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The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1d}/₂

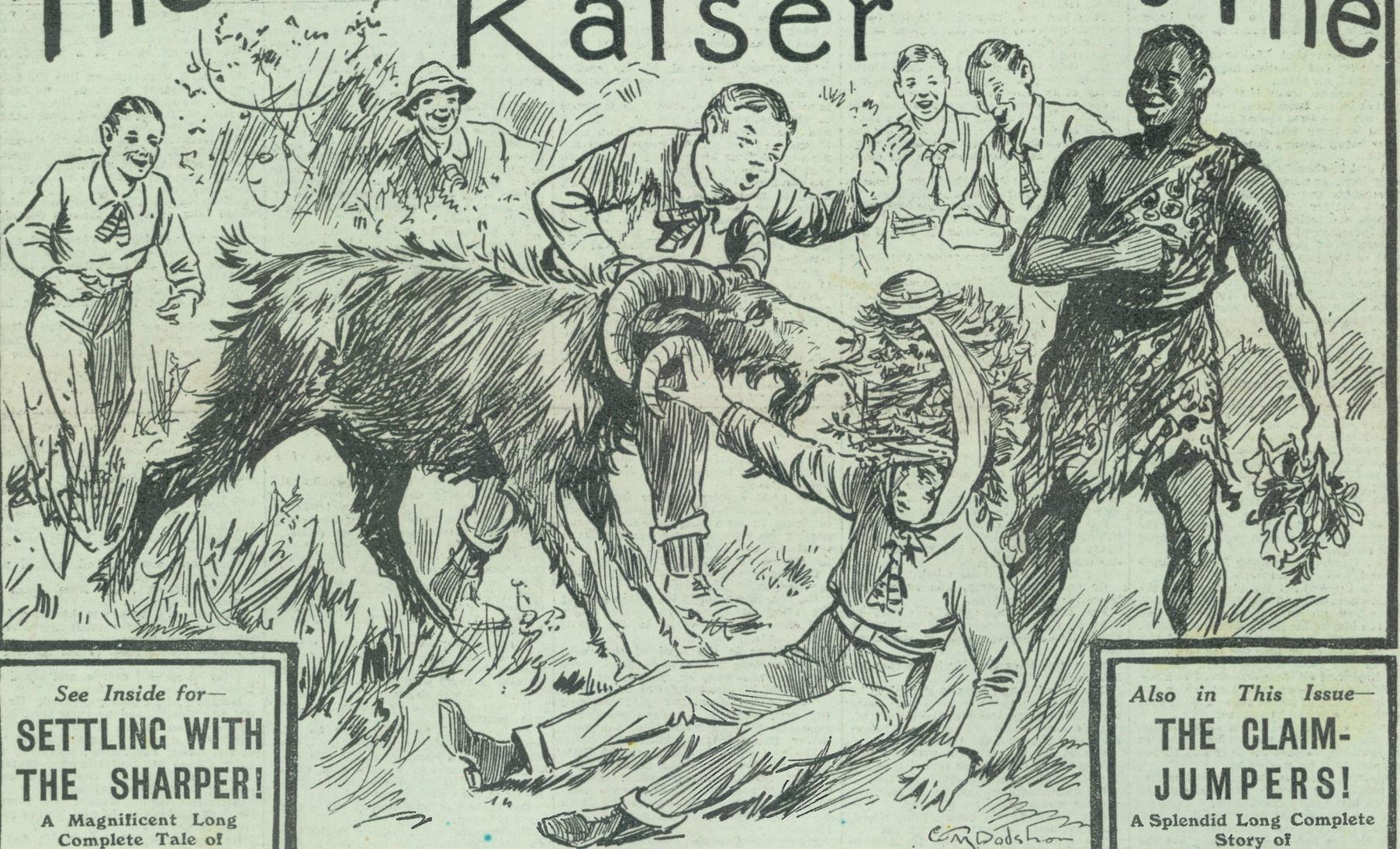
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED THE "PENNY POPULAR." **WAR TIME PRICE**

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THREE HALFPENCE.

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The Boys Who Beat The Kaiser



See Inside for—
SETTLING WITH THE SHARPER!

A Magnificent Long Complete Tale of **JIMMY SILVER & CO.**
— BY —
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HORACE IN A HUNGRY MOOD!

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— BY —
MARTIN CLIFFORD

FOR NEW READERS.

THE KAISER is determined to obtain possession of the Mahdi's huge treasure which is hidden in the heart of the continent of Africa, and, to do so, he employs three desperate Germans named **BARON VON SLYDEN, CAPTAIN STOOM, and VON SNEEK.**
The papers, however, containing the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure are in the possession of **CAPTAIN HANDYMAN and CY SPRAGUE,** who decide to go in quest of the treasure, and to take with them the boys of the Bombay Castle, chief among whom are **DICK DORRINGTON, CHIP, ARTY DOVE, SKELETON, PORKIS, and PONGO WALKER.**
LAL TATA, a cheery Hindu, **TOOKUM EL KOOS,** a native wrestler, **FLINT PASHA,** a member of the Sudan Police, are also amongst the party, as well as the boys' pets, **CECIL,** the orang-outang, **HORACE,** the goat, and **GUS,** the crocodile.

In the last instalments Baron von Slyden and his fellow spies made strenuous efforts to secure the papers containing the secret of the Mahdi's treasure. But the boys of the Bombay Castle defeated them, and they went away empty-handed.
The baron refused to throw up the

sponge, however, and when the boys of the Bombay Castle started on the expedition up the Nile the rascally Hun had concocted a dastardly scheme for getting his revenge.
The boys went ashore at a place named **El Katif,** and after an exciting adventure with a hippopotamus they were attacked by a band of Askaris employed by Baron von Slyden, but with the assistance of the hippo and Horace, the goat, the boys routed their enemies. The baron came on the scene, and was amazed to find that his dastardly plot was meeting with failure.
(Read on from here.)

Baffled!

It is strange, but none the less true, that all Germans who live abroad in English-speaking countries prefer to speak in broken English rather than in whole German.
"Vot vos der matter?" exclaimed Baron von Slyden, when he heard strange sounds of distress issuing from the dark bamboo thicket. "Ve vos not killin' der Englander boys! Dey vos killin' our peoples!"
It was certainly plain, to judge by the yelling and howling of the Askaris and the squealing of the camels, that

something had gone seriously amiss with the plans of the Kaiser!
Baron von Slyden growled a German oath under his breath, slipping from his camel, and pushed his way in at the dark tunnel.
The first thing he stumbled on was the body of the senseless Askari, who had been pitched from his camel.
The Baron went on his nose promptly, as he stumbled over the body of his German East African follower.
As soon as he picked himself up, he attempted to restore consciousness to his fallen tribesman in a truly German fashion.
Which is to say, he kicked the senseless man in the ribs.
"Get up, pigdog!" he yelled.
And here was another curiosity of the German language in Africa.
Though the Germans have enlisted the warlike Askaris under their flag, and though they are trained by German officers, these savage negroes steadily refuse to speak or to learn German.
All German military orders are

given in English, the only language which the Askaris will speak.
"Get up, black pig!" roared Baron von Slyden.
And he gave the fallen tribesman another drive in the ribs with the toe of his heavy cavalry boot.
But the senseless man only groaned.
Captain von Stoom, who closely followed his evil master, made another kick at the prostrate body on his own account.
Then the two, drawing their heavy revolvers, forced their way into the press of snapping camels, and shouting, frightened men, eager to learn what was happening.
All they could discover was that, far from the boys falling into their ambush, they had come riding into that convenient patch of moonlight where they were to have been assassinated by order of the Kaiser, not on donkeys or camels, but on the broad back of the Great One.
The Baron knew very well what the "Great One" meant.
The boys had come riding on the

back of the hippopotamus, which is revered by the Askaris as the chief of the river gods.
And this was the reason of the sudden scare which had set his followers firing right and left, in all directions but that by which the boys had advanced.
But the story was too tall a one for him to believe.
In the back of his thick German head, Baron von Slyden was already beginning to realise that the average British schoolboy is something of a handful, even to the Mailed Fist of that Mighty War Lord the Kaiser.
But that a gang of these youngsters could catch a wild hippo, and ride it, like a tame donkey caught on a village green, was a bit more than he could believe!
All he could surmise was that some vagary of the moonlight, and the deep, black shadows cast by the bushes, had deceived the eyes of his superstitious followers.
(Continued on the next page.)



(Continued from the previous page.)

The German is always a good hand at pushing his way through a crowd.

With boot and camel-whip of rhinoceros-hide, the roaring baron fought his way through the frenzied mob.

The frightened Askaris were taught to fear the cutting slash of that terrible whip of raw hide.

Two restive camels which insisted on blocking the baron's way were shot out of hand by the huge cavalry revolver.

And thus the baron whipped and shot his way through the rout of his followers. Soon he won to the spot where Cassim, the Arab spy, lay where Tookum el Koos had thrown him.

The baron did not kick Cassim in the ribs.

He knew that Cassim, the spy, was a wasp with a sting of his own, and about as malevolent and dangerous a character as Africa could show in its darkest mood.

So he knelt by Cassim in the darkness of the thicket, and whispered to him to know what had happened.

Outside the tunnel of bamboos he could hear the laughter of these high-spirited boys, and cries of "Good old Horace!" and "Good old Walter!"

Who Walter was he did not know. Walter is a German name as well as an English name.

He thought that Walter was one of these wretched English boys who were spoiling all his plans.

Little did he dream that Walter was a fine fat hippo, fresh from the mud of the Nile, who had been chased and caught and ridden by these daring boys.

The baron knelt down by the side of Cassim.

At first he thought that Cassim was very badly hurt, and felt him over for broken bones or the wet stains of blood.

As a matter of fact, Cassim at that moment was feeling pretty sick.

In the space of a minute he had taken a tremendous right-hand punch on the point of the jaw from Arty Dove. Then Tookum el Koos had hurled him amongst the bamboos. Then an angry camel had trodden on his face with a dab of its great padded foot that was as heavy as a welt from the glove of a heavy-weight pugilist. And finally Horace, the goat, had butted him thrice in the stomach.

So Cassim was feeling as though he had been hit by a tornado. He was sobbing for breath and mad with rage.

And the baron could hardly believe his ears as Cassim sobbed out in wild, disjointed sentences a story that the boys had come along the camel-path, all riding on the back of a hippopotamus, shouting and laughing as though they were riding on a pleasure-jaunt.

The hippopotamus, frightened by the tumult caused by its appearance, had turned aside and burst through the bamboo thickets, and the boys had jumped from his back.

Then Cassim had sprung forward, knife in hand, to do his master's work.

He had picked out the big boy with the rumbling voice, and the big British boy had called up an evil spirit, who had smitten him on his jaw, which was broken.

Then another evil spirit had picked him up and hurled him into the thicket.

Then had come a spirit that was the worst spirit of all these demons of Eblees—a spirit with flaming green eyes, which had the long beard of an old man—a spirit that smelled of fire and brimstone.

And this spirit had fallen upon Cassim, and had dealt him tremendous blows in the stomach, so that his liver had turned to water, and he was dying.

This was Cassim's story, sobbed out as he fought for breath, for Horace had winded him pretty completely.

And the baron had to believe it. The baron was not superstitious. He did not believe in anything but the Kaiser and Germany, which was to be the greatest country in the world when she had strangled Great Britain and had sent her German bands to play in London.

Baron von Slyden firmly believed that the Germans were the greatest people in the world, and that soon Great Britain would be begging for mercy.

And he was wild with rage at the way these insignificant British boys were persistently defeating all his plans in Africa.

But the baron made up his mind that he would soon get the better of them, even though he had to do this with his own hands.

Generally the baron did his murdering by other hands.

But his gang of murderers had apparently broken down, and he would take those lives himself in the name of the Kaiser!

Snarling with rage, the baron crawled forward in the shadow of the thicket, revolver in hand.

He was an excellent shot with a revolver, and had killed several good shots of the German Army in duels, in his younger days.

He did not doubt his shooting now.

And there was Von Stoom, crawling behind him.

Captain von Stoom was also an excellent shot, more especially in the tricky light of the moon, which is the very worst light there is for shooting of any kind.

It was for this reason that Baron von Slyden had picked out Von Stoom for his right-hand man.

He was very cool, very certain, and very ruthless, and at this sort of night work he was hard to beat.

In the old days Captain von Stoom

would have made a very excellent paid assassin.

He had all the craft and liking for the job.

So perhaps the baron was a little bit careless as he crawled to the mouth of the dark tunnel beneath the bamboos.

It seemed so easy to take a number of rapid pot-shots into that careless, laughing crowd of schoolboys, who stood, half wondering and entirely unafraid, in the patch of moonlight at the head of the path.

"Whoever they are," he heard Dick Dorrington's high, clear voice call, "they've got it in the neck! They must be fighting amongst themselves!"

"It's Walter that's scared 'em!" rumbled the deep voice of Skeleton. "I say, you chaps, I'm feeling awfully peckish again! A bit of excitement always makes me as hungry as a hunter. I suppose that's why I am feeling as though I could do with a bit of supper. We'll open a tin of lobster when we get back to the boats."

The crawling baron almost laughed at the easy task that lay before him.

These foolish British boys were asking to be murdered.

They had not dreamed of taking cover or running away from the strange noises of the thicket.

Unarmed, they stood in the white moonlight, their white flannel and duck clothing affording a target that the very duffer of an assassin could not miss.

Some of them were peering in at the mouth of the tunnel; others, with their hands in their pockets, were surveying the gap in the bamboo thickets where Walter, the hippo, had disappeared in his quest for the Nile.

There was no pity in the baron's heart; no intent of sparing these young lives.

He was a true Prussian to his boots.

These boys stood in the way of the Kaiser. They also stood in the way of the baron himself.

Both these facts were crimes worthy of death. They must be put out of the way.

The baron raised what he called his "good German revolver," and took a sight at Skeleton, who stood turning out his pockets, absently looking for a missing bag of brandy-balls to satisfy his craving for food.

The sights of the baron's revolver were levelled on the third button of Skeleton's waistcoat.

It was a pearl button, and it caught a flicker of the moonlight as the gaunt, cadaverous boy stood there.

The baron's finger was pressing the trigger.

He had taken the first pressure.

Another quiver of a muscle, and Skeleton would have had something more indigestible for his supper than the tin of lobster which he was planning.

But the baron changed his mind, for through the group there pressed the burly figure of Arty Dove, the boy who had once smitten him on the jaw.

The baron changed his mind.

He remembered Arty, and he remembered his debt to Arty.

The baron always paid this sort of debt in full, though he did not worry much about paying debts of the usual sort.

It was not often that the baron changed his mind.

But his mind and his aim shifted as he brought his sights to bear on Arty, who was plainly recognisable in the moonlight.

