Lovell gulped.

"Ye-e-es, you rotter!"

"Good! I thought you'd be a nice boy if we persuaded you. Mind you behave yourself, or you'll get the inch next time."

Lovell did not reply; he gurgled with wrath.

The three Tommies sat down to lunch with smiling faces, and Lovell, with one hand free, waited on them.

Once or twice he had a touch of the pin

up his phiz for like a Chinese idol. It's just dawned on him.

"For goodness' sake don't be funny!" implored Jimmy Silver. "Life's a worry enough without that. I say that it might be a prohibited area—being so high up near the coast, and if you don't know what a prohibited area is, I'll tell you. It's a place where you can't go without a permit from the military authorities of the district."

"Well, that Roman camp's nothing of the kind, then, or there'd be a sentry, or something, somewhere about."

"I dare say there would," admitted Jimmy. "But there mightn't be. But if the place was a prohibited area, and chaps camped there, and the official johnnies got to know of it, they'd soon be routed out and warned off."

"Very likely, but I don't see what it matters to us, you ass! You're wandering in your mind, Jimmy!"

"Oh, you don't see, of course! Have you ever heard of a company of first-class actors called the Rookwood Players?"

"Eh! Yes, ass!"

"Who was the best actor of the lot?"

"Erroll."

"Ahem! Well, yes, perhaps so; but a jolly good member was your Uncle James," said Jimmy Silver. "I've been thinking. We haven't got any of the theatrical things with us, but we're only two miles from a town. In that town I'll bet nippence to fourpence that there's a costumer's! We've got some tin. Well, suppose we buy or hire some things? Hiring them will do, as we only want them this once, and we can leave a deposit."

"What the merry thunder—?"

"You've seen me made up in character," continued Jimmy. "I can do it on my head. Suppose I made up as a man about fifty, with whiskers and glasses and things—"

"What on earth for?" shrieked Raby.

"Is this a time for private theatricals?"

"Fathead! In that rig I'd walk up to the camp—"

"Eh?"

"As an official—"

"A—a—official!" stuttered Raby, while Newcome stared open-mouthed and Tubby Muffin even left off finishing up the remnants of the lunch in his astonishment.

Jimmy Silver nodded calmly.

"As an official," he answered. "There's no end of officials in the country now, civil and military—tens of thousands of them, and they're increasing in number every day. That's what they call efficiency, you know. Well, if that old Roman camp is a prohibited area, it's quite natural for an official to walk in and order the Moderns off."

"Oh, my hat!"

"There's officials on tap for every mortal thing now, from fixing the prices of pocket-handkerchiefs to regulating the length of the tail of a sardine," said Jimmy Silver. "I'll wager there's over a hundred within a mile of us! It's quite natural for one to turn up—more natural than not, in fact."

"You couldn't do it!" gasped Raby.

"I could do it on my head!" answered Jimmy Silver disdainfully. "To be an official you've only got to be middle-aged, with an important manner and a fat head. I can assume the fat head."

"No need for that; you're born for that part of it."

"Ass! What do you think of the wheeze?"

"Rotten!" answered Raby at once.

"Piffle!" said Newcome.

"Bosh!" said Tubby Muffin.

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

"Well, I'm going to try it," he said. "You chaps stay here, while I hike off to the town. I'll be back in an hour or so."

And, without vouchsafing another word, Jimmy Silver started.

Raby and Newcome looked at one another.

"Of all the chumps—" said Raby.

"Of all the fatheads—" said Newcome.

And they let it go at that.

They had a very agreeable rest, however, under the trees by the roadside, while they waited for Jimmy Silver to return.

He was back in about an hour, with a bundle in his hand.

"Got the stuff?" asked Raby incredulously.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Yes, rather! You fellows can help me make up. Come into the trees, where we shan't be seen."

"It's no good, you know," remarked Newcome.

"Rats!"

"Simply rot!" observed Raby.

"Rubbish!"

Jimmy Silver evidently did not intend to argue the matter.

His comrades, with expressions of great resignation on their faces, accompanied him into the trees, giving Jimmy Silver his head, so to speak.

Jimmy opened his bundle, and his comrades surveyed the contents curiously.

They were still incredulous, but their expression altered a little as they watched Jimmy Silver in the process of transformation.

He donned grey trousers and a black frock-coat over his own clothes, which made him look a good deal stouter.

He changed his boots for a larger pair with elevators in them, which added nearly a couple of inches to his stature.

With the aid of a mirror stuck on a trunk he made-up his face.

Jimmy Silver, as a leading light of the Classical Players at Rookwood School, was an adept in that art.

His present task was rather more difficult than that of making up as Julius Caesar or Hamlet, but Jimmy did it well.

He produced a sallow complexion and a wrinkled brow in a manner that was really surprising.

A wig with greyish hair made him look fifty, at least, added to the effect of a pair of large spectacles, which completely altered the expression of his face.

Greyish moustache and whiskers added still more to the effect.

A stiff white collar and a silk hat gave the finishing touch.

When the last artistic touch had been added Raby and Newcome and Tubby Muffin stared at Jimmy Silver almost in awe.

The captain of the Rookwood Fourth had vanished, and in his place stood a gentleman of about fifty, rather stout and important-looking.

He still lacked a little in height, but he made that up in breadth.

He was as tall as a good many men of fifty with his elevated boots.

He blinked at his chums through his glasses, the lenses of which were, of course, of plain glass.

"Well, you doubting Thomases?" he said.

His voice was no longer Jimmy Silver's, any more than his looks.

He had adopted a somewhat high-pitched and querulous voice, which made his comrades jump as they heard it.

"My hat!" ejaculated Raby.

"Oh, crumbs!" said Tubby Muffin. "He might be his own giddy grandfather!"

"What do you think of it now?" demanded Jimmy Silver.

"Ripping!" exclaimed Newcome heartily. "Whether the Moderns believe you're an official or not, I'll bet they won't know you're Jimmy Silver!"

"Blessed if I think Lovell will know you, let alone the Moderns!" said Raby.

