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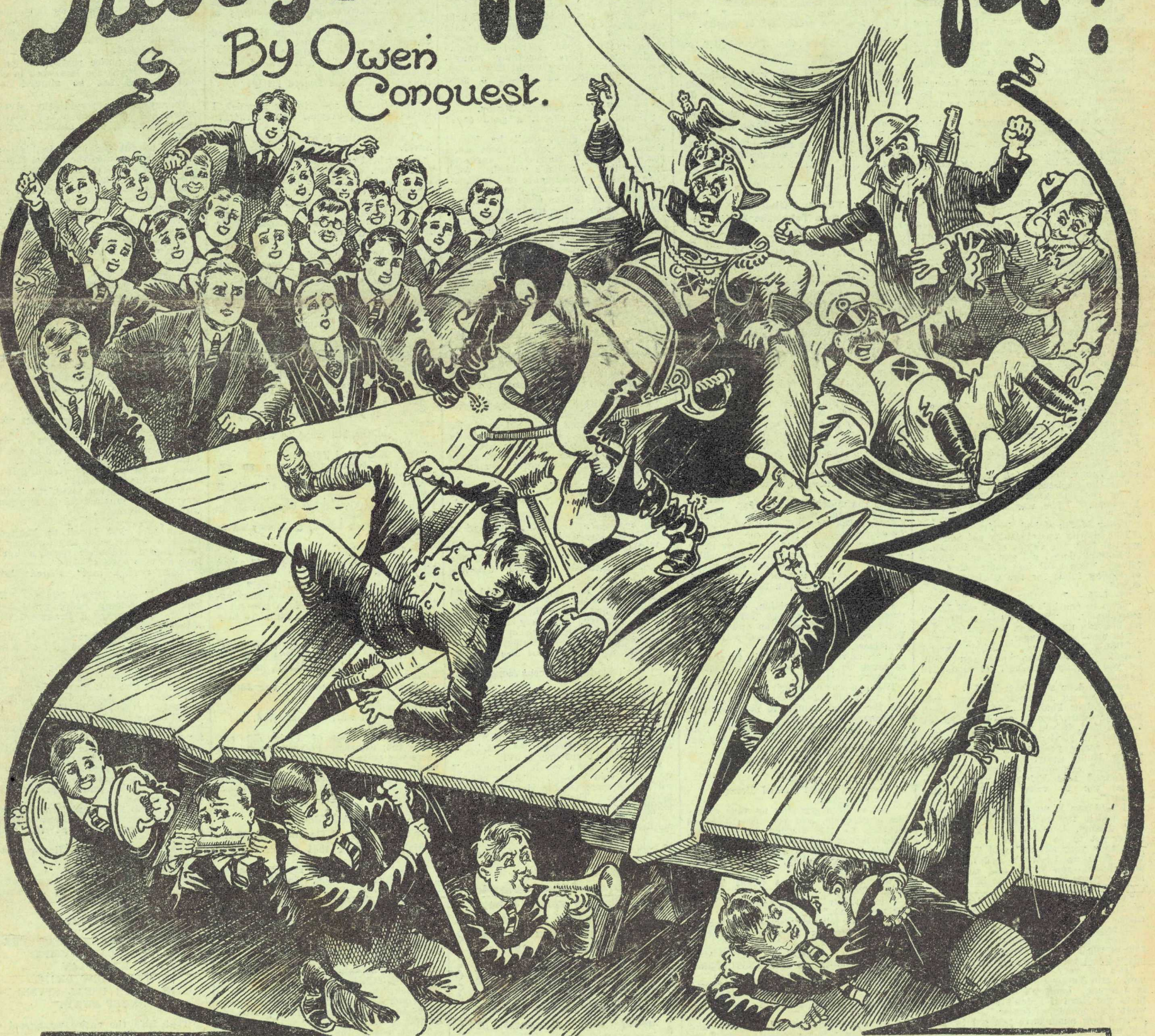
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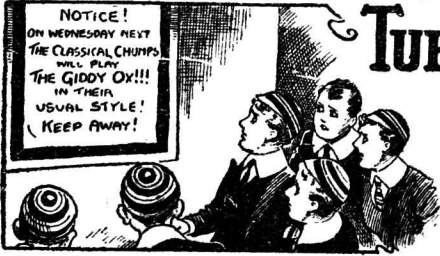
[Week Ending November 30th, 1918.

Tubby Muffin's Benefit!

By Owen Conquest.



THE MODERNS SPOIL THE CLASSICALS' PLAY!



TUBBY MUFFIN'S BENEFIT!

A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of JIMMY SILVER & CO., the Chums of Rookwood. By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter. Tubby's Tale of Woe.

"Can you lend me five pounds?"

"Five which?"

"Pounds!"

"Make it five hundred!" suggested Jimmy Silver humorously. "You're too moderate, Tubby."

And Arthur Edward Lovell chimed in cheerily:

"Tubby, old man, go the whole giddy unicorn, and make it five thou'. We'll have a whip-round in the Classical Fourth to raise it."

"We will—I don't think!" grinned Raby.

"I said five pounds!" said Tubby Muffin firmly. "I meant five pounds! I've simply got to have it, you chaps."

"My dear man, I'll lend it to you on one condition," said Newcome.

"Done!" said Tubby instantly.

"What's the condition?"

"That you tell me where to find it first."

"Fathead!" yelled Tubby.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four of Rookwood chortled in chorus.

Five pounds was a sum that the cheery Co. seldom found themselves in possession of all at once, and if any member of the Co. had been in possession of it he would have thought twice—if not three—before handing it over to Tubby Muffin.

Indeed, Tubby might as well have requested the loan of five hundred or five thousand pounds; he was just as likely to get it.

Half-a-crown was generally Tubby's limit when in quest of a loan, and if he could not bag half-a-crown he did not disdain twopence.

His request for five pounds tickled the Co., and rather surprised them, too.

Reginald Muffin was looking quite serious, however.

He gazed at the Fistical Four more in sorrow than in anger as they chortled.

"But what's the row, Tubby?" asked Jimmy Silver at last. "Has the sergeant let you run up a bill at the school shop?"

Tubby shook his head.

"Have you been playing banker with Peele?" asked Lovell severely.

"No. I—I owe the money," confessed Tubby.

"You owe somebody five pounds?"

"And I'm being dunned," said Tubby sadly. "There'll be a row if I don't settle. And, as Christmas is coming on, I thought you fellows might be willing to help me out of my fix."

"What's Christmas got to do with it?"

"Well, you see—"

Tubby hesitated. Really, Christmas had very little to do with it; but Tubby had apparently hoped to touch the hearts of the Fistical Four by the mention of the magic word.

"Besides, Christmas isn't here yet," said Jimmy Silver. "But I'll tell you what, Tubby, you can ask us again then."

"Or the Christmas after!" said Lovell.

"Or the one after that," suggested Newcome. "The war will be over by then."

Tubby Muffin sighed deeply.

This hilarity was evidently not what he wanted from the chums of the Fourth.

"Nothing doing, old gun!" said Jimmy Silver. "You must find some other way of raising funds for the Christmas holidays."

"I—I—I—"

"Two to one he's spoofing," said Lovell suspiciously. "Why should a stranger let him run up a bill of five quids?"

"It wasn't a stranger."

"Don't pile it on, Tubby," urged Lovell. "Nobody who knew you would let you run up fivepence, let alone five pounds."

"Another deep sigh from Tubby.

"Tell us all about it, Tubby," said Jimmy Silver kindly. "We can't lend you five quids, but we can listen to the tale of woe, if you like."

"That's a good offer," agreed Lovell.

"It's really your fault, Jimmy," said Tubby Muffin sadly.

"Mine?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Yours," said Tubby. "Didn't you advise me to take up footer this season?"

"I told you it would bring down your fat, which the rations haven't done!" said Jimmy, laughing. "But what's footer got to do with it?"

"I took your advice," said Tubby. "I went down to Lamson's and ordered a new rig-out—new footer and all. And—my pater won't foot the bill!"

"Well, my hat!"

"You've ordered five pounds' worth of goods you can't pay for?" exclaimed Newcome.

"I took Jimmy's advice."

"You young ass!" exclaimed the captain of the Fourth indignantly. "I never advised you to order footer togery."

"It's all very well to round on me now," said Tubby sorrowfully. "But I'm in a scrape. Lamson's will send the bill in to the Head if I don't square. They want their money, of course."

"And how much have you got towards it?" asked Raby.

"Fourpence."

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Well, of all the silly idiots!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "There will be a shine if Lamson's bill goes to the Head."

"And your pater will have to pay it, Tubby."

"He won't!" moaned Tubby.

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows.

"You see, you advised me—"

recommenced Tubby.

"Fathead!"

"Well, I took your advice—"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Jimmy.

"Suppose you fellows get together, and whack it out!" suggested Tubby Muffin brightly. "After all, five pounds isn't such a thumping lot, is it?"

"Br-r-r-r!"

"And I'm really going in for footer, hot and strong," said Tubby. "I may be a good bit of use this season, Jimmy—in the junior eleven, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tubby's suggestion restored the good-humour of the captain of the Fourth.

The fat Classical grunted; he could not see any grounds for merriment in his remark.

"Well, are you going to see me through?" he asked. "Of course, I'll settle up later. I'll save up my Christmas tips—"

"I've heard that yarn before."

"If you don't trust me—"

began Tubby, with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh, seat!"

"Hallo, there's the dinner-bell!" exclaimed Lovell. "Come on!"

"I say, Jimmy—"

But the Fistical Four were heading for the School House, and Tubby Muffin snorted indignantly at this heartless disregard for his predicament.

Really, the Co. seemed to think dinner more important than Muffin's financial troubles.

However, Tubby rolled after the Fistical Four; he was not indifferent himself to the claims of dinner.

The 2nd Chapter. Uncle James Takes the Matter in Hand.

Jimmy Silver wore a thoughtful expression that afternoon.

Lovell & Co. noted it, and grinned as they noted it.

They knew what was in Jimmy's mind.

"Uncle James" of Rookwood was playing kind uncle again, and he was thinking out Tubby Muffin's difficulties.

It was just like Jimmy.

Tubby had acted like a reckless young ass, if not a young rascal; but there was no doubt that if he had ordered goods he could not pay for he was in a serious scrape.

Certainly he deserved to be left to face his troubles alone, as a warning for the future; but Jimmy Silver could not quite make up his mind to that.

Somehow or other Reginald Muffin was to be helped, and Jimmy Silver, probably, was the only fellow at Rookwood School likely to take much trouble about the fat junior.

As "Uncle James" he felt called upon to see Tubby through, if it could possibly be done.

But the matter was not easy.

Five pounds was a large sum to a fellow in the Fourth Form, and the combined resources of the Fistical Four did not come to that amount, or near it.

And even if Jimmy Silver was willing to "play up" to the extent of subscribing all he had, it was pretty certain that the Co. would look upon the matter with a different eye.

In fact, Lovell's opinion, stated with much candour, was that Tubby Muffin could go and eat coke, an opinion that Raby and Newcome endorsed with great heartiness.

A "whip-round" was likely to produce as much as Jimmy could raise himself, and very little more.

The idea was not much use, and Jimmy had to think of something else, hence the thoughtful wrinkle in his brow that afternoon.

After lessons, when the Fistical Four went to the end study to tea, Jimmy was still looking deeply reflective.

"Well?" said Lovell at last.

"Eh?"

"What's the result?"

"Result of what?" asked Jimmy.

Lovell chuckled.

"You've been screwing up your chivvy like a gargoye, and you haven't jawed nineteen to the dozen," he answered. "That means that you've been thinking. What's the result—if any?"

"Well, about Tubby," said Jimmy, as he cracked his egg.

"Oh, I knew it was about Tubby! Bother Tubby!"

"Blow Tubby!" added Newcome. "Pass the war-bread!"

"After all, it's rather creditable for the fat little bouncer to take up footer," remarked Jimmy.

"Oh, lots! I haven't noticed him staggering humanity on the footer-ground, though."

"Well, it's a sign of grace, anyhow," argued Jimmy, "and he's rather a thoughtless young ass. I'd like to see him clear."

"Nothing doing!" said Lovell. "You're not clearing this study out of cash for that fat bouncer, Jimmy! Cut it out!"

"No jolly fear!" said Raby emphatically.

"Nix!" remarked Newcome.

"I've got an idea," said Jimmy mildly.

"Well, we'll hear your idea, but don't ask us to help you carry a hat round in the Fourth, because we jolly well won't do it!"

"That's not it."

"Good! Then you can go ahead."

"What about a benefit?" asked Jimmy.

"A which?"

"Benefit!"

"What are you driving at?"

"I suppose you've heard of the Classical Players?" said Jimmy Silver. "What about a benefit performance, the proceeds to go to clear Muffin of his debt?"

"What proceeds?"

"Charge for admission, fathead!"

Arthur Edward Lovell grinned.

"My dear man, go to bed and dream again!" he said. "Fellows won't pay to see the Classical Players perform. It's enough trouble to make 'em come in without paying."

"Look here," said Jimmy Silver warmly, "our dramatic society is the best thing of the kind going at Rookwood. We could give a jolly good performance—"

"Passed unanimously! But charging for admission is a geegee of quite another colour! Who'll pay?"

"Well, if it's announced as a benefit performance the fellows would pay," said Jimmy. "Besides, we'll give 'em something specially good. Instead of Shakespeare, we'll have something funny—something the fellows would like to see. We can depend on getting a good comedy."

"How?"

"I'll write it," explained Jimmy.

"Would that make it a good one?" asked Lovell in surprise.

"Lovell, old chap, don't be funny! You're never really funny except when you're playing 'Hamlet'!" answered Jimmy Silver. "That's settled. We'll have a benefit performance of the Classical Players, with a really good bill, that will make the fellows come in and pay. Proceeds to go to the Muffin Fund. We'll bag the lecture-hall for a half-holiday, and make it a matinee performance, so that everybody can come—outsiders as well as Rookwooders, if they like."