The baron could hear Captain von Stoom breathing heavily behind him.

Von Stoom was panting with the lust of murder, and the baron feared that the heavy breathing might affect his aim.

His finger tightened on the trigger.

There was a flash and a report.

Arty threw up his hands, spun round, and went down on his face in a heap.

The Kaiser's spy had paid his debt in full—at least, he thought so in that moment.

With a cry of triumph he broke from the cover of the bamboo thicket.

In that moment the baron was beside himself.

All the German brutality and lust for murder was up in a second.

He was as dangerous as any wild-beast of the African jungle.

And he was accompanied by a brute equally dangerous in Captain von Stoom. This was a job after Von Stoom's own heart.

"Die, English pigs!" snarled the baron. He had got the boys fixed. They had gathered round Arty in a group, as though to protect him by interposing their own bodies.

Skeleton was the only one who spoke. "Look here!" he faltered. "I don't know who you are, but this is a pretty rotten thing to do—to shoot at a lot of chaps who haven't got anything more than their pocket-knives to—"

The baron cut short Skeleton's remarks by slowly covering him with the threatening muzzle of the heavy-calibre revolver. Skeleton did not shrink.

He merely looked the baron up and down, with an expression of intense disgust on his cadaverous face.

The baron stayed his finger on the trigger.

These boys did not seem to be afraid of him, and their pride of race and their pluck stung him.

Not one of them had made a movement to desert their fallen companion.

Porkis was down on his knees, and had lifted Arty's head, gently stanching the wound with his handkerchief.

"I say, Dick," he mumbled, "who is this scoundrel? He's dressed like an Arab and he speaks like a German. He must be a German! No one else would do such a dirty trick!"

"He is a German!" snarled the baron, maddened by the entire lack of fear on the part of these British boys. "He is a German, and you boys shall pay for the wrongs you have done to Germany! You shall all die! Not one of you can escape! Down on your knees, you British dogs!"

Dick Dorrington faced him boldly, and slipped sideways to cover Skeleton with his body.

"Look here," he said, his lip curling scornfully. "I don't know who you are or what you are. But Britishers don't kneel to any German, even if he is armed to the teeth. You've got us fixed, you and your hooligan friend, and you seem to want to kill us. Why don't you get ahead with your killing, and dry up with that nonsense about going on our knees? We don't kneel to Germans, and we don't kneel to madmen or murderers!"

Even now the baron hesitated between his lust of murder and his swollen-headed desire to have this plucky little group of British boys kneeling at his feet and pleading for their lives.

He could take their lives in a few shots of that practised revolver.

He could make certain of that huge nigger, who stood half-ready to spring.

He had made a gesture to Captain von Stoom, which left Tookum el Koos to be settled by him.

Slowly the revolver covered Dick's broad white forehead.

"Say your prayers, young Englander!" snarled the baron.

"Not to you, you scoundrel!" responded Dick promptly.

The German's finger pressed the trigger. But simultaneously with the report of the great revolver came a double-snap from another revolver from behind the group of boys.

The great cavalry revolver dropped to the earth, and the German bully clapped his hand to his elbow, doubling up and nursing his right forearm exactly like a small boy who had received a whack on his funny-bone from a cricket-stump.

Captain von Stoom doubled up simultaneously with his master.

He, too, had dropped his revolver under the sting of excruciating pain, which had shot from his elbow to his fingertips.

And there in the bend of the path, with a smoking weapon in his hand, stood Captain Handyman, his eyes blazing with anger and his pointed beard bristling!

"Hey, you German sausages!" snapped the little captain. "Do you want any more lessons in snap-shooting, you murdering, flat-headed baby-killers?"

The two Germans glared at the little figure which stood in the moonlight.

They did not move, firstly, because they could not move, for they were paralysed by the two lightning bullets which had shot their weapons out of their hands.

Secondly, Captain Handyman had thrust his hands now in the sidepockets of his coat, and they knew very well that they were both covered by a man who must be one of the finest pistol-shots in the world.

Captain Handyman had played on them his favourite trick, and this was to shoot the weapon out of the hand of his adversary, leaving his arm tingling and numbed.

The two Germans stood there spell-bound. They gave a grunt of surprise when they saw Arty Dove suddenly sit up and run his hand in a puzzled fashion through his hair, as though wondering what had hit him.

"He's all right, sir!" said Porkis joyfully. "The bullet just raked over the top of his skull. Stunned him, that's all."

Cy Sprague had stepped from behind Captain Handyman. He examined the crown of Arty's head closely.

"He's all right," he announced. "Another half-inch lower and he would have been all wrong!"

"Good!" snapped the little captain. "Now, you murdering flat-heads," he roared suddenly, "you've tried to ambush my boys! I can hear your crowd scuttling away, and I know your game! If it wasn't for setting a bad example to the boys, I'd shoot you where you stand! But we Britishers don't shoot defenceless men, and neither of you two will be able to close your fists for the next twelve hours. But your legs are all right. Have you ever done a gun-dance?"

Neither of the unhappy pair answered. They stood there in the white glare of the moon, looking like a couple of stage-villains in the circle of a blue limelight.

"Now," said Captain Handyman grimly, "we're going to call the tune, and you are going to dance!"

He turned to Chip.

"Chip," he ordered, "turn on a tune on that old mouth-organ of yours. Any old tune will do for these rascals. They'll dance fast enough when I start putting the quicksilver into their heels!"

Chip struck up a merry tune on his mouth-organ.

It was an Irish jig of the merriest sort. Baron von Slyden scowled.

He did not feel like dancing at that moment, for the sensation was beginning to come back to his numbed arm in a terrible pricking and tearing of excruciating pins and needles.

"You shall not make jokes of us German gentlemen!" he growled. "I will die first!"

"German gentlemen!" said Captain Handyman, raising his eyebrows superciliously. "There never was a gentleman in your tinpot Empire! And as for making a joke of you, you are nothing but a joke from your swollen-headed Kaiser Bar down to the waiters and the shoe-blacks. Dance!"

The Germans hesitated.

All the bravado was out of them now. They knew that they had found their master in shooting, a man who had no sort of respect or fear for the German Empire and its mighty master, the Kaiser.

They did not hesitate for long.

Bang! Bang!

Two bullets clipped the earth at their heels, sending up spurts of white dust in the moonlight.

The baron gave a hop, and Captain von Stoom gave a hop.

In another second they were dancing madly, whilst a perfect stream of bullets rattled from Captain Handyman's revolvers.

He reloaded with the swiftness of a conjurer.

The baron and his evil companion did not dare to stop dancing.

Every time they showed a tendency to slacken, the bullets from that deadly brace of revolvers clipped their heels.

Chip tooted away cheerfully on his mouth-organ, providing the orchestra for this strange dance; whilst Tookum el Koos, mad with delight at seeing the tables thus turned on the two scoundrels, clapped his hands in time to the music.

Arty sat up with his head tied in a handkerchief.

His ears were singing, and his head was aching from the raking of the baron's bullet, but he was well enough to take a front seat to see the fun.

The baron was speechless as he danced.

He was maddened by the indignity he was suffering.

He was mad to think that he, the friend of the Kaiser, should be set to dancing like a monkey on the top of a barrel-organ, and as he danced he vowed vengeance swift and dire on the laughing crowd of boys who surrounded him.

But there was more trouble yet in store for the baron.

Horace, the goat, having doubled up Cassim, the spy, had gone for a little cruise on his own, squeezing his body amongst the close-growing bamboo thickets.

Horace had been trying to pick up the trail where Walter, the runaway hippo, had broken through the canes.

But he had met with no success.

The bamboos obstructed the passage of his great horns, and this made Horace wild.

He butted his way through the obstinate cane-brakes, and the great flexible canes flipped back and smote him.

So when Horace emerged on the track again at no great distance from the spot where he had penetrated the thicket, he was about as full of goatish mischief as he could be.

And there, the very first persons his evil eyes fell on were the baron and his aide-de-camp, dancing wildly to the music of a mouth-organ and the rattle of revolver shots.

That was enough for Horace.

If one thing made Horace more angry than the rattle of revolver shots and the acrid fumes of spent cartridges, it was the music of a mouth-organ.

Regardless of the revolver shots, Horace lowered his great battering-ram of a head and leaped into the air, bouncing like a tennis-ball.

"Look out, sir!" yelled Porkis. "Here's Horace! Don't shoot!"

Horace was into the fray so quickly that one bullet from Captain Handyman's revolver clipped his ear, whilst another sent a feather of clipped hair flying from his tail.

With a yell of fear the baron and Captain von Stoom turned to run.

They forgot all their fears of Captain Handyman and his shooting in the greater fear of Horace.

Horace gave them two yards start as they rushed for the entrance of the dark tunnel, where the pathway disappeared amongst the bamboo thickets.

Then he was after them like a terrier on the track of a couple of rats.

He caught the baron first, boosting him along with a punching butt that would have shifted a string of coal-waggons.

"Ouch!" grunted the baron, and flying through the air, he came on his face in the darkness of the thicket.

He was up again in a second, fear lending him wings.

He heard a dull thump like the bursting of a distant bomb, as Captain von Stoom, caught up by Horace, was treated to a similar boost from behind.

Then he ran like a hare.

He could hear his followers streaming out from the far side of the thickets, a mob of shouting men and frenzied camels.

They were all fairly on the run now, and they ran all the faster at the fusillade of Captain Handyman's shots, which rang ominously through the night air.

They were perfectly certain that a considerable body of armed men were close on their trail, and searching the thickets with their fire.

The baron yelled for help.

But his flying followers did not heed him.

He could hear Captain von Stoom panting and gasping close at his heels, and behind Captain von Stoom came the clatter of cloven hoofs.

Horace was running a close third, playing with his chase as a cat plays with a mouse.

Soon he was up with the baron again, rolling him over like a playful puppy gambolling with a kitten, save that his playfulness consisted of a driving butt, which fetched the baron behind like the slam of a steamhammer.

Then it was Captain von Stoom's turn, and Horace did not neglect him.

So it happened that when they reached the far side of the thicket the baron and his followers were hardly recognisable.

They were panting, and covered with mud from the soft path.

Their clothing hung from them in festoons of rags.

Von Stoom's nose was bleeding from a thump against a bamboo-root after a collision with Horace.

Horace chased them to the far side of the thicket.

Then he smelled camels, and heard the voices of men—black men.

Horace was a cunning old bird. He did not like camels, and he knew that black men were no friends of his.

So, with a parting boost into the rear of the racing Von Stoom, he turned and gave a loud bleat of triumph, as much as to say: "There! Don't you come playing in our yard any more!"

After that Horace trotted back through the dark shadows of the cane brakes to his friends.

He was singed and disreputable, but his head and his tail were up, and his green, luminous eyes glistened like opals.

On the other side of the brakes the two battered Germans crawled on their hands and knees, looking fearfully behind them as though expecting a further attack from this formidable enemy.

"Donner und blitzten!" exclaimed Baron von Slyden, in his harsh, guttural voice. "Dot vos some goat. I shall kill dot goat next times dot I do him encounter!"

Captain von Stoom made no reply.

Horace had presented him with a mass of bruises.

He was beginning to wonder whether, after all, they were going to walk over this little British expedition as easily as they had expected.

Boys who could bring hippopotami and fighting goats into their service, were quite capable of allying themselves with lions and rhinoceroses.

Very Mysterious!

Horace trotted back to his friends, and was received with shouts of welcome.

"Well done, Horace!" cried Arty Dove, who was holding his aching head in his hands. "You soon put those rascals on the run!"

"Horace," said Skeleton, "when we get back to camp you shall have a whole tin of potted lobster to yourself, and you can eat it, tin and all!"

Captain Handyman shook his head.

"I'm not quite certain, boys," he said, "that I should not have done better to have punched a hole through both of those ruffians, instead of swanking about with saloon-pistol practice and showing them how. But I cannot bring myself to kill

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Tell All Your Chums About This Forthcoming Attraction!

THE BOYS WHO BEAT THE KAISER

(Continued from the previous page.)

even such a couple of vermin in cold blood. Perhaps it is just as well that we let them run."

But Tookum el Koos shook his head. None knew better than old Tookum the ruthlessness of these enemies.

They had been made to look ridiculous to-night, and Captain Handyman, with his pistol practice, had played with them.

But Tookum knew very well that sooner or later the baron would seek his vengeance.

"Trust a lion before a snake, and a snake before an evil man!" he muttered, quoting an old Arabic proverb.

Then he helped Arty to his feet.

The raking of the bullet had made Arty very dizzy, and there was a nasty wound across his scalp.

But Tookum el Koos made signs that he would cure his wound in no time, and as Arty was helped homewards through the thickets of brush the great, gaunt figure of the wrestler dodged in and out of the

bushes, stooping now and then to pick a leaf here and a leaf there.

The boys glanced at Tookum with awed eyes.

He was muttering and mumbling charms as he gathered the leaves, and his eyes were rolling wildly.

They watched the huge figure in its speckled leopard-skin passing through the bush, keeping a course parallel to their own.

"Crums!" whispered Porkis. "Old Hokey-pokey is doing magic stunts!"

Still muttering his charms, Tookum el Koos leaped out on the path a few yards ahead, and waited for the little party to come up.

In his hands he held a great mass of sweet-scented leaves, which he proposed to slap on Arty's head.

At first Arty objected.

"I'm all right, Tookum, old chap," he said. "I don't want my head thatched like a haystack!"

"Let him do it," said Flint Pasha, who had come out to find the party. "Tookum is a great witch-doctor and herbalist amongst his own people, and you may be sure that whatever he puts on your head will do it good."

So Arty allowed Tookum to have his way.

With clever, tender fingers Tookum took off the bandages which had been hastily improvised, and built up on the top of Arty's head a great lump of bruised leaves.

The boys roared with laughter at their wounded companion, as bit by bit a regular stack of leaves rose on top of his head.

Even Arty soon started grinning, for a sudden coolness spread over his head, the aching of the wound stopped, and his eyes cleared as though by magic.

Tookum kept on mumbling his charms and incantations as he piled the green bushy on top of Arty's head.

Then he tied it round the boy's chin with strips of native cloth.

And then he solemnly perched Arty's cap on top of the huge bandage, which stood up a foot above the crown of his damaged head.

"Jiminy, Arty," exclaimed Porkis, "you look like a Jack in the Green!"

"And you smell like a peppermint-drop!" exclaimed Skeleton, sniffing the air hungrily for the aroma of menthol, which was given forth by this strange woodland dressing.

The delightful, aromatic smell of the crushed leaves attracted even Horace, who badly wanted to taste Tookum's magic herbs.

He tried to nibble the bandage from Arty's head, and was promptly clouted by Porkis for his pains.

Horace snorted indignantly.

But he got away with Arty's school cap, which he gobbled up hastily.

"Look out!" cried Arty. "Hold his neck!"

