

# THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

like getting a move on. Pongo, you keep cave at the door. I'm going to have a look round this place. Those chaps didn't run through my pockets, and I've got my electric-torch."

Pongo moved to the door and sat against it.

There was a click in the darkness, and Dick's outline showed black against the circle of light of his electric-torch, which he flashed on the walls of their prison.

It was stacked up with bags of waste-paper and rubbish, over which rose the columnar formation of the basalt.

One side of the cave was built in by a partition of wood.

It was plain that the Germans had built their quarters by enlarging a cavern, which laid within the walls of the large outer cavern.

This side of their prison did not interest Dick.

He wormed his way amongst the lumber that was stored against the wall of black basalt.

There were stacks of it—old wood, barrels full of engine-room rubbish and scrap, old rubber, valve-packing, empty paint-tins, and all sorts of gear.

Dick worked his way like a rat through twenty or thirty feet of this stuff before he came to the wall of the cavern.

He only flashed his light on at intervals. He had a good battery to the lamp, and, luckily, he had recharged it the night before.

But he wished to be as sparing as he could in its use.

As he felt along the walls with his hands, and carefully explored each step of ground with his foot before he stepped on it, he became aware of a slight movement of the stagnant air in the cave.

It was the faintest breath of air,

hardly enough to stir the flame of a candle, but it caused Dick's heart to start beating violently.

He felt that there was a hole in the wall somewhere, some fissure or rift in the solid rock, which communicated with the outer world.

Pongo and Porkis had given him a very fair idea of the lay of the ground.

The great cave outside was connected by a submarine entrance with the sea, an entrance large enough to admit a sea-going submarine of the largest size.

Probably at a certain stage in the tide there was an air space between the roof of this entrance-arch and the water.

Dick remembered now!

It was the period of neap tides.

He had heard Captain Handyman give an order that very morning that the mooring-ropes of the South Star were to be eased off as the tide fell.

It was now about half-past eleven in the morning, and it would be low water five minutes before noon.

With renewed hope he flashed on the precious electric-lamp.

And there, almost under his fingers, was the hole in the wall, through which the air was entering fresh and cool, and strong with the scent of seaweed.

Here, between two huge columns of basalt, a ragged crack, over a foot wide, descended the wall and into the rock of the cave floor.

Dick flashed his light into it.

The fissure was there right enough, descending deep into the rock, sideways and downwards, in accordance with the lay of the basalt.

Without a moment's hesitation he slipped into it, bracing his back against one side of the fissure and his feet against the other.

The crack was a regular chimney of the sort which are the delight of the mountain climbers of the Lake District.

But this fissure was only twelve or fifteen feet deep.

And there was plenty of foothold in it, for the rock parted in little square columns almost like a flight of steps.

Down these Dick descended, and it was not long before the walls about him grew wet and slippery with green, slimy seaweed.

A crab looked up at the glare of his electric-lamp, then scuttled over the weed and splashed into a pool of water, which slowly rose and fell in the foot of the fissure.

And in the side of this pool was a little arch, through which came the puff of fresh air, as the black water rose and fell, and with the air came the clanging of hammers and the burr of automatic riveters.

Dick listened with his heart in his mouth.

He could hear the guttural German voices calling one to the other.

He knew enough German to understand what was passing.

One man called to another with a laugh, asking at what time the All Highest was going to have the Englander pig-dogs shot.

Another wanted to know how long it would be before dinner-time.

To this a voice replied that it wanted but five minutes to noon.

The voices were quite close, and Dick made up his mind where he was.

The fissure opened out in the main cavern just under the wharf or pier alongside which the U-boat under repair was moored.

He learned from the talk of the men that this was not the Kaiser's craft.

That had gone off to meet some officers who were to join her off the coast of Portugal.

It was one of the U-boats which had not surrendered to the British Fleet.

Worsted in a fight with a British merchant ship before the declaration of the armistice, it had trailed back to this lonely lair, of the sea pirates to undergo repairs.

These were nearly completed, and when the Kaiser's craft returned, the two would sail away in company to continue their foul warfare against the forces of civilisation.

Dick, supporting himself in the fissure, listened with all his ears to the careless talk of the men.

He learned that they were fed up with working underground in this fashion, and that the work of repair was six times harder than it would have been in a properly equipped dockyard.

They were longing to be out in the open seas again, for on the island the strictest orders forbade all but the All Highest and his immediate entourage to show themselves above ground.

Then a whistle shrilled, and the sound of hammers stopped suddenly.

It was the dinner hour.

Dick waited to hear no more.

He climbed rapidly up the fissure into their prison cave, and made his way silently through the piles of lumber.

He understood these better now.

It was forbidden that any rubbish should be thrown into the submarine cave.

A scrap of paper floating out to sea from the cave on the fall of the tide might be sufficient to give away the presence of this submarine lair to the watchful cruisers and patrol craft of the British Navy.

This was the reason why the Germans had so carefully stored up all their old junk in the limited space at their command.

He was back to his chums just in time to lie down where his captors had thrown him.

"Cave!" called Pongo.

In the passage outside sounded the footfall of heavy sea boots.

The big key rasped in the rusty lock, and the door was thrown open.

The huge sailor who had carried Dick down stood framed in the lighted doorway.

In his hand he carried a pail of water and three lumps of bread.

"Hallo, you English pigs!" he said, throwing the bread on the ground and placing the pail in the doorway. "Here is your dinner. Und if I had my way you would eatlarve, sure as my name is Hans Grimm."

Porky looked up.

"Arc you the chap who wrote the fairy-tales?" he asked.

Hans Grimm snarled.

"You take care dot you tell no fairy tale to de All Highest when he for you shall send dis evenin'. My vord, you shall cop it, you young pig fellers!" he replied.