"I can see the whole county rushing in, fairly breaking their necks, to see us playing our merry comedy!" grinned Lovell.

"We'll call a meeting of the Players after tea," pursued Jimmy. "As you fellows agree—"

"Eh? You haven't asked us yet whether we agree?"

"That being settled," continued the captain of the Fourth, unheeding, "we'll hold a meeting and settle the details. Suppose we fix the performance for next Wednesday?"

"Neh! With a giddy comedy to write and learn and rehearse!"

"We live in rapid times, old chap. No time for slacking. It's got to be fairly soon, and we can't spare the Saturday next week, or the Wednesday after; there's footer. Now or never, you know. Finished tea yet?"

"No!" roared Lovell.

"Well, I'll call the chaps in, anyway."

"Look here—"

But Jimmy Silver was gone.

The captain of the Fourth believed in striking the iron while it was hot.

Within a quarter of an hour there was a meeting in the end study of all the principal members of the Classical Players.

Mornington and Erroll, Oswald and Conroy, and Pons and Van Ryn, Peele and Flynn, and two or three more, came to the meeting, and they listened in surprise to the suggestion of a benefit performance for Tubby Muffin.

"What utter rot!" was Peele's comment.

"I don't see it!" answered Jimmy Silver tartly.

"If we're goin' to charge for admission, let's bag the cash ourselves!" said Cyril Peele. "I don't see any sense in handin' it to Tubby Muffin."

"Well, it's to help him out of a fix!" said Conroy. "I back up the idea."

"He shouldn't get into a fix!"

"Oh, rats! Let's see him through, if we can!" said Oswald. "After all, it will be no more trouble than any other performance. The question is, will the fellows pay to come in?"

"There's another question, too," remarked Mornington.

My dear Readers,

I regret that, owing to pressure on space, I have been compelled to omit my Chat column. You may rest assured, however, that although I am unable to give you particulars of next Monday's stories, the yarns will be up to the usual high standard of excellence.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

"What's that, Morny?"

"Is Tubby Muffin really in a fix, or is he spoofin' to raise the wind?" asked Morny. "Very likely it's only one more of his dodges for raisin' money. He's always up to somethin'."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver rather blankly.

There was a chortle in the study.

Perhaps Mornington was a little suspicious, but undoubtedly it was possible that Tubby Muffin was merely "spoofing" for Tubby's "dodges" for raising the wind were many and varied, and never came to an end.

"Uncle James, with all his sagacity, had not thought of that possibility."

"My hat! I shouldn't wonder!" said Kit Erroll, with a laugh. "Tubby is an awful spoofer, and he's too fatheaded to understand that it's a swindle. He's done us often enough."

"Well," said Jimmy Silver, after a pause, "we can find that out easily enough. We can use Bootles' telephone, and ask them at Lamson's."

"Better do that first, I should say!" grinned Morny.

To which there was general assent.

"Cut off to Bootles' study now, Jimmy," said Lovell. "He's gone down to Coombe, and now's your chance."

"Right-ho! Wait till I come back!" Jimmy Silver hurried downstairs.

He did not like to suspect Tubby Muffin of spoofing to such an extent, but certainly it was necessary to ascertain that all was above-board before the benefit performance was proceeded with.

Mr. Bootles being out it was easy enough to use his telephone, and Jimmy Silver ensconced himself in the Form-master's study and took up the receiver.

He rang up Lamson's, the outfitter's in Coombe, who did a great deal of business with the Rookwooders in the supply of sports and games necessaries.

"Hallo! Is that Lamson's?" asked Jimmy, when he got through.

"Yes; manager speaking."

"Is Jimmy Silver, Rookwood. Have you had an order for a footer rig-out from Muffin of the Fourth lately?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does the bill come to five pounds? I want to know, because we're seeing to it for Muffin."

"I will ascertain in one moment, Master Silver."

Jimmy held on to the wire for a couple of minutes, and then the answer came back from the manager at Lamson's.

"Are you there? Yes? Five pounds one shilling and threepence, sir."

"Thank you!"

Jimmy Silver rang off, and quitted Mr. Bootles' study quite satisfied.

On his way back to the Fourth-Form quarters he met Tubby Muffin, who was waiting for him, with a rather peculiar expression on his fat face.

"—I say, Jimmy!" he stammered. "I heard you in Mr. Bootles' study. You—have—been telephoning to Lamson's?"

"Yes," answered Jimmy.

"—I say—"

"You had to know whether you really owed the money, Tubby; you're such an awful spoofer," said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, dear!" gasped Tubby.

"Oh, asked the manager, and he told me," said Jimmy.

Tubby blinked at him.

"Wha-a-at did he tell you, Jimmy?" he stammered.

"He said the bill came to five pounds one and three."

"Oh!" ejaculated Tubby.

For some reason, there was an expression of relief on his fat face.

"We're going to see you through, if we can," said Jimmy. "And he hurried on to the end study, leaving Reginald Muffin staring after him."

"Well?" asked Lovell, as Jimmy Silver came in.

"It's all serene!"

"Tubby really owes the money?" asked Mornington.

"Yes; five pounds one and three."

"Well, that settles it," agreed Mornington. "It's like his cheek to run up a bill he can't pay, but I'm willin' to help see him through."

"Same here!"

"Well, I don't agree!" said Cyril Peele. "If I'm actin' in the play, I'm takin' my whack of anythin' that's goin', and blow Tubby Muffin."

"Then you can step out!" was Jimmy Silver's answer.

Peele snuffed.

"I jolly well will!" he answered.

And he did.

But the defection of Peele did not worry the Classical Players much, and there was quite a long meeting in the end study, in which the benefit performance was duly discussed and the arrangements made.

The 3rd Chapter. For the Benefit of Reginald Muffin.

"Hallo! What's that Classical worm up to?"

Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth, asked that question, in tones of indignation.

The three Tommies were chatting at the foot of the staircase, in Mr. Manders' House, when Jimmy Silver came in.

Jimmy Silver proceeded to pin a paper on the Modern notice-board, heedless of the stares of the Modern juniors.

Having affixed the notice to his satisfaction, the captain of the Fourth walked out of Mr. Manders' House.

"Check!" said Tommy Cook.

"Bedad, let's go after him and bump him!" suggested Tommy Doyle, with a warlike look.

"Let's look at the notice," was Tommy Dodd's suggestion.

And the three Tommies bore down on the notice-board, and scanned the paper pinned up there by Jimmy Silver.

It was a very interesting announcement. It ran:

"NOTICE!

GRAND BENEFIT PERFORMANCE BY THE CLASSICAL PLAYERS!

WEDNESDAY NEXT, 3 p.m., IN THE FORM-ROOM.

ROLL UP!

'KATCHING THE KAISER!'

A KLASICAL KOMEDI!

ADMISSION 6d.

Reserved Seats 1s.

ROLL UP!"

Tommy Dodd & Co. stared at that announcement as if they could hardly believe their eyes.

"The cheek!" gasped Tommy Dodd. "Asking us to pay a tanner a time to see them play the goat! Us!"

"A KLASICAL KOMEDI!" said Cook. "That's meant to be funny! That's the Classical brand of humour."

"The nerve!"

"The neck!"

The indignation of the three Tommies was deep.

In their opinion the Classical Players were very small beer, anyway; the Modern Players were "it."

The Classical Players, certainly, regarded them with high disdain, but that feeling was fully reciprocated by the Moderns.

"A benefit performance!" said Doyle. "Whose benefit, I wonder? It can't be for the benefit of the audience; they'll be the sufferers."

"They won't get any audience at a tanner a time," remarked Tommy Dodd. "Who'd pay to see them playing the ox? I should want paying, I know that, and more than a tanner."

"Sticking the notice up here, just as if we'd go!" said Cook. "Bless their KLASICAL KOMEDI! This is pure cheek!"

Tommy Dodd jerked the paper down from the board.

A Classical notice posted up on the Modern side was the last word in cheek, and it could not be allowed for a moment.

Tommy Dodd reversed the sheet of paper, and wrote out a new notice on the back of it, amid chuckles from his comrades.

Then he put the paper in his pocket, and strolled over to the School House.

He went into the House, and, finding nobody there, pinned the paper on the board, reversed, to show the new notice he had written on the back.

He did not linger on the spot, but hurried out of the School House at once, and came on the Fistical Four outside.

Tommy gave them a wary look, but the chums of the Classical Fourth were all smiles.

"Coming, old son?" asked Jimmy Silver genially. "You've seen the notice, of course?"

"I've seen it!" said Tommy gruffly.

"Moderns are admitted—if they pay, of course," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "It will be rather rough on the rest of the audience, but Modern tanners are as good as any others. You might— your necks for once, considering that you'll be among respectable people."

"Yes, I think you might do that!" agreed Raby.

Tommy Dodd breathed hard.

"Shurrup!" said Jimmy Silver, with a warning look at his chums. "No rags now! We'd really like you to come, Tommy; we're raising a fund to get that fathead Muffin out of a scrape. It's going to be a ripping comedy; it will make you laugh no end!"

"Why not perform 'Hamlet,' if that's your object?" inquired the Modern junior, with heavy sarcasm.

"Look here—"

"I'm sure that Lovell as Laertes or Horatius would make any audience feel that they'd had their money's worth—from a comic point of view."

"You cheeky ass!" roared Arthur Edward.

"Shush!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now, look here, Tommy Dodd, you'd better come! It's to see a Rookwood fellow through, you know."

"I'd do anything I could!" said Tommy Dodd gravely. "Ask me to face lions in their dens, or Huns on the war-path, or a great statesman making an epoch-making speech, and I'm your man. But to face the Classical Players on the stage—my dear man, there's a limit to human endurance! Can't be did!"

And Tommy Dodd scudded away when he had made that remark—none too soon, for the Fistical Four had quite lost their geniality, and he was in danger of getting bumped on the unsympathetic earth.

"Cheeky ass!" growled Lovell. "Blow their Modern tanners—we don't want 'em! I don't believe in admitting Moderns at all!"

The Fistical Four went into the House, and were greeted by a shout from Van Ryn, who was looking at the notice-board.

"What does this mean, Jimmy Silver?"

"Eh! What?"

"Did you stick this up?"

Jimmy Silver stared at the paper on the board in astonishment. It was written in pencil in bold capitals.

"NOTICE!

ON WEDNESDAY NEXT THE CLASSICAL CHUMPS WILL PLAY THE GIDDY OX!!! IN THEIR USUAL STYLE! KEEP AWAY!"

"That isn't the notice we agreed on, Jimmy Silver!" said Van Ryn.

"Ass!" said Jimmy politely. "That's Tommy Dodd's handiwork, the cheeky ass! That's what he was doing on this side!"

And Jimmy jerked down the paper in great wrath.

The 4th Chapter.

Tommy Dodd Thinks It Out.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were very busy during the next two or three days. The "classical comedy" was going strong. Jimmy himself had written most of "Katching the Kaiser," but the other members of the cast put in a great deal, to their own satisfaction. Many hands made light work, Lovell remarked when he was putting in improvements. And he only snuffed when Jimmy reported that too many cooks spoiled the broth. Still, there was no doubt that it was a most excellent comedy—from the Fourth Form point of view, at least. There was plenty of knock-about fun in it, and the Kaiser had a most terrific time. The scene was laid at Potsdam, and the action was chiefly a series of mishaps that happened to the great Wilhelm, the imperial part being played by Higgs of the Fourth, who was selected as the ugliest fellow obtainable—though that was not explained to him. The lecture-room was unobtainable, as Mr. Manders was using it on Wednesday for a lecture on some scientific subject to Modern seniors; "utter rot," in the opinion of the juniors. It was, as all the Classical Players agreed, rotten that they could not have the lecture-room on account of such a trifling thing as a science lecture by Mr. Manders, but there it was, and they had to make the best of it. They decided on the Form-room. As Wednesday was a half-holiday, the Form-room was at their disposal, and Mr. Bootles graciously gave permission for a dramatic performance to be enacted there. There were a good many preparations to make, but the Players had most of the things they needed, and they were skilled in improvising a stage and curtains. The stage was to be formed of boards laid upon boxes and trestles, and the amateur actors had "been there before," so to speak, and they had the materials to hand. That part of the preparations was, of course, left till after lessons on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the cast were mugging up the play. Fellows could be discovered at all hours, in all sorts of places, reciting their lines, and striking attitudes, and trying on beards and whiskers. The Modern juniors regarded it all with a lofty eye of disdain. If Tommy Dodd & Co.'s assistance had been requested, probably they would have joined in heartily, and helped to make the benefit a success. But it had never even occurred to the Classical Players that Moderns would be any good, so far as acting was concerned. Moreover, there was a big demand for "parts" on the Classical side, every fellow preferring to be on the stage, rather than taking a place in the hall at the expense of sixpence. There were a good many more aspirants than parts, as a matter of fact, without hothering about assigning parts to Moderns. The Moderns could come into the audience and have a chance of seeing what good acting was really like, so the Classics thought. Naturally, Tommy Dodd & Co. were not inclined to take up that position. They snuffed at the whole thing. Moreover, they saw no particular reason why funds should be raised for Tubby Muffin; he wasn't a Modern, anyway. Tommy Dodd's opinion was that the whole affair would be a frost, and he confided to his chums that it served Jimmy Silver right, for not having secured the services of really good actors—plenty of whom could have been found on the Modern side. But as the date of the performance approached, Tommy Dodd had to modify his opinion. To a Modern, it was amazing that anybody should be willing to pay sixpence to see the Classical Players play the goat, but Classics did not look at it in the same light. They supported Jimmy Silver, especially after it was known that the Co. weren't playing Shakespeare. As Flynn remarked, a fellow couldn't be expected to stand that, but otherwise he was willing to come and see them. Jimmy Silver was quite busy, for a time, in scribbling out little squares of paper, bearing the legend:

"ADMIT ONE!
J. SILVER."