Porkis grabbed Horace by the neck.

"Cough up that cap, you old scoundrel!" he exclaimed.

But it was too late.

Horace coughed once and he coughed twice, and the tears came into his green eyes.

But the cap, rolled up in a ball, slid down his neck.

"Well, that's put the lid on!" exclaimed Arty disgustedly. "I had my

best penknife stowed in the lining of that cap to keep it from rusting on the river. I wonder what old Horace will feel like if the little blade or the corkscrew gets open in his stomach!"

"Don't you worry about Horace's inside!" replied Captain Handyman, as he marched along by Arty's side. "Horace's stomach is a deal tougher than your head. Now, here we are at the camp. The boys have got it pitched all right, and I don't suppose that you boys will mind a supper in the small hours of the morning."

The boys did not mind a bit.

Their camp was already pitched, a cloud of white canvas, not far from the village.

Fires were burning and torches were flaring.

Their followers, alarmed by the sounds of firing, had turned out armed, and cries of welcome went up as the boys marched into camp.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this amazing serial in next Monday's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would write and let me know what they think of this new story.)

SETTLING WITH THE SHARPER!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood

The 1st Chapter.

"Uncle James" is Worried.

"Silver!"
Mr. Bootles, the master of the Rookwood Fourth, spoke very severely. Jimmy Silver coloured.

"Yes, sir!"
"You are not paying attention, Silver!" said Mr. Bootles impressively. "You are not thinking of your lessons! You are wasting time!"

"Oh, sir!"
"You will kindly devote your attention, Silver, to the lesson, and cease turning your head to stare across the field. I am surprised at you!"

"Ye-es, sir," stammered Jimmy.
Mr. Bootles shook his head at him portentously, and let the matter drop. But two or three fellows glanced curiously at Jimmy.

Jimmy Silver certainly seemed in an unusually uneasy frame of mind that morning.

Instead of devoting his whole attention to the valuable instruction he was receiving from Mr. Bootles, as he ought to have done while in class, he was allowing his eyes and his attention to wander.

The Fourth Form were in class in the School Meadow, near the big oak-tree, their usual place while the school was under canvas, and lessons were taken in the open air.

In the distance the school buildings were still undergoing repair at the hands of the workmen, but, owing to war conditions, the work of repairing the damage done in the air-raid was still lingering on.

The Third Form, under Mr. Bohun, were at some little distance, in a pleasant and shady spot, and it was towards the Third Form that Jimmy Silver's eyes wandered.

His cousin, Algy Silver, was there, and Jimmy was aware that the youthful Algy was in hot water.

That was not an uncommon experience for Algy of the Third, but on the present occasion he was in hotter water than usual.

More than once Mr. Bohun's voice had been heard across the intervening space, addressing Master Algy in tones of wrath.

Hence Jimmy's inattention to Mr. Bootles, and the total lack of interest he displayed in the enthralling topic of deponent verbs.

Algy had just been called out before the Third, and Mr. Bohun was handling his cane.

That was a matter of supreme indifference to Mr. Bootles and most of his class, but it worried Jimmy Silver.

"Never mind the kid, Jimmy, you ass!" whispered Arthur Edward Lovell. "You're getting Bootles' rag out."

"A licking won't hurt him," murmured Raby, on Jimmy's other side.

"Might do him good!" suggested Newcome.

Jimmy was silent.
Across the sunny fields came the sound of the cane.

Swish, swish!
Jimmy Silver looked round again. He could not help it.

He was worried about his cousin Algy. The fag was going back to his place, squeezing his hands, with a scowling face.

"There's something up with Algy this morning," murmured Jimmy. "I noticed him last night, too."
"Bother Algy!" grunted Lovell.
"Silver!"
Jimmy Silver jumped as Mr. Bootles' voice boomed at him in wrathful tones.

"Yes, sir," he stammered.
"You are staring about you again, Silver!"
"W-a-was I, sir?"
"You were, Silver! I have warned you before. Come out before the class, Silver!"
Jimmy Silver reluctantly obeyed.



THE TELL-TALE PHOTOGRAPH!

"I—I'm sorry, sir."
"Why, you are staring about you even while I am speaking to you!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles in exasperation. "Really, Silver, this is too much! You will stand there, under my eyes, for the remainder of the lesson, and if you stare about you again I shall cane you!"

Jimmy Silver, with a crimson face, stood where he was placed, with his back to the distant Third Form.

The Fourth-Formers grinned at him.

It was a new experience for the captain of the Fourth to be stood in a corner like a naughty fag, and not a pleasant experience.

Poor Jimmy's face became so crimson that it looked as if it was on fire, and his discomfort was greatly increased by the grinning of his Form-fellows.

Townsend and Topham, and Peele and Gower, grinned and whispered to one another, and even his own chums seemed highly entertained.

The lesson proceeded, but Jimmy's ears were busy in listening to the sharp voice of Mr. Bohun, which came from behind him.

Mr. Bohun was addressing Silver II, once more in angry tones, and as the swish of the cane followed Jimmy looked over his shoulder.

The unfortunate Algy was going through it again, with a scowling face and gleaming eyes.

"Silver!" thundered Mr. Bootles. Jimmy jumped.

He spun his head round at once.

The Form-master's eyes had fallen on him while he was staring over his shoulder, and Mr. Bootles was really angry now.

He took up his cane.

"This is beyond all toleration, Silver!" he exclaimed. "I can only believe that it is deliberate impertinence! Hold out your hand!"

Mornington jumped up in his place.

"Mr. Bootles—"

"You may sit down, Mornington."

"Yes, sir; but Silver's cousin is getting caned over yonder; that's why Silver is looking round," said Mornington.

"Oh!" said Mr. Bootles.

He lowered the cane and glanced across at the Third Form.

Mornington sat down.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "Is that the cause of your distraction, Silver?"

"Ye-es, sir!" stammered Jimmy, redder than ever.

"H'm! Ahem!" said Mr. Bootles, not unkindly. "I will excuse you this time, Silver; but you must pay attention. You may go back to your place."

"Thank you, sir!" said Jimmy.

He sat down again in great relief, and with a grateful look to Mornington.

Jimmy Silver was glad when lessons were over that morning.

And directly the Fourth were dismissed Jimmy hurried away to look for his cousin Algy.

But he looked in vain.

The scapegrace of the Third had disappeared immediately Mr. Bohun dismissed the Third, and Jimmy did not succeed in finding him.

He came back to dinner with the Fourth with a worried look.

His chums, Lovell and Raby and New-

come, wore expressions in which exasperation was curiously mingled with resigned patience.

Family affection was all very well, they considered; but they considered also that "Uncle James" was over-doing it.

With chummy frankness they did not conceal the fact that they were fed up with Algy.

It was a half-holiday that afternoon, and the Fistical Four had planned a "rag" on the Modern juniors to improve the shining hour, but Jimmy did not look much in a humour for a rag now.

After dinner Jimmy Silver was starting off by himself, evidently with the intention of looking for Algy, when Lovell & Co. encircled him.

"No, you don't!" said Arthur Edward Lovell grimly.

"I'll see you later," said Jimmy.

"Not in the least. You'll see us now!" answered Lovell. "We've got a rag on for the afternoon; and we're fed up with the merry Algy. Let him rest."

"I'm rather worried about him," said Jimmy seriously. "Don't play the goat, old chap. I must see him!"

"Is this the first time a fag has ever been licked at Rookwood?" asked Lovell sarcastically. "He was checking old Bohun—I could see that."

"I want to see him."

"What about ragging the Moderns?" demanded Raby.

"Bother the Moderns!"

"And bother us, too, I suppose?" demanded Lovell warmly.

"Yes, bother you!" assented Jimmy Silver; and he hurried away, leaving his chums greatly exasperated.

The 2nd Chapter. Under His Thumb.

Bump!
Jimmy Silver heard that sound as he came through the archway into Little Quad.

That part of Rookwood had suffered little in the air-raid, and it still presented its old aspect, green and shady under the old beech-trees.

Jimmy had learned from Tubby Muffin that Algy had been seen going there, and he was following when he heard that bump.

He came suddenly on the scene.

Algy Silver was standing with his fists clenched, and a flame of anger in his face, and at his feet, on the grass, sprawled Bertie de Vere of the Third.

"That's for you!" said Algy, as Jimmy Silver came up. "That's what you've been asking for. Now cut, or I'll give you another!"

"You rotter!" mumbled the nut of the Third, as he sat up, dabbing his nose with his fingers.

"Cut, I tell you!" snapped Algy. "You landed me in this trouble, you worm, and I'm fed up with you!"

Bertie de Vere rose slowly to his feet, and, with a glance of malice at Algy, and a scowl at Jimmy Silver, he walked off.

"Hallo, Algy!" said Jimmy, not displeased by the scene he had just witnessed.

Bertie de Vere's friendship had done Algy no good, and it looked as if it was emphatically at an end now.

"Hallo!" grunted Algy gruffly.

"I've been looking for you, kid," said Jimmy Silver. "What's the trouble, kid?"

"Nothin'."

"You were in hot water this morning with your Form-master."

"Yes, bother him!"

"You must have checked him, Algy. Bohun isn't a bad-tempered man."

Algy snorted.

"Well, I did cheek him," he answered. "I was worried, if you want to know, and I was more than fed up with his rot. He took it out of me, though," added Algy, rubbing his hands reminiscently.

"I don't see why you should be worried."

"You wouldn't."

Algy quickened his pace, heading for the gates.

Jimmy Silver quickened his steps also, keeping with him, and they went out into the road together.

There Master Algernon halted.

"Hook it!" he said laconically.

"Where are you going, Algy?"

"Can't you guess?" said the fag sarcastically. "It's a half-holiday. I'm going to paint the town red, play the giddy goat, and have a merry time, you know."

He laughed bitterly, and, to Jimmy's surprise and horror, the laugh suddenly ended in a sob.

"Algy!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth.

"Oh, let me alone!" panted Algy. "I've got to go. Joey Hook will be expectin' me at the Bird-in-Hand. I've got to go."

"You can't go, Algy," said Jimmy Silver quietly. "I won't let you, for one thing. But what do you mean by saying that you've got to go?"

"Because it's true. Do you want to see me sacked from Rookwood?"

"No, of course not."

"Then you'd better not interfere with me this afternoon."

Jimmy stared at his cousin in dismay and perplexity.

He was aware that under the guidance of Bertie de Vere, Algy had been guilty of a good deal of recklessness, not far removed from rascality, and he had feared that it was something of the sort that was troubling the fag now.

But the expression on Algy's face showed that matters were worse than he had supposed.

"Tell me what's the matter, Algy," he said, at length. "If you're in a scrape you know I'll help you out of it. I've done so before."

"I know you have, Jimmy," said the fag, in a softer tone. "But you can't help me this time. I'm fairly treed. It's partly your fault, too."

"My fault?"

"Yes, in a way. Still, it's really because I was a fool, and I've got to pay for it. I don't know what the pater will say when I'm kicked out of Rookwood. The fag's voice trembled. "What a silly ass I've been!"

"You're not going to be kicked out of Rookwood, Algy," said Jimmy Silver.

"Tell me about it, and we'll see what's to be done. How do you mean that it's my fault?"

"Well, I shouldn't have gone to the

Bird-in-Hand that day with Bertie only you were jawing me," said Algy sulkily. "I really did it only for a lark. You remember—a couple of weeks ago—"

"I remember. But that's all over."

"Tain't! You know that worm Peele, of your Form, followed us there, and took a snap of us with his camera when we were playing cards with Hook in the arbour."

"I made him give me the photograph and the negative, too, and destroyed them both," said Jimmy. "That's all right."

"It isn't all right, I tell you," said Algy impatiently. "There was another photograph. Peele gave one, or sold it, to Joey Hook."

"Oh!"

"That rotten sharper kept it!" said Algy. "It's a photograph of him and me and Bertie, playing cards together in the arbour. But you've seen it, so you know what it's like. I'd chucked up Bertie and Hook, too, and all that rot, and now the beast knows there's nothing more to be got out of me he's cut up rusty. He met me in the lane yesterday, and showed me the photograph. He's blacked out De Vere, so that it won't do him any harm—Bertie's still thick with him. But that photo is enough to get me kicked out of Rookwood if he shows it to the Head. And he threatens to."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy.

"I'm under his thumb!" groaned Algy. "Of course, I never suspected he was such a beast, or I'd never have gone near him. But—but he's got me down now. He's offered to take ten pounds for the photograph. Where am I to get ten quids from? I haven't got ten bob."

Jimmy Silver was silent in utter dismay.

"So long as I keep friendly he's going to keep it in his pocket-book, he says," went on Algy. "If I desert an old pal—that's how the beast puts it—he's going to send it to the Head. He expects to see me this afternoon, with Bertie. I've jolly well thumped Bertie, anyhow. I wish I could thump Hook."

"My hat!" said Jimmy.

"I've got to go," said Algy. "I don't want to go—I suppose you can see that now—but if I don't—"

Jimmy was silent, almost aghast.

He had supposed Peel's ill-natured trick with the camera to be over and done with, but it had cropped up again in the most unexpected manner.

One of the tell-tale photographs was still in existence—and in Joey Hook's hands.

Jimmy understood that the needy sharper was feeling resentment at being thrown over, as he would regard it, by the wretched fag whose pocket-money he had been accustomed to annex.

Mr. Hook had given Peele of the Fourth a half-crown for that photograph.

It was worth much more than that to him.

"The man's an utter rotter," said Jimmy, at last.

"I know that—now."

"I don't think he would send that picture to the Head, Algy. It's illegal for him to play cards with you for money, and he would be giving himself away."

"Lot he would care!" growled Algy.

"He knows, anyhow, that I daren't let the Head see it. It would finish me here."

Jimmy was silent again.

He knew that only too well.

It was not much use to tell Algy that he might have expected his rascality to land him in a scrape, and that he ought not to have expected honourable dealing from a professional sharper.

Algy knew all that; and "I told you so!" was no solace.

"Well, got anything to say before I go on?" jeered Algy.

"You'd better not go," said Jimmy. "Keep away from that den, anyhow."

"And quarrel with him? Catch me riskin' it!"

"That photograph's got to be got back somehow," muttered Jimmy. "It's all rot his asking ten quids for it. That's ridiculous! We couldn't raise such a sum of money. The awful swindler! But—but—"

Lovell and Raby and Newcome came out at the gates, and approached the cousins.



SETTLING WITH THE SHARPER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"I'm not!" snapped Jimmy angrily. "You're here!" said Tracy, with a chuckle. "My dear man, don't think I blame you. Life's short. Why shouldn't it be merry?"

"I'll give you a tip, my boy!" said Smythe condescendingly. "Put your money on Monkey Brand for Saturday. He'll win; take my word for it!"