There was a footfall in the passage outside, a stealthy, sneaking step.

The boys had a glimpse of the yellow-faced, sinister figure of the Kaiser as Hans Grimm, becoming aware that his illustrious master was cavestrapping, shut the door on them and hastily turned the key.

Porky chuckled in the darkness.

"Bill is taking quite an interest in us," he said. "I wonder what his game is?"

Dick laughed.

"Whatever it is," he said, "we've got a game to play as well. We are shut in like rats, boys, but there is a hole in the bottom of the rat-trap, and I've found it!"

(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.)

# The School Without Masters!

### A Magnificent New Long Complete Tale of the Chums of Rookwood. By OWEN CONQUEST.



#### The 1st Chapter.

##### The Staff on Strike.

"What larks!"

That was the general feeling at Rookwood School—in the Lower Forms, at least.

The great men of the Sixth, perhaps, took the matter with proper seriousness. Perhaps the Fifth saw that there was a serious side to it.

But the juniors did not seem to see anything serious about it at all. Their opinion, freely expressed, was that it was a tremendous lark.

Certainly, the state of affairs at Rookwood was unprecedented.

Masters on strike!

"Who," as Lovell of the Fourth remarked, "had ever heard of such a thing?"

Nobody had!

"It's a corker!" said Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth. "A regular corker! What's the Head going to do? That's the question!"

"All right for the Sixth!" remarked Mornington. "The Head takes the Sixth. But who's going to take the rest?"

And Tubby Muffin chirruped joyously: "There won't be any lesson! There can't be! Fancy that!"

Which was not an unpleasant prospect to most of the juniors.

Lessons, as Lovell observed sagely, could be overdone. Lovell declared that, if he ever became Head of a public school, he would see that more time was devoted to footer than to lessons—a view that found much favour in the Fourth Form.

There was much excitement in Rookwood when the news became generally known that the whole staff had struck, and the fellows went to bed that night in an excited frame of mind.

Discussion ran on in the dormitories for a good hour after lights-out.

For there was no doubt about the state of affairs.

The masters of Rookwood had met in solemn session in the Masters' Room, and had delivered their ultimatum to the Head. And at least a dozen juniors, in various corners and recesses, had been witnesses of the scene in the corridor when Dr. Chisholm had come out of his study and met his indignant staff.

Opinions were a little divided as to where the blame lay.

But opinions were not divided on one point—that it was a great lark.

All the juniors, at least, agreed on that. The rising-bell in the morning awakened an expectant school.

In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth discussion and speculation commenced the minute the juniors were out of bed.

"It was French this afternoon," said Raby. "There won't be any French. Mossos was one of the gang."

"And the Moderns won't get any German!"

"And we sha'n't have to construe!" said Tubby Muffin brightly. "Bootles, of course, will be on strike with the rest, as he's the cause of all the trouble. How jolly lucky I didn't do any prep last even-

ing! It would have been wasted if I had! Fancy that!"

"There'll be prayers this morning," observed Oswald. "The Head takes prayers."

"But nothing after prayers!" said Muffin jubilantly.

"Hurrah!"

"There'll be some brekker, I hope!" said Jimmy Silver, laughing.

"We might get up a punt-about this morning," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell thoughtfully. "No good going into the Form-room if there isn't any master! The Head can't want us to make one another construe, can he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, I'm not going to get up yet," said Tubby Muffin, rolling back into bed. "If the masters can go on strike, so can we. Nothing to get up for, is there?"

"Bulkeley may come up and go on strike, too—with his ashplant!" remarked Raby.

"Oh, bother Bulkeley! I wish the prefects would go on strike, too!" said Tubby Muffin plaintively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Anyway, I'm not getting up. What's the good?"

"Don't be a slacker," said Jimmy Silver. "I'm not slacking—I'm going on strike," explained Tubby Muffin. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander."

And Reginald Muffin laid his head on the pillow and closed his fat eyelids once more.

A strike of the masters, if it led to an extra nap for Tubby, was an excellent thing in the eyes of the fat Classical.

"Better turn out, Tubby!" called out Jimmy Silver, when the Fiscal Four were ready to go down.

Snore!

Jimmy Silver & Co. went down, and Tubby Muffin was left in bed.

But a few minutes after the rest of the Fourth were down Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the dormitory.

The captain of Rookwood had his ashplant under his arm.

He fixed his eyes sternly on Tubby Muffin's bed.

"Muffin!"

"Snore!"

Tubby Muffin was sleeping with one eye open, as a matter of fact, and that eye was fixed rather uneasily on Bulkeley, as the Sixth-Former came into the dormitory.

Bulkeley let the ashplant slide down into his hand, and as he did so Tubby Muffin awakened very suddenly and sat up in bed.

"I—I say, Bulkeley—"

"Why aren't you down?" demanded Bulkeley.

"I—I— The fact is, I'm not going to do any lessons to-day. Masters on strike, you know."

"I see," Bulkeley nodded. "You're going on strike, too—what?"

"That's it!" said Tubby brightly. "Just the idea! I'm not going to get up till about ten or eleven—see?"

"I see!" assented Bulkeley. "Now, I'm going on strike!"

"Are you really, Bulkeley?"

"Certainly!"

Swish, swish!

"Yarooooh!" roared Tubby Muffin, as the ashplant caught his fat shoulders. "Yoop! Leave off! I say, you beast— Yarooooh! Leave off, can't you? Yoop! I'm getting up, ain't I?"

Bump!

Tubby Muffin rolled out of bed on the opposite side so hurriedly that he was mixed up in the bedclothes, and landed on the floor in a heap.

He rolled there and roared.

"Feel like getting up now, Muffin?" asked Bulkeley genially.

"Yarooooh! Yes! Ow!"

"You don't feel like an extra nap?"

"Nunno! Yow-ow-ow!"