Jimmy Silver grinned, a rather peculiar grin, with his wrinkled and whiskered face.

"I fancy it will work!" he said. "I'm going to try, anyway! Here goes!"

And, after a last look in the mirror, Jimmy Silver started on the path up to the Roman camp.

His chums, almost breathless with excitement, waited with the Classical caravan below.

Their faith in Uncle James had revived at last.

The 5th Chapter. Trouble for Tommy.

"Who the dickens is this?"



THE RIVAL CARAVANNERS COME TO GRIPS! WHO WINS?

Thus Tommy Dodd, as he watched a silk-hatted gentleman who had appeared on the cliff path.

The Modern chums saw him arrive at the barricade of boulders, and stop and peer at it through his spectacles, and then climb over and continue on his way.

Then he passed out of sight on the winding path.

"Old duffer!" yawned Tommy Dodd.

"Fancy a man starting out on the cliffs in a frock-coat and a silk-topper! Queer idea of enjoying himself!"

The stranger did not come in sight again till he was on the level, and then he came into the Roman camp with a quick, jerky tread.

The three Tommies and Lovell glanced at him carelessly.

As Lovell was tied, the sight was likely to be rather surprising to a stranger, who did not know the merry manners and customs of the rival juniors at Rookwood.

The gentleman came towards the Modern caravan, and glanced at Lovell and then at the three Moderns.

"What are you doing here?" he rapped out, in a high-pitched and decidedly ill-tempered tone.

Tommy Dodd stared at him.

"Sitting on the grass," he answered.

"Do you know that you are liable to arrest?" exclaimed the silk-hatted gentleman sternly.

"Wha-at!"

"Were you not aware that this is a prohibited area?"

"My hat! No."

The three Tommies jumped up, rather dismayed.

It occurred to them now that such a spot was likely enough to be a prohibited area, into which a stranger is not supposed to wander haphazard.

Lovell grinned.

He was thinking that it was just as well that the Moderns, and not the Classics, were camped there.

Camping without a permit in a prohibited area was a serious matter.

The gentleman blinked at the Modern juniors scrutinising through his spectacles with a very suspicious expression.

"Is there anyone else here?" he asked.

"Anyone older, I mean?"

"No; we're caravanning," answered Tommy Dodd. "We hadn't the faintest idea that it was a prohibited area, of course. There's no notice up."

"You do not seem to have used your eyes, young man!" snapped the stranger.

"What is this boy doing here, tied up?"

"Oh, that's only a lark!"

"Indeed! Have you taken any photographs here?"

"My hat! No. We haven't a camera with us."

"Have you taken any sketches?"

"No."

"Then why did you come here?" demanded the silk-hatted gentleman suspiciously.

"Just caravanning," said Tommy Dodd.

"Huh! I have never heard of caravans coming up such a steep path before. It looks to me as if this caravan is simply camouflage, and you are here for some illegal purpose."

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Cook.

"Howly mother av Moses!" murmured Tommy Doyle. "We're landed in something this time, Tommy, you gossamer!"

Tommy Dodd knitted his brows.

"Look here, you're asking us a jolly lot of questions, sir!" he exclaimed. "I dare say you have a right to, if it comes to that. But who are you, anyway?"

"You are surely aware that every prohibited area has a Civil superintendent!" snapped the visitor.

"I—I didn't know—"

"You may have to prove that. If you belong to this district you must have heard of Mr. Jorrocks, Civil superintendent of the prohibited area of Beachwood, Sandycombe, Hockley-cum-Clayton, and the intervening districts."

"Great pip! Never even heard of the places!" said Tommy Dodd. "We're quite strangers here."

Mr. Jorrocks gave him a very suspicious look.

may be in league with you, for all I know to the contrary."

"They're not! They—"

"We've got some books, with the name of our school written in them, in the van, sir!" exclaimed Cook.

Mr. Jorrocks sniffed.

"That proves nothing! In fact, I am not empowered to let the matter rest here. You must explain yourselves to the military commandant. If you are honest, and can prove that you came here with no evil purpose, you have nothing to fear. But there have been cases of spying on this coast."

"Oh, dear!"

"Ow!"

"Do we look like German spies?" howled Tommy Dodd indignantly.

"German spies never look like German spies," answered Mr. Jorrocks drily. "If they did they would not be of much use to Germany."

The force of that remark struck the Rookwooders, and they were silent.

"I repeat that you have nothing to fear if you can prove that you are simply schoolboys on a caravanning tour," said Mr. Jorrocks. "But you must prove that in the proper quarter. I will accompany you and your van to the military camp, a mile from here."

"We can prove it easily enough," said Tommy Dodd.

"It remains to you to do so, then," answered Mr. Jorrocks. "Kindly put your horse to, at once, and accompany me to the colonel."

The unhappy Moderns set to work at once.

Lovell was released, and he helped them.

It was no time to think of Modern and Classical rivalry.

Lovell, in fact, was involved in the affair, as he was present in the "prohibited area."

He had the pleasant prospect of accompanying the Moderns, with Mr. Jorrocks, to the military commandant, to give an account of himself.

The horse was quickly harnessed, Mr. Jorrocks watching the process through his spectacles.

"Ha, ha! Neither did I."

"I tell you it's not a laughing matter!" exclaimed Lovell. "It turns out that the Roman camp is a prohibited area, and we're being marched off to see a dashed military johnny and be called over the coals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Classics shrieked.

"All very well for the Moderns," growled Lovell, "but not so jolly well for me. I've got to go with them, as I was there. Jolly lucky for you fellows that you weren't in the Roman camp."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

To the amazement of Arthur Edward Lovell and the three Tommies, Mr. Jorrocks joined in the roar of laughter.

He laughed so heartily that his grey moustache twisted sideways, giving him a most extraordinary look.

He took off his spectacles, chortling.

Lovell stared at him.

The three Tommies gazed at him as if they were fascinated.

They stood dumb, while Mr. Jorrocks removed his wig, his whiskers, and his moustache.

It was like a dream to the three Moderns.