These were the reserved seats, at a shilling each, and quite a number of the fellows put up a whole "bob" for the good of the cause. There was a still larger number who had promised to come and pay for admission at the doors. And the more the Moderns sniffed at Tubby Muffin's Benefit, the more the Classics backed it up, from patriotic motives. It became, in fact, a test of House patriotism, and fellows who hesitated to promise to come were asked scornfully if they were pro-Moderns. "They'll have an audience!" Tommy Dodd told his chums, on Tuesday. "It seems extraordinary, but they'll have an audience. I believe every chap on the Classical side will go, excepting the seniors. I actually saw Smythe of the Shell ask Silver for a ticket!" "Smythe always was a silly ass!" commented Cook. "He was—and is—but audiences generally are silly asses!" said Tommy Dodd. "A silly ass's tanner is as good as anybody else's tanner. They're going to get a thumping big audience, and they'll raise the money, and make a success of the whole bizney. They feel that it's up to them."

"They won't get any Moderns, anyway." "Well, you see," observed Tommy Dodd thoughtfully. "It ain't very dignified for us to be sulking in our tents like merry old Achilles. It's up to us to see that the Classical Players don't score a big hit with this silly rot. In fact, it ought to be downed, in the name of Art." "Oh, my hat!" "Anyway, we're not going to let the Classics score if we can help it," said Tommy Dodd. "Hear, hear!" said Doyle and Cook heartily. They were more interested in "dishing" the Classics than in any question of Art, that was clear. "In fact, we ought to muck it up!" continued Tommy. "H'm! Rather rotten to spoil Tubby's benefit, if he's really in a scrape for money," remarked Cook. "I don't mean that! Let 'em pay the money and go in. That makes it all right for the fund; we don't want to disappoint Muffin. But after they've paid and gone in—"

"Oh, I see!" "It's up to us!" said Tommy Dodd firmly. "We ought to muck up the performance. It will be a lesson to them, and they want one. If they'd asked us to take the thing in hand for them, we'd have run it through successfully. They haven't." "Cheek!" "But how are we going to muck it up, bedad?" asked Tommy Doyle. "Listen," said Tommy Dodd. "I've got a wheeze!" And, sinking his voice to a whisper, Tommy Dodd communicated the "wheeze," and there was a burst of chuckling from his comrades. That evening the Classical Players were surprised by a big demand for tickets from the Modern side.

The 5th Chapter. The Play's the Thing! "Going like hot cakes!" said Jimmy Silver in tones of great satisfaction in the end study that evening. "Queer!" remarked Lovell. "Well, I think it's rather decent for the Moderns to rally round, after all, and support the benefit," said Jimmy. "And I think it's queer. Is there some game on?" asked Lovell suspiciously. "I don't see how. They can't kick up a row at the performance. Bulkeley's promised to come," Jimmy grinned. "If they're paying their money for that they'll be sold." "How many tickets so far?" asked Baby. "Fifteen reserved seats at a bob each!" said Jimmy Silver impressively. "And I understand that a regular crowd of them intend to pay at the doors." "Good!" "The fact is, if the Moderns hadn't rallied round I don't think we should have made up quite the five quid," confessed Jimmy Silver. "It's rather a lot of money, you know. As the matter stands, there will be some over—ten shillings or so, I think." "I say, Jimmy—" Tubby Muffin came in, with a very brisk expression on his fat face. "I say—" "All serene, Tubby. It's going to be a success," said Jimmy Silver reassuringly. "We shall raise the cash for your bill at Lamson's." "You said something about ten shillings over." "About that, of course." "Well, it's all the same to you, Jimmy, I'll have that in advance," said Tubby, holding out a fat hand. The Fiscalist Four stared at him. "You'll what?" ejaculated Newcome. "I may as well have it in advance, out of the takings," explained Tubby. "I've got a use for it, as a matter of fact." "At the tuckshop?" roared Lovell. Tubby blinked at him. "Don't you ask questions, Lovell! I

suppose I can do as I like with my own money?" "Your own money!" stammered Lovell. "Yes; it's mine, I suppose, as it's my benefit!" said Tubby Muffin warmly. "The fact is, I'd rather have it in my own hands. Of course, I don't distrust you fellows—" "Distrust us!" said Jimmy Silver dazedly. "Still, I'd rather have the money in my own hands!" said Tubby firmly. "It's the best way—the businesslike way, you know. Then I shall be satisfied about what's left over, too." "You fat boulder!" gasped Jimmy. "We're raising the money to pay your bill at Lamson's, not for you to blow on tuck. Anything over won't be handed to you, you—slug! It will be handed to the Cottage Hospital in Coombe." Tubby jumped. "The Cottage Hospital!" he stammered. "Certainly!" "But it's mine!" yelled Tubby. "Bats!" "Look here, you're not going to give my money to the Cottage Hospital!" howled Muffin. "Give your own, if you like! I won't allow it! It's a swindle!" Jimmy Silver's hand strayed to a cushion. "Where will you have it, Tubby?" he inquired. Tubby decided not to have it at all. He scuttled from the study in a great hurry, and the subject was dropped. But Tubby remained in a state of considerable indignation. Why the Classical Players should get up a benefit performance to provide him with extra tuck was a mystery to everyone but Tubby, but it was evident that the fat Classical considered that it was up to them. He was quite alone in the opinion. It was agreed on all hands that any surplus after Tubby's debt was paid was to go to the Cottage Hospital, and cer-

tainly not into Tubby Muffin's greedy paws. And Tubby's complaints were silenced by the terrible threat that if he said another word the whole sum should be handed to the hospital, and Tubby left to deal with Lamson's as best he might. What Tubby gaped, and did not say another word, though his indignation remained as deep as ever. On Wednesday a great deal of thought was given to the afternoon's performance, and Mr. Bootles was a little cross in class as a consequence. But lessons were over at last. In the interval before dinner Jimmy Silver & Co. set to work turning the Form-room into an auditorium. There were plenty of forms for the audience, and chairs and stools were added to them, until there was ample accommodation for all comers. The stage was most successfully erected. Somewhat to the surprise of the Classics, Tommy Dodd & Co. came over in a genial mood to lend a hand in the work. There was plenty to be done, and the Modern assistance was welcome. Indeed, Jimmy Silver & Co. had to admit that the Moderns were playing up in a really sportsmanlike manner. Lovell was a little suspicious, but even Arthur Edward confessed that he could not see any sign of the cloven foot. Tommy Dodd & Co., in fact, worked like Trojans, and helped to erect the stage and rig up the curtains in front. All was finished at last in the most satisfactory manner. The stage was, perhaps, a little loose for knockabout fun, and the big boards gave a little here and there when trodden on heavily; but the erection was safe enough, and it answered the purpose, and that was all that was wanted. At the dinner-bell all was ready, the stage was finished, and draped round with coverings of various kinds, to hide its primitive construction from the eyes of the audience, and the effect was really good.

In a satisfied mood the Classics went off to dinner, Tommy Dodd & Co. making their way to Mr. Manders' house, where they dined, on the Modern side. But the moment Tommy Dodd & Co. were at liberty to leave the dining-room they scudded back to the Classical side. The three Tommies, and Towle, and several other Modern juniors hurried into the Form-room. No Classics were there as yet. The performance was timed to begin at three, and the cast were in their studies making-up. Green-rooms were rather at a discount, as Lovell put it, and dressing-rooms "quite off." After making-up, the actors had to put on coats or cloaks and scuttle down to the Form-room, which they entered by the door at the end behind the scenes. So far the Form-room was deserted, and likely to be for some time. Everything that had to be done had been done under Jimmy Silver's personal supervision before he retired to the end study to get his war-paint on. "Here we are!" grinned Tommy Dodd. "Now, don't make a row; and, mind, not a whisper till I give the word!" The Modern juniors approached the draped stage at the end of the Form-room, and Tommy lifted up the coverings at the side. One by one the merry Moderns crept under the stage. It was raised nearly two feet from the floor, so there was plenty of room for them to lie down there at ease. As soon as all his party were under the planking, Tommy Dodd followed them, and let the drapery fall. Under the stage, the Moderns remained very quiet. When a Classical fellow strolled on, later, to see whether everything was quite ready he had not the slightest suspicion that the Moderns were there,

stamp on the floor, as a hint that it was time for the curtain to go up. The signal for the raising of the curtain was given, and the Fourth-Formers entrusted with that task elevated it, with some difficulty, their efforts being cheered by the audience as if they were part of the show. The Moderns were stamping as well as cheering, but that outbreak ceased as Bulkeley of the Sixth came in. In the presence of the captain of Rookwood order had to be kept. Tubby Muffin showed Bulkeley to his seat, bowing and grinning, and the Rookwood captain sat down with a smile. With a final jerk the curtain went up; it remained a little awry when it was up, but that was merely a detail. The stage was disclosed, with Higgs sitting on a throne as a most terrific-looking Kaiser. Enter Jimmy Silver, representing a British Tommy—though how a British Tommy was supposed to have got to Potsdam was left to the imagination of the audience. The Kaiser had opened his lips to speak, when— Boom! Buzz! Crash! Boom! Buzzzzzzzz! Jimmy Silver jumped. The Kaiser fairly bounded off his throne as that terrific commotion came from under his very feet. He caught his feet in his Royal robe, rolled over, and sprawled on the stage with a loud yell, amid a howl of laughter from the audience. Boom! Crash! Bang! Buzz!

The 6th Chapter Not According to Programme. Jimmy Silver stared at the planking under his feet as if mesmerised. Mouth-organs and tin-cans and saucupan-lids were buzzing and banging and rattling under the stage, and the chief of the Classical Players was too astounded to do anything but stare. It was a most unexpected commencement to the Classical comedy. Higgs sat up, roaring. "Ow! Oh! What's the row? Oh, my napper! Ow!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Somebody's under the stage!" howled Jimmy Silver. "Ha, ha, ha!" "It's those Modern cads!" roared Lovell from behind the scenes. "I knew they were up to something! Didn't I say so?" "Ha, ha, ha!" came in an hysterical yell from the audience. Boom! Crash! Bang! Buzz! "Have 'em out!" "Ha, ha, ha!" "Ring down the curtain!" yelled Jimmy Silver. The assistants tried to obey, but in their haste they were too hasty with the curtain, which required tact. It came down half-way, and slanted, and refused to move further, either up or down. The delighted audience cheered. "Have 'em out!" roared Lovell, rushing on the stage in all the panoply of a Hun general. "I'll smash 'em!" The excited cast of the Classical comedy were all on the stage now, though not for the purpose of performing. Some of them were howling threats, and some prising up a board to get at the hidden Moderns underneath. Other fellows were creeping under the stage from behind the scenes to get to close quarters with Tommy Dodd & Co.; but in the dark and the confined space that was not an easy task. They chiefly seemed to discover boots, and retreated from the contact with loud howls. The audience were yelling with laughter, especially the Modern part, who evidently knew what to expect. Some of the Classics, indeed, seemed to think that it was all part of the entertainment, and Adolphus Smythe was heard to express the opinion that if Jimmy Silver thought that dashed row was entertainin', Jimmy Silver was makin' a dashed mistake. The climax came suddenly. Under the stage Conroy had succeeded in reaching Tommy Dodd, and they closed in mortal combat. There was a heaving of the planks, and two or three of them were shifted, and through the opening there rose into view Tommy Dodd and Conroy, fighting furiously. Then came crash on crash, as the planks were shoved upward from below, with disastrous results to the actors standing on them. From below Moderns rose into view, rather dusty and red, but in great spirits, and from above Classical actors rolled over as the floor heaved under them, and some of them disappeared from sight. It was not quite a comedy, but undoubtedly it was comic—at least, from the Modern point of view. Amid the ruins of the stage Tommy Dodd & Co. were engaged in deadly conflict with the Classical Players, with disastrous results to make-up and costumes, to say nothing of noses. Amid rolling planks and tumbling the rivals of Rookwood punched and pommelled one another in great excitement, even the actors forgetting the play which was not coming off. Tommy Dodd & Co. were outnumbered, and they shouted for rescue, a call which the Moderns in the audience were not likely to leave unanswered. Heedless of Bulkeley, who was shouting for order, the Moderns invaded the stage, perhaps thinking that they might as well have their full money's worth, as they had paid for admission. Naturally, the Classical audience piled in, too. Bulkeley shouted and raved, but it was not till three or four other prefects had come to his assistance that the riot was quelled.

hidden from sight, but quite ready for action. It was a long wait for the hidden juniors, but they were comforted by the prospect of what was to happen when the play began. About half-past two fellows began to drift in, and Flynn and Jones minor, the doorkeepers, began to take sixpences. There was a continuous clinking of small silver in the teapot which stood on a chair near the door to receive the cash. As three o'clock came nearer the audience came in more thickly. Moderns as well as Classics arrived in force. The three Tommies and some others certainly were conspicuous by their absence, but the greater number of the Modern Fourth and Shell came along. For reasons best known to themselves, they had smiling faces. Perhaps it was in anticipation of a very funny entertainment, though the fun they expected was not quite on the lines laid down by the Classical Players. Close on three Jimmy Silver & Co., made up and ready for business, arrived in the Form-room by the upper doors, and threw off their coats in the wings. Jimmy looked through the stage curtain, and smiled with satisfaction as he saw the Form-room filling fast. The "reserved seats" were beginning to arrive now, and Tubby Muffin, who had been told off for that task, was showing them to their seats with great empressement. Adolphus Smythe of the Shell came in with Howard and Tracy, with a lofty smile of patronage. Adolphus had kindly patronised the junior play, making it an occasion for considerable swank; but Jimmy Silver was a practical fellow, and he did not mind how much Adolphus swanked so long as he paid. There was quite a crowd at last, and the Form-room was almost filled. Some of the heroes of the Third, who had been let in at half-price, began to



TUBBY MUFFIN PUTS HIS FOOT DOWN!