He restored the photograph to his pocket-book, replacing the same in his inside-pocket. It was clear that he regarded it as valuable, and meant to be very careful with it.

and tell 'im that the price goes up a couple of quid every time I get any 'igh-and-mighty lip."

The 4th Chapter. What's To Be Done?

Lovell & Co. greeted Jimmy Silver with curious looks when he returned to Rookwood. Jimmy met them at the tent they shared in the school encampment, and his first proceeding was to hand back to them the money he had borrowed that afternoon.

"Let's go and see Morny," said Lovell, rising. "I remember I was going to speak to him and Erroll. Come along, Tubby!"

The 3rd Chapter. "N.G."

Jimmy Silver had started for Coombe at a rapid pace, but he slowed down after a time, and his footsteps grew more and more lagging as he approached his destination.

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN. Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post.

IN TWO WEEKS' TIME! Readers of the BOYS' FRIEND will not have to wait long now for the splendid treat which I have promised them.

FOR NEXT MONDAY. "JIMMY SILVER'S HOUSE-WARMING!" By Owen Conquest. The title of next Monday's splendid tale of the Rookwood chums suggests something new, and I can assure you that this story will come very fresh to all of you.

received the punishment which they so richly deserved. "THE BOYS WHO BEAT THE KAISER!" By Duncan Storm. In the next instalment of our amazing serial you will make the acquaintance of Robbler, a wild boy, and his pet, Tiddles.

"You fool!" repeated Algy, with almost breathless fury. "Haven't I been on the carpet before, and didn't the Head warn me then what to expect? You fool!"

Your Editor

The 5th Chapter. Mornny's Plan.

Jimmy Silver answered "adsum" to his name as Mr. Bootles called the roll, and as soon as calling-over was finished he hurried away.

He wanted to be alone to think. But as he went back through the dusk towards his tent Mornington of the Fourth sauntered after him and joined him.

Jimmy went into his tent without observing the dandy of the Fourth, and Mornny followed him in.

"Hallo! Enjoyin' the merry twilight?" asked Mornny.

"I—I won't ask you in just now, Mornny," said Jimmy awkwardly. "I—I've got a bit of a problem to think out."

"My dear man I know that, and I've come to help you think it out. Two heads are thicker than one, you know."

"Oh!" said Jimmy in surprise.

He was not over-pleased to find that his trouble was observed by others as well as his chums.

He was very friendly with Mornny now; their old disagreements were quite over.

"No, don't say what you're thinkin'," said Mornny lightly. "I'm not goin' to mind my own business."

"I—I wasn't—"

"My dear man, I've chipped in because I think I can be of use!" said Mornington. "No business of mine, but I've a pretty clear idea what's the matter, and it's very likely I can help you out. I've been there, you know."

"You know?" stammered Jimmy.

"Well, I've had my eye on the merry Algy several times, and I noticed your weird antics this mornin'. Don't tell me anythin' if you don't want to, but if you like, I dare say I could help. Algy's in trouble with some merry old friends of mine that I never speak to now. I can guess that much."

Jimmy paused.

Naturally, he did not want to confide Algy's shady secrets to anyone, but it struck him as very probable that Mornny could help him in the present emergency.

Mornington had once been hand-in-glove with the "merry blades" of Rookwood, and had been a very valued acquaintance of Joey Hook and the sporting gang at the Bird-in-Hand.

Certainly, the one-time blackguard of the Fourth was more suited to deal with such people than Jimmy Silver was.

"You're jolly good!" said Jimmy at length. "I'll tell you, Mornny, and if you can help me I'll be no end grateful! You know those rotters better than I do. But—but I don't know what's to be done."

"I'll give you my opinion, anyhow."

And Jimmy plunged into explanation, Mornington listening quietly, the dusk in the tent hiding the half-mocking expression upon his handsome face.

"You see, it's jolly serious!" Jimmy wound up.

"No doubt about that," agreed Mornny. "Serious enough for Algy, if the Head ever sees that entertaining photograph. Sure it's the only one in existence?"

"Oh, yes!"

"You didn't think of tryin' to bag it when the brute showed it to you?"

"I couldn't!"

"I suppose Hook keeps it pretty safe?"

"Yes; in a pocket-book in an inside pocket. Naturally, he would keep it on him, and safe," said Jimmy. "Not that there would be much chance of getting it from his quarters at the Bird-in-Hand, even if he left it in his room."

Mornington wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

"He's askin' twelve pounds for a rag of a photo he gave Peele half-a-crown for!" he remarked. "Of course, that's why he bought it of Peele—he saw a chance of gettin' your merry cousin under his thumb. He's in low water financially, and he can't afford to part with any source of income in these hard times. You want to get hold of that photo?"

"Of course!"

"You'd be justified in takin' it by force if you could, as he's only usin' it for blackmailin'."

"I wish I had the chance!" answered Jimmy, setting his teeth. "I'd give him half-a-crown, though, as he gave that to Peele for it."

"I'd give him a black eye! But suit yourself. I think it could be worked," said Mornington. "Suppose you asked him to meet you at a distance from the Bird-in-Hand, and—"

Jimmy shook his head.

"He wouldn't do it! I could only have one motive for asking him to meet me, and he would smell a rat at once!"

"He would," agreed Mornington.

Jimmy Silver looked disappointed.

He had hoped, from Mornington's manner, that the dandy of the Fourth had something practical to suggest.

"Of course, there's nothing doing," said Jimmy. "Keep dark what I've told you, anyway, Mornny."

Mornington laughed.

"But there's something doin'!" he answered. "Hook wouldn't take two steps from his pub to meet you, Silver, but he would go a long way to meet me!"

"You don't have anything to do with him now."

"Quite so; but he would jump at the chance of renewing the acquaintance," answered Mornington coolly. "He would come along to-night if I asked him. He would jump at the chance with both feet!"

"But—but you couldn't—"

"I could!"

"But would you?" asked Jimmy, in surprise. "There's no reason why you should bother about my cousin, and take risks for him."

"None at all; and as it's not a duty I feel inclined to do it," answered Mornington, laughing. "Suppose I get a word with the brute—without mentionin' you or Algy in any way, of course."

"It's too late to-night."

"Easy as winkin'," answered Mornington. "The merry workmen have been gettin' on with the repairs while we've been under canvas. The telephones have been finished, and it's easy to walk into

the rooms, as the doors and windows are all open, so far. Bootles was usin' his telephone to-day."

"I know; but—"

"And after dark there's nobody yonder," said Mornny, with a nod in the direction of the school buildings. "Easy as fallin' off a form. I'll 'phone to the cad."

"But—but—"

"I'll ask him to walk along to the school camp," grinned Mornington, "and we'll meet near the tents after lights-out. He will be as pleased as Punch. When he comes along we'll have a little friendly talk with him about the photograph—what?"

Jimmy stared at Mornington.

It was a reckless scheme, and quite in keeping with Valentine Mornington's reckless character.

"My hat! Just the game I should enjoy, cleanin' out that swindlin' rascal who used to clean me out such a lot!" said Mornny. "I'll get Erroll to take a hand in dealin' with him—and you can be there with your pals. My dear man, we'll talk to Joey Hook like a whole family of Dutch uncles, an' persuade him to do the just and righteous thing—what?"

"I—I suppose it might work—"

"Like a charm."

"If—if you like to take the risk, Mornny, we'll try it. But it's risky for you. Suppose you were spotted ringin' up the Bird-in-Hand?"

"Leave that to me. Is it a go?"

"Yes," said Jimmy Silver slowly.

"Done, then!"

Mornington sauntered out of the tent, leaving Jimmy Silver feeling comforted.

Mornny was smiling as he walked away into the darkness.

After call-over the juniors were supposed not to leave the camp, and Mornny had to be careful.

But he moved quietly among the tents, and vanished across the quad towards the deserted school buildings, where the workmen had long since knocked off.

"I'd be very pleased and honoured, sir."

"It's a go, then. By the way, what do you think of a gee for the race on Saturday afternoon—the three o'clock? Heard anythin' special?"

"That I 'ave, Master Mornny," answered Joey Hook eagerly. "A tip straight from the stable—straight from the 'orse's mouth, sir! I can tell you—"

"I shall have to ring off," interrupted Mornington hurriedly. "I'm usin' one of the school telephones, you know."

"My eye!"

"It's a bit risky. You'll come along?"

"Wot-ho!"

"You know the place where the school wall fell in after the bomb?"

"I know it, sir—passed it many a time."

"Come there, then, and I'll be there—ten o'clock, say. I have to leave it till well after lights out."

"I'm your man, sir. Rely on me!"

"Done!"

Mornington rang off.

In the bar of the Bird-in-Hand Joey Hook stood himself a drink, in his satisfaction at the return of the strayed sheep to the shady fold.

Valentine Mornington picked his way out of the shadowed building, and cautiously returned to the school camp.

A figure loomed up before him in the gloom as he reached the tents.

"Mornington!" It was Bulkeley's voice. "You've been out of bounds!"

"Only to the buildings, Bulkeley," said Mornny meekly.

"I know that, and you know it's forbidden. You might have broken a limb there, you young ass!"

"I didn't, as it happens."

"Take fifty lines. It will be the cane next time," said the prefect.

"All right, Bulkeley."

Mornington went on to his tent, smiling. He did not mind the imposition. He was thinking of his appointment with Joey Hook, and of the surprise that awaited the sharper, and that thought gave him much satisfaction.

ruins into the gap, and Mornington stepped out into the road alone.

His comrades remained in the gap, hidden from sight by the wall and the darkness, while Mornny, a few paces away in the direction of Coombe, waited for Mr. Hook.

The juniors waited with keen anxiety. They had agreed to back up Jimmy Silver in that somewhat harebrained attempt to "draw the teeth" of the blackmailer, but certainly no one but Valentine Mornington thought there was any enjoyment in the adventure.

Mornny waited cheerily, humming a tune under his breath.

It was close on ten o'clock when there were heavy footsteps in the road, and a fat, squat figure rolled into view in the gloom.

Mr. Hook had arrived, bringing a whiff of tobacco and whisky with him.

He peered at the junior standing there by the wall, and halted.

"Hallo, old top!" said Mornington cheerily.

"Glad to see you agin, Master Mornny," said the sharper, in an oily voice. "Might be safer to get a bit further off—what?"

"Oh, this is all right; we're a good two hundred yards from the camp," answered Mornington carelessly. "Now, about business, Joey."

"Right-ho, Master Mornny—business," said Joey Hook. "I tell you, my boy, I've got a tip for Saturday's race that's worth something. I tell you—"

"Never mind that for a minute. I've got somethin' else to speak about."

"Go it, sir."

"Young Algy Silver's photograph, old nut!"

Joey Hook started.

"Wot do you know about that, Master Mornny?" he asked.

"Everythin', old scout. That's why I telephoned to you," answered Mornington coolly. "I want you to let me have that picture, Joey."

A very ugly look came over the sharper's

ever, that Jimmy Silver was one of the party.

The sharper was bumped down on the ground, still held.

Jimmy Silver bent over him.

"You're going to give me that photograph now, Mr. Hook," he said quietly. "It's my turn now. Will you give it to me?"

The sharper could not speak, but he shook his head furiously.

"I'll give you half-a-crown for it," said Jimmy. "I suppose it's your property, in a way, and I shall pay for it—as much as you paid. Will you hand it over?"

Another furious shake of the head.

"You could be sent to prison for threatenin' my cousin with it," went on Jimmy. "You know that, and you know you'd be prosecuted if it wasn't for disgracin' my cousin—a mere kid you'd never have spoken to if you hadn't been an unscrupulous villain!"

"Hear, hear!" murmured Lovell.

"Silver, old man, you're no end entertainin'," said Mornington. "This is as good as the Head when he gets to sixtily."

"Shut up, Mornny!" whispered Erroll.

"You've got to give it up, Hook," went on Jimmy Silver. "Will you?"

Shake!

"Then you'll be bumped till you do," said Jimmy.

"Why not take it?" said Mornington.

"I'd rather he gave it to me."

"Well, it will be amusin' to bump the brute! Give it to him, dear man, and don't mind how hard you hit the ground."

Bump!

To his utter amazement and wrath, Mr. Hook found himself lifted from the ground and jammed down on it again with a jam that knocked nearly all the breath out of his beery body.

It was a new experience for the sharper, and not an agreeable one.

He gurgled and gurgled wildly, with the scarf jamming his mouth.

"Will you give me the photograph now, you scoundrel?" muttered Jimmy Silver.

Mr. Hook nodded his head frantically.

He understood that the bumping was to go on till he yielded the point—and he had had enough.

His right hand was freed, and he groped for the pocket-book.

He clawed it open, clawed out the photograph, and flung it fiercely at Jimmy Silver.

"Make sure it's the goods," murmured Mornington. "I've got a flash-lamp here."

The light glittered on the photograph for a moment.

It was the "goods," as Mornington expressed it.

Jimmy Silver drew a deep, deep breath of relief as he tore the photograph methodically into fragments, and still smaller fragments, and ground them into the dust under his heel.

"That lets Algy out!" grinned Lovell.

Jimmy Silver took a half-crown from his pocket, and placed it in Mr. Hook's fat hand.

"There's your money!" he said.

Mr. Hook came nearly to hurling the coin in his face, but he wisely refrained. Besides, a half-crown was a half-crown.

The photograph was worth nothing excepting as a means of blackmail.

"Now you can go," said Jimmy Silver. "Your teeth have been drawn, you blackmailin' rascal! Let me see you near Rookwood again, and I'll show you what my upper-cut is like!"

"Good-night, Hookey!" murmured Mornington. "I'm afraid I shan't be able to use nat tip straight from the horse's mouth for Saturday. Chin, chin, old chappy, and let Rookwood alone in future."

The scarf was jerked away from Mr. Hook's mouth, and the juniors disappeared into the darkness. They were in their tents by the time Joey Hook had finished gasping and struggled to his feet.

The sharper leaned against a tree, panting, and poured out a stream of muttered oaths. His teeth had been drawn, as Jimmy Silver had said.

Algy of the Third was no longer under his thumb; his proof was gone.

Any accusation from a person of Mr. Hook's character would not have been even listened to without convincing proof to begin with.

In a bitter, savage mood the sharper tramped away down the road to Coombe, "done" for once, after his long experience of "doing" others.

Jimmy Silver had good news for Cousin Algy the next morning.

The fag gasped when he heard what had happened; but he brightened up very much. The shadow that had impended over him was lifted, and he could breathe freely again.

"Oh, good—good!" said Algy. "Good man, Jimmy—and Mornny, too! I say, that beast Hook must be feelin' awfully wild."

"You won't speak to him again, Algy?"

"No jolly fear!" said Algy emphatically. "If he speaks to me, I'll punch his nose! And speakin' of that, I'll go and punch Bertie's nose now. It's time it was punched again."