They rubbed their eyes, wondering whether they were the victims of an optical delusion.

But they weren't, and when Jimmy Silver's spectacles and hirsute adornments were gone, a certain familiarity in the features struck them, in spite of the make-up.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby. "Do you know the merry old Civil superintendent now?"

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

Tommy Dodd's jaw dropped.

"It—it isn't Jimmy Silver!" he said faintly.

"Jimmy Silver!" murmured Doyle dazedly.

Jimmy threw off the frock-coat.

"It's your own Uncle James!" he said affably. "My hat! You seem rather surprised, Lovell, old scout! Mind your eyes don't drop out!"

"You!" stuttered Lovell.

"Little me!" said Jimmy Silver cheerfully. "I had to get you away from the Moderns, old bean, and the Moderns away from the camp. We're going to have the Roman camp. So far as I know, it's not a prohibited area, and I don't believe there's such a johnny as a Civil superintendent. If there is, I've never heard of it. You don't look pleased, Tommy Dodd!"

"I—I—I—" stuttered Tommy Dodd.

Even yet he could hardly believe that he had been spotted so thoroughly and efficiently by the Classical of Rookwood.

Lovell was grinning joyously, however; he did not share the feelings of the three Tommies.

He had been rescued, and the three Moderns had been turned out of the Roman camp, and it was the biggest and most successful spoof in the history of the rivals of Rookwood.

Lovell joined in the chortle, while the three Tommies began to look sulphurous, as they realised how egregiously their Modern leg had been pulled.

"Ye spalpeen!" gasped Tommy Doyle. "Ye thafe of the worruld! Ye— Oh, there ain't a word for yez! I'll spifficate yez intirely! Mop him up!"

"Not in these trousers!" grinned Jimmy Silver. "We've got you now where we can handle you, dear boys— Hallo! Back up!"

Heedless of the odds against them, the three Tommies rushed at Jimmy Silver, simply thirsting to give "Mr. Jorrocks" the ragging of his life.

But the Fistical Four piled in together, and on the open road the Moderns no longer had the advantage.

All the advantage was now with the Classics, and even Tubby Muffin joined in.

It was a terrific scrap for a few minutes, and then the three Moderns were strewn in the road, and a Classical was sitting on each of them.

"Our win!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "You Moderns are no good, you know! This is where we smile! Give 'em a Classical smile!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Tommy Dodd. "Gerroff, Lovell, you beast, you're busting my ribs! Yow-ow! Go and eat coke! Ow, wow! We chuck it! Ow!"

The three Moderns, very dusty and dishevelled, were allowed to rise, and they limped to their caravan.

It was a great relief to know that they were not to be taken to a military commandant, certainly; but they were not feeling pleased.

But evidently the game was up, and the Classics were the victors.

Tommy Dodd & Co. led their horse on, and the Modern caravan rumbled away down the road, and this time it was the Classics who sent after the retreating enemy a yell of triumphant laughter.

And as the Moderns disappeared, the Classical caravan was led up the cliff-path, and this time there was nothing to stop them, and they arrived triumphantly at the Roman camp.

The Classical caravanners were in possession of the prize.

From the Roman camp they could see the lower road winding away in the distance, white in the sunlight, and on it appeared, like dots to the view, a caravan and three tramping pedestrians.

Then Tommy Dodd & Co. vanished from view, and the Classical caravanners gave a cheer that awoke every echo of the chalk cliffs around them.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"RIVALS OF THE ROAD!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!

"Can you swim, Jackson?" he asked.
 "A little," replied Jack.
 "Well, do your best, old son," said Bob. "We must save those girls!"
 Next instant Bob had taken a header into the water.
 Dicky and Jack quickly followed suit. Bob was the first to reach the girls. He turned quickly on his back, and, grasping one of them by the arms, swam strongly towards the bank.
 Dicky did the same with another of the girls; and Jack Jackson, knowing very little of the methods of life-saving, felt his heart beat wildly as the possibility of being unable to rescue the other girl occurred to him.
 But Jack's assistance was not needed. Having recovered from the shock of being drawn into the water, the remaining girl suddenly struck out with arms and legs, and swam slowly towards the bank for which the others were making.
 Jack Jackson followed up in the rear, to render assistance should it prove necessary.
 Jack's help was not required, however. He reached the bank at last, to find Bob and Dicky standing by the side of the rescued girls, who were looking very frightened and exhausted.

Suddenly a tall, grim-looking gentleman came striding towards them, an anxious expression on his face.
 "Molly, Phyllis, Hilda!" he gasped. "What is the meaning of this? What—what—"
 One of the girls looked up into the man's face, and smiled faintly.
 "Oh, we're all right now, dad!" she said wistfully. "Just a little wet, that's all!"

"Wet!" exclaimed the man. "But—but how the dickens did you come to fall into the water?"

"I—I can't tell, dad," said the girl. "All I know is that we hadn't got far from the island before we found that the boat was practically full of water."
 "But—but how did the water get into the boat?" demanded the man. "Surely it didn't spring a leak?"

"It must have done, dad!" replied the girl softly. "It was all right when we rowed to the island—wasn't it, Hilda?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Hilda, who was beginning to look bright and cheerful.
 "It is amazing!" exclaimed the man. "Wickens has no right to let out boats that are unsafe! I shall speak to him about it, and see that every one of his boats are examined immediately. Now, get home, my dears, or else you'll be getting pneumonia. I am only too thankful that you have not been drowned!"

"We should have been if it hadn't been for these boys!" said Hilda, giving them the Redcliffe juniors a roguish smile.

"Quite so—quite so!" agreed the man, turning to the chums. "I don't know how to thank you, my boys," he added. "Come over to the Hollies with me and dry your clothes."

"Oh, we're all right, sir!" said Bob promptly. "A wetting won't do us much harm. Besides, we must get back to Redcliffe at once, or else we shall be late for call-over!"

"Very well," said the man. "Just as you like; but I insist upon your coming to see me on your next half-holiday. My name's James Gregory, of the Hollies. I expect you know the house. Now, don't hang about, boys."