HORACE, THE GOAT, FORGES—

Like a candle which had just been pinched out.

All that Horace saw was a fat nigger, trembling in the ruddy flare at the edge of the abyss, and with a desperate charge Horace let drive at him, for he stood between Horace and the water.

Horace did not care that the water was three hundred feet below.

He drove into space, and the howling king, grabbing his parachute, was driven before his irresistible charge.

At the same moment Captain Handyman jumped for it, and the captain, the king, and the goat came sailing down through the air together as Chip and Dick, ridding themselves of the parachutes, popped up to the surface, and, treading water, looked around at the wild scene.

They saw Horace flying through the air like a shell, turning the most amazing somersaults, and leaving a trail of sparks behind him as he came plunging down from the dizzy height of the King's Leap.

They saw Captain Handyman and Obob sailing down, hanging on grimly to parachutes that distended like great balloons as they took the air.

Then of a sudden the magazine-shed, flaring on the edge of the King's Leap like a beacon-fire, gave a great leap from the rock.

A stunning roar thundered from the cliff-top, and the magazine, blown into millions of sparks, opened out into a huge fan of fire, filling the whole sky with a golden rain.

The Crystal Palace in its palmiest days of firework displays never put up such a flare as Obob's magazine of hoarded powder. The golden shower lighted the country for miles around, and out of the sparks Horace came hurtling and hitting the water in a trail of sparks and a splash that sent up a fountain of water twenty feet high.

The boys dived, for in addition to Horace other projectiles were arriving from the shattered cliff-top.

Huge slabs of rock, torn from the crest of the cliff by the explosion, whistled through the air, knocking up the water in spouts all round them.

Chip and Dick dived deep, and stayed down as long as they could.

They did not fear the crocodiles. As Dick afterwards remarked, no crocodile, unless he were off his chump, would have stayed within a couple of miles of such a racket.

When the boys popped up again, gasping for breath, Captain Handyman was swimming beside them, whilst a convulsive struggle beneath King Obob's parachute showed that the king was there all right.

Somewhere in the gloom was an angry, snorting, and a paddling sound, like the puffing of a tugboat, which showed that Horace was still going strong after his historic dive.

Then came a welcome shout.

Round the base of the bectling cliff emerged the motor-launch, with the four whalers in tow, and a great shout which went up from these told the swimmers that their chums had seen them, and were coming to their rescue.

In less than a minute the launch had got them alongside, Captain Handyman was dragged from the launch, and Obob was hauled up in his parachute, looking like some huge sprawling black fish.

The boys were rescued by their own craft, No. 4 whaler, and when they were safe aboard loud cheers greeted Horace, who came puffing and splashing into the circle of light, his green eyes shining like emeralds.

"Here's old Horace!" cried Porkis. "Good old Horace!"

"Mind how you handle him!" said Dick, as a dozen eager hands were outstretched to the swimming goat. "Horace has had a very trying time, and he will be in a rotten temper!"

"Be very careful with annoyed goats," urged Mr. Lal Tata. "Tie his feet before you lift him in boat, or he will make tremendous mutinies!"

But there was no more ginger left in Horace as they lifted him into the boat. Horace was beat to the world, winded and singed.

He crouched down in the bottom of the whaler, quiet as a lamb, keeping a watchful eye, however, on the battered cricket-bag in which Gus, the crocodile, was confined.

Gus seemed to know that his old pal Horace had come on board.

Probably he scented Horace, who smelled like a burned hearthrug, for he showed his nose out at a slit in the end of the cricket-bag, showing his ugly teeth.

In the launch crouched King Obob, who was as depressed as Horace by his recent adventures.

In a few hours King Obob had lost everything that he had schemed and tricked for during many years.

He had been licked in open fight, and the secret of his dreaded boxing-glove had been revealed.

The six hundred choice scoundrels who had gathered round him would now plunder the city of Booloo, in which they would probably be assisted by the Germans.

All Obob's carefully gathered store of powder had gone up in that one tremendous explosion, which, in a manner of speaking, had knocked the bottom out of his box.

An African king who sets up to be an autocrat is no good without gunpowder. Gunpowder is the chief stock-in-trade.

And all Obob's gunpowder had gone aloft in that one show of sparks. Moreover, Obob was in deadly fear of the motor-engine of the launch.

He was perfectly certain that Captain Handyman had an evil spirit locked up in the box, who would sooner or later come out and eat him up.

Captain Handyman steered the launch, with her string of boats, cautiously round the strange, rocky island of Booloo.

Luckily for the town of Booloo, the fire had been fanned away from its huddle of reed hovels by the wind, and thus was confined to the palace.

The fierce burning of the reed walls and roofs had soon consumed the place to white ash, and now, on the top of the cliff, there was only a red glare like the smouldering of a volcano.

Obob looked up at this, and began to cry.

"What's the trouble, old Treacle Face?" asked Captain Handyman.

"Boo-hoo!" wept Obob. "Me busted!"

"Well, you aren't the first king that's been busted," replied Captain Handyman comfortingly, as he spun the wheel of the launch in his hands. "And you won't be the last. I know one, a worse nigger than you, who'll get his ticket punched before long."

"Who dat king?" asked Obob, who naturally took an interest in all his brother kings in the world.

"Why, he's called the Kaiser of Germany," replied Captain Handyman. "He's the boss of those three hooligans who entered your city before we did. That's where you made your mistake, King Obob. You started playing with those Germans, and they put you up to playing hanky-panky with us. So all you have got for your pains is that you've lost your palace and your situation. And I should think that you had a pretty good berth, too," added the captain.

"But no good ever came of hanking with Germans. You aren't the first king that's lost his situation through mixing with that trash!" Captain Handyman's words were a shot in the dark. But they went home.

Obob, sitting on the floor of the launch, keeping as far as he could from the dreaded engine, told how the Germans had come to him across his secret fords, and had tempted him to stop the expedition.

He confessed how he had given them permission to bring their men into his fortress to assist in exterminating the expedition, and how he had been deluded into thinking that Captain Handyman and his friends were going to attack him.

And, finally, Obob begged that he might be allowed to get out of the launch and into the whaler with the boys, that he might be further from the engine.

The whaler was brought alongside, and the king was hoisted over her gunwale amidst cheers from the boys.

"Come on, Obob!" said Skeleton, who never owed a grudge. "Come on! You must be hungry. You've come just in time. We're going to have a bit of supper. There's a splendid ham here, and Pieface has made some fruit turnovers that take a bit of knocking."

The frightened king settled down by Skeleton, keeping a watchful eye on Horace.

But Horace was fed up. He just lifted his head, looked at the king, and said "Maw!" Then he went to sleep again.

Skeleton had laid out a good spread in the whaler.

The festive board was lit by a hurricane-lamp, and in its centre, laid out on a white tablecloth with a pink paper frill round the knuckle, was such a ham as Obob had never seen in his life before.

And as the launch slowly coasted round the Rock of Booloo, keeping cautiously just beyond gunshot, Skeleton entertained the fallen king in truly Royal style.

"Dick," said Skeleton, "cut his Majesty a slice of ham—a good, thick slice with a bit of knuckle—and hand him the mustard."

Obob looked more cheerful when a huge plate of ham was placed before him, with thick slices of bread-and-butter.

Obob had never tasted ham before. He was a follower of Mohammed, and

the Mohammedan is not allowed to eat ham.

The mustard was mixed in a cup, and before the boys could stop him, Obob had scooped up half the mustard with a spoon and had bolted it.

Now, although Obob was a ruffian and a hooligan of the blackest dye, there was, after all, something Royal about him.

When the mustard bit him, and the tears began to run down his cheeks, he did not try to spit out the stinging mixture, but swallowed it manfully.

"Ot drink!" he remarked tearfully to Arty Dove. "You Ingiliz too much 'ot stuff!" he added, gulping the mustard down.

Arty grinned. He was still wearing the king's diamond belt over his shoulder.

"We aren't half so hot as you are, Obob," he said. "But if it hadn't been for Dick and Chip, you'd have been the hottest thing in Booloo to-night. Here, let us make you a sandwich!"

And Arty made his old enemy a tremendous ham sandwich.

It may seem strange, but Obob had never seen a sandwich in his life.

No man had ever invented a sandwich in Obob's country.

So the idea of putting one piece of meat between two pieces of bread seemed magic to the ex-king.

Obob laughed like anything.

Then he slapped his stomach and his eyes bulged with delight as he tasted his first sandwich.

"Good meat!" he said. "Plenty good meat! What you call um?"

"Sandwich!" replied Arty. "That's one of our sixpenny busters you've got there. Have some mustard, king?"

But Obob shook his head.

"Me like slawidgee too much," he said. "Me no like bluster! Bluster him too 'ot stuff. Burn stomach!"

Obob put the cup of mustard down close by Horace, who was dozing.

Horace languidly opened an eye. He saw the mustard-pot.

Then he reached out his long tongue, and nearly cleaned up the cup at one lick.

Horace squinted when the first sting of the mustard took him in the neck.

Then he made a sort of gobbling noise.

The cup of mustard had rolled over till it fetched up against the cricket-bag, out of which protruded the head of Gus, the crocodile.



OBOB EL MOOK—

There was still some mustard left in the cup, and Gus took a good mouthful.

Then he coughed and began to jump up and down in the cricket-bag, so that it flopped about as though it were alive.

"Crumbs!" exclaimed Porkis. "What's up with the cricket-bag? It's walking about!"

This was true.

Gus's sharp claws had scraped away the stitching of the cricket-bag so that his legs projected from it.

And Porky, who was watching, could hardly believe his eyes as he saw the cricket-bag walk forward and snap viciously at Horace's tail.

Whether it was the bite of the mustard in his throat, or the bite of Gus on his fire-scarred tail that caused Horace to leap suddenly to life, it is difficult to say.

But, with a sudden stagger, Horace was on his feet.

King Obob, with his mouth full of sandwich, was suddenly boosted from the box on which he was sitting over the table.

At the same moment the hurricane-lamp on the table flew into splinters of glass as a bullet from the darkness slapped into it.

The crack of half a dozen rifles was plainly heard.

It was a sound quite different from the "fuf" of the gas-pipe guns of the niggers of Booloo.

And, with a dull thud, three well-directed bullets slapped into Skeleton's ham as it lay on the table, just in front of King Obob's nose.

"Put those lights out!" shouted Captain Handyman. "They are plugging at us from the rock!"

The launch, with her tow of boats, had circled the island, which stood up above the surrounding marshes like a miniature Gibraltar.

They were beyond gunshot, and there was no need for an explanation of the rifle-bullets which were whistling round the little flotilla.

Baron von Slyden, working on Obob's fears, had induced that unhappy monarch to allow him to bring his Askaris from the distant bank of the Nile, beyond the swamps, into the fortress.

These had been ferried across in the wide, flat-bottomed boats, which the niggers used for their rush-cutting, and, guided by the flare of the burning palace,

had not been long in reaching the island.

The lights in the boats were quickly extinguished as Captain Handyman, taking advantage of the cover of every patch of reeds that stuck up from the swamp, edged up towards the fortress to see what was doing.

Down wind came the hoarse, grating blare of the German trumpet-calls, and as the night-breeze parted the pall of smoke which hung over Booloo like a cloud, Captain Handyman gave an exclamation of anger.

The roof of a small hut had fallen in, sending up a momentary flash of flame. It only lasted a second.

But it lasted long enough to show the pirate flag of the German Empire fluttering blood-red in the glow from the flag-staff above the landing-place.

The Germans had taken possession of Booloo!

A Desperate Scheme.

The sight of the flag on the crest of rock at Booloo was to Captain Handyman like a red rag to a bull.

All over the rock the niggers could be heard shouting mournfully.

"What are they saying, Obob?" asked Captain Handyman of the ex-king of Booloo, as the launch came to a dead stop behind a large bunch of reeds, where she was out of sight of the town, allowing the whalers to range up alongside.

"Dey say 'king dead!'" replied Obob mournfully. "Dey tink me burn all up!"

"Cheer up, king!" said Dick Dorrington. "Have another ham sandwich?"

And in the darkness he handed the unhappy King of Booloo a magnificent sandwich, made of ham and raspberry jam.

Obob wept and ate his sandwich, whilst Captain Handyman, standing up in the launch, peered through the reeds behind which they were hidden, and strove to take in the situation.

There was no doubt that Baron von Slyden and his confederates had managed to smuggle their forces of armed Askaris on to this swamp-guarded stronghold.

These had seen the lights that were burning in the launch, and had potted at them with their rifles.

Now they were firing desultory shots at intervals.

But they had lost the track of the launch and her tow of whalers in the darkness, and their bullets flew wide.

The hoisting of the German flag in this fashion was practically an act of war, for Booloo was situate in British territory.

But Captain Handyman meant to have that flag down before dawn.

"If I don't get that dirty dishcloth down by sunrise," he muttered, "my name is mud!"

Then he turned to Obob, who was squatting weeping in the whaler amongst the boys, chewing at his sandwich of ham and raspberry jam as he wept.

"Come out of that boat, Obob!" said the captain. "I shall want you in the launch. I can hear those nuts ashore casting loose the chains of the war-canoes of your navy. We are going to have some naval manoeuvres."

"Me wan' more slupper!" said King Obob.

"Give him another sandwich, boys!" said the captain, laughing.

A huge sandwich, packed with ham and smeared with raspberry-jam, was soon made by the boys.

It was shoved into the huge black fist, and he was hoisted from the whaler into the launch.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "up with your guard-plates. The navy of Booloo is coming out to attack us!"

The boys did not take long in shipping the thin plates of Harveyised steel, which were provided for the protection of the whalers in savage warfare.

These were two feet high, and slipped into grooves in the gunnel.

They provided a shelter that would turn a bullet, and the slots which separated the plates at the rowlocks served as loopholes for rifle-fire.