"If you do, turn in," said Bulkeley cheerily. "I don't mind laying into you again with this stick. It's a good exercise, in fact."

"Yow! I don't want a nap! I—I want to gerrup! Oh, dear!" howled Tubby Muffin. "I—I really meant to say, Bulkeley, that I wouldn't stay in bed for—for anything!"

"That's better! I expect to see you down in five minutes, Muffin. If you're not I'm coming back."

"Ow!"

The captain of Rookwood tucked his ashplant under his arm and quitted the dormitory.

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Tubby Muffin. "Awful rotter— Ow! Wow!"

Tubby Muffin's ablutions did not take him long that morning.

He was down well within the five minutes.

And in that short space of time he had also made a firm resolve that, whatever the staff of Rookwood School might do, he would not follow their example of going on strike.

#### The 2nd Chapter. Expectant!

Jimmy Silver & Co. came in to breakfast after a run in the keen, fresh air of the quadrangle.

They looked round at once to see whether Mr. Bootles was in the dining-room.

That day Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth Form, was to leave Rookwood—or was to have left Rookwood, for it was by no means certain now that he would go.

The juniors were glad to see him in the room.

He was looking troubled and harassed, but at least he was not gone yet, and that was satisfactory.

Mr. Bootles took his place at the head of the Fourth Form table as usual.

It was plain enough to the juniors that he was in a perplexed and worried frame of mind.

He was under sentence of dismissal from his post, and in those circumstances it was difficult to see how he could remain at the school.

But there were other circumstances that had to be considered.

Nearly the whole staff had supported Mr. Bootles in his difference with the Head, and led by Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth, they had declined to serve their chief any longer unless the dismissal of Mr. Bootles was cancelled.

How the school would get on without masters was a problem.

Mr. Manders, and another master on the Modern side, had declined to have anything to do with the strike.

They were, as the juniors put it, black-legging!

But practically the whole staff were acting in concert, and unless the Head yielded, the state of affairs at Rookwood was certain to be very extraordinary indeed.

The sympathy of the juniors was with Mr. Bootles, with few exceptions.

For Mr. Bootles had incurred the wrath of the Head by standing between Jimmy Silver of the Fourth and an unjust punishment.

That Jimmy had not committed the fault ascribed to him had been proved, and the Head had acknowledged it; and he was glad, doubtless, that an unjust punishment had not been administered.

But he could not forgive Mr. Bootles for his intervention.

The dismissal held good, and poor Mr. Bootles had packed to go, when his colleagues took up the matter in solemn session.

The ultimatum to the Head was the result.

At the breakfast-table the Classical Fourth were very good indeed.

There was no chattering or whispering, no shying of bread bullets; they did not, in fact, take any advantage of Mr. Bootles' preoccupation.

They wanted the little gentleman to understand that they were backing him up.

Whether Mr. Bootles understood it was a question, however; he was probably not thinking about the juniors at all.

Jimmy Silver glanced at the other tables, noting the looks of the other masters present.

Mr. Greely of the Fifth was looking grim and stern.

That stout and important gentleman was the leader of the strike, and there were certainly no signs of surrender in his severe face.

Mr. Wiggins and Mr. Bohun did not look happy, and they were very quiet indeed.

The other masters were not to be seen. Breakfast passed off in an atmosphere of subdued thunder.

Even the juniors, though they still regarded the masters' strike as a "lark," realised that it had its serious aspect.

After breakfast, when the chapel bells began to ring, the juniors headed for chapel, with a great curiosity to see the Head.

Somewhat to their disappointment, Dr. Chisholm presented his usual aspect.

Perhaps his lips were a little tighter than usual, but that was all.

Certainly he showed no sign of being in a worried frame of mind.

"The Head's a hard case!" Arthur Edward Lovell remarked, as they came away from chapel. "Hard as steel. He won't give in."

"I don't think the masters will, either," remarked Newcome.

"Goodness knows what will happen, then."

"It's a case of the irresistible force brought to bear upon the giddy immovable object," remarked Jimmy Silver. "I wonder if there's going to be any lessons?"

"Are you going in to lessons, Tubby?" chuckled Lovell.

"I—I think so," said Tubby Muffin. "On second thoughts, you know, I don't think this idea of striking is much good. Bulkeley's such a beast, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The hour was at hand for morning classes, and fellows gathered round the doors of the Form-rooms in a state of subdued excitement.

The Sixth went in as usual; those high and mighty personages declined to show

the slightest excitement or perturbation.

Perhaps they felt that they were called upon to set an example to the rest of Rookwood.

But outside the Fifth Form-room Hanson and Jobson and Lumsden and some more of the Fifth stool chatting in low voices, and wondering what they were to do if Mr. Greely did not come along.

Adolphus Smythe of the Shell was chatting with some more Shell fellows, with a satisfied grin on his face.

Adolphus did not object to a day off.

He was discussing "geezes" with Howard and Tracy, and making arrangements for a "little run" that day if there were no lessons.

Among the fags of the Second and Third there was open chirruping and chuckling.

Algy Silver, Jimmy's cousin in the Third, was starting a punt-about in the Third Form-room with a cushion for a footer.

Evidently the seriousness of the position was quite lost upon that lively young gentleman.

The Fourth Form made it a point not to be noisy like the fags; something was due to the dashed dignity of the Form, as Townsend put it.

They waited—some of them in the Form-room, and some outside.

It was past the time for beginning, but not a master had put in an appearance so far.

The strike was taking effect.

The Second Form were playing leap-frog along the passage now.

It was a symptom of what was to come. Peele of the Fourth came in from the quad, grinning.

He looked as if he had news.

"Anythin' goin' on?" asked Mornington.

"Yes—the Head!" grinned Peele.