And as he bade them good-bye the anxious expression had vanished from the man's face, and the firm grip which he gave their hands proved to Bob Travers & Co. how thankful he was that his daughters were saved from a watery grave.

"What are we going to do about the boats?" asked Jack Jackson, as soon as the man and his daughters had departed.
 "Better leave them where they are," replied Bob Travers. "Wickens will have to rescue them himself. I'm not keen on another ducking."

"Neither am I," agreed Dicky, with a grin.
 "Well, come on, then!"

And, breaking into a run, the chums made tracks for the school.
 When they reached the gates Mason & Co. were standing there, grinning to themselves.

"Did you enjoy your picnic on the island?" asked Mason cynically.
 "Eh?"

"Didn't you have a good time?" went on the bully. "But, I say, how the dickens did you come to fall into the water?"

"Perhaps they didn't know how to manage a boat, Mason, old man!" remarked Harris. "More likely they were swanking about, and fell in! Talk about drowned rats—Ow! Yow! Yarooogh!"

Dicky Turner was not in the mood to listen to the bully's sarcastic remarks. He leaped forward, and landed his fist full in Harris' face, howling him over.

Bob did the same to Mason, while Jack Jackson placed Wilson hors-de-combat.
 Then the chums raced off to the dormitory and changed their things.

The next day they paid a visit to old Wickens, the boatman, who made the amazing statement that the plug was missing from the girls' boat when he brought it back to the boathouse.

This set Bob Travers and his chums thinking, and when they remembered what Mason had said about enjoying their picnic on the island, their suspicions concerning the part played by the bullies became aroused.

They questioned Mason & Co. on the affair, and although they could prove nothing against them, they were sufficiently confident that the bullies were guilty to give them a good ducking in the fountain by way of punishment.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"ON THE WRONG TRACK!"

By HERBERT BRITTON. DON'T MISS IT!

YEN CHIN'S RUSE!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story, introducing FRANK RICHARDS & CO., the Chums of the School in the Backwoods.

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter. A Pest of the Prairie.

"Waal, I swear!" Frank Richards threw aside his blanket and sat up in the grass as that exclamation fell upon his ears.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc looked up from their blankets. Only Chunky Todgers continued to sleep.

That podgy youth was a good sleeper, and probably the war-whoop of a Red Indian would not have awakened him.

The chums of Cedar Creek had camped for the night on the open prairie. They had been several days on the North-West trail now, and in this region settlements were few and far between.

The morning sun was glimmering over the prairie, and the gophers were blinking out of their holes under the thick grass when Frank Richards & Co. were awakened by the bull-voice of the stranger.

Frank blinked at him, rubbing his eyes. He saw a huge, long-bearded, muscular man, in leather breeches, red shirt, and a tattered Stetson hat, with a black pipe in the corner of his mouth.

A revolver and a hunting-knife were stuck in the stranger's belt, and his big, hairy hand rested on the butt of the revolver, as he stood and stared at the four schoolboys.

He was rather an ugly-looking customer, and Frank's second glance was turned towards the horses and pack-mule, staked out in the grass close by.

"Jerusalem!" went on the big stranger, evidently surprised by the schoolboy camp, which he had come upon suddenly. "What do you call this yer outfit? Search me!"

The chums of Cedar Creek jumped up. "Hallo!" said Bob Lawless.

"I guess this puts it ever me!" said the stranger, staring at him. "What are you youngsters doin' out on the prairie without your mummies?"

"Traveling," answered Bob Lawless. "We're on a holiday. Where did you spring from?"

"I guess I'm hoodin' it to last Chance!" answered the stranger. He glanced at the horses, and added emphatically: "But I guess I ain't hoodin' it any farther than this yer spot! No, siree!"

Bob Lawless understood that remark, and his jaw set squarely.

The schoolboy camp was a good thirty miles from the nearest settlement, and the big master evidently fancied that the horses were at his disposal for the trouble of taking them.

His eyes were wandering greedily about the camp.

"I guess I've struck it!" he went on. "This yer is luck, and no mistake! I reckon this is a cinch!"

"I don't see where that comes in," said Bob Lawless quietly. "You're welcome to a breakfast here, if you like."

"I guess this will pan out a bit better than that!" grinned the long-bearded man. "I reckon you'd better think twice before you jaw at Oregon Bill, my boy! Keep away from that shooter!" he rapped out suddenly, as he detected Bob moving quietly towards his rifle.

The six-shooter came out of his belt like a flash.

Bob paused.

"I guess," said Oregon Bill, with a grin, "that you youngsters would ha' done wiser to stay at school! Don't you talk to me! When I'm at home, in Oregon, I kill a man before breakfast every morning! That's the kind of galoot I am! You hear me yamp!"

Chunky Todgers awoke, and sat up, and he blinked in great dismay at the big ruffian.

Frank Richards & Co. looked rather undecided.

The revolver in the ruffian's hand looked rather dangerous, and he looked brutal enough to use it, if need arose.

They could see that he was a "hobo"—one of the Western tramps who are the pest of the outlying districts, and whose activities range from begging, chicken-stealing, and horse-thievery, to robbery with violence, according to circumstance.

Certainly he looked a very ugly customer for the schoolboys to tackle, though they would not have hesitated had their rifles been in their hands.

But the rifles and the shotgun were leaning against the pile of saddles, and their hands were empty.



"What the thunder——" exclaimed Bob Lawless, as he caught sight of the bound juniors. "Look out for Yen Chin!" said Frank Richards hastily. "He's in the wood somewhere—looking for you!"

"You'd better go on your way, my man," said Frank Richards quietly. Oregon Bill lifted his revolver.

Crack! Frank Richards gave a jump as a bullet sang by within two inches of his head.

"Oh!" he gasped. "Haw, haw, haw!" roared the hobo. "I guess that's a warning, my lad! Do you want the next one through your cabeza?"

Frank Richards clenched his hands hard.

He was not frightened, by any means, as the ruffian supposed, but he realised that he was helpless.