It was Flint Pasha who had whispered a scheme to Captain Handyman, which that commander had been swift to adopt.

To put it into execution the king's help was necessary.

There was no doubt that the navy of Booloo was about to attack them.

This consisted of thirty or forty large war-canoes, driven by thirty paddles a side.

These canoes were fitted with large platforms astern and in the bows for the fighting men.

Taking them all round, they were ugly craft to encounter.

The clinking of the mooring-chains could be heard as these were loosed from their mooring-poles at the landing-place under the cliff.

It was also possible to hear the hum

of men, punctuated now and then by sharp orders from Von Slyden, who was placing guards of Askaris in each canoe to drive the nigger crews.

Captain Handyman chuckled under his breath.

"German Navy's coming out to fight!" he muttered. "British Navy is going to start running from 'em!"

And, setting his engine full speed ahead, he spun the steering-wheel of the launch, which shot out from behind the clump of reeds, and steered through one of the long waterways leading from the citadel.

A yell from the shore and a scatter of gunfire showed that Von Slyden and his mob could hear the chugging of the engine in the darkness.

The redoubling of the yells showed that the first canoes were getting off in chase of them.

The launch was travelling fast, for she was heading down the great stream of the Nile.

Twelve miles away, through the swamps, there was a spot known to Flint Pasha, who had discovered it by accident.

This was the Hongo Whirlpool, a huge swirl in the river, caused by the same freak of Nature which had forced the Rock of Booloo up through the bed of the great swamps.

The Whirlpool was caused by a twelve-mile long ridge of rock, which passed through the swamps like a backbone, sometimes submerged, sometimes cropping above the surface of the river, but always hidden by the huge banks of papyrus reed which covered the wide current of the Nile.

This ridge of rock, when the river was high, acted as a barrage against the huge flood which came pouring down from the great lakes of Central Africa, and, forcing the main current of the river over to the bank that bound the swamps, had created this whirlpool.

Very few niggers knew of its whereabouts, for it was hidden in the most secret labyrinth of the Great Swamp, and the Hongo Whirlpool was a name of dread amongst them.

But Captain Handyman was not afraid of the Hongo Whirlpool.

He figured that the launch had just enough power to fight her way into the great whirlpool, and to fight her way out again with her tow-boats.

But with the great clumsy war-canoes, with their inadequate paddles, it was another matter.

If Captain Handyman could only entice them into the Hongo, they could not fight their way out till the current slackened.

The current was running strong now. The river was swelling, and would probably continue to swell for a couple of days.

A big canoe, getting into the grip of the Hongo, would go whirling round in a monotonous circle of a mile and a half, unable to fight her way back to the entrance through the walls of reed.

This was Captain Handyman's plan of campaign, and he grinned to himself as he heard the threatening yells astern of them, and the thump of the war-drums that beat time for the paddlers.

He turned to Obob, who was sitting in the bottom of the launch.

"Obob," said Captain Handyman cheerfully, "when you have finished that sandwich I want you to get up in the eyes of the boat and show us the way."

Obob stopped chewing his sandwich and rolled his black eyes.

"Where you go?" he asked.

"I'm going into the Hongo," replied Captain Handyman, as cheerfully as though he were remarking that he was going for a stroll up the High Street.

Obob's jaw dropped.

"Obob, yow!" wailed the king. "Me no wantee go 'Ongo! Him too bad place!"

Then Obob suddenly started back.

With a swift movement Captain Handyman's fist had gone to his pocket.

Now the muzzle of a revolver, large as a small cannon, pressed cold on Obob's flat nose.

"It's the Hongo this trip, Old Jumbo's Tails!" said Captain Handyman, in a voice that left no inclination for contradiction. "You eat your sandwich, and get up in the front of the boat, and show the way through this range. If you play any hank I'll pump you full of lead as a bad dollar! Savvy?"

"Me savvy!" whined the king; and he crawled forward into the eyes of the launch, signalling as Captain Handyman directed, with his arms to right or left, as the dark, bewildering forking of the waterways led towards the dread Hongo Whirlpool!

(Another magnificent long instalment of this amazing new 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.)



TO LEAP FOR HIS LIFE!

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

A Splendid New Serial, introducing Bob Travers & Co., the Chums of Redclyffe.

By HERBERT BRITTON.



THE CHIEF CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY ARE:

BOB TRAVERS, DICKY TURNER, JACK JACKSON, and BUNNY, the chums of Study No. 5. MASON and HARRIS, the bullies of the Fourth, who share Study No. 2 with BARKER, the bounder. MR. CHAMBERS, the master of the Fourth Form. JIMMY WREN & CO., the chums of the New House.

In recent instalments it was told how Barker, the bounder, having been defeated in a fight with Jack Jackson, resolved to make the latter's life a misery, and disgrace him in the eyes of his schoolfellows. Barker discovered that Jackson's father was employed by his own father, and threatened to secure Jack's father's discharge if he did not obey his Barker's orders. Last week Jackson was chosen to play in the House match. Barker got to hear of it, and told Jackson that he would have to cut the footer match, and accompany him to the Plough and Harrow.

(Read on from here.)

Under the Bounder's Thumb.

"Don't be a cad, Barker! Be reasonable, for Heaven's sake! Let me—"

The bounder cut Jackson short with a wave of the hand.

"My dear chap," he drawled, "I'm being as reasonable as possible. It's most unfortunate that the House match should be coming off to-day. But you'll have to cut it, you will, really! I'm most anxious to have your company, you know."

"You rotter!" Jack Jackson clenched his fists tight in his anger. "You're doing this purposely! You know I'm keen on playing this afternoon, and—"

"Go on!" said Barker, with a sardonic grin. "I shouldn't have thought so. But what's it matter? You'll have another chance later on, no doubt."

"I sha'n't—I sha'n't!" muttered Jack Jackson helplessly. "Travers won't forgive me if I let him down to-day! Oh, you cad! You utter brute! Let me play this once—"

"Can't be done, my dear chap!" said the bounder. "I simply couldn't do without your company this afternoon! I'm absolutely yearning for it, doncher know! We'll leave the school at about half-past two. You can come to my study for me."

"I won't—I won't!" murmured Jack Jackson miserably.

"Really?" said Barker, with an air of mock surprise. "That means that I shall have to write to my gov'nor, and—"

"Oh!"

Jack Jackson muttered a low groan. He was under the bounder's thumb. The latter could do just what he liked with him. His will had to be obeyed.

Jack Jackson's father was employed by the bounder's father, and Jack knew that if he defied Barker the latter would do his utmost to get his father discharged from the firm of Fowke, Barker, & Kosman.

The bounder had threatened to do so once before, and Jack Jackson knew that it would not take much for Barker to carry out his threat.

Jack hated the thought of being the means of getting his father discharged, but he hated still more the idea of being compelled to mix with the bounder, the worst fellow in the Fourth.

If he defied Barker the latter would carry out his threat, but if he gave way to him he would lose his chance of securing a place in the Eleven, and would also incur the anger of his chums for mixing with the fellow who was despised by the majority of the Fourth-Formers. The latter alternative was bad enough, but the former—

Jack Jackson gave the bounder a

bitter look, a look that made no impression whatever on the latter.

"You needn't look so upset, my dear chap," he drawled. "I sha'n't ask you to drink or to play cards. I just want you to accompany me to the Plough and Harrow for er—er—well, for company. You see, I've taken a great fancy to you."

"You—you—"

"Now, don't get excited, my dear chap," drawled the bounder, patting Jack Jackson on the shoulder. "I think I'd better be getting along now. I believe I can hear your chums coming down the stairs. Don't forget. I shall expect you at half-past two."

Next instant Barker disappeared, and Jack Jackson remained on the stairs, gazing vacantly before him.

Bob Travers and several other fellows came running down the stairs, but they pulled up short at sight of Jackson.

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Travers. "What's the matter, old son? Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, y-y-y-yes!" faltered Jack Jackson, looking up.

"You ought to be jolly pleased with yourself!" said Bob Travers. "You've got a place in the House Eleven, and if you play up well you might squeeze into the junior team!"

Jack Jackson did not reply. His ambitions had been shattered like a house of cards.

He knew how happy he would have been had he been able to play that afternoon, and how he would have tried his utmost to have deserved another trial.

But now there was no hope for him.

He dreaded acquainting Bob Travers with the fact that he could not play that afternoon, dreaded answering the questions that Bob would be bound to put to him.

But it had to be done, and, realising this, he drew Bob aside and spoke in a whisper.

"C-c-can I speak to you for a moment, Bob?" he asked softly.

"With pleasure, old son!" replied Bob cheerfully. "Speak up, and—"

"Come downstairs," muttered Jack Jackson, and he led the way.

The other juniors watched Jackson in amazement as he disappeared round a bend in the stairs. They were considerably puzzled by the latter's manner.

Jack Jackson did not stop until he reached the Hall. Then he drew Bob aside, well away from two or three fags who were standing before the notice-board.

"I'm awfully sorry to let you down, Bob," he said quietly. "But—but I must ask you to excuse me this afternoon."

"Excuse you!" said Bob Travers in surprise.

"Yes; I sha'n't be able to play," said Jack Jackson. "I'm sorry, but—"

"My hat!" exclaimed Bob Travers. "What ever's the matter? Feel groggy, or—"

"N-n-no," faltered Jack Jackson. "I'd like to play, but—but I can't. I wouldn't have let you down for worlds, but I can't help it! I've got to go out, and—and—"

"Oh, well, it can't be helped!" said Bob. "It must be something jolly important to keep you from the game. I know that, as you've been so keen just lately."

Jack Jackson sighed. He had been keen—very keen—but it seemed that all his keenness had been for nothing.

He looked at Bob, wondering whether the latter's suspicions were aroused.

But there was no sign of suspicion on Bob Travers' face.

"Clang! Clang!"

The bell for dinner rang out at that moment, and it came as a relief to Jack Jackson.

He smiled faintly and walked off with his chum, but the expression soon vanished from his face, to give place to one of deep misery.

That meal proved to be the most un-

appetising of which Jack Jackson had ever partaken, and he was thoroughly glad when it was over.

He left the dining-hall, and strode out into the quadrangle alone.

Jack felt that he could not face his chums. Dicky Turner particularly he wished to avoid.

Dicky was outspoken, and would probably have demanded an explanation of his strange behaviour.

But Jack Jackson was not troubled by having to answer questions.

Most of the fellows were too keen on the match to worry about him.

Jack saw them all troop towards the football-field, and his heart ached with disappointment.

How he longed to be with them, and to play his hardest for the sake of his side.

But that afternoon was not to be an enjoyable one to him.

Sharp at half-past two Jack entered Barker's study. The latter gave him a cynical grin as he rose lazily from the easy-chair.

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "It's half-past two, then! I had no idea it was so late. Been reading, you know. Suppose you wouldn't like a tip for the races on Saturday—what?"

"You—you—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the bounder. "I quite forgot that sort of thing wasn't in your line. My dear chap, you don't know what's good for you."

"And I don't want to know!" declared Jack Jackson firmly.

"Go on!" said Barker sarcastically. "You may some day. I suppose you're looking forward to our little outing—what?"

"I'm not, and you know it, you cad!" cried Jack Jackson hotly. "Won't you let me watch the footer-match? You know how I dread going to that rotten pub, and—"

"My dear chap," broke in the bounder, "it's absolutely impos. I'm that keen on your company that I couldn't dream of giving way to you. Now, buck up! It's time we got a move on."

Jack Jackson held his head low as he left the study with the bounder.

He knew that the latter delighted in causing him pain, and he would have given anything to have thrashed the arrogant cad there and then.

But his hands were tied, so to speak—he could do nothing.

During the walk to the Plough and Harrow, that respectable inn in the village, Barker tried again and again to engage his victim in conversation.

But Jack refused to say anything. He couldn't—his mind was too full of anxious thoughts for him to speak to the bounder.

"Here we are," said Barker, at last, as they reached the public-house. "This way, old man!"

Jack Jackson followed the bounder meekly.

The latter made his way to a side door and pushed it open.

Then he entered a dingy bar-parlour, which reeked strongly of spirits and bad cigarette smoke.

Jack Jackson halted in the doorway, and was sorely tempted to turn tail and run.

But the bounder observed his intention. "Come inside, old man," he said. "Let me introduce to you my friends Mr. Doshier and Mr. Barlow—two of the best." The persons mentioned had been sitting at a table, but they rose and held out their coarse hands to the Redclyffe junior.

But Jack Jackson pretended not to see them. He looked in another direction.

The men, however, were quite unconcerned by the fact that they had been snubbed.

"What's the game, Mister Barker?" asked Doshier, turning to the bounder. "Brought your friend to have a game at cards, eh?"

The bounder laughed.

"No, Doshier, old sport," he said cheer-

fully. "We won't make him play this time. He's not keen, you know; one of those good little chaps, and—"

Mr. Doshier winked knowingly.

"I've got you," he said coarsely. "I suppose he's got no objection to us having a bit of sport."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Barker. "It's all the same if he has. Take a seat, Jackson, old chap, and keep your eyes on us. You may be able to pick up some points, you know."

Barker sat down at the table with the two men, and commenced to shuffle the cards.

Jack Jackson took a seat in the far corner of the room, gazing moodily out of the window.

His thoughts turned at once to his chums on the footer-field, and he wondered what they thought of him for missing the match.

But a little later, when the game of cards had been in progress for fully ten minutes, Jack was brought back to his surroundings by a shout from the bounder.

"Jackson," he exclaimed, puffing out a cloud of cigarette-smoke, "pass me that glass of whisky from the counter!"

Jack hesitated, and gave the bounder a meaning look.

"Pass that glass, d'you hear?" exclaimed Barker.

Jack Jackson passed the glass, and went back to his chair again.

The game of cards continued, and Jack Jackson was not troubled for a while.

He strolled to the door, and looked out across the open country, but Barker made no attempt to call him back.

Nevertheless, the bounder was keeping a wary eye on him.