"What about the Head?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"I've just seen him through his study window. Marchin' up an' down his study like a giddy Grenadier on sentry-go!" chuckled Peele. "He doesn't know what to do, of course. I saw Knowles come into his study an' go out. The Head knows what's goin' on, and he doesn't know what to do! Ha, ha!"

"Poor old Head!" grinned Conroy.

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows.

"It's a rotten state of affairs, and no good for Rookwood!" he said. "The Head ought to let up on poor old Bootles, and make an end of it."

"He can't give in!" said Mornington, with a shake of the head.

"Well, I don't see how he can," admitted Jimmy. "He oughtn't to have let it go as far as this. It's got to end somehow."

"There goes Bootles!" murmured Lovell.

Mr. Bootles was observed, with a troubled brow, heading for the corridor that led to Dr. Chisholm's study.

Two or three of the juniors scouted cautiously after him, and they came back with the information that he had gone into the Hon's den—in other words, the Head's study.

The juniors continued to wait.

Adolphus Smythe had coolly put a cigarette between his lips.

He did not yet venture to light it. Doubtless that would come later.

From the Third Form-room came a continuous uproar.

And the Second Form fags were growing more and more lively with their leap-frog.

#### The 3rd Chapter.

##### The Substitutes.

Dr. Chisholm turned a glance like steel upon Mr. Bootles as that nervous little gentleman entered his study.

Calm as he was, it was only too clear that the Head of Rookwood was deeply and bitterly incensed.

A strike of the school staff was utterly unprecedented; it was a thing incredible, almost unimaginable.



Form-room, with the excited juniors round him.

"Kick him out!" shouted Conroy.

"Oh, my hat!"

"Hurrah! Turn him out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rotters!" yelled Carthew, as the juniors seized him on all sides.

"I'll smash you! I'll call in the Head!"

"I'll—I'll— Yaroo! Leggo! Oh, crumbs!"

"Bump him!"

"Hurrah!"

Bumping a prefect was a form of amusement that was not, under ordinary circumstances, indulged in at Rookwood.

Perhaps for that reason, among others, the Classical Fourth were not inclined to let the present opportunity pass.

Seven or eight pairs of hands were on the infuriated prefect, and his struggles were quite unavailing.

He was swept off the floor, yelling, and he came down again with a smite that made him yell still louder.

"Give him another!"

"Ha, ha! Bump him!"

"Give him jip!" howled Tubby Muffin.

"Lemme gerraf him! I'll jump on him! Let me jump on the beast!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bump!

"Oh! Ah! Ow! Help!"

The door opened.

Mr. Bootles, in his overcoat, with his umbrella on his arm, looked into the Form-room, with distended eyes behind his glasses.

The "sacked" master had been about to leave when the uproar from the Fourth Form-room reached his ears.

It had drawn Mr. Bootles to the spot.

"Boys!" stuttered the little gentleman in horror. "Silver—Erroll—Conroy! My dear boys—"

"Oh, my hat! Bootles!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. released Carthew suddenly.

The prefect lay on his back on the floor and roared.

The juniors turned crimson faces towards their horrified Form-master.

True, Mr. Bootles was no longer their master, and he had no authority there, but old habits were strong.

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Jimmy.

"What does this riot mean?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"We can't stand that rotten bully, sir," said Mornington coolly.

"Mornington!"

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Carthew.

"I'll go to the Head! Yow-ow-ow! You young demons, just you wait a minute or two!"

The breathless and dishevelled prefect staggered out of the Form-room.

"Carthew!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"One moment, Carthew—"

"Don't speak to me!" panted Carthew.

"You are not a master here now, Mr. Bootles, and you needn't interfere."

"What! Carthew, this impertinence is—"

"Oh, rot!" snapped Carthew rudely.

Mr. Bootles stood quite dazed by that reply.

But from somewhere in the Fourth a Latin dictionary whizzed through the air, and it landed on the side of Carthew's head in the doorway.

The juniors were not disposed to see their Form-master insulted, whether he was sacked or not.

Carthew uttered a scendish yell and went staggering into the passage.

"Well hit!" yelled Lovell. "Right on the wicket!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew spun back in the doorway with a face like a demon, as if about to rush at the juniors.

A regular fusillade met him.

Books and inkpots whizzed through the air, and under the volley Carthew fairly turned tail and bolted, streaked with ink.

A roar of laughter followed him.

"Boys!" exclaimed Mr. Bootles, almost wringing his hands in dismay at such a scene in the Form-room. "My dear boys, do not—"

"Order!" called out Jimmy Silver. "Remember Mr. Bootles is here, you fellows! Order!"

"Right you are!" said Conroy. "Sit down, you chaps. Shall—shall we go on with Virgil, sir?"

"Yes, yes! Certainly!" stammered Mr. Bootles.

He picked up the book Carthew had laid on the desk, and the Classical Fourth sat down in a very quiet and orderly way.

It seemed to Mr. Bootles the best method of quietening the tumult.

In a very few minutes the Form-room presented its old aspect, with the exception that the Form-master was in his overcoat, and had an umbrella hanging on his arm.

But within five minutes the door was flung open, and the Head of Rookwood strode in, with rustling gown, with the ink-splashed face of Mark Carthew scowling behind him.

And Mr. Bootles, trembling with wrath and indignation, laid down his book and whisked to the door.

"Good-bye, sir!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Silence, Silver!" thundered the Head. Jimmy bit his lip.

Like most of the Rookwooders, he had a great respect for the Head, but the stern old gentleman was running the risk of losing it now.

"And now," resumed the Head, when Mr. Bootles was gone, "what does this riot mean? I placed Carthew, of the Sixth Form, in charge of this class. In disobeying him you have disobeyed me!"

"He's a rotten bully, sir!" said Mornington.

"How dare you use such expressions to me, Mornington?"

"It's the truth, sir!"