It was not likely that Oregon Bill would risk his neck by sending a bullet through a schoolboy's head, but it was very probable that he would "wing" him if he showed fight.

Frank had no desire to be laid in the grass with a bullet through his leg. It was evidently a time to temporise and act with caution.

As a matter of fact the schoolboy adventurers had been lacking in caution. Now that they were approaching the wilds of the North-West, it would have been judicious to keep watch and ward in their camp.

It was rather too late to think of that now, however.

The grinning hobo was master of the situation.

Even without the deadly weapon the huge ruffian would have been a very tough proposition for the schoolboys to tackle.

A levelled rifle would probably have brought him to his senses fast enough, but the rifles were out of reach.

"Now, I guess you're going to be s'pry!" said Oregon Bill. "You hop it lively, and get me some breakfast! Sharp's the word!"

The chums of Cedar Creek exchanged glances.

But there was no help for it. Oregon Bill held the whip-hand, for the present.

He sat on the saddles in the grass, and rested the revolver on his knee, while the schoolboys set about preparing breakfast.

With feelings too deep for words Frank Richards & Co. started work, under the eyes of the hobo—grinning, but watchful.

The 2nd Chapter. Desperate Measures.

Oregon Bill sat at ease, with great satisfaction depicted in his rough, bearded face, while breakfast was preparing.

The hobo plainly regarded himself as being in great luck—as having "struck oil," with a vengeance.

The schoolboys did not need telling that when he had satisfied his hunger, the prairie tramp intended to make off with their horses and packs, and all their other belongings that were of any value.

They would be left stranded on foot on the wide prairie, to make their way to some settlement as best they could.

That was not at all the outcome which the Cedar Creek fellows had planned for their North-Western trip.

As they worked under the ruffian's eyes their thoughts were busy.

Brushwood had been brought along from the last timber for the camp-fire, and Bob Lawless soon had the fire going.

Antelope steaks were soon frying, and the fragrant scent of coffee made Oregon Bill sniff with satisfaction.

It was a breakfast such as the tramp had probably not tasted for a very long time.

"I guess this is some cinch," he remarked. "I ain't struck a bonanza like this yer since I-it out of Oregon, over the line. I calculate I was wise to try Canada this summer. Haw, haw, haw!"

Quietly, but with deep feelings within, the schoolboys served the hobo with an ample breakfast.

Steaks and corn-cake vanished at a great rate down Oregon Bill's capacious throat, washed down by copious draughts of coffee.

The hobo was evidently enjoying himself.

Frank Richards & Co. would not have grudged a hearty breakfast, even to so disreputable a character as a prairie tramp, had he asked for it civilly.

But serving him under duress was quite another matter.

Having supplied the hobo's wants, the schoolboys retired to the camp-fire to cook their own breakfast.

They were thinking, however, a great deal more about getting the upper hand of their unwelcome guest than of breakfast.

"He's busy for a bit," murmured Bob Lawless, with the corner of his eye on the gorging hobo. "He's laid down his shooter, too. He kinder thinks we're taking this lying down."

Frank Richards' eyes gleamed.

"We're not," he said.

"I guess not. He means to run off with our horses and truck, and leave us stranded. I guess that's not in the bill," said Bob.

"We've got to handle him," said Beauclerc quietly. "The only question is, how? If you could get hold of a trail-rope, Bob, and rope him—"

"He would spot it at once if I tried."

"What's the game, then?" asked Frank. "The beast will be nunning off with our horses as soon as he's done feeding."

"You fellows are game, of course?" said Bob. "He will shoot, there's no doubt about that, if he gets a chance; and he'll shoot to kill rather than go under, if he can."

"We're game, fathead! Have you got an idea?"

"Yes. I'm taking him some more coffee in a minute," said Bob. "I've got it in this tin jug. Well—he sank his voice to a faint whisper—"when I'm handing him the coffee, I'll pitch it suddenly into his face."

"Oh!"

"That will blind him for a minute. I'll make a jump for the revolver the next second, and perhaps I shall be able to get it away. You two fellows stop here, and the instant I chuck the coffee, you can pick up brands from the fire and run at him. Get two big brands burning ready."

"Good man!" said Frank, with a deep breath.

"Hyer, walk up!" bawled Oregon Bill. "Can't you see my coffee's finished? Do you want me to wake you up with a bullet? Hay?"

He picked up the revolver he had laid on his knee.

"Coming, sir!" called back Bob Lawless meekly.

"Get a hustle on, then!"

Bob took up the tin pitcher of coffee and carried it towards the hobo, where he was seated on the saddles and other "truck" in the grass.

His heart was beating hard, but his face was quite calm.

Frank and Beauclerc, affecting to be tending the fire, selected two thick, short boughs that were sticking among the embers, burning at the ends.

They were the only weapons to hand, but they were likely to be formidable at close quarters.

The question was, whether the hobo could be dealt with at close quarters, before he could get his six-shooter into play.

That was the risk the Cedar Creek fellows had to run.

Frank and Beauclerc had one eye on Bob, their hearts throbbing, as he came up to the hobo with the pitcher in his hand, steaming.

Oregon Bill grinned, and laid his revolver on the knee of his leather breeches again, ready to his hand, as he held out his tin cup to be filled.

"Here you are!" said Bob.

"I guess I'm teaching you to be s'pry," grinned the hobo, as Bob filled the cup with steaming coffee. "I reckon—Ah! Oh! Yah!"

Swish!

With a sudden jerk of his arm, Bob Lawless hurled the almost boiling contents of the pitcher full into the bearded face of the ruffian.

Oregon Bill started backwards with a yell of agony.

He reared up, clutching at his face, blinded for the moment by the steaming flood.

His revolver slid and dropped into the grass.

Bob Lawless made a spring for it. But Oregon Bill was too quick.

He flung himself forward, half blinded, to grab at the revolver, and his left hand, striking out wildly, caught Bob on the chest and hauled him into the grass.

A few seconds more, and the groping hand of the ruffian would have grasped the six-shooter.