Then, when Jack Jackson's back was turned to the bar counter, Barker made a sign to the man behind the bar, and handed him a small paper packet.

The man nodded, and, after pouring a bottle of lemonade into a glass, he emptied the contents of the paper packet into it—a white powder.

Barker waited until this had dissolved, and then he called to Jack Jackson.

"Jackson," he shouted, "there's a glass of lemonade for you on the counter!"

"Thanks, but I don't want it!" said Jack Jackson shortly.

"By gad!" drawled the bounder. "Don't be so stand-offish. Drink it up at once. I shall be coming along in a minute."

"I'd rather not, thanks all the same."

"Drink it up, I tell you!" exclaimed Barker harshly. "If you don't, I shall have—"

The bounder paused, and wagged a finger at Jack Jackson.

Jack Jackson understood that Barker was threatening him once again, and very much against his will he swallowed the liquid.

Five minutes or so later Barker rose to his feet, and bid his companions goodbye.

"Come on, Jackson, old chap!" he said, as he moved out of the dingy room. "It hasn't been so bad, after all, has it?"

Jack Jackson grunted, but he said nothing.

"I consider I've let you down pretty lightly, considering," went on Barker. "I might have insisted upon your playing cards, and then— Here, take hold of my arm!"

Jack Jackson had suddenly swayed in the road.

The bounder caught him at once, and held on to him tightly.

There was a very curious expression on Jack Jackson's face, and as he noticed it the bounder smiled.

"It's working, by gum!" he muttered. "Jolly good job he didn't see what I put into that glass!"

"W-w-what did you say?" muttered Jack Jackson, staring vacantly at the bounder.

"Oh, nothing," replied Barker casually. "Here, hold 'em up!" he added, as Jack Jackson staggered across the road.

"Won't the Redclyffe fellows have a fit when they see you! But I'm not done yet, my pippin!"

The bounder drew a small bottle of whisky from his pocket, and, withdrawing the cork, he poured a small quantity over Jack Jackson's coat.

"Now then," he said, taking a firm hold on Jack Jackson's arm. "The next job is to get you to Redclyffe, and then— Ha, ha, ha!"

Barker broke into a chuckle as he thought of the surprise he was going to give the Redclyffe juniors.

Jack Jackson was quite oblivious to his surroundings.

The drug which Barker had had dropped in the lemonade was fast taking effect, and Jack Jackson exhibited every evidence of being in an intoxicated state.

The bounder had a difficult task to prevent his victim from collapsing, but at last they reached the gates of Redclyffe, at the very moment that the junior footballers were returning to the school, excited and cheerful.

They pulled up short at sight of the bounder and the helpless junior.

"Jackson!" gasped Dicky Turner. "What the dickens is the matter?"

Mason, the bully of the Fourth, approached, and as he smelt the whisky which Barker had poured on Jack Jackson's coat, he started with amazement.

"Squiffy, by gum!" he exclaimed.

"Rot!" said Bob Travers. "He can't be! He—"

"Smell him, then!" said Mason. "He fairly reeks of it. The chap's drunk—absolutely gone to the wide!"

"What utter nonsense!" cried Bob Travers, sniffing the air. "He must be ill. Where did you find him, Barker?"

"Where do you think?" said the bounder artfully. "I was walking past the Plough and Harrow when I saw him lying on the ground helpless. I couldn't leave him there to disgrace the school, so—"

"Don't talk piffle!" exclaimed Bob Travers wrathfully. "Jackson wouldn't do such a thing!"

The bounder sniffed disdainfully.

"Apparently you are not acquainted

with Jackson's habits," he said. "I say I found him outside the Plough and Harrow, and if you want proof there are several people there who'll give it."

Bob Travers gasped.

"My hat!" he muttered. "This is the giddy limit! I can't believe it's true! Jackson's dead straight!"

"Just shows how he's deceived you," said the bounder. "What did he miss the match for this afternoon? Why did he go out on his own—eh? My dear Travers, you've been taken in. Your pal Jackson's let you down with a bump this time. Hadn't you better get him up to the dormitory? I don't know whether you want Chambers to see him in this frightful state!"

Bob Travers glanced at the other juniors.

"Lend a hand, you fellows!" he said. "We must get him up to the dormitory without being spotted. It would mean the boot for Jackson if the masters spotted him like this."

"Perhaps it would serve the dear fellow right," said Barker.

"Shut up, you rotter!" cried Bob indignantly. "Come on, you fellows! Let's hurry up! The sooner we get Jackson into the dorm the better!"

"Hear, hear!" chuckled the bounder.

By sheer luck Bob Travers & Co. managed to get their helpless chum up to the dormitory without being observed. There they laid him out on a bed and left him.

The rest of the evening they spent in speculating the cause of Jack Jackson's mysterious behaviour.

They could hardly bring themselves to think that he was the worse for drink, and yet how else could they account for his strange condition?

Before bed-time that night the faith of many juniors in Jack Jackson had received a big shaking.

Trouble in the Dormitory.

"Phew! What a niff!"

Mason, the bully of the Fourth, made the remark when the Fourth Form juniors entered their dormitory that night.

There was a strong smell of whisky in the air, and Mason was not the only junior there who noticed it.

There was a regular chorus of sniffs and several exclamations from the surprised Fourth-Formers.

"This is a bit too thick!" went on Mason. "The place reeks like a tap-room!"

"Ten times worse!" chimed in Harris. "That rotter Jackson must have soaked himself with whisky!"

"Look at the rotter!" said Mason, pointing to Jack Jackson's recumbent form on one of the beds. "He hasn't got over it yet! He's absolutely— By gad! The rotter's moving!"

"So he is!"

Jack Jackson stirred slowly, and raised himself on his hand.

His other hand rose to his head, and he gazed around him in perplexity.

"Where—where am I?" he murmured.

"I—"

Bob Travers was at his chum's side in an instant.

"Lie back, old son!" he said in kindly tones. "You'll be all right presently!"

"But—"

"Have the rotter out!" exclaimed Mason. "Let's make him run the gantlet! That'll soon work off the effects of the whisky!"

Jack Jackson's mind in a bewildered state, started at the mention of whisky.

"What's the matter?" he asked in a feeble voice. "I don't remember coming here. I—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Mason. "He doesn't remember coming here, you fellows! Ha, ha!"

"Shut up, Mason, you cad!" exclaimed Bob Travers angrily.

"Sha'n't shut up!" snapped Mason. "I shall say just what I like! The rotter's the worse for drink, and I'm for giving him a jolly good ragging!"

"So am I!" cried several supporters of Mason.

Jack Jackson stared at the accusing faces around him in amazement.

His mind was in a very dazed state, and he did not comprehend all the juniors' remarks.

He understood that they were accusing him of having done something, the nature of which he could not fathom.

He turned questioning to Bob Travers.

"Bob," he muttered, "why am I here? I remember going to the—the—"

Jack Jackson paused.

"To the Plough and Harrow!" broke in Mason, with a hilarious laugh. "We know where you went this afternoon, you rotter! Don't you remember Barker finding you helpless in the road?"

"Helpless—in—the-road?" repeated Jack Jackson slowly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Mason. "I suppose his brain is still too fuddled for him to remember exactly what happened. Don't you remember getting drunk, you rotter?"

"Drunk!" muttered Jack Jackson; and then he turned to Bob Travers once again. "For goodness' sake tell me what is the matter, Bob?" he urged. "I remember going out this afternoon, but I can't remember coming back. My head aches frightfully, and—and—"

Jack Jackson broke off short as once again Mason & Co. burst into a hilarious chuckle.

"Fancy the rotter having a headache!" he remarked to his cronies. "I'd like to meet a kid who could drink a bottle of whisky without feeling the effects!"

"If you don't shut up, you cad—"

began Bob Travers, and then he paused as he heard footsteps in the passage.

"For goodness' sake buck up and get your things off, you fellows!" he added. "Here's Harcourt coming to see lights out, and if he sees us like this—"

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Mason.

"It's only right that he should be told about Jackson, and— Ow! Yow! Yoooop!"

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

Bob Travers drove his fist full in Mason's face and sent him to the floor. Next moment Harcourt, the captain of Redclyffe, entered the dormitory. "Great Scott!" he exclaimed in surprise. "What—what the dickens are you kids up to?"

"Only a little disagreement, Harcourt!" explained Bob Travers quickly. "Mason said something I didn't quite approve of, so I knocked him down."

Harcourt gave Bob a grim look. "H'm!" he said. "As you've seen fit to spend the time you should have devoted to undressing in settling your disagreements, you'll have to undress in the dark."

With that Harcourt turned out the light and departed from the dormitory. It was really very fortunate that Bob had knocked Mason down, otherwise the captain of the school might have held an inquiry as to why the juniors were grouped round Jack Jackson's bed.

As it was, his whole attention was given to the disagreement between Bob

and the bully, and he did not even glance at Jack Jackson.

Very soon after the door of the dormitory closed Mason lighted a candle and placed it on one of the washstands.

"Now, then," he said, "who's for making Jack Jackson run the gauntlet?"

"You'll leave Jackson alone!" said Bob Travers firmly. "If you dare to lay your hands on him I'll give you a thundering good hiding!"

"You—you—" spluttered Mason, as he observed Dicky Turner and Applby and Hawkins, and one or two other juniors moving to Bob Travers' side. "Why should you shield the cad?" he demanded.

"For the simple reason that I'm not going to have him handled by you rotters until his guilt is proved!" said Bob Travers.

"Well, let him prove he's innocent!" said Mason. "If he can do that we won't touch him."

Jack Jackson sat up in bed, still hold-

ing his aching head, and looked pleadingly at Bob Travers.

"For goodness' sake tell me what's the matter, Bob!" he urged. "What are these fellows accusing me of? What the dickens have I done?"

"I'll jolly soon tell you, you rotter!" exclaimed Mason. "I'm going to ask you a number of questions, and if you don't answer them satisfactorily we're going to make you run the gauntlet!"

"Go ahead, Mason!"

"Where did you go this afternoon?" demanded Mason.

"I went out," replied Jack Jackson, and his eyes searched for the bouncer, who was standing at the back of the group of juniors.

"I know you went out!" snapped Mason irritably. "Where did you go?"

"I—I—" faltered Jack Jackson helplessly.

"Did you go to the Plough and Harrow?"

No reply.

"For the second and last time," went on Mason relentlessly, "did you go inside the Plough and Harrow in the village?"

Still Jack Jackson did not answer. He stared at the coverlet of the bed, almost afraid to face the accusing juniors.

"Very well," continued Mason. "As you refuse to answer the question, we presume you did go in the place. Now answer the next question. Did you have anything to drink while you were out?"

Jack Jackson looked up once again.

"I—I had a glass of lemonade," he answered slowly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mason. "Pretty strong sort of lemonade, I should say! How many bucketsful did you have?"

"What—what are you driving at, you cad?" said Jack Jackson, raising his voice for the first time.

"I'm just trying to prove that you were brought back to the school this afternoon suffering from the effects of whisky," explained Mason. "We found you in the road—or, at least, Barker did—and carried you home. Luckily, we managed to get you up to the dormitory without being seen, but—"

"You cad!" cried Jack Jackson hotly. "How dare you make such an accusation! I've never tasted whisky in my life, and—"

"Well, how do you account for the state you were in this afternoon?"

"I—I—" Jack Jackson faltered. He simply could not account for what had happened, for the simple reason that he did not remember anything after leav-

ing the Plough and Harrow with the bouncer.

"I think we can consider that Jackson's guilt has been proved," said Mason, addressing the circle of juniors. "He admits having drunk some whisky—I mean lemonade—it's the same thing, really, so far as he's concerned—and he admits going to the Plough and Harrow—or, rather, he declines to admit not going there. Is he guilty, or not guilty?"

There came a roar from Mason's cronies:

"Guilty!"

"Is he to be made to run the gauntlet?"

"Rather!"

"Well, have him out!"

Next instant more than half the fellows in the Fourth Form dormitory made a rush for Jack Jackson, hurling Bob Travers and his chums unceremoniously aside.

(Another magnificent long instalment of this splendid new 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.)

A DESPERATE VENTURE!

A Splendid Long Complete Story,
Dealing with the Barring-Out at the School in the Backwoods.
By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter. Nothing Doing.

Knock!

The butt of a riding-whip crashed on the door of the schoolhouse at Cedar Creek.

Three heads were put out of a window at once—those of Frank Richards, Bob Lawless, and Vere Beauclerc.

It was Old Man Gunten who was rapping at the door.

The fat Swiss storekeeper of Thompson Town looked round, glaring at the three smiling faces.

Frank Richards nodded genially. "Good-morning, Mr. Gunten!" he said affably.

A snort was Old Man Gunten's reply. He was not in an affable mood.

"You've come along to tell us that you're giving in?" asked Bob Lawless. "You young rascal!"

"Eh?"

"You young villain!"

"Dear me!" said Bob, unmoved. "Is that the kind of manners you learn on the School Board, Mr. Gunten? You ought really to chuck it up, and come to school instead. We'd teach you manners here."

"I've come to talk sense to you young scallywags!" shouted Mr. Gunten.

"Why don't you begin, then?"

"This foolishness has been going on long enough!" exclaimed the storekeeper. "It's got to come to an end!"

"We're ready when you are," said Frank Richards. "You know the terms. Let our schoolmistress, Miss Meadows, come back, and it's all over. Until then we hold Cedar Creek School against all comers!"

"Hear, hear!" came a shout from within the lumber schoolhouse.

"You're wasting your time, Mr. Gunten," said Vere Beauclerc. "You ought to know by this time that we're not giving in."

"I guess I know how you stand," said Mr. Gunten, with a scowl. "You've got no food there."

"You can send us some, if you like. We'll pay spot cash!" suggested Bob Lawless.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Old Man Gunten did not look as if he would be likely to send provisions to the rebels of Cedar Creek, even for spot cash.