"You have taken advantage of the present unusual state of affairs to break out in riot!" exclaimed the Head.

"It's not like that, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "We—"

"Don't contradict me, Silver!"

"But, sir—"

"Silence! I shall punish every boy here!" said the Head. "Give me a cane, Carthew."

Carthew, with a glitter in his eyes, handed Mr. Bootles' cane to the Head.

"You may go to the Sixth Form-room, Carthew," added the Head. "I will place another prefect in charge of the Fourth Form."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Carthew.

The Head made a gesture of dismissal, and Carthew left the Form-room.

He was "sacked" from his new position already.

The Head intended to punish the juniors for their outbreak, but he had tact enough to send away the prefect who had been unable to keep order in the Form.

The next ten minutes were not enjoyable to the Fourth.

They had to file before the Head and take a cut each, and Dr. Chisholm did not lay the cane on lightly.

The juniors were looking grim, some

"We were willing to go easy with old Bulkeley, so long as he didn't want to make us work," said Algy, in an injured tone. "Of course, we weren't going to work without a Form-master. He cut up rusty. And in the middle of the morning Bulkeley was called away—"

"He came to take us!" grinned Raby.

"And they sent in Knowles instead," said Algy resentfully. "Knowles—a Modern prefect—a worm of a Modern, you know. They actually thought that Classics were going to be run by a Modern! I don't know why they made old Chisholm Head of Rookwood. It wasn't for his brains."

"Ow-ow!" remarked Grant.

"Wooooop!" murmured Wegg, rubbing his grubby hands.

"You've been ragging?" asked Jimmy.

"What do you think?" answered his cousin, with a grunt. "We weren't going to stand Knowles. He's a bully—nearly as bad as Carthew—and he's a Modern. I shied an ink-ball at him—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Of course, he laid into me with the pointer," groaned Algy. "He's been givin' us the pointer most of the mornin'. I don't know whether that's what the Head thinks we're sent to Rookwood for. I thought we'd come here to learn things."

"Well, Knowles could teach you the rot you learn in the Third, if you'd let him," remarked Newcome.

"Catch us letting Knowles teach us anything!"

"It's all rot," said Wegg, in a very injured tone. "There ain't any masters, and there oughtn't to be any lessons. I don't call it fair play."

"Why should we pull with Knowles, when the Head himself can't pull with his giddy staff?" said Grant.

"That's what I say," agreed Algy Silver. "I know jolly well I'm going to make Knowles' life a burden, so long as he's lookin' after the Third. Ow! My hands!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. walked away in a thoughtful mood.

There was no doubt that discipline was

"Fancy a new set of masters at Rookwood, with the old set putting up at the inn in the village, looking on! Can the Head get a new lot in so quick as all that? And isn't that what's called blacklegging?"

Jimmy Silver wrinkled his brows thoughtfully.

The masters' strike at Rookwood might be a tremendous lark, in some of its aspects, but Jimmy realised that it was not for the good of the old school, and he would have been very glad to see it at an amicable end.

**The 7th Chapter. Mischief Brewing!**

There was an interview that evening between Mr. Greely and the Head. Probably the Fifth Form master was making a last attempt to reach some accommodation.

If so, the attempt was a failure, for during the evening there was a general exodus of the staff from the school.

On the Modern side Mr. Manders and another master remained, but on the Classical side there was not one.

Even the French master had thrown in his lot with his English confreres.

Some of the Rookwooders watched them as they left.

The staff had very serious and grave faces, and Mr. Greely a decidedly irritated expression.

The gates of Rookwood closed behind them.

Most of the school knew that the departed masters had taken up their quarters at the village inn, which looked as if they did not believe that they had looked their last on Rookwood.

There, apparently, they were to wait till the strike had its effect, and the headmaster came to reason.

But there was no sign about Dr. Chisholm of any intention of coming to reason.

In public his face was as calm, severe, and unemotional as usual.

In private, probably, he felt the trouble that had fallen upon him and the school;

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Knowles was a bit too fresh," explained Grant of the Third. "We're going to leave him there."

Thump, thump!

"Cave! Here comes the Head!" called out Oswald of the Fourth.

There was a sudden scudding off of the fags.

The Fourth-Formers vanished also, leaving a clear field for the Head.

Dr. Chisholm's brow was like thunder, as he came up to the door.

Thump, thump!

"Let me out, you young scoundrels!" roared the Modern prefect, within.

"Knowles!"

"Oh, it is you, sir! I've been locked in, sir. Those fags—"

"I will see that you are released, Knowles."

It was some time before the key was found and the prefect released.

Shortly afterwards, there was a painful scene in the Third Form-room, with fags holding out reluctant hands, and the Head wielding the cane.

In the afternoon Bulkeley returned to the Third; it was pretty clear that Knowles could not handle them.

Knowles was bestowed upon the Classical Fourth.

And the moment Knowles stepped into the Fourth Form-room the juniors exchanged glances that told that their thoughts were of war.

Knowles was unusually good-tempered that afternoon; perhaps he had had enough trouble, and did not want any more.

But an angelic temper would not have saved him from trouble.

The Classics were "up against" a Modern, anyway—and Knowles had not Bulkeley's popularity to see him through.

And the feeling was growing in the form that the prefect was acting the part of a "blackleg."

Knowles was systematically worried by his hopeful pupils, till at last his temper failed him.

Then he brought the cane into play.

And then there was a volley of grammars, dictionaries, and exercise books from the Fourth, smiting Knowles right and left and covering the floor of the Form-room like a snowstorm.

"You young rotters!" howled Knowles. "You—you disorderly little beasts, you—you—"

"Clear off!" called out Mornington. "You've no business here! We want Bootles!"

"Silence! Order!"

"We want Bootles!" roared the Fourth.