But even as he groped, still howling with pain, Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc were rushing on him, the burning brands in their grip, and the flaming, smoking weapons were dashed together into the face of the hobo.

Oregon Bill gave a yell of anguish, and rolled back blindly, and as he rolled over in the grass the schoolboys struck again and again.

The 3rd Chapter. The Upper Hand.

Bob Lawless was on the revolver, now, and he sprang up with the weapon in his hand.

In a moment it was directed towards the struggling, shrieking hobo.

"Let up!" he rapped out. "I've got him covered! If he raises a finger now I'll drill him!"

The brands had been extinguished by the violent contact with the unfortunate hobo's face.

They were still smoking and dropping sparks as Frank and Beauclerc ceased to lash at the howling ruffian.

Oregon Bill sat up blindly in the grass.

His face was blackened, his eyebrows burnt almost entirely away, and his hair and beard badly singed.

His furious howls showed that he was suffering great pain.

Half blinded by the smoke in his face, he grabbed desperately at the knife in his belt, and strove to scramble up.

There was murder in the ruffian's furious face now.

Bob Lawless' voice rang out sharp and threatening.

"Drop that knife!" Oregon Bill did not heed.

Howling with rage, he dragged the hunting-knife from his belt, and the cold steel gleamed in the sunlight.

Crack!

Bob Lawless fired without an instant's hesitation. Hesitation at that moment meant death.

Oregon Bill's right arm dropped helplessly to his side as the bullet smashed through his elbow.

The knife dropped harmlessly into the grass.

The ruffian uttered a roar like a wounded buffalo.



YEN CHIN'S RUSE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

The 4th Chapter. Roped In!

Frank Richards looked round quickly. It was a couple of days later, and the Cedar Creek schoolboys were camped in a clump of timber in the lower foot-hills of the Cascade Range.

Frank Richards, with the shotgun under his arm, had wandered away through the wood to look for game. He was at some distance from the camp, threading his way through the trees, when he heard a rustle close at hand.

He scanned the thickets and creepers round him keenly, and as he did so something dropped from a branch above upon his shoulders, and he went with a crash into the herbage.

A startled cry left his lips. For a moment he thought that it was a lynx that had sprung upon him from above, and he expected, with a shudder of horror, to feel the fierce jaws in his flesh.

But instead of that a human knee was planted in the small of his back, pinning him face downwards in the grass.

Above him sounded a soft chuckle that he knew well. "Yen Chin!" he gasped. "He, he, he!" came from the unseen Chinese kneeling on his back. "Flanky caught—oh, yes! Me bully boy—oh, yes! He, he!"

"You young rascal!" exclaimed Frank, struggling to rise. "Let me up!"

"No lettee up!"

"I'll rope you, you young villain!"

"No lopee Yen Chin, me tinkee!" chuckled the Chinese. "No can."

Frank Richards struggled vigorously. Had he not been taken by surprise he would have handled the little Chinese easily enough, but he was at too great a disadvantage now.

The knee in his back pinned him down, and the Chinese seized his wrists from behind and held them firmly.

Frank's struggles only had the effect of grinding his nose in the rough soil, and he very soon gave them up.

He lay gasping, with a face crimson with anger and exertion, as the little Chinese chuckled again.

"No gettee up!" grinned Yen Chin. "Me gottee! Flanky velly bad boy. Me, Yen Chin, you say!"

"You loope as!" exclaimed Frank. "What are you playing these tricks for?"

"Me write come with Flanky!"

"Well, you won't, you rascally heathen!"

"Then Flanky come with me."

"What?"

Frank began to struggle again as he felt the Chinese fastening a rope about his wrists behind his back.

But he struggled in vain, and in a few minutes his hands were secured.

Then Yen Chin jumped up, keeping hold of the end of the rope, and allowed the English schoolboy to scramble to his feet.

"You plisoner!" said the Chinese cheerfully.

Frank Richards panted. He was greatly inclined to use his boots upon the pertinacious Celestial, but he refrained.

As a matter of fact, Yen Chin was expecting that movement, and he was ready to jerk him over with the rope if he began to kick.

"Have you come here to ask for a roping?" exclaimed Frank angrily. "Let me go at once, or I'll call out to Bob!"

"Bob no heal if callee," said Yen Chin. "Too fal away."

"Let me loose!"

"Flanky wantee Yen Chin comee on journey?"

"No!" roared Frank.

"Then no lettee loosee. Me takee Flanky away," said Yen Chin. "Flanky ugly old lascal!"

Frank Richards grinned in spite of his annoyance.

Yen Chin was evidently determined to be one of the party for the North-West, and he was not to be argued with.

"How did you get here, you little heathen?" asked Frank.

"Me follow trail. Follow allee way. Easee nuil!" said the Chinese. "Me lookee, wachee, you bet. Catchee Flanky."

"What are you going to do, you young ass?"

"Takee Flanky way. You comee," said Yen Chin, pulling on the rope.

Frank Richards had no choice about following the Chinese.

He was too far away from his comrades for a call to reach their ears, and there was no help for him.

Yen Chin picked up the shotgun, and led the schoolboy away into the timber, grinning cheerfully.

It was not the first trick he had played on the party that declined his estimable company on their North-Western excursion, and it seemed likely to be more successful than the last.

Leaving the camp farther and farther behind at every step, Frank Richards unwillingly followed his conductor through the timber.

Yen Chin halted at last in a deep ravine where a little stream followed under the heavy bushes.

In that hidden spot his pony was staked out.

"You sittee down," he said.

"Look here—Oh!"

Yen Chin jerked the rope, and Frank sat down rather suddenly at the foot of a sapling.

The loose end of the rope was run

round the trunk, and knotted, and Frank was a helpless prisoner.

He stared at the grinning Chinese in great wrath.

"Oh, my hat! I'll rope you for this, you yellow rascal!" he exclaimed.

"First catchee Chinese!" grinned Yen Chin. "Flanky caught!"

"You're not going to leave me here?" exclaimed Frank, as the Chinese turned away.