"What's going to happen to you if you stay there without food?" he snorted.

"Probably we shall get hungry," replied Bob. "It seems probable, to me. What do you think yourself?"

"Now, look here!" said Old Man Gunten, unheeding Bob's remark and the chuckle that followed. "I'm willing to be reasonable. Miss Meadows can't come back. She has been discharged by the board of trustees."

"By you!" said Frank.

"Your new headmaster, Mr. Peckover, has been duly appointed by the board."

"Which means you!"

"But I've spoken to him, and he agrees to let you off unpunished if you return to your duty at once," said Mr. Gunten. "Nothing more will be said about this affair, on condition that you stop this nonsense at once."

"Rats!"

"What!" roared the unhappy trustee.

"Bosh!"

"You young rascals!"

"Go home!" said Bob cheerfully. "Go



FRANK RICHARDS & CO.'S METHOD OF DEALING WITH THE RUSTLER!

home and think it out again, Mr. Gunten. Second thoughts are best, you know."

"Mind, you won't get any food till you give in!" said Mr. Gunten savagely. "I've got a dozen men watching the school, and any kid who comes out will be roped in at once, thrashed, and sent home!"

"How kind of you!"

"If you stick there you'll starve!" roared Mr. Gunten.

"What a weight on your conscience if we do!" said Bob. "Still, your conscience is pretty tough, isn't it, Mr. Gunten?"

Mr. Gunten seemed on the verge of an attack of apoplexy.

He had given the rebels of Cedar Creek time enough, as he thought, to come to their senses.

But there was certainly no sign of surrender on the part of Frank Richards & Co.

They were "on strike" until Miss Meadows was reinstated at Cedar Creek, and they intended to make it a fight to a finish.

As a matter of fact, they were encouraged by Mr. Gunten's visit and by his offer, which was a great concession—from his point of view.

It looked as if the chairman of the board of trustees was getting alarmed at the length to which the school strike had gone.

It was an unprecedented state of affairs, and it certainly reflected no credit upon the school management.

Intervention was certain, sooner or later, from the powers that were, and Mr. Gunten could not expect to emerge from an official inquiry with flying colours.

But it was only too clear that there was "nothing doing."

"Any more remarks to make?" asked Bob Lawless, as the storekeeper stood silent, nonplussed. "If not, good-bye!"

"For the last time!" said Mr. Gunten. "Look here, you'll all be let off. Isn't that good enough for you?"

"Nix!"

"Then you can stick there and starve!" roared Old Man Gunten; and, shaking his fat fist at the smiling faces at the window, he strode back to his horse.

As he led the animal out of the gateway in the school fence a rough-looking man joined him there.

It was Four Kings, the leader of the "Red Dog crowd" of Thompson.

Mr. Gunten spoke a few words to the ruffian, and then mounted and rode away down the trail.

Four Kings remained lounging in the gateway, smoking his pipe.

Cedar Creek School was evidently being

carefully watched, and undoubtedly it was costing Mr. Gunten a good many dollars.

And the end of the affair seemed more and more doubtful to the Swiss storekeeper as it was prolonged day after day.

Old Man Gunten was not in a happy mood as he trotted home to Thompson.

The 2nd Chapter. A Desperate Venture.

Frank Richards closed and barred the window-shutter as the storekeeper departed.

The garrison of Cedar Creek were always on the alert, watching for a possible attempt to rush their stronghold.

The Red Dog men, however, seemed to be contented to remain watching the school, to "bag" any fellow who ventured outside.

They had attacked once, and had been defeated, with the help of the cattlemen from the Lawless Ranch; and Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, had warned Four Kings & Co. that if they attacked again they would have him to deal with.

That warning was quite enough for the Red Dog crowd, who had been severely handled by the cowboys on the previous occasion.

But matters were growing serious for the rebels besieged in the lumber school. The last of their provisions had almost gone, and how to obtain fresh supplies was a serious problem.

The garrison had been reduced day after day, as fellows were called away by their parents. The latter, while disapproving of Mr. Gunten's proceedings, could not quite approve of a schoolboy strike.

There were now only seven fellows in the garrison—Frank Richards, Bob Beauclerc, Eben Hacke, Yen Chin, and two others.

But seven were enough to hold the fort, unless Four Kings tried his device again of "smoking out" the defenders; but that he did not dare to do.

Starving them out, however, though slower, was a sure method.

"I guess it looks a bit serious," Bob Lawless remarked, as Frank barred the shutter. "Of course, we're not giving in."

"No fear!" said Frank emphatically. "If we don't, Old Man Gunten must!" remarked Vere Beauclerc. "You can see that he's getting anxious. I shouldn't wonder if the authorities have taken some step already, and he knows of it. If they send a man here to investigate, Mr. Gunten would like the trouble over before he comes."

"It won't be over," said Eben Hacke. "But what the thunder are we going to do for grub?"

"No grubbee to eat," remarked Yen Chin dolorously.

"Oh, we can gnaw our belts, if it comes to that."

"Grooh!"

"We've got to make a break," said Frank. "We've tried it after dark, and we were stopped, and jolly nearly nabbed. We shall have to make another attempt to-day."

Bob Lawless nodded.

"It's risky," he said.

"But what else is there to do?"

"Nothing," agreed Bob. "We've got to chance it. But, mind, if two of us go out, and get roped in, the rest are to hold out, all the same."

"That's settled."

Bob Lawless reflected.

It was not an easy task to get through the watchers outside the school, though he did not believe that they numbered a dozen.

Such a number would have meant a considerable expenditure of dollars, more than Mr. Gunten would be likely to disburse if he could help it.

Four Kings probably had five or six companions scattered among the timber round the school.

In actual combat the schoolboys were no match for the burly rustlers, and if they were caught their return to the school would be impossible.

It was a knotty position, but it was pretty clear that the attempt had to be made.

Bob Lawless made up his mind, and he gave his instructions to his followers. Bob and Frank climbed out of an upper window to the roof of the schoolhouse, where it was possible to drop to the ground behind the buildings.

At the same time Beauclerc and Hacke slid from a window into the playground in front.

There they were in full view of Four Kings, smoking in the gateway.

The ruffian sighted them at once as they came towards the gateway, as if intending to make a sudden rush through. He gave a shrill whistle, and three or four men came running up to join him. Beauclerc and Hacke paused halfway to the gates, and Four Kings waved his pipe at them.

"Kim on!" he called out mockingly.

The two schoolboys came on, but paused again, and there was a chortle from the group of ruffians in the gateway.

All their attention was given to the two, as Bob had guessed would be the case.

Meanwhile, Bob and Frank had dropped

from the schoolhouse roof at the back, and, hidden by the buildings from the sight of Four Kings & Co., they were studding for the fence on the other side of the playground.

They reached it and clambered over.

Outside there was no sign of a watch.

"I guess we'll do it," muttered Bob. "Drop and chance it, Franky, and run as if you had a bull buffalo behind you."

"Right-ho!"

They dropped from the fence, and ran for the timber.

In a couple of minutes they were among the trees.

From the roof of the schoolhouse Yen Chin was watching, and as the two comrades disappeared into the timber the little Chinese climbed back into the house.

A minute later his pigtailed head was put out of the lower window, and he signed to Beauclerc and Hacke.

They retreated to the schoolhouse at once, followed by a roar of laughter from Four Kings, who concluded that they had given up the idea of making a rush through the gateway.

"All serene?" asked Beauclerc, as he reached the window.

Yen Chin nodded and grinned.

"Allee light! Flanky and Bob gone."

"Good!"

Beauclerc and Hacke climbed in, and the shutter was closed and barred again.

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were on their way to Cedar Camp, through the forest, and their comrades at the school could only wait and hope for the best.

The 3rd Chapter. Getting a Lift.

"Here we are!"

Bob Lawless spoke in terms of great satisfaction as he and his chum came in sight of Cedar Camp.

They had had a long tramp through the forest, but they were strong and fit, and the miles had flitted fast under their feet.

They had seen nothing of Four Kings and his comrades, who were still under the impression that they were within the besieged schoolhouse.

They were glad enough to see Cedar Camp.

"Good luck!" said Frank Richards. "We've done the first half of the job, anyway, Bob."

"And well do the rest," said Bob cheerily.

They entered the Hotel Continental—the log hotel at which Frank Richards had stopped when he first arrived in the Thompson Valley, to join his uncle in Canada.

Their first proceeding was to order a square meal, having arrived at dinner-time, when the habitués of the Continental were sitting down to their midday repast.

After that important preliminary they proceeded to the camp store, where they made their purchases.

There had been a "whip-round" at Cedar Creek for cash, and they were well supplied with dollars, which they laid out to the best advantage.

Provisions of all kinds were stacked into their haversacks, which were decidedly heavy by the time they had finished.

"I reckon it will be a hefty job, getting this lot back," remarked Bob Lawless, as they left the store. "We've got to do it, though. We may get a lift on the trail as far as the timber."

They started out of the camp, keeping their eyes open for any passing vehicle.

There were two miles of trail ahead of them before they reached the forest, and a lift would have been very welcome.

A quarter of an hour later there was a rumble of wheels behind them.

Bob looked round quickly.

"By gum! It's the post-wagon!" he exclaimed.

"Kern Gunten!" shouted Frank.

They stopped in the trail.

The post-wagon was driven by Kern Gunten, the son of the Swiss storekeeper, who was postmaster of Thompson.

Gunten gave a start as he saw his two former schoolfellows standing by the trail, waiting for him to come up.

He whipped up the horses, evidently not being desirous of stopping to speak to them.

Bob Lawless jumped into the middle of the trail.

"Halt!" he called out.

"Stand aside!" shouted back Gunten.

"Halt, I tell you!"

Kern Gunten did not heed.

He drove right on, and it looked for a moment as if the rancher's son would be dashed aside by the horses.



A DESPERATE VENTURE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

But Bob Lawless stepped to one side in time, and caught one of the horses, Frank Richards catching at the other. The two animals were dragged to a halt. Kern Gunten gripped his whip hard, as if thinking of using it on the chums of Cedar Creek, but he refrained. Now that the wagon was stopped that proceeding was a little too risky. It would certainly have been followed by painful results for the Swiss. He glared down at the schoolboys in the trail. "What do you want?" he snapped. "We want a lift as far as the timber," answered Bob. "You won't get it."

"Your mistake," answered Bob Lawless cheerily. "Jump in, Franky!" "What-ho!" said Frank. Again Gunten gripped the whip hard, but again he decided not to use it. Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin clambered into the wagon. Kern Gunten watched them with an angry scowl. "You've no right to shove yourselves into this wagon!" he snarled. "I guess you know that, you pesky rotters!" "Better language," said Bob. "We might chuck you out, and leave you to walk, you know."

Gunten snarled. "So you're out of school," he said. "My popper thinks you are still in the school-house." Bob pointed to the two stacked haversacks in the wagon. "Lift out for grub," he answered. "You'll get bagged as you go back. Four Kings is on the watch for you, and four or five other galoots."

"We're changing that." "I guess they'll be feeding on the grub you've been buying," grinned Gunten, restored to good-humour by the thought, as he drove on the wagon. The heavy post-wagon rattled on down the trail. "Where do you want a lift to?" grunted Gunten. "As far as Old Man Beauclerc's shack."

"I'm not going half the way. I turn off on the southern trail, along Cedar Creek. You know that?" "You can go out of your way a bit for us," said Bob coolly. "These haversacks are rather hefty, and we want all the lift we can get."

"I can't turn out of the way for you!" roared Gunten. "You can try," grinned Bob. "We'll see that you succeed."

"Look here—" "If you'd been a bit more civil, we wouldn't have made you—now we will!" said Bob. "That'll be a lesson to you in manners. You need it."

Gunten gritted his teeth, and drove on. "You'll get it in the neck at Cedar Creek," he said, after driving on in silence for some time. "The superintendent's coming."

"Oh!" said Frank Richards. "Who's that?" "The school superintendent from Kamloops," said Gunten. "He's coming up the valley to investigate into the affair at the school. Miss Meadows has seen him about it. You'll get turned out of Cedar Creek, for a cert, you two; you're the ring-leaders. And I shall come back when Mr. Peckover gets in as headmaster," he added, with a sneer.

"Mr. Peckover isn't in yet," said Frank. "The superintendent will bring you to your senses, I reckon," said Gunten. "He may bring your popper to his!" suggested Bob Lawless. "Anyhow, we're not giving in, if they bring along the whole Board of Education of British Columbia. You've been turned out of the school, Gunten, for jolly good reasons, and that's why your popper got Miss Meadows sacked, and a new Head appointed. But he won't work the ruffian. You turn off here, kid," added Bob, as the wagon rumbled on to the fork in the trail.

"I don't turn off," said Gunten doggedly. "I calculate you do!" Bob Lawless gripped the wrist of the Swiss, and Gunten surrendered, with a fierce scowl. The post-wagon turned off on the trail towards the timber. Gunten reluctantly drove on till the Beauclerc shack came in sight—deserted now, as Vere Beauclerc was at Cedar Creek, and his father, the remittance-man, was absent from home.

Near the shack the wagon stopped, and Frank jumped out, Bob tossing the haversacks to him, and then following. "Thanks for the lift, Gunten!" called out Frank, with a smile. "Hang you!" was Gunten's reply. He pulled the horses round, and drove off to get back to the Cedar Creek trail, leaving the chums to tramp into the timber. "I guess that lift has saved us some trouble," remarked Bob Lawless, as they plunged into the shadow of the forest. "Only two miles to the school from here if we cut through the timber; and I guess I know all the trails."

The two schoolboys shouldered the haversacks, and started on their tramp. They tramped on cheerily, despite the weight of their burdens and the difficult nature of the ground. As they entered on the last half mile Bob Lawless suddenly halted in the midst of the thick timber. "Hallo! What's that, Franky?" he exclaimed, holding up his hand.