And that cry was taken up as a slogan, and chanted at Knowles, and his voice was drowned in the roar.

"We want Bootles! We want Bootles!"

Knowles stood panting for breath, and quite at a loss. He beat a retreat from the Form-room at last.

"He's gone for the Head!" murmured Lovell.

"Look out for squalls!" grinned Mornington.

In a few minutes Dr. Chisholm entered the Form-room, with a brow like thunder.

"Silence!" he exclaimed, as the buzz of voices did not cease at his entrance.

"We want Bootles!"

"What?"

"We want Bootles!" came in a shout.

The Head stood transfixed for a moment.

It was the first expression of opinion from the Fourth that had reached his ears, and it probably came as a surprise to him.

"How dare you!" he panted at last. "Silence! Silence! The next boy who speaks will be flogged!"

There was silence then.

The Head's glance swept over the class, flashing; but it did not find there the usual awed submissiveness.

"I shall take this class for the remainder of the day!" said Dr. Chisholm, in a grinding voice. "I warn you to let me hear no more insolence!"

How the Fifth and the Sixth got on, on their "lonesome," the juniors did not know; probably they spent the afternoon chatting.

The Head was tied to the Fourth.

And there certainly was exemplary order in that Form—while the Head was there.

The Head was probably as glad as the juniors when the time came to dismiss the Form.

He had a harassed look as he rustled away.

With all his grim determination of character, he was not finding it an easy task to run Rookwood "on his own."

Jimmy Silver & Co. were smiling, as they strolled into the dusky quadrangle.

"It can't last!" said Lovell sapiently.

"I don't say I wholly approve of masters going on strike! It's setting a bad example to us nice boys. But the Head's too stiff by half. We want Bootles."

"We do—we do!" said Jimmy.

"Bootles has got pushed out because he stood up for little me! It's up to us to stand up for him!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And when the new masters come," said Jimmy, "I think there's going to be trouble. We're not going to see Bootles ousted. Perhaps, when our giddy new master has dealt with us a bit, the Head will be glad to call Bootles home—what?"

And the chortle that followed indicated that Jimmy Silver's chums thought it very probable.

**THE END.**



**THE FOURTH FORM BREAKS OUT!**

**The 6th Chapter. Trouble with the Third.**

Dr. Chisholm's face was pale with anger.

A hush fell on the juniors as the Head's angry glance swept over them.

The next moment, however, the Head observed Mr. Bootles, and he transferred his attention to the Form-master.

Mr. Bootles coloured under his grim gaze.

"You here, Mr. Bootles!" exclaimed the Head angrily.

"Really, sir—"

"You have no right in this Form-room! Have I not spoken plainly enough, Mr. Bootles, in informing you that your services are no longer required in this school?" rapped out the Head.

Mr. Bootles crimsoned.

"I came here because the Form-room was in an uproar," he exclaimed. "I have interfered to restore order, Dr. Chisholm, and I have done so. Now that I have done it I am ready to retire."

of them sullen, when they went back to their places.

Dr. Chisholm laid down the cane.

"I shall send Bulkeley to take charge of this Form," he said. "If there is any further trouble, very severe measures will be taken."

"There won't be any trouble with Bulkeley, sir; he's not a rotten bully," said Mornington.

The Head did not appear to hear that remark.

He left the Form-room, and in a few minutes Bulkeley of the Sixth came in.

Another prefect had been placed in charge of the Third, leaving the captain of Rookwood free to deal with the Classical Fourth.

Bulkeley's methods were very different from Carthew's, and the remainder of the morning passed off quietly enough.

Bulkeley was too popular for the juniors to wish to give him any trouble, though they were in a restive mood.

Some of them were rubbing their hands as they came out of the Form-room at twelve o'clock.

"What a merry mornin'!" remarked Valentine Mornington, with a laugh.

"The Head was in a rare wax."

Lovell gave a snort.

"They can't run a school on prefects!" he said. "It's all rot. Bulkeley can handle the Fourth, simply because we like the old chap, and don't want to worry him. I'll bet you there's been trouble in the Third."

Jimmy Silver was of the same opinion, and he looked for his cousin, Algy of the Third, to learn how matters had gone on that morning.

He found the usually cheery Algy scowling in the corridor, and squeezing his hands—an occupation that was also Grant's and Wegg's.

"Trouble?" asked Jimmy.

Algy Silver grunted.

"Of course! What did you expect? Did you think the Third Form could be run by a blessed prefect?" he inquired.

"But old Bulkeley—"

already considerably relaxed, and that the school without masters would be the scene of strange happenings if something was not done soon.

"Hallo, there go Bootles' goods and chattels," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell, with a nod towards the gates.

Old Mack, the porter, was taking out the trap, with several trunks and boxes stacked in it.

Mr. Bootles, in hat and coat, was to be seen in the old stone gateway, in company with Mr. Greely of the Fifth.

The Fourth Form-master had not gone yet, but he was evidently going at last.

"Let's go and say good-bye to him," said Lovell.

"Yes, rather!"

The Fistical Four walked quickly down to the gates, glad of the chance of saying good-bye to their Form-master before he went.

Mr. Greely was speaking as they came up, and they could not help hearing the words of the Fifth Form-master.

"The Coombe Arms, then," said Mr. Greely. "Well—very well! You will engage a sufficiency of accommodation for—"

"Yes, certainly. But—"

"If matters remain as they are, the whole staff will be leaving Rookwood," said Mr. Greely. "We do not intend, however, to disperse—not yet, at all events. My idea is to wait at hand a return to common-sense on the part of Dr. Chisholm, or the intervention of the governing body."

"Quite so; but—"

"At the Coombe Arms we can remain till matters are clearer," said Mr. Greely.