Yen Chin glanced back with a chuckle. "Allee light! Soon have companee," he said.

"Eh? What companee?"

"Bob, perhaps; and Chunkee—silly, fat Chunkee—and Chelub."

With that the Chinese disappeared into the timber, and Frank, in utter amazement, was left alone in the ravine with the staked pony.

He understood the extraordinary scheme of the cunning little Chinese now.

Yen Chin intended—if he could—to bag the whole party one after another, and evidently to make terms with them when they were helpless in his hands.

It was Yen Chin's way of getting himself included as a member of the holiday party where his room was preferred to his company.

"My only hat!" murmured Frank. He wriggled uncomfortably in his bonds, striving to get his hands free.

But the attempt was unavailing. Yen Chin had done his work too thoroughly for that.

Frank Richards was a prisoner until it suited the heathen to return and set him free.

Overhead the noonday sun was blazing down, but the thick trees in the ravine fortunately shaded Frank from its rays.

It was very warm, however, and he was soon tired and thirsty, and his feelings towards Yen Chin were far from friendly.

It was an hour later that footsteps were audible in the ravine, and Frank looked round eagerly, hoping that his chums had found him.

He was sure that they would search for him when he failed to return to the camp.

His face fell as he saw the new-comers. Chunky Todgers, with a face crimson with fury and his hands tied behind his back, was led into the ravine by the grinning Celestial.

Evidently the fat youth had fallen into the heathen's hands just as Frank Richards had done.

Chunky blinked at Frank as he halted. "You here?" he exclaimed.

"Looks like it!" grunted Frank. "And you—"

"I went out to look for you, as you didn't come back," said Chunky dolefully.

"This heathen beast suddenly roped me in. I'll scalp him as soon as I get loose!"

"I'll scalp him as soon as I get loose!"

"I'll choke him with his own pigtail! I'll—"

"Chunky silly fat jay!" remarked Yen Chin. "Sittee down!"

"I won't, you heathen! I—Yaroo!"

Chunky Todgers sat down with a bump. Yen Chin coolly tied him to the tree beside Frank Richards.

The Celestial grinned at the unhappy pair with great satisfaction.

"Two of the party of four were in his hands."

"Give me something to drink, you heathen!" growled Frank Richards.

"Allee light."

Yen Chin brought a tin pannikin of water from the spring, and Frank drank it eagerly.

"You dinkee, Chunkee?"

"Yes, you heathen!"

"All lightee now?"

"Let me loose, or I'll scalp you!"

"No scalpee. No can."

Yen Chin vanished into the timber again.

Frank Richards and Chunky Todgers looked at one another helplessly.

"What's the mad little idiot's game?" exclaimed Chunky.

"He wants to join the party," said Frank, laughing in spite of his wrath and discomfort. "This seems to be his way of doing it."

"I'll—I'll—I'll—I'll—"

Words failed Chunky Todgers. The English language would not have expressed his feelings just then.

Two more weary hours passed by. Then footsteps were heard again.

"Beau!" exclaimed Frank.

It was Vere Beauclerc, and he did not come alone.

His hands were tied, and Yen Chin was leading him, wriggling with meriment.

Beauclerc was looking as much amused as exasperated.

The Chinese's extraordinary proceedings appealed to his sense of humour to some extent.

"So you're in it, too, Cherub?" grunted Chunky Todgers.

"You stay here with Chunkee and Flanky!" grinned Yen Chin, fastening the rope to the sapling. "Me gcee catchee Bob. Then all plisoner—oh, yes! Then you all askee me velly nicee to comee with you, and me sayee yes—me good boy; velly fond of silly old Flanky."

Yen Chin departed again.

"My hat! This is a go!" said Beauclerc. "The little beast dropped on me

out of a tree, like a dashed lynx. He's going to look for Bob now, I suppose."

"He won't catch Bob so easily," said Frank.

"I hope not! It looks as if we're booked to have Yen Chin with us, if he does."

"We won't!" roared Chunky Todgers. "He's too full of imp's tricks for me. I'm going to lambaste him as soon as I get loose!"

"When will that be?" asked Frank.

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Chunky.

It was a question to which Chunky could not find an answer.

For the present, at least, all the trumps were in the hands of the Chow of Cedar Creek.

All depended upon whether Bob Lawless was caught napping as his comrades had been.

And the three prisoners waited anxiously, more than half expecting to see Bob Lawless led into the ravine, a prisoner, by the grinning Yen Chin.

The 5th Chapter. Licked at Last!

"Bob!"

A long, dismal hour had passed for the prisoners in the ravine.

The sun was sloping down in the west, beyond the mountains towards the far Pacific.

Shadows were lengthening in the wooded ravine.

Frank Richards and his companions had been testing their bonds again, but they could not get their hands free.

Tired and angry, they had given up the attempt, and settled down to wait with that patience they could muster until Yen Chin returned, meanwhile promising the Chinese all sorts of dire punishments as soon as opportunity came.

A footstep in the thickets caused them to look round, and they saw the sunburnt face of Bob Lawless looking out of the foliage.

For the moment they fully expected to see Yen Chin with him, leading him, bound, to the place of captivity.

But Bob Lawless was alone.

He was scanning the ravine from the thicket, for a moment not seeing the three prisoners seated at the foot of the sapling.

He started as the trio called out his name together.

"Bob!"

"This way, Bob!"

"Hurry up!"

"Oh, Jerusalem!" ejaculated Bob, as his astonished glance turned upon the three prisoners.

He came quickly out of the thicket.

"What the thunder—" he exclaimed.

"Look out for Yen Chin!" said Frank hastily.

"The heathen! Is he here?"

"He's in the wood somewhere—looking for you," said Beauclerc.

"You don't mean to say that Yen Chin fixed you up like this!" shouted Bob.

"Ahem! Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't blow off! Let us loose!" exclaimed Chunky Todgers. "That heathen may come back any minute."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"Look here, you ass—"

"I guess I'll have you loose in a jiffy," chuckled Bob. "Oh, this beats the whole deck, and no mistake!"