Jimmy Silver laughed, as the cheery Algy hurried away to look for his one-time chum. Jimmy debated a good deal in his mind whether that high-handed dealing with Mr. Hook was justified. It had been the only way of dealing with an unscrupulous rogue, and that, he felt, was its justification.



As Mornington whistled, five shadowy forms started out of the darkness, and Mr. Hook was collared and borne backwards into the road.

It was dark in the buildings, and dangerous, too, for lumber lay about in the gloom, and there were still gaps in some of the floors.

But Mornny seemed like a cat in the dark, and he reached Mr. Bootles' old study in the School House.

The telephone was there, and he was aware that the instrument was now in working order.

With perfect coolness, standing there in the dark, with the wind blowing in at the shattered window, Mornny took the receiver from the hooks, and called up the number of the Bird-in-Hand.

Mornny was enjoying himself; the wild scheme he had laid was after his own heart.

The idea of "taking in" the sharper who had often fleeced him in the old days made Mornny chuckle as he waited for his number.

It was a barman that answered from the Bird-in-Hand, and Mornny asked to speak to Mr. Hook.

He had to wait a couple of minutes, and then the beery tones of Joey Hook came along the wires, inquiring what was wanted.

Mornington laughed softly.

"It's little me?" he explained.

"An' who's me?" grunted Mr. Hook.

"Don't you know an old pal, Joey?" asked Mornington reproachfully.

"By gum! Is that Mornny?"

"The very same."

"Werry kind of you to ring me up, Master Mornny," came the sharper's beery voice, oily now as well as beery. "Long time since I've 'eard from you, sir. Anythin' I can do for you in my line, old pal?"

"I want to see you, Hook. I can't get out; the beaks are rather watchful. I've a rather old reputation, you know."

Mr. Hook chuckled hoarsely.

"Could you come along and see me?" asked Mornington calmly. "You know the school's under canvas now, and it's easy enough to slip out of a tent."

Before bedtime there was a consultation in Jimmy Silver's tent, in which Mornny and Kit Erroll and the Fistical Four took part, Tubby Muffin being forcibly excluded from his quarters for the occasion.

And all was arranged when the Fourth Form turned in, and, needless to say, Jimmy Silver did not sleep when he laid his head on the pillow at "lights-out."

The 6th Chapter. The Only Way.

"Quiet!"

Jimmy Silver whispered the word.

There was a dim glimmer of starlight over Rookwood School, and the lines of white tents loomed up spectre-like.

In some of the tents, occupied by seniors, the lights still burned, but they were carefully screened, according to the lighting regulations, and hardly a ray escaped outside.

The Fistical Four, half dressed, had crept quietly out of their tent, leaving Van Ryn and Tubby Muffin asleep.

By the oak-tree in the school meadow they were joined by Erroll and Mornington.

Kit Erroll was grave and quiet, Mornny was smiling in a sardonic way.

It was no new experience for Mornny to be up after lights-out, though he had lately dropped his old ways.

"Here we are!" murmured Erroll.

"All serene," whispered Mornington. "Ten minutes yet to the merry appointment. Keep out of sight till I call you, remember."

"Right-ho!"

The juniors crept away in the gloom.

At a spot where the exploding bomb had spent its force on the school wall was a wide gap, two or three yards wide, cumbered by masses of brick and stone.

It had not yet been touched by the workmen, who were getting on first with more essential repairs, and it made an easy passage into the road.

Jimmy Silver & Co. clambered over the

face, and he blinked oddly at Mornny in the shadows.

"I don't understand this, Mornington," he said. "You said as how you 'ad business with me—"

"So I have—and that's it. I'm open to give you a quid for that picture."

"Well, it ain't goin' at the price," said Mr. Hook sourly; "and if that's all you've got to say to me—"

"I'll make you another offer," said Mornington coolly. "I'll give you half-a-crown."

"Oh, don't be funny!" said Joey Hook. "A man ain't likely to take a 'arf-crown after refusin' a quid, I s'pose?"

"That's where you make a mistake, Joey. You gave a half-crown for that picture, and you're goin' to sell it at the same price. And you can thank your stars that you're not sent to prison into the bargain for the blackmailin' rotter you are!" Mornington gave a sudden, low whistle.

"Now, then!"

The sharper started back, with a startled oath.

As Mornington whistled five shadowy forms started out of the darkness, and before Mr. Hook quite knew what was happening he was collared by as many pairs of hands and borne backwards into the road.

Bump!

Joey Hook opened his startled lips for a yell, but a scarf was crammed over his mouth at the same moment, and the yell died away in a suffocated gurgle.

He struggled frantically, but it was unavailing.

Every limb was held in an iron grip, and the scarf was jammed into his mouth till he was thoroughly gagged.

"Bring him along," said Mornny quietly.

Mr. Hook found himself dragged up from the road, and carried across, and into the trees on the other side, where the peculiar scene was safe from chance observation.

He stared wildly at his captors, but in the gloom he could not make them out.

He could guess pretty accurately, how-

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"JIMMY SILVER'S HOUSEWARMING!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!



THE FORM-MASTER'S PERIL!

A Splendid New Story, introducing
**BOB TRAVERS & CO., the Chums of
Redclyffe School.**

By **HERBERT BRITTON.**

The 1st Chapter.

Mr. Chambers is Wrathful.

"Here we are!"
Thus Bob Travers of the Fourth Form at Redclyffe School.

He and his chums, Jackson and Turner, were standing near a huge canvas tent which stood in Park's Meadow, a mile or so distant from Redclyffe.

In this tent Mitchell's Marvellous Circus performed twice daily, to the gratification of hundreds of villagers, who flocked from miles around to witness the entertainment.

Attached to the circus was a boxing-booth, and it was this special attraction which had made an appeal to Bob Travers & Co.

The chums had been compelled to make an evening visit to the circus, as the boxing did not commence until seven o'clock.

As they were armed with passes, signed by Harcourt, the captain of the school, they had no fear of being called over the coals for returning late to Redclyffe.

"This doesn't look much like the boxing-booth!" remarked Jack Jackson, as Bob Travers led the way towards the huge tent.

"It isn't, either," said Dicky Turner. "Look at those advertisements up there. They're all about wild-beasts, and circus-riders, and clowns. No mention of the boxers."

"Neither is there," said Bob Travers, pulling up short. "I wonder—Great pip! Who's this coming along?"

Dicky Turner and Jack Jackson gazed in the direction Bob was looking, and their eyes became fixed on a rather simple-looking junior, attired in Etons like themselves.

The new-comer was peering in all directions, apparently in search of somebody.

"My giddy aunt!" gasped Dicky Turner, frowning portentously. "It's that ass Bunny! What the dickens has he come here for?"

Bob Travers grinned. "Shouldn't be surprised if he's looking for us," he said quietly. "It's a funny thing we can never go anywhere but that duffer must follow us."

Dicky Turner snorted. "It isn't funny!" he growled. "It's annoying! I'm fed up with the silly chump! I get quite enough of the duffer at Redclyffe, without having him chucked on us out of doors! I'm going to dodge the idiot! If he—"

"Too late, my son!" said Bob Travers, with a smile. "He's spotted us."

Bob's statement was perfectly true. Bunny, the duffer of the Fourth, had tracked them from Redclyffe, and, having found them at last, was striding forward, a look of pleasant satisfaction on his simple face.

"Oh, dear!" he sighed, as he came up with Bob Travers & Co. "I'm so glad I've found you. I was afraid I shouldn't catch you before you entered the boxing-booth."

Dicky Turner glared at the duffer. "Who told you we were going to the boxing-booth?" he demanded.

"I heard you discussing the matter in the study," replied Bunny simply. "I went up to the dormitory, with the full intention of coming with you, but when I re-entered the study I discovered, to my amazement, that you had gone. Never mind; I have found you in time."

"Worse luck!" muttered Dicky Turner. "What did you say, Turner?" asked Bunny curiously.

"I—I was just thinking we should be late for the show if we don't buck up," answered Dicky haltingly.

"Yes; it's close on seven o'clock," said the duffer. "Come with me. I know the way to the booth. I passed it whilst I was looking for you."

"Ahem!" said Dicky, not moving; and then he added in a serious voice: "I don't think you had better come with us, Bunny. It's not the sort of place for a fellow like you to go to."

"Really—"

"You might see some awful sights, you know," added Dicky Turner quickly. "They might upset your brain, and—"

"You must be under a delusion, Turner," said Bunny, staring at Dicky in amazement. "There is nothing horrible in boxing. My father told me that everybody should learn the art of self-defence. He said that boxing was the cleanest of sports."

"But—supposing there's some knife-throwing or revolver-shooting!" said Dicky.

"That is impossible, my dear Turner!" said the duffer. "Such things do not occur at British boxing-booths."

"But you never know—"

"Out in the Wild West I believe such things do happen on rare occasions," remarked the duffer. "But supposing they were to occur here, it would be our duty to prevent the shedding of blood. But calm your fears, my dear Turner; I assure you this is no occasion to be afraid."

"You burbling chump!" roared Dicky wrathfully. "Why don't you take a run round in your hat, or else run away and lose yourself?"

"Really—"

"I say, Bunny, old son," said Bob Travers, "have you got a pass?"

"A pass?" queried the duffer.

"Yes; a pass to remain out late," explained Bob. "You'll get a jolly good wiggling from Chambers if you get in late and haven't got a pass!"

"Dear me!" said Bunny thoughtfully. "I quite forgot to obtain one. But it cannot be helped. I shall have to explain my forgetfulness to Mr. Chambers."

"You fatheaded duffer!" exclaimed Dicky Turner angrily. "Fat lot of notice Chambers will take of your explanation. He'll pile it on no end! You'd better go back to Redclyffe. No good running risks, you know."

Bunny shook his head. "I think you are under a misapprehension as to the course Mr. Chambers will take," he said. "In any case, I cannot see my way clear to return to Redclyffe. If Mr. Chambers sees fit to cane me, then I shall have to take my punishment manfully."

"Oh, scissors!" groaned Dicky, with a glance at Bob Travers. "What the dickens are we going to do, Bob? Shall we bump the silly chump?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bob. "Cheer up, Dicky! Better make the best of a bad job. Let's get a move on. Where's the boxing-booth, Bunny?"

"Follow me," said the duffer. "I will show you the way."

"Look here, Bob—" began Dicky, by way of protest.

"Oh, come on, Dicky!" said Bob persuasively. "We must try and lose the silly ass!"

"All right," said Dicky resignedly.

But the chums failed to lose the simple-minded duffer.

When at last they observed the boxing-tent in front of them they mixed in with the crowd, in the hope of dodging the duffer; but Bunny clung to them like a leech, refusing to allow them to stroll out of his sight.

He followed them to their seats in the front row facing the boxing-ring, all unconscious of the fact that his company was undesired by the three chums.

At length the first fight of the evening was announced, and in his enthusiasm for the entertainment the wrathful Dicky forgot all about the duffer.

The fight was between two very evenly-matched boxers, and a most exciting contest it proved to be.

Bob Travers & Co. thoroughly enjoyed it, and as the succeeding contests were equally as good, the duffer's presence ceased to trouble them.

At length the showman announced that the next—and last—contest would be between two light-weight boxers—Teddie Green and Nigger Knight.

The two combatants appeared in the ring to the accompaniment of a burst of applause.

Teddie Green was a fair-haired, bright-looking young fellow of about eighteen years of age; whilst Nigger Knight, dark-skinned and cheerful-looking, was decidedly the bigger of the two.

From the cheers of the audience it was apparent that Green was the favourite, and the fair-haired boxer certainly deserved the distinction, for he soon out-matched his antagonist.

Nigger Knight possessed a very hard punch, but nevertheless he was hardly so nimble on his feet as his opponent.

Teddie Green was skilled and cunning, and eluded many blows that were meant to send him to the boards.

Then, when the dark-skinned boxer appeared to be tiring, Teddie went for him hammer-and-tongs, and sent him to the floor with a neat left and right on the point.

Nigger Knight did not rise; he was beaten to the wide.

The audience cheered the victor to the echo. Bob Travers & Co. joined in the roar of applause that greeted Teddie Green's triumph.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Travers, with a glance at Dicky. "That was splendid! That young fellow knows all there is to know about boxing. Wouldn't I like to have a spar with him!"

"Hallo!" cried Dicky. "The giddy showman's going to make a speech!"

"So he is!"

The burly, genial-looking showman entered the roped-in square, and, facing the audience, he held up his hand for silence.

Immediately the cheering and clapping subsided.

"Gentlemen," said the showman in a strong voice, "it is my earnest hope that you have all enjoyed the entertainment I have placed before you this evening. I feel sure Teddie Green's marvellous exhibition has met with your approval, and before you depart I wish to issue a challenge on Teddie's behalf."

The showman gave the young boxer an admiring glance, and then turned to the audience again.

challenger does not exceed the middle-weight limit. Challenges should be handed in to me after the performance or during the week."

"Dear me!" said Bunny, a thoughtful expression on his fat face. "That is a splendid offer!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Dicky Turner. "You're not thinking of accepting the challenge, I hope?"

"As it happens, I was," said Bunny. "I should not expect to beat Green, but the experience would prove of immense value to me. It would certainly enable me to learn more about the noble art of self-defence."

"It would help you to learn not to make such a silly ass of yourself!" growled Dicky. "Green would knock you into a cocked hat! One blow from him would break you in two!"

"Really, Turner—"

"Oh, shut up!"

"I refuse to shut up!" said the duffer firmly. "I'm going to see the showman." He moved forward. "Excuse me, sir!" he said, touching the showman on the arm. "I—Ow! What did you pinch my arm for, Turner? Yow-ow!"

"Come back, you burbling chump!" said Bunny. "I'm going to accept the challenge. I—Ow! Yow-ow! Yooooop!"

Dicky Turner pulled the duffer's legs from under him, and sat him down on the ground.

"Now perhaps you'll shut up!" growled Dicky. "I'm just about fed up with you!"



Slowly—very slowly—the juniors lifted the obstruction. It was a tremendous task—a task from which many grown men would have flinched, but Bob Travers & Co. refused to give in.

Take my advice, and hop it back to Redclyffe! You'll be safer there!"

"Really, Turner—" began the duffer, sitting up, and rubbing his head ruefully.

"Ahem! I hope you young fellows aren't quarrelling."

The chums looked round, to find the showman standing at their side, a grin on his bluff countenance.

Bob Travers laughed. "No," he said. "We're trying to convince this chap that he's a silly ass!"

"Ahem!"

"He wants to accept your challenge," explained Bob. "He thinks he's up to Teddie Green's mark."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The showman burst into a hearty laugh, and then reached down to assist Bunny to rise to his feet. "Better run away, sonny," he said cheerily. "Teddie could put you out with his little finger. Now then, be a good little chap, and get back to your school!"