"The Head, I believe, has been telephoning and telegraphing to various agencies all day, with the view of engaging a new staff without delay, but—"

The Fistical Four walked away, and Mr. Greely's voice was no longer heard.

Neither of the masters had observed them, and they gave up their intention of saying good-bye to Mr. Bootles just then.

"A new staff!" murmured Lovell.

in public he betrayed nothing of what he thought or felt.

The school was without masters pending the arrival of a new staff, and a new staff for such a school as Rookwood was not to be gathered at a moment's notice.

Meanwhile, it was necessary to "carry on" by the aid of the Sixth Form prefects, who did their best in the unprecedented emergency.

But that evening there were growing signs that the rule of the prefects would not long remain undisputed.

Some of the fellows alluded to them openly as "blacklegs."

That, when it came to the ears of the prefects, naturally caused great wrath; and the liberal use of the official ashplant, which, in turn, excited indignation and restiveness.

The next day the forms went into class as usual, with the prefects in charge.

In the Classical Fourth all was quiet.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were attached to "old Bulkeley," and did not want to worry him.

Bulkeley's personal popularity carried him through.

But it was different with the other forms.

Knowles of the Modern Sixth was in charge of the Third, and there was trouble with that lively form.

During the morning, the Fourth heard an uproar proceeding from the quarters of the Third, and grinned at one another. They guessed that Cecil Knowles was having a lively time.

When the juniors were dismissed, Jimmy Silver & Co. went along to the Third Form-room, and, to their surprise, found the door locked—a crowd of fags roaring with laughter outside, and someone inside hammering furiously on the door.

"What's the row?" asked Jimmy Silver. Thump, thump, thump! came from within the Form-room.

"Only Knowles!" grinned Algy Silver. "We've locked him in!"

"My only hat!"

THE END.

**NEXT MONDAY.**

**THE RUMPUS AT ROOKWOOD!**

By OWEN CONQUEST. DON'T MISS IT!

# BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Get up, and I'll give you the thrashing of your life!"

"You do, and—"

"Get up!"

"Touch me, and I'll get your guv'nor sacked to-morrow!" shouted the bounder.

"Mind, I mean it!"

Jack Jackson dropped his hands to his sides, and his eyes were fixed on Barker as the latter rose slowly to his feet.

The latter kept a wary eye on Jackson, in case the latter should hit out.

But Barker's threatening words were running through Jack Jackson's brain, and he was undecided what to do.

"Now we'll get to business!" said Barker with emphasis. "You've got to be taught that it doesn't pay to defy me!"

"Look here—"

"If you hadn't cut up rusty I would have let you off," said the bounder with

a sneer. "But I couldn't dream of doing so now."

"What the dickens are you driving at?" demanded Jack Jackson impatiently.

"You'll soon know, old fellow!"

"But—"

"It so happens that I'm going to break bounds to-night, and pop down to the Plough and Harrow for a game at cards."

"You can jolly well go!" said Jack Jackson indignantly. "All I hope is that the police raid the place and you're caught with the other scoundrels!"

"H'm!" the bounder pursed his lips. "It would be rather rotten if you were there," he added slowly.

"I sha'n't be there!"

"You will, old fellow," said Barker coolly. "You're coming with me. I must have company, and there's nobody I'm more anxious to take with me than you."

"You—you—"

"Now, don't forget!" said Barker. "We'll leave the school at eleven o'clock. You'd better not fall asleep, because I shall wake you."

"You won't do anything of the kind!"

"You'll keep awake, then?"

"I sha'n't!"

"Then what are you going to do?"

"I'm not coming with you," said Jack Jackson, with determination.

"You are coming!"

"I'm not!"

"Then you can look out for squalls!" snapped the bounder. "I won't put up with any more of your nonsense! I'll write to my father first thing in the morning, and if your father isn't sacked before the end of the week I'll eat my hat!"

"You utter cad!" cried Jack Jackson.

"You—"

"You needn't call me names," said the bounder. "That won't make me alter my mind. Now, if you'll let me pass, I'll get on to the dormitory!"

"Look here—"

"Are you coming with me to the Plough and Harrow?"

"No!"

"Then it's no good my discussing the matter any further," said Barker calmly.

"You've fairly asked for trouble, and you're going to get it!"

"And so are you!" exclaimed Jack Jackson. "Put up your hands!"

"Eh?"

"Put up your hands, I tell you!"

"I—I—I— Ow! Groooogh!"

Jack Jackson hit out swiftly, sending the bounder reeling against the wall.

"You've taunted me quite long enough," said Jack Jackson. "Now you're going to suffer for it! Take that—and that—and that!"

Three times in quick succession Jack Jackson drove his fists in the bounder's face.

Barker was completely overwhelmed, and he sank to the floor.

Jack Jackson bent over him, and shook his fist at the fallen bounder.

"I've not given you one tenth part of what you deserve, you cad!" he exclaimed hotly. "But if you dare to speak to me again I'll have no mercy on you! I'll thrash you to within an inch of your life!"

"Ow! Yow! Yoooooop!" spluttered Barker.

Jack Jackson walked up the stairs and entered the Fourth Form dormitory.

It was not until five minutes later that Barker made his appearance.

Several fellows observed the fact that he had been fighting, and questioned him on the matter.

But the bounder gave no explanation. He was seething with anger.

And it was a long while ere he fell asleep that night.

His mind was fully engaged in evolving a scheme for getting his revenge on Jack Jackson.

But Jack Jackson slept peacefully. He had put up with too much from Barker to worry about what the latter might do on the morrow.

(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.)

# HUNTING THE ROAD-AGENTS!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD

The 1st Chapter. The Ambuscade.

"Hold on!"

Bob Lawless pulled in his horse. It was Saturday, which was a whole holiday at Cedar Creek School, and Frank Richards & Co. were free for the day.