From the depths of the timber, in the direction of the school, there came a sudden cry. It was a cry that told of surprise and pain mingled, and it was followed by silence. The chums looked at one another. "Somebody hurt!" said Frank Richards, in a low voice. Bob Lawless wrinkled his brows. "I guess it's some galoot in trouble," he said. "Those Red Dog toughs are around, and they may have—" He paused. "Franky, we ought to be moseying back to Cedar Creek as fast as we can hump it; but—"

"But if that's somebody in trouble—" "I guess we've got to give him a look in," said Bob. "Shove the bags in the thicket here; they'll be safe till we come for them. Come on, Franky!" The haversacks were hastily thrust out of sight in the green thicket, and the chums of Cedar Creek hurried on through the timber as fast as the underwoods allowed, in the direction of the cry they had heard.

The 4th Chapter.

A Pilgrim and a Stranger!

A loud, rough voice reached the ears of the schoolboys as they hurried on. It came from ahead of them, where a trail ran through the wood, which they could already see through the openings of the trees. "Take it easy, old gent! I guess you're going to get hurt if you cut up a rumpus! You hear me yaup!" "You scoundrel!"

"Take it easy, pard! I ain't going to hurt yer, but I calculate you are going to pony up your dust." "Give him a sockdologer on the cabeza, as a warning, Dick!" came another rough voice—the voice of Four Kings, the leader of the Red Dog crowd. Frank Richards and Bob came to a sudden halt where the thickets still screened them from the trail.

As they looked out from the trees, a startling sight met their gaze. A man in "store-clothes," well dressed, and evidently a stranger in the section, was lying on his back in the trail, and Euchre Dick had a brawny knee planted on his chest, pinning him down. Four Kings stood beside them, holding a lasso, the loop of which was round the fallen man's body.

Evidently the stranger had been "roped in" by the two ruffians, and in falling he had uttered the cry which reached the ears of the schoolboys in the timber. Four Kings knelt beside the fallen man, and began to turn out his pockets. Frank and Bob Lawless exchanged a troubled look.

"We can't let them rob that galoot, Franky!" muttered Bob. "Look here, we've got to chip in. Get hold of a club, and we'll wade in, and I reckon we shall take them by surprise, and we'll have a chance of downing them."

Frank Richards nodded. He was prepared to take the risk. It was easy enough to obtain bludgeons by breaking off stout branches and whittling them with their pocket-knives. At length Frank Richards drew a quick, deep breath. "Ready!" he whispered. "Come on!" muttered Bob.

He led the way with a rush, Frank Richards following him like a shot. The sudden dash took them out of the timber and into the middle of the trail before the rustlers could take the alarm. Euchre Dick gave a sudden shout as he spotted them, but it was too late. He reeled back from the man he was kneeling on as Bob's bludgeon smote him across the head.

Four Kings, still on his knees, spun round, catching at the knife in his belt as he did so, and at the same moment Frank Richards struck him full and square. The heavy bludgeon crashed on the ruffian's head, and Four Kings dropped in the trail like a log. He did not move again. Euchre Dick had fallen, but he leaped up, backing away and clutching at a

weapon, but both the schoolboys were upon him, lashing out fiercely, well aware of what would happen if the rascal succeeded in drawing his pistol. Bob's blow caught him on the shoulder, and a second later Frank Richards struck him on the head, and Euchre Dick fell into the grass. He lay there and howled, with his hands up to guard his head. "Let up! I pass!" he yelled. "Pass, pardners! Let up!" "Get the rope—quick, Franky!" panted Bob.

Four Kings lay unconscious, but he was already showing signs of returning to himself, and there was not a moment to waste. Frank Richards caught up the loose end of the lasso and bound Euchre Dick's wrists together. Then he turned to Four Kings and dragged his hands together, while Bob Lawless bound them securely. "Our game!" gasped Bob. The stranger was sitting up in the grass, blinking at the schoolboys through his glasses dazedly.

Bob Lawless relieved him of the loop of the lasso, and Frank helped him to his feet. Bob picked up his hat and handed it to him. "Bless my soul!" ejaculated the stranger, taking the hat. "Bless me! I—I guess I'm under an obligation to you, my lads. You came along very luckily for me."

"We had some luck, too, sir," said Frank Richards, smiling. "If we hadn't taken those rotters by surprise they would have handled us pretty severely." "You took a great risk, too, my boy!" "All's well that ends well," said Frank. "Here's some of your things, sir. I think that's the lot."

He gathered up the stranger's belongings, which Four Kings had laid in the grass as he abstracted them. Four Kings had come to his senses now, with a terrific headache and a furious temper, and he was struggling with the rope on his wrists. But he could not get loose, and he sat in the grass and poured out a stream of savage oaths.

Bob Lawless picked up his cudgel and gave the ruffian a light tap on the head with it. "Stow the chinwag!" he said. And Four Kings, who did not want another tap, promptly "stowed" it. The stranger restored his purse, watch, and other belongings to his pockets, and dusted his hat and replaced it. He was rather a good-looking gentleman, with a plump, kind face, and the schoolboys liked his looks.

He had recovered his breath now and his equanimity, though he was still feeling the effects of the bump on the hard trail. "I am very much obliged to you, my boys," he said. "You have saved me from being robbed, and perhaps from ill-usage. I should like to know your names."

"Frank Richards, sir." "Bob Lawless." "You belong to this part of the country?" "Yes; the Lawless Ranch, down the valley," said Bob. "Bless my soul!" exclaimed the stranger. "Then you belong to Cedar Creek School, I suppose?" Bob Lawless nodded, with a smile. "Yes, we're Cedar Creek chaps," he said.

The stranger looked at them very attentively. He was manifestly interested in the circumstance that they belonged to the school, though the chums could not guess why. "Are you going to let a galoot go?" growled Euchre Dick. "You can go as soon as you like," answered Bob. "I dare say your pards will untie you when you find them. Vamoose!"

"I guess I can't mosey along like this." "I guess you'll have to," said Bob, "and if you don't mosey along at once I'll help you with my boot!" The two ruffians, cursing, disappeared into the timber, with their hands still bound. "You're all right now?" "Yes, certainly. But where is the haste?" asked the stranger, looking at him sharply. "We've got to get back to the school." "For your lessons?" "Ahem! Not exactly."

Bob hesitated a moment, and then went on: "There's a bit of a shindy in our school now, sir, and those rustlers who tried to rob you are up against us." "It's a barring-out," explained Frank Richards, with a grin. "Old Man Gunten, the chairman of the trustees, has sacked

our schoolmistress, and we're not having it. So we've gone on strike, and we're holding out." "Yet you are here—" "We had to get out to get in some provisions. Old Man Gunten is trying to starve us out."

"But what have those ruffians to do with it?" "Mr. Gunten is employing them to down us," explained Bob. "We've got to get in before they get back to the rest of the gang and warn them that we're out of school. We've got our bags near here. Good-bye, sir!" "One moment. Is Mr. Gunten, a school trustee, actually employing ruffians of that type against the school-boys?" "Yes, rather!" said Frank. "We've had more than one tussle with them already. But we must get off, sir."

"I will come with you a little way," said the stranger. "I am very much interested in this." "Just as you like, sir." The two schoolboys hurried into the timber, the stranger accompanying them, and the two haversacks were taken up again. Then they started for Cedar Creek at a good pace, the man in "store-clothes" still keeping them company.

His interest in the affair at Cedar Creek rather puzzled the two schoolboys, but they had no objection to telling him the story. On the way to the school he learned the whole history of the expulsion of Kern Gunten, and of the exciting events that had followed. He put a good many questions to the two chums, all of which they answered frankly enough.

But no time was lost on the way, in spite of the "chin-wag," and they came in sight of the school at last. "Must leave you here, sir," said Bob Lawless. "We've got to get in over the fence. Better keep clear of the trail, or you'll fall in with those rustlers again. They're watching the school."

"Thank you, my boy!" "If you're heading for Thompson, you can cut through the timber and strike the trail further along," added Bob. "I came from Thompson," said the stranger, with a smile. "I was going to Cedar Creek when I was stopped by those rascals."

"To the school?" exclaimed Frank Richards. "Yes; but on consideration, I shall return to Thompson now. My name is Macfarlane," added the gentleman, smiling again—"Dr. Macfarlane. You will probably hear my name again."

And with that he left the surprised chums. "Blest if I quite make that galoot out, Franky," said Bob Lawless. "Ever heard of Dr. Macfarlane?" "Never, that I know of."

"He seems jolly interested in our school. What on earth could he have been coming there for?" "Friend of Miss Meadows, perhaps; and he mayn't have known what was on at the school," remarked Frank. "If he's staying in Thompson, I guess he's heard; it's the talk of the valley. But never mind him—come on!"

Very cautiously the two chums quitted the timber, and approached the fence at the back of the school enclosure. Nothing was to be seen there of the Red Dog crowd, and they reached the fence safely, and the haversacks were dragged over it, and the two schoolboys followed. They cut across the playground to the schoolhouse.

A window at the back was open ready, and Vere Beauclerc was there, waiting for them. "Here we are again!" grinned Bob Lawless. "Take in the loot, Chorus." "Good luck!" exclaimed Beauclerc. The haversacks were handed in, and Bob and Frank followed, and the window was closed and barred.

And within five minutes the hungry garrison of Cedar Creek were enjoying a hearty dinner. "The 5th Chapter. In the Neck!"

Crash! Bob Lawless jumped up. It was a terrific concussion on one of the barred windows, and it made the bars creak and groan. "Hallo! They're coming!" Dinner was not yet finished, but the schoolboys jumped up from the meal in hot haste. Outside the voice of Four Kings was heard in savage tones. "Hang them! I tell you I don't keep ten cents for the cowboys—hang them! I'm going to smash up that young bound Lawless, I tell you!" Crash! Crash, crash! Bob Lawless coolly unbarred the

shutter, and it flew open under the next blow of the Red Dog rustler. A furious bearded face glared in at the opening. Four Kings scowled fiercely at the seven schoolboys, gathered there with cudgels in their hands to meet him. "Oh, there you are, young Lawless!" he snarled. "You got back, hey?" "Looks like it," smiled Bob. "Have you dropped in to see me, old man? Step right in. Don't stand on ceremony."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Four Kings hesitated a moment, remembering his former experiences at that window; but he was too enraged to hesitate long. He made a sudden plunge at the window, and his head and brawny shoulders came through. Bob Lawless had a rope ready in his hand. As the ruffian's head came in, he made a rapid cast, and the noose descended on to Four Kings' shoulders. It was drawn tight in a second, and the loop tightened round the rustler's throat, and Four Kings gave a gasping yell.

"Hang on!" yelled Bob. The schoolboys pulled on the rope, and Four Kings gasped and spluttered, his face as crimson as a beet. He clutched at the window-frame with his hands, and held on, gasping. "Let up!" he pleaded. Bob shook his head. "Can't let up!" said Bob. "Hanging's too good for you, Four Kings, but this is a chance too good to be lost. Are you ready?" "Groogh!"

"You're bound to come to it sooner or later, you know," said Bob. "Gurrugh!" came from the unfortunate rustler. "Let up! Groogh! Let up, and I guess I'll mosey along, Groogh!" He clutched at the rope round his neck, but it was tight, and he could not loosen it. "Let up!" he pleaded, all his ferocity gone now. "Let a galoot mosey along! I cave in! Let up, galoot!"

"Well, you ought to be hanged, you know," said Bob Lawless, with an air of consideration. "May as well be sooner as later." "Pullee lopee," grinned Yen Chin. "Me pullee, hangee nicee-nicee! Velly funnee hangee ole lascal!"

And the Chinese caught hold of the rope and pulled in good earnest. Frank Richards grasped him and yanked him back in time. "You young ass!" he gasped. "Do you want to kill the man?" "Me wantee killee," answered Yen Chin cheerfully. "Velly funnee killee ugly ole lascal, oh, yes!"

To judge by the terrific expression on Four Kings' face he did not think it funny. "Let up!" he groaned. "I'll mosey! Let up!" "You can vamoose," said Bob. "Keep that potty Chinese back, Franky!" "Bettee killee—" "Shut up! You can mosey along, Four Kings, but if you put your ugly cabeza in here again, we'll rope you in, and keep you fixed up for keeps! Mind that! Now, abquatulate, and you can cut the rope when you're at a distance."

Four Kings, glad of the permission, backed away from the window to the full length of the lasso, watched by the grinning garrison. His own comrades were grinning, too. Four Kings tumbled for his knife and opened it, and cut through the rope, sawing through it as fast as he could. Bob Lawless gave him a jerk or two as a reminder to hurry up, and at last the rope parted, leaving the ruffian with the loop still about his neck.

He was grabbing at it savagely when Bob closed the shutter and barred it again. The schoolboys returned to their interrupted dinner, without being further troubled by Four Kings. Over the meal Bob Lawless and Frank related their adventures in the timber and the meeting with the galoot in "store-clothes."

Eben Hacke interrupted them at the name of the stranger. "What did you say he called himself?" he exclaimed. "Dr. Macfarlane," answered Frank. "Did he come from Kootenay?" "Blessed if I know; but he was a stranger in this section," said Frank. "He came along to-day from Thompson."

"I guess I can tell you who he is," said Hacke, with a chuckle. "Didn't you say Gunten told you the school superintendent was coming up to-day?" "Yes."

"That's the galoot! I guess I know the name—my popper knows him," said Eben Hacke. "That pilgrim you clipped in to help is the school superintendent who's coming up to investigate our affair here."

Frank whistled. "That accounts for his being so keen to hear all about it," he said. "My hat! Well, he's heard our side of the story now, at all events. I fancy Old Man Gunten will have been pitching him a rather different yarn, and he was coming here to inquire for himself. I wonder how it will turn out?" All the garrison of Cedar Creek were wondering that, and they hoped for the best. But however it turned out, one thing was certain—there was no surrender for Frank Richards & Co.

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"THE REBELS' VICTORY!"

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