"There you are, Bunny. I told you you were talking a lot of rot!" said Dicky disdainfully.

Bunny rose to his feet, looking offended. "Really, my dear sir," he said, "I think you are under a delusion! I—Let go my arm, Turner! Ow! Yow-ow-ow-ow! Let—"

"No fear!" replied Dicky wrathfully. "You're coming back to Redclyffe! Look how everybody's laughing at you!"

A crowd had gathered round the juniors, and were roaring with laughter at the duffer.

"Really—" began Bunny.

"Oh, come on, do!" snapped Dicky, and, taking the duffer by the arm, he dragged him out of the tent. "Now then, you silly chump!" he roared, as soon as they were out in the open. "You can buzz off back to Redclyffe as soon as you like!"

"I refuse! I—"

Bob and Jack grinned, and took charge of the duffer. Then they raced him back to Redclyffe.

Bunny was not an athlete, and he was soon breathing heavily from exertion. But the chums gave him no rest.

They raced him up to the gates of the school, and then into the School House, and up to the Fourth Form passage.

At the top of the stairs they came face to face with Mr. Chambers, the master of the Fourth.

There was a very stern look on Mr. Chambers' face as he stood in the juniors' path.

"So you have returned!" he rapped out. "Yes, sir!" said Bob Travers. "We had late passes, and—"

"Show me them at once!"

Bob Travers & Co. handed their passes to the master.

Mr. Chambers inspected them, and then turned a gleaming eye in Bunny's direction.

"Where is your pass?" he demanded, in a severe voice.

"I haven't one, sir," said the duffer. "I quite forgot to obtain one before I left the school."

"Where have you been?" snapped Mr. Chambers angrily. "Kindly give an account of your actions."

"Bunny has been with us, sir!" explained Bob Travers.

"I gather that from the fact that he has returned with you!" said the master abruptly. "I am waiting for your explanation, Bunny!"

"I have been to the circus, sir," said the duffer slowly.

"The circus?"

"Yes, sir," continued Bunny. "Mitchell's Circus. It was owing to my enthusiasm that I forgot to obtain a pass. I trust—"

"You disgraceful young vagabonds!" exclaimed Mr. Chambers. "How dare you disgrace this school by attending a low-down circus?"

"I think you are under a misapprehension, my dear sir," said Bunny simply.

"Silence!" rapped out Mr. Chambers. "To think that boys at this school should lower themselves to attend a disgusting circus! I am ashamed of you. You shall suffer for your misdeeds! Follow me to my study at once!"

"But, my dear sir—" began Bunny.

"Enough!" snapped the master. "I refuse to listen to another word! Come with me immediately!"

Having no alternative, the chums followed the angry master to his study.

They trooped inside Mr. Chambers' room, and stood meekly by the door whilst he took a cane from his desk.

The next few moments were very painful ones for Bob Travers & Co. Mr. Chambers caned them each most severely, and then fixed them with his glinting eyes.

"I have punished you no more than you deserve," he said, in measured tones. "But I warn you, this is nothing to the punishment you will receive if you dare to blacken the name of the school again by going to a disreputable circus! You may go!"

And the chums went, in a dismal and despondent mood.

They flung themselves into the nearest chairs as they entered Study No. 5, and a long time elapsed before any of them spoke.

The 2nd Chapter.

By Sheer Pluck.

"I think I shall accept that challenge!" Bob Travers made the remark to his chums after breakfast the next morning.

"What!" exclaimed Jack Jackson. "You're thinking of challenging Teddie Green?"

"Why not?" said Bob Travers, with a smile. "I'm simply itching for a fight with a good man! Except for one or two scraps in the school, I've not had a rousing mill since I left Joe Barnett's boxing-booth. I'm rather keen on a contest with that chap Green. He's a skilful boxer, and it would be a real treat to stand up to such a chap!"

Dicky Turner shook his head sagely. "Better not, Bob," he said. "You

remember what old Chambers said. If he finds out—"

"Oh, he won't find out!" said Bob confidently. "It was only through that ass Bunny that he got on to us last night, and as we shall be careful not to say anything about the matter to him this time, I don't see how he can twig anything."

"All right!" said Dicky Turner cheerfully. "Don't let me discourage you, old son! I'm game if you are!"

"What about you, Jackson?"

"Oh, you can count me in!" said Jack Jackson promptly. "I've never seen you box a good man, Bob, and I reckon a fight between you and that fellow Green ought to be worth watching."

Bob Travers smiled.

"Right-ho!" he said. "I'll drop a line to the merry old showman at once, and offer to meet Teddie Green to-morrow night. We shall have to be careful not to upset Harcourt, otherwise we sha'n't be able to get passes."

"Needn't worry about that," said Dicky Turner. "Harcourt's one of the best, and he's not likely to kick up a fuss at us going to the circus. You'd better buck up and write that note, Bob. The bell will go for lessons in a minute or two."

Bob Travers soon procured pen and paper, and before the bell clanged out for morning lessons he had penned the note to James Mitchell, and posted it in the school letter-box.

The next morning a reply arrived from the showman.

Bob opened the letter in the seclusion of Study No. 5, and when he read that his challenge had been accepted for that evening his delight knew no bounds.

There was no fear of Bunny becoming acquainted with their intentions this time, for Bob had taken the precaution of shutting him out of the study.

During the day Dicky Turner obtained passes from Harcourt, the captain of the school, and Bob Travers got out his boxing things, and tied them into a small parcel.

At six o'clock they took their departure from the school unnoticed.

Bob Travers congratulated himself on having succeeded in keeping the matter a dead secret, but he would hardly have been so cheerful had he known that, in pulling his handkerchief out of his pocket, he had also pulled out the letter from James Mitchell accepting his challenge.

The letter had dropped to the floor of the Fourth Form passage.

Had Appleby or Hawkins or any other of the decent fellows picked up the note all would have been well, but as it happened the note fell into Mr. Chambers' hands.

When the bad-tempered master read the contents of the note his rage knew no bounds.

He threatened the chums with every variety of punishment, and went back to his study with the full intention of dragging the chums back from the circus, and taking them straight to the Head to be punished.

All unconscious of his unfortunate accident, Bob strode along the road with his chums, whistling cheerfully to himself in anticipation of his fight with Teddie Green.

Arrived at the boxing-booth, Jack Jackson and Dicky Turner took their seats in the front row, whilst Bob was led to the dressing-room by the showman.

A few minutes after seven o'clock, when the booth was packed to its utmost capacity, James Mitchell entered the ring and announced particulars of the contest.

Then a few seconds later Bob and his opponent entered the ring, to the accompaniment of a burst of applause.

Bob looked very slight by the side of Teddie Green, but the experienced boxing enthusiasts—and there were many of them in the booth—could tell that the contest was not to be a walk-over for Teddie.

Bob's muscles stood out hard and firm, and there was a look on his face which told only too plainly that he did not intend to go down without putting up a stiff fight.

"Time!" announced the referee.

"Go it, Bob, old son!" shouted Dicky Turner excitedly.

"Give him beans, Teddie!" sang out the latter's supporters.

Right from the start the fight proved to be an interesting one.

Teddie Green knew a great deal about boxing, and so did Bob Travers.

Many a time Teddie aimed his left at Bob's head, only to find that when he hit, Bob neatly side-stepped, and succeeded in dodging the blow.

Bob, too, had difficulty in landing an effective blow, but when at length he feinted cleverly with the right, and sent his left to his opponent's face, the audience cheered him to the echo.

"Well done, Bob!" sang out Dicky, when the round had come to a conclusion. "Stick to him for all you're worth!"

Bob smiled faintly; he fully intended to do as Dicky advised.

The second round was fought at a very quick pace. First Bob aimed a blow at his antagonist's head, then Teddie shot a right-hander at Bob's body.

Dodging here, side-stepping there, each of the boxers was compelled to call forth all the skill at his command to avoid his opponent's blows.

The excitement was at fever heat, when suddenly there came an interruption from the entrance to the tent.

In their enthusiasm for the boxing contest, very few of the audience heard the commotion, but gradually faces were turned in the direction of the entrance, as voices raised in anger became plainly audible.

And when, a few moments later, a breathless figure came racing towards the ring, there were three faces in the crowded arena that paled noticeably.

Bob Travers & Co. caught sight of the new-comer, and small wonder that they changed colour, for the breathless, excited figure was none other than Mr. Chambers, the master of the Fourth.

"I forbid this fight!" he exclaimed, in

(Continued at foot of page 320.)

THE CLAIM-JUMPERS!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD**

The 1st Chapter.

The Cedar Creek Claim.

"I guess that's O.K.!" said Bob Lawless, with an air of great satisfaction.

"Ripping!" said Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc together.

And Chunky Todgers chimed in:

"You bet!"

The chums of Cedar Creek School were standing by a mountain stream, amid the pine-clad slopes of the Cascade Range. In the bend of the stream, a wooden dam had been built out by the Cedar Creek fellows, exposing a part of the sandy bed.

There Frank Richards & Co. had been at work washing out the golden grains from the pay-dirt.

On the edge of the stream Bob Lawless had erected two posts, cut from the forest, and to the posts was fastened a board, roughly fashioned with the axe.

The board bore an inscription in large capital letters.

As Bob's brush was made of twigs, and his paint of vegetable-juices mixed with black mud and water, the lettering was somewhat patchy and irregular; but it was quite clear to read, and could be seen at a distance.

"NOTICE!"

THIS CLAIM has been pegged out by F. RICHARDS, V. BEAUCLERC, R. LAWLESS, AND J. TODGERS, OF CEDAR CREEK.

HANDS OFF!"

"I guess there can't be any mistake about that!" said Bob. "All the same, the sooner we register the claim at Tucker's Bar the better. I reckon we'll ride down there this morning."

"Sooner the quicker!" agreed Frank Richards.

"We want to get some truck, too," said Bob. "I tell you, kids, there's a good bit of gold-dust in that sand, and we can carry home some dollars with us when we wind up our holiday here. We've got to lay in some spades and picks and stuff, and we've made enough dust out of the claim already to pay for them. Let's get off!"

The schoolboy gold-seekers broke up camp, and mounted their horses, with cheery, contented minds.

They rode away slowly down the difficult mountain-trail, the pack-mule following the riders.

According to all mountain laws, the notice set up on the claim protected it from other prospectors, and as soon as it was lawfully registered it became the private property of the discoverers.

Frank Richards & Co. were naturally elated.

When they had started on their holiday in the North-West, they had not looked for a stroke of luck of this kind.

Chunky Todgers, indeed, had announced that he was going to "strike it," but Chunky's comrades had taken that humorously.

Bob Lawless had discovered the auriferous traces in the mountain stream, and he had "panned" the sand with success.

The claim was to be registered in the names of the four, but they intended to allow a share for Yen Chin, the Chinese, who had been a member of the holiday party until a few days previously.

Yen Chin had been "fired" from the party for various misdemeanours, and as he had put in no work on the claim, he really was not entitled to a share.

But Frank Richards & Co. agreed that he should count as one of the Co.

The four riders rattled cheerfully down the valley, and then into the lower trail that led to Tucker's Bar, the nearest mining-camp in that part of the Cascade Mountains.

There was a sudden call on the fresh, morning air, and a diminutive figure came out on the trail from a spruce thicket.

"You stoppee!"

It was Yen Chin.

Bob Lawless pulled in his horse, and his comrades followed his example.

But their looks were not conciliatory.

"Well?" snapped Bob.

"Nice morning!" said Yen Chin.

"Have you stoppued us to say that?"

"Velly glad to see nicey ole Bob again!"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"Pool lill' Chinese solly, bad boy!" said Yen Chin pathetically.

"Be velly good boy afterwards. Oh, yes! You wantee me comee backee?"

Bob shook his head.

Frank Richards was already relenting; his heart was of the softest, as the cunning little Chinese well knew.

But the rancher's son looked grim.

"Hook it, John!" he said. "You can't hitch on to this crowd again! It's not only that you sneaked away from Camp to gamble with Gunten and Keller—though that was bad enough—"

"No speakee mole to Guntee and Kellee!" said Yen Chin eagerly.

"Guntee and Kellee travel homee now—gonee!"

"That isn't all!" snapped Bob. "You



Gomez commenced to run, and the sticks lashed on him as he ran the gauntlet, yelling at the top of his voice.

pinched the gold we'd washed out of the claim, and you're a thief, Yen Chin. I dare say you don't look at it like a white man, but it's too thick for us! You'd better take the trail home!"

"No wantee!"

"Then you can go and chop chips!"

Bob Lawless rode on.

Beauclerc, who had not spoken, followed him, and Chunky Todgers snorted emphatically as they passed the little Celestial.

Yen Chin caught at Frank Richards' bridle as he would have followed.

"No leavee pool lill' Chinee!" he murmured.

Frank's heart smote him.

Had a white man been guilty of Yen Chin's conduct Frank would have felt too much disgust to feel much compassion for him.

But he could not help feeling that it was different with the Oriental.

He had always stood Yen Chin's friend at Cedar Creek School, in the far-off Thompson Valley, in spite of the Chow's many impish tricks and his incurable habit of untruthfulness.

But the robbery of his comrades, to "raise the wind" for a poker game with Gunten and Keller, was the limit.

The chums had recovered the purloined "dust"; but that did not alter the fact of Yen Chin's guilt.

Certainly Yen Chin looked very repentant now; but it was probable that that was simply because he had to suffer for his rascality.

He looked up pleadingly at Frank's troubled face.

"No leavee pool lill' Chinee!" he murmured again. "Ole Flanky velly nicey ole boy! Lill' Chinee velly fond ole Flanky!"

"Frank!" shouted back Bob Lawless.

"Come on!"

"I—I say, Bob—"

"Rot! Come on, I say! And if that heathen comes with you, I'll give him the butt of my gun on his cabeza!"

"All right, Bob!"

"No takee pool lill' Chinee?"

"Can't be done!" said Frank. "Dash it all, Yen Chin, you know what you were doing, and you can't expect to be trusted again! I'm sorry, but there it is! Let go!"

He shook off the Celestial's hand, and rode on after his comrades.

Yen Chin was soon lost to sight among the rocks and thickets, as Frank Richards & Co. trotted on to Tucker's Bar.

But Frank could not help thinking of the Chinese.

There was no reason why Yen Chin should not return to his home at Thompson.

The Cedar Creek holiday was drawing to an end, anyway, and he would have to return soon.

But evidently he wanted to rejoin the party, and finish the holiday with them in the North-West.

He had been "on his lonesome" for two or three days now, and he had not started for the south.

Frank Richards wondered what he would do after his latest rebuff, and he hoped that Yen Chin would be sensible enough to take the trail for home.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Claim-Jumpers.

Frank Richards & Co. were very busy after their arrival in Tucker's Bar.

The little mining-camp in the heart of the Cascade Mountains had few facilities for shopping, but the one and only store provided the articles of which the schoolboy gold-seekers were in need.