He drew his hunting-knife, and severed the ropes with a few cuts.

Glad enough were the prisoners to rise and stretch their tired limbs.

Bob Lawless was still chuckling explosively.

He seemed to see the humorous side of the matter more clearly than the other fellows did.

"How did the Chow work the riddle?" he inquired.

Frank Richards explained.

Bob greeted the explanation with many chuckles.

"Well, you are a crowd of jays," he said. "And you mean to say that the cheeky Chow is looking for me, to serve me the same?"

"Yes, rather. I wonder you haven't fallen in with him. How did you find us here?" asked Frank.

"I've been hunting for you, of course, as you didn't come back," answered Bob. "I guess I was thinking that Oregon Bill might have turned up again. I couldn't imagine what had become of you. I never guessed—Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't cackle, ass! I expect that Yen Chin would have bagged you, too, if he had dropped on you."

"Not in a month of Sundays!" grinned Bob. "I keep my peepers peeled when I go wandering. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, let's get back to camp," groaned Chunky Todgers. "I'm awfully hungry."

"I've got some grub in my haversack," answered Bob. "I reckoned I should find you hungry, if I found you at all."

"Hand it over," said Chunky at once.

The three schoolboys were glad to receive the provisions from their thoughtful chum's haversack.

They began munching immediately.

"I guess we'll look for Yen Chin, in our turn," remarked Bob Lawless. "We'll give the heathen a lesson about playing these tricks. If I hadn't been able to pick up your trail in the timber you might have stayed here all night! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll scalp him!" said Chunky Todgers vengefully.

Bob Lawless suddenly cocked his head on one side, listening intently.

"Somebody's coming," he said.

"I can't hear—" began Frank.

"Your ears weren't trained on the prairie, old scout. I reckon it's the Chinese coming home—without me!"

grinned Bob. "Let him come! Sit down as you were, and let him think you're as he left you. I'll take cover."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The three schoolboys plumped down in

the grass at once, at the foot of the saplings, with their hands behind them towards the tree.

Bob Lawless jumped behind a big tree a few yards away.

A minute or so later there was a rustling in the underwoods, and Yen Chin came down the ravine.

He grinned as he looked at the trio, not suspecting for a moment that their hands were free as his own.

"Hallo, haven't you caught Bob yet?" asked Frank Richards, peering at the Chinese through the thickening dusk.

Yen Chin shook his head.

"No catchee yet. Catchee in morning," he said. "Bob no goey way without you, me tinkee. No catchee in darkee. Plenty time."

"So you're going to keep us here till morning?" said Beauclerc, laughing.

"Oh, yes. Me keepee. To-morrow catchee Bob—silly old Bob!"

"You think you'll be able to catch Bob, do you?" asked Frank.

"Me tinkee? Oh, yes," said Yen Chin confidently. "Bob silly old lascal—catchee like gophee asleep! Oh, yes! Ah-h-h-h!"

Yen Chin broke off with that startled howl, as a grip of iron fastened on the back of his neck.

Bob Lawless had stepped quietly from cover.

Yen Chin spun round, and his almond eyes grew almost as round as saucers as he stared at Bob Lawless.

Frank Richards & Co. jumped to their feet, and the Chinese jumped, too, as he saw that they were free.

"Keno!" said Bob Lawless cheerfully. "Ow! Lettee go neckee!"

"So I'm a silly old rascal, am I?" demanded Bob. "You'll catch me like a gopher asleep, will you?"

Yen Chin wriggled in the Canadian's muscular grip.

"No tinkee Bob silly old lascal!" he gasped. "Bob velly handsome fellee—velly nicee, clevee old chap. Oh, yes! Lettee go neckee. Me Yen Chin, good boy!"

Bob Lawless shook him forcibly.

"Hold him while I get a rope!" yelled Chunky Todgers, greatly delighted at the turn of events.

Yen Chin yelled.

"No lopee pool lill! Chinese! Yen Chin bully boy—oh, yes! Likee muchee handsome Chunkee!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Yen Chin's compliments did not appear to Chunky Todgers in the least; perhaps he knew how much they were worth.

He grabbed up one of the cut ropes, folded it, and commenced operations on the Chinese.

Lash, lash, lash!

Yen Chin hopped, as Chunky lashed out with the rope, and yelled till the timber rang again.

Bob Lawless released him, laughing, and the Chinese made a rush to escape.

But Chunky Todgers did not mean to let him escape unpunished.

As the Chinese rushed away, Chunky rushed in pursuit, still lashing out with the rope.

Chunky had missed his midday meal owing to the Celestial's impish trick, and that was an offence Chunky could not possibly forgive.

Yen Chin dodged desperately, but the fat youth kept close behind, laying on with the rope with all the strength of his podgy arm.

"Lettee up!" shrieked Yen Chin. "Only jooke! Me likee nicee ole Chunkee! Handsome Chunkee! Nicee ole Chunkee! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob Lawless.

"Me no likee lopee!" howled Yen Chin. "Lettee up! Oh! Ah! Oh! Yah!"

The Chinese made a desperate rush for his pony, with Chunky close behind, still laying on with the rope.

He had to bend down to pull up the stake peg, and release the pony, and as he did so Chunky plied the rope with tremendous effect.

Yelling wildly, Yen Chin dashed at the pony, and scrambled on his back.

Another lash caught him as he did so, and the next caught the pony, and the animal sprang away.

With Yen Chin clinging to his back like a cat, the pony dashed into the wood, and vanished into darkness.

Chunky Todgers stopped, panting.

"I guess that's a lesson for the heathen," he stammered. "I guess that's a warning to him, some! Ow! I'm tired."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Chunky Todgers had quite tired himself out, but probably Yen Chin was more tired of it than Chunky was.

The chums of Cedar Creek did not see the Chinese again as they threaded their way through the timber back to the camp.

They would not have been surprised to hear something of him during that night; but apparently Chunky's vigorous lesson had had some effect, for the Chinese did not approach the camp.

Neither was he seen when they pulled up stakes in