At a lumber hotel they obtained a dinner, and then they entered the store to make their purchases.

The "dust" they had brought from their claim was weighed in the store and taken as cash.

They purchased picks and spades, and other articles required for their work on the claim, and disposed their purchases upon the pack-mule.

There were a good many prospectors coming and going in Tucker's Bar, but none of such a youthful appearance as Frank Richards & Co.

The schoolboys attracted some attention.

The storekeeper directed them to the sheriff's office, the sheriff being the only legal official of any kind in the camp, and empowered to enter registration of claims.

"Cedar Creek Claim," as the chums named it, was duly entered, and Frank Richards & Co. had the proud consciousness of being its legal possessors.

It was late in the afternoon when the four schoolboys rode out of Tucker's Bar, giving themselves time to reach the claim before sundown.

They rode along very cheerily on the mountain trails, and Frank, remembering Yen Chin, kept an eye open for the little Celestial.

But he saw nothing of him, and he hoped that by that time Yen Chin had realised that the best thing he could do was to "make tracks" for home.

The sun was sinking towards the Pacific when the schoolboy explorers came in sight of their old camp by the mountain stream.

Bob Lawless uttered an exclamation.

"The notice is down!" he exclaimed.

"Hallo! Somebody's hopped in!" said Frank. "There's a camp-fire going! Look at the smoke over the trees!"

Chunky Todgers gave a howl.

"They're after our dust!"

Bob's brow set grimly.

"The notice was plain enough for any galoot to understand," he said. "I guess there'll be trouble if anybody's jumping our claim. Look to your guns, my infants. We may want them."

The chums of Cedar Creek looked grave as they rode on.

In the mountains of the North-West, beyond the confines of the regular settlements, law and order did not exist as they had known them in the Thompson Valley.

Every man was a law unto himself, more or less, in the unexplored fastnesses of the Far North-West.

But Frank Richards & Co., averse as they were from the very thought of violence, had no intention whatever of being "jumped" out of their claim.

It was theirs by right of discovery and by law, and the notice set up by Bob Lawless made it impossible for any later prospector to make a mistake on the subject.

They looked to their rifles as they rode up to the camp, and the weapons were in their hands as they dismounted.

"Look after the hosses, Chunky!" said Bob.

Frank and Bob and Beauclerc, rifles in hand, moved through the trees towards the claim on the creek, while Chunky Todgers tethered the horses.

An exclamation of anger burst from Bob's lips as they came out on the shelving bank.

The notice-board and the posts had been torn down and used for the purposes of a camp-fire.

The remnants of them were crackling away amid a pile of pine-cones and spruce-twigs.

An iron pot was boiling over the fire, apparently containing supper, being left to cook by itself, while the new campers were busy in the bed of the stream.

There were two of them, small in stature, lithe, and swartly of complexion, Mexican by race, of mingled Spanish and Indian blood, as the schoolboys could see at a glance.

They had knives in their belts, but their guns were leaning against a tree on the bank, as Bob noted at once.

With a run he was between the two Mexicans and their firearms.

The coming dispute was likely to be much more amicable with firearms in the hands of only one of the parties.

The two Mexicans were busy, and did not for some moments observe the three schoolboys, but as Bob placed himself before the guns they paused in their work and looked up.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

The two Mexicans stared at him. One of them, a thick-set, black-bearded man, made a movement towards the bank.

"Stand where you are!" said Bob.

"You're not touching these guns for a bit."

"What is it?" asked the Mexican, speaking in English. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"I guess we're the owners of this claim you're robbing."

"Oh!"

The Mexicans exchanged a quick glance.

The black-bearded man dropped his hand upon his knife, and Bob Lawless pushed his rifle forward at once.

"Let go that sticker!" he said.

The Mexican half-drew the long "cuchillo," but his companion caught him quickly by the arm.

"Para! Para, Jose Gomez!" he muttered.

"I give you a second!" said Bob Lawless, his eyes gleaming along his rifle.

"If you want your arm smashed with a bullet—"

Jose Gomez released the knife.

"That's better, Greaser!"

The black-bearded Mexican scowled savagely at the Canadian schoolboy.

"You knew well enough that this claim was pegged out," said Bob Lawless. "You'll hop out of that creek instanter!"

The Mexicans came up the bank, glancing towards their guns, but making no attempt to reach them.

"This is your claim, senor?" asked Gomez, forcing himself to civility, which was belied by the glitter in his black eyes.

"I guess so. You saw the notice-board you've pulled down."

"I do not read English."

"You speak it!" answered Bob.

"But that is not the same, senor."

"Well, the notice being there was enough to show you that the claim was pegged out," answered Bob. "You could see that it had been worked, too. You're a claim-jumper, Mr. Greaser!"

Gomez clenched his swartly hands.

"You're the kind of galoot the miners string up on a branch," continued Bob. "Many a pilgrim would shoot you in your tracks for jumping his claim. That's the law of the foot-hills."

Gomez scowled more blackly, and his companion backed away with a look of alarm.

The claim-jumpers were totally at the mercy of the schoolboys, if the latter had chosen to use their rifles.

There were a good many prospectors in the Cascade Mountains who would have pulled trigger without wasting words in such a case.

"Vamonos, Jose Gomez!" muttered the black-bearded man's companion; and Bob, who had heard Spanish talked by Mexican "hands" on the ranches, knew that that meant "Let us go."

Gomez hesitated.

"You say it is your claim, senores?" he exclaimed.

"I reckon."

"We found it deserted."

"You knew it was being worked, though. Anyhow, you know it now," said Bob, "and the sooner you make tracks the better!"

"Give us our guns, then, and we will go."

"Los escopetos, y vamonos," said the other, speaking to Gomez.

Bob glanced at his comrades.

He did not want to keep the property of the Mexicans, claim-jumpers as they were, but naturally he did not want to place deadly weapons in the hands of a couple of ruffians who were only too likely to use them.

"It would be folly to give them firearms," said Vere Beauclerc quickly. "It would mean shooting, Bob! Take their cartridges away first!"

"Good!" said Bob. "I'll keep this rifle looking at them, Franky, while you take away their powder and shot."

"Hands off, senores!" shouted Gomez angrily, as Frank Richards came towards him. "Vaya! Vaya!"

"You'll give up your cartridges, or you leave your guns here!" said Bob. "Take your choice!"

Gomez gritted his teeth.

He settled the matter by flinging his cartridge-belt to the ground, and his companion followed his example.

Then Beauclerc picked up the guns, and first discharging them into the air, handed them to the Mexicans.

"Now light out!" said Bob Lawless,

making a motion with his rifle. "Don't come moseying round this outfit again, or I shall shoot you on sight! That's a plain warning. Get!"

And the two Mexicans, with savage, scowling faces, "got."

The 3rd Chapter.

Jumped!

Bob Lawless watched the two claim-jumpers out of sight down the rocky valley before he dropped his rifle.

The Mexicans disappeared at last, however.

"Good riddance!" said Bob. "A pair of the biggest rascals this side of the Rio Grande, from their looks."

"I'm jolly glad they're gone," said Frank Richards, in relief. "I was afraid that black-jowled ruffian was going to try to use his knife."

"There would be a dead Greaser lying around if he had tried it."

"That's what I didn't want, old chap. I suppose they're gone for good," said Frank.

"I guess so. We'll keep a good watch to-night, all the same. You can't be too spry in the foot-hills. But I reckon we're not going to have our claim jumped, if we have to shoot as many Greasers as there are between Vera Cruz and Acapulco!" said Bob Lawless emphatically.

The schoolboys camped for supper, which Chunky Todgers soon had ready, helping himself to the boiling pot left by the Mexican as prize of war.

"I'm blessed if I quite know what it is," said Todgers. "It smells jolly oily, but it tastes all right, and we're going to rope it in. Going without their supper will do those two bulldozers good."

Frank Richards & Co. made a good supper as the last rays of the sun disappeared beyond the mountain-tops, and then they turned in, intending to be up bright and early in the morning to recommence work on the claim.

The schoolboy explorers were accustomed to keep watch at night in that perilous region, and they were more careful than ever on this occasion, in view of the possibility that the claim-jumpers were still lurking in the valley.

Bob Lawless took the first watch till midnight, and then Frank Richards relieved him.

"All serene, Franky," Bob said. "But keep your eyes peeled."

"What-ho!" answered Frank.

He sat on a log in the shadow of a tree with his rifle across his knees, watching the valley.

At length a faint rustle in the trees, louder than that caused by the night breeze, caused him to rise from the log and look about him in the gloom.

The rustle was repeated, not a dozen yards from him, in a thicket of spruce.

It was probably an animal coming down to the stream to drink, but Frank Richards was not taking chances.

He fixed his eyes on the thicket warily, and lifted his rifle to his shoulder.

With every sense on the alert he watched.

The rustle came again.

Frank Richards was about to call out to his comrades, when he gave a start and a startled cry as a strong grip closed on him from behind.

For a moment he thought he was dreaming, or that one of his comrades had taken hold of him for a joke.

He spun round, but the grip was too strong for him, and he was forced to the ground, and in the dim light he caught a glimpse of a swartly face—the face of Jose Gomez, the black-bearded claim-jumper.

"Bob!" yelled Frank. "Bob! Beau! Wake up!"

The next instant he was on the ground, flung there savagely by the muscular Mexican, and his rifle dragged from his hands.

At the same moment the other Mexican came running from the thicket.

Frank, as he rolled dazedly on the ground, understood how he had been tricked.

The Mexican in the thicket had deliberately rustled the foliage to draw his attention, while the other rascal stole upon him from behind from another direction.

Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc started up from their blankets, reaching for their weapons as they did so.

But Frank Richards' rifle was in Gomez's hands, and he levelled it, his black eyes scintillating along the barrel.

"Hands up!" he shouted. "Up with them, senores, or I pull trigger!"

The rifle-muzzle was bearing full on the two schoolboys, within three yards of them, and it needed only the light pressure of a finger to send the bullet speeding.

"It's a cinch, Cherub," said Bob Lawless coolly. "Pass, pardner."

He put up his hands, and Beauclerc followed his example. There was no help for it.

Even in the uncertain starlight the Mexican could not have failed to kill at so short a range.

Frank Richards had striven to get on his feet, dazed as he was by the fall he had received, but Gomez's companion had grasped him, and a bright cuchillo glittered over the schoolboy.

The Mexican muttered something in Spanish which Frank did not understand, but he understood its import, and he lay still.

Bob Lawless' face was set, but he took the situation with his usual coolness.

"It's your game," answered Bob tersely. "I'm keeping still."

"Juan!" snapped Gomez, addressing his companion without turning his head. "Si, si!"

Gomez rapped out something in Spanish.

His comrade had tied Frank Richards' wrists with a length of cord, and he now rose and advanced towards Bob and Beauclerc and Chunky Todgers.

Under the threatening rifle of Gomez they could make no resistance, and Juan bound their hands together.

Then Gomez slung the rifle over his arm with a laugh.

"I think the claim is ours, senores," he said cheerfully. "But do not be disappointed—you shall work on the claim. Si, si! You shall work—under my eye and under my rifle. Muy bien!"

Frank Richards & Co. sat down on their blankets with their hands bound. They were not feeling much inclined for sleep.

Gomez and his companion rummaged in the camp, and found food, and sat down to eat, grinning and chucking, and talking to one another in Spanish.

They took no further heed of the schoolboys.

"What do you think their game is, Bob?" asked Frank gloomily.

"You heard what the galoot Gomez said. They're forced to keep us prisoners while they're jumping our claim, and they're going to make us earn our oats—working on the claim for them."

"The awful villains!" groaned Chunky Todgers.

"I reckon the claim will peg out in a week or so," said Bob, "and then I calculate they'll vamoose, taking our dust and our hosses and outfit, and leaving us stranded in the mountains. That's their programme. But there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip, and I reckon we're going to down them somehow."

Bob Lawless spoke hopefully; but there seemed little hope in the situation for the chums of Cedar Creek.

And Frank Richards & Co. were not feeling cheerful when the dawn broke on the Cascade Mountains.

The 4th Chapter. Turning the Tables!

Clink, clink!

Pick and spade rang on the sand and the rock in the claim, as the morning sun climbed higher over the mountain-peaks.

Frank Richards & Co. were at work.

They worked with black brows and gleaming eyes, their thoughts busier than their hands.

On the rocky bank, Jose Gomez sat watching them, with rifle across his knees, and a grin on his swarthy face, shaded by his big sombrero.

Juan, his comrade, stood on the sand, with a rope in his hand, for use, if the schoolboys flagged in their work.

Probably the two Mexicans, in their own country, had often worked wretched "peons" in the gold-mines in the same way, in the half-civilised Western States of Mexico, and it was nothing new to them.

But it was new to the Canadian school-boys, and it made them grit their teeth as they worked and bided their time.

It was only the thought and the hope of somehow turning the tables upon the claim-jumpers that made them submit.

But resistance at present was out of the question.

Their weapons were in the hands of the two claim-jumpers, and Gomez sat, with

his rifle ready to shoot, on the high, rocky bank, and he could have picked them off like rabbits if he had chosen.

Certainly he had no desire to risk a rope for his neck; but if the schoolboys had rushed on him with their picks, as they were strongly tempted to do, he would have shot them down without mercy.

Frank Richards blamed himself severely for having been taken off his guard in the night attack, though really he was little to blame.

The Mexicans had been too cunning for him, that was all.

Self-reproach was useless, however, and the question was, how to get out of the hands of the claim-jumpers.

There was a week's work ahead before the "pay-dirt" was washed out of the placer, and all the possible gold obtained.

It was Gomez's intention to keep the schoolboys prisoners till all was done—partly for his own safety and partly for their labour on the claim.

Pick and spade rang wearily under the brightening sunshine and the watchful eyes of the grinning Mexicans.

The work itself did not matter much; the schoolboys had intended to spend that day in hard work.

But working for themselves was quite different from working under compulsion for the benefit of a couple of thieves.

"Let 'em wait a bit!" murmured Bob Lawless, in a brief pause for rest. "I guess our end will come up soon. I know that I'll have a go at them with a pick, if I'm shot the next minute, before I'll let them walk off with our gold!"

"Same here!" said Vere Beauclerc quietly. "But keep patient. Our only chance is to take them off their guard."

"Sigue!" called out Juan, with a threatening gesture of the rope.

"What does the rotter mean, Bob?"

"He means, go on," said Bob, with a faint grin. "We'd better. Our turn will come."

And the labour was resumed.

A great deal of work was got through during the morning, and the two Mexicans grinned with satisfaction over the result.

The "placer" was panning out well, though it was likely to be exhausted by a few more days of strenuous washing-out.

Frank Richards & Co. were dispirited enough as they ate a meagre lunch, and, after a short rest, they were turned back to work.

Bob Lawless grasped the handle of his pick hard, as Jose Gomez called to him, and the Mexican half-raised his rifle.

"You scum!" muttered Bob. "You pesky scum!"

"To work, nino!" grinned Gomez. "And listen to me! Any more of your black looks, and I will put a bullet through your leg, as a warning! To work!"

Bob choked back his feelings, and resumed his labour.

Under the afternoon sun the work on the claim went on.

The two Mexicans sat on the rocky bank under the shade of a tree, their firearms ready to their hands, and rolled cigarettes, and smoked them incessantly, as they watched the labour they did not choose to share.

Suddenly the schoolboys started round from their work, and stared towards the bank where the Mexicans sat.

A loud and terrible cry had suddenly rung out, and, to their amazement, they

saw Jose Gomez stagger forward, and roll helplessly down the bank into the sandy bed of the stream.

"What the thunder—" gasped Bob. "There was blood upon the Mexican as he rolled on the sand, clawing at it with his hands, and groaning."

The other rascal was on his feet, staring round at the trees behind where they had been sitting, rifle in hand.

Nothing was to be seen save the thick foliage, and the Mexican, in alarm and fear, fired into the trees.

Crack!

Bob Lawless gave a gasp.

"Somebody's heaved a rock at that galot from behind!" he panted. "By gum, I reckon his heads' got a pain in it! Buck up, you chaps!"

Gomez was sprawling helplessly on the sand, evidently hard hit.

A jagged chunk of rock, hurled from the thicket, had struck him on the back of the head, nearly stunning him, and for some minutes the Mexican was helpless.

The chance of the Cedar Creek fellows had come at last.

Bob Lawless rushed towards the fallen man, pick in hand.

Gomez, dazed as he was, saw him, and made an effort to get his rifle up, to shoot.

But before he could do so, Bob's pick crashed on his shoulder, and he sank back on the sand with a yell of agony.

The next instant Bob Lawless had caught up the rifle.

Juan, high up on the bank, was firing into the thicket, with a startled and furious face; but at his comrade's yell he spun round towards the creek.

His rifle was empty, but he crammed in a cartridge as he turned.

Bob raised Gomez's rifle.

But the Mexican on the rocky bank would have fired first, quick as Bob was; and Frank and Beauclerc, as they saw it, felt sick at heart for a second.

But even as the Mexican above was pulling trigger, a chunk of rock whizzed from the thicket and struck him in the back.

Juan pitched forward heavily, his rifle exploding as he fell, and the bullet crashing into the sandy bed of the stream.

Unable to save himself, the Mexican pitched forward, and rolled down the rocky bank, crashing within a yard of the sprawling Gomez.

He lay there and groaned.

"On him!" yelled Frank.

With a leap, Frank Richards reached the fallen Mexican, as he sprawled on his face, and his knee was planted between Juan's shoulders, pinning him down.

The Mexican groaned.

The crashing rock on his back had hurt him severely, and he was in no condition for a struggle, even if he had had a chance.

Gomez had made an attempt to rise and draw the knife in his belt, but Beauclerc reached him, and his pick circled over the rascal's head.

"Quiet!" said Beauclerc coolly. "Let that knife go, or I'll knock your brains out where you lie, you scoundrel!"

Gomez, with a curse, relinquished the weapon.

Beauclerc snatched it from his belt and tossed it into the stream.

"I guess this is our game!" said Chunky Todgers, gasping with delight. "Keep those rotters safe, and I'll tie 'em up."

"Go it, Chunky!"

Chunky Todgers ran for a trail-rope.

Gomez and Juan made no resistance now.

They were injured, and they were under the threat of a rifle and a couple of picks, more than sufficient to keep them in a state of submission.

The chums watched them warily enough, however, till Chunky returned with the rope from the camp, and bound their hands.

The two Mexicans being secured, Frank Richards & Co. had time to turn their attention to their unknown rescuer, who was still hidden by the thicket above the bank.

"Show yourself, pard!" called out Bob Lawless.

Who it was that had attacked the claim-jumpers so opportunely for the Cedar Creek chums was a mystery; but Frank Richards thought he could guess.

And he smiled when the thicket rustled, and through the foliage a diminutive figure appeared, with a little yellow face grinning under a big Stetson hat.

"Yen Chin!" yelled Bob.

The Chinese grinned.

"Well, my hat!" ejaculated Beauclerc. The little Chinese clambered down the rocky bank, and joined the chums of Cedar Creek on the wet sand of the claim.

"Allee light," he said cheerfully. "Me comee backee! Nicee ole Flanky glad to see pool lill' Chinee—oh, yes!"

And Yen Chin grinned at the astonished Co.

"Well, by gum!" said Bob Lawless at last, with a deep breath. "I guess this lets me out! You—"

"What you tinkee?" grinned Yen Chin. "I thought you'd made tracks for home."

"No makee tracks without nicee ole pals," said Yen Chin. "Me tinkee stickee to ole Flanky—oh, yes! Me watee. Me see. See bad Mexican man makee pool ole Flanky wolkee—oh, yes! Me comee quiet—cleepce—what you tinkee? Cleepce velly quiet in tee, comee behind." The little Chinese chuckled. "Heavee look at Mexican man—what you tinkee? Oh, yes!"

"I was never so jolly glad to see a rock heaved," said Bob Lawless.

"You came along at the right time, Yen Chin," said Beauclerc, with a smile. "We were in a bad fix."

Yen Chin nodded.

"Me knowee—oh, yes! Now allee light, you likee ole Yen Chin comee back—oh, yes!"

He blinched inquiringly at the chums of Cedar Creek.

Frank Richards laughed.

There was not much question that the little heathen was to rejoin the party, after the service he had rendered.

It was owing to Yen Chin that the schoolboy party had the upper hand of the claim-jumpers, and after that by-gones had to be by-gones, whatever the young rascal had done before.

"All serene, kid," said Bob Lawless. "I suppose you can't help being a thundering little scoundrel!"

"No helpee," agreed Yen Chin. "But Chinee velly good boy now, nicee boy, bully boy with a tin ear, you bet! Oh, yes! Nevel playee cardee no mole, nevel steallee, nevel bollow money without askee first. You bet!"

"Till the next time," grunted Bob.

"What you tinkee?" grinned Yen Chin. "Well, the blessed heathen's in our

crowd again, anyhow," said Bob. "That's settled." "Yes, rather!" agreed Frank and Beauclerc.

And Chunky Todgers nodded assent. Yen Chin beamed with satisfaction. "Nicee ole Bob!" he said. "Me likee nicee ole Bob velly muchee. Me going to be good boy, velly good boy! Now me killeee Mexican."

Yen Chin drew his hunting-knife, and turned to the two Mexicans with a business-like air.

There was a simultaneous yell of terror from Gomez and Juan.

"Senor!"

"Vaya!"

Frank Richards caught the Chinese by the shoulder and dragged him back. "Stop it, you young villain!" roared Bob.

"Bettee killee. Safee."

"Senores!" gasped Gomez. "Let us go! We will make tracks—we will leave—we will hurry! Keep him away, with his knife! Caramo! Let us go!"

Bob Lawless searched the Mexicans for weapons, and completely disarmed them.

Then he broke off some sticks from the thicket, and handed them round.

"Lay it on as they go!" he said.

The schoolboys formed up in two lines, grinning—Bob and Chunky and Frank on one side, Yen Chin and Beauclerc on the other.

Then Gomez was cut loose and told to run.

He was willing enough to run, and the sticks lashed on him as he ran the gauntlet, eliciting Bendish yells from the claim-jumper.

He went running on, still yelling.

Then Juan was cut loose, and set running after him, with a liberal application of the sticks to his back to help him go.

The two Mexicans disappeared down the valley, yelling wildly, and vanished. They were not likely to return.

Frank Richards & Co. worked the claim for the following week, keeping a good lookout the while, but nothing more was seen of the claim-jumpers. They had had a severe lesson, and they gave the school-boy goldseekers a wide berth.

Yen Chin, on his best behaviour now, worked as hard as any of the party, perhaps with some idea of atoning for his fault. But he was quite forgiven now, and the chums of Cedar Creek let bygones be bygones.

At the end of the week the "placer" was exhausted, and the chums rode down to Tucker's Bar with their gold—which weighed up to the tune of a thousand dollars.

Which, as Bob remarked with exuberant satisfaction, would be something to show the fellows at Cedar Creek when they came home after their holiday in the North-West.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"HOMEWARD BOUND!"

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

DON'T MISS IT!

THE FORM-MASTER'S PERIL!

(Continued from page 318.)



his attention off the fight, and he had received several severe blows on the head and body.

But Bob, dismissing all thought of Mr. Chambers from his mind in his enthusiasm for the fight, soon recovered his composure, and by the end of the third round he was practically even on points.

During the interval James Mitchell came up to the side of the ring, a scared, anxious expression on his face.

He approached Bob Travers.

"Have you got plenty of nerve, youngster?" he asked softly.

Bob Travers stared hard at the showman. He was puzzled by the latter's question.

"Listen here, sonny," said the man. "I've just heard the Gothas—Hun planes, you know—are making for this direction. I'd announce it to the crowd, but I'm afraid of a panic. I expect the guns will start booming in a minute or two. Are you game to fight on, and keep the crowd excited?"

Bob nodded his head at once.

"Rather!" he said determinedly. "I'll do anything you like. But what about Teddie Green?"

"Teddie will be all right," said the showman. "He's got nerve enough for anything. Don't fight for a knock-out, my son. Punch away merrily, and keep the crowd excited. D'you understand?"

Bob nodded assent, and after the showman had spoken to Teddie Green "Time!" was announced, and Bob rose from his corner determined to keep the crowd in a state of feverish excitement.

Bang! Thud! Bang!

Blow after blow the two boxers exchanged with rapidity.

The crowd cheered the boxers to the echo, and thus they did not hear the deep boom of anti-aircraft guns in the distance.

Bob heard a significant thud, and immediately he indulged in a merry mill with his antagonist.

Bob did not suffer from nerves, and had the Hun planes not approached any nearer the crowd might have left the

booth that evening utterly unconscious of the peril that had been so near at hand.

But the Gothas did approach nearer, and when suddenly there came a deep, reverberating thud—a thud that shook the tent from end to end—there was barely a face in that crowded arena that did not pale from shock or fear.

"Keep calm, gentlemen!" shouted the showman grimly. "Go it, Travers, my son. Don't give in!"

Bob did not require a second urging.

There was a restless movement amongst the more nervous section of the audience, and several men rose to their feet with the intention of leaving the booth.

Bob and his opponent did their utmost to allay the fears of the crowd. They fought on pluckily, endeavouring to arouse the enthusiasm of the audience once again.

It was a hard job, for the bomb had fallen very close to the circus, and although luckily the audience had shown little sign of panic, there was no doubt that their nerves had received a severe shaking.

Bob was shivering slightly, but he stuck to his guns manfully, and gradually the cheerfulness of the crowd came back.

Several men bolder than the rest started to cheer, and thus the booming of the guns in the distance was unheard in the boxing-booth.

The fight went on to its full length—six rounds—and when the referee announced the result as a draw his decision met with the approval of the crowd.

Bob Travers & Co. did not remain long after the fight.

As Bob said, news of the air-raid must have reached the school, and there was every possibility of the Head being anxious as to their fate.

They departed from the booth, and took the road leading to Redclyffe.

"I wonder where that bomb dropped?" remarked Dicky Turner, as they broke into a run.

"I should say it was pretty near," said Jack Johnson. "Just a little too near to be pleasant, at any rate. I— Hallo! Who's that calling?"

The chums stopped and listened. Faintly to their ears came a cry for help.

"Surely that bomb hasn't dropped on a house, and—"

Dicky Turner was unable to voice the thought that was in his mind.

"Come on!" said Bob Travers, taking

his chums by the arms. "Better go and investigate."

Again came that pitiful cry—a cry for help—and the chums had no difficulty in locating it.

They turned up a side-road, and when at length they caught sight of a row of houses in the bright moonlight their hearts beat quickly, for the truth dawned upon them at once.

The bomb had dropped on a house, and that cry for help came from somebody buried beneath the wreckage.

It did not take them long to come upon the scene of the tragedy.

A house had been completely demolished, and the wreckage lay in all directions.

A number of people were already engaged upon the rescue work, and Bob Travers & Co. immediately lent their assistance.

"Help!"

Once more they heard that anxious cry.

The voice sounded very near now, and Bob Travers groped amongst the wreckage for a sight of the victim of the Huns' deadly bomb.

At last he caught the glimpse of a pale, anxious face beneath a heap of bricks and heavy beams, and when Bob noticed that one of the walls of the house was hanging in a perilous position over the imprisoned person, his heart throbbed with excitement.

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" he urged. "We must try and raise the beams, so that somebody can drag the poor beggar out!"

The beams were a tremendous weight, but, oblivious to their own danger, the three juniors thrust their shoulders under the beams, and with all the force at their command endeavoured to raise them.

Slowly—very slowly—they lifted the obstruction. It was a tremendous task, a task from which grown men would have flinched, but Bob Travers & Co. refused to give in.

Inch by inch they raised the beams, until at last one of the other helpers was able to drag the imprisoned man from his place of peril.

Their backs aching under the severe strain, the chums moved away from the scene, and a moment later there came a fearful crash as the wall toppled down, right over the spot where a moment previously they had been engaged upon their work of rescue.

The juniors' first concern was for the fate of the man they had rescued. They came upon him some twenty yards from the wreckage, and when they caught sight of him they uttered a startled exclamation.

"Chambers!" murmured Bob Travers aghast. "Poor chap! I hope he's not killed. I—"

"Stand away there!" sang out a voice in the juniors' rear, and next instant the ambulance men approached with a stretcher.

A few moments later Mr. Chambers was being carried in an ambulance to the nearest hospital. He was unconscious, and thus he did not know that he had been rescued from certain death by the three juniors he hated most at Redclyffe.

My boys, I do not know how to thank you!"

It was Mr. Chambers who made the remark. He had spent a weary week in hospital nursing a broken arm. But his was now out of danger, and his first thought was for the juniors, whom he had been informed had so gallantly gone to his rescue.

"I shouldn't try, sir!" said Bob Travers quietly.

"I am sorry, deeply sorry, that I treated you so harshly for going to the circus," said Mr. Chambers falteringly. "I was unreasonable—most unreasonable. I owe you my life, and I am deeply grateful to each one of you!"

Mr. Chambers was grateful; there was no doubt about that. But whether his gratefulness would last was a question that neither of the chums could answer.

Nevertheless, it was a pleasure to them to see the master of the Fourth in such a mood—a mood he had never shown during all the time they had been at Redclyffe.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE SCHEMER OF THE FOURTH!"

By HERBERT BRITTON.

DON'T MISS IT!