The three chums were riding along a rough track on the hillside north of Thompson town, when Bob suddenly drew rein.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc followed his example, glancing at the rancher's son inquiringly.

Shading his eyes with his big Stetson hat, Bob Lawless sat motionless in the saddle, staring intently down the hillside.

A good distance below the trail to Thompson wound round the foot of the hill, with the river on the other side.

The hillside was dotted with clumps of pine and birch, and great patches of spruce blackened with the frost.

So far as Frank and Beauclerc could see, they were alone on the wild hillside, and nothing living stirred amid the patches of wood and thicket.

But it was evident that something had caught the keen eyes of the Canadian schoolboy.

For a full minute Bob sat quite still, looking intently towards the lower trail, his eyes keen and his brows knitted.

"I guess that's queer!" he said at last.

"What on earth's up?" asked Frank Richards, puzzled. "I can't see anything excepting the trail and the river. Have you spotted a grizzly?"

"Nope. Franky, my son, you've been long enough in Canada to have learned to use your eyes."

"I'm using them, fathead!"

"Not with much result, then!" grinned Bob. "You can see the Thompson trail, I suppose?"

"Nothing new in that!"

"Your mistake—something quite new," answered Bob. "There's two galoots in ambush beside the trail."

"What?"

Frank and Beauclerc stared hard in the direction Bob pointed out with his riding-whip.



## THE CAPTURE OF THE "ROAD-AGENT!"

He glanced up at the sky as he made that statement; his timekeeper was the sun glimmering over the mountain ranges.

"About three! It's about time for the post-wagon—any time between two and four the post-wagon comes along on Saturday afternoon to Thompson from the upper camps. Those galoots are watching for the post-wagon."

"Phew!"

"I suppose they can't be watching for anything else?" remarked Beauclerc.

"Now, when two galoots take cover in the timber, and watch a lonely trail for the post-wagon, I guess I want to know why," said Bob Lawless. "And I kinder remember that last week we heard of road-agents getting busy in this section—the Flour-Bag Gang."

"Oh!"

"There were two men, with their faces covered up with flour-bags, that robbed a rancher on the Cedar Camp trail," said Bob; "and it looks powerful like to me that those two galoots are watching now for the post-wagon. I guess it's likely."

Frank Richards nodded.

The two Stetson hats, barely seen at the distance down the hillside, were not moving.

Why should the two wearers be crouched in cover there, watching the trail, unless for an ill motive?

"The road-agents, of course," said Frank, with a deep breath.

"You see, from the point they get a wide view," said Bob. "At that point on the trail they can see a mile towards Thompson, and a mile the other way, north. They can see that the trail's clear both ways, if they pile on the post-wagon when it comes humping along. And I guess there's usually a lot of dust in that wagon from the claims on the upper range. It might be worth a thousand dollars or two to them if they bag it. I guess we've dropped on the Flour-Bag Gang right at work."

Frank and Beauclerc nodded.

There seemed no other explanation of the ambush by the trail, and their hearts beat faster at the thought of being so near—un-suspected—to the road-agents watching for their prey.

"And," continued Bob thoughtfully, "I guess we're not letting them rip. There's two of them, and three of us. And we know they're there, and they don't know we're here. Are you fellows game?"

"Game as pie!" said Frank. "But—"

"We've got to chip in," said Bob.

"And if there's shooting—"

"There won't be any that we handle them well," said Bob. "We know enough woodcraft to take them by surprise from behind. We've got to prevent the post-wagon being robbed. And there's another reason. I guess it will be one up for Cedar Creek School if we rope in the Flour-Bag Gang. I've heard that some of the fellows at Hillcrest School have been talking about doing it."

"What rot!"

"Well, Dicky Bird is a hefty galoot."

Bob Lawless led the way as the chums of Cedar Creek plunged into the thickets on the wild hillside.

The chums had been riding over the hill on a visit to a homestead at White Pine; but they were not thinking of that visit now.

White Pine could wait.

Since he had come to the Canadian West, Frank Richards had picked up a good knowledge of woodcraft; but once he had plunged into the thicket the trail and the ambush were lost sight of, and Frank had to admit that he could not pick his own way in the right direction.

But Bob was an unfailing guide.

Probably he had fixed some landmarks in his memory, and was guided, too, by the lie of the hillside.

The rancher's son hesitated hardly once, as he led the way down the descent towards the trail.

He trod with great caution, making no sound—not even a twig snapped as he made his way through the thickets.

Frank and Beauclerc imitated his caution.

Bob paused, and held up his hand suddenly.

In the thicket ahead of them, on the very border of the trail, there was the sound of a slight movement.

It was followed by another sound—a yawn.

It sounded as if the watchers of the trail were growing tired of their vigil.

Bob made his comrades a sign of caution, and trod warily on, his riding-whip gripped in his hand, the butt ready for use.

Frank and Beauclerc followed.

Not the slightest sound was made now, for they were almost near enough to hear the breathing of the pair crouched by the trail.

Through the bushes glimpses could be had of muddy riding-boots, and the butt of a rifle.

Only a thin screen of thicket separated them now from the ambushed pair, who were still watching the trail without dreaming of turning their heads.

Bob set his teeth.

It was time!

He could see little of the two forms screened within a few feet of him, but quite enough to guide him.

He signed to his comrade and made a sudden spring.

Like a leaping lynx, the lithe Canadian schoolboy crashed through the thicket, and landed upon the back of one of the crouching figures.

There was a startled cry, and the figure went plunging forward, with Bob kneeling on his back.

The other was springing up when Frank and Beauclerc landed on him together, and he crashed face downwards, with the two schoolboys on him.

The ambushed pair had been taken utterly by surprise.

They wriggled under the gripping knees on their backs, and the two rifles that had fallen from their hands lay useless.

"Give in!" rapped out Bob Lawless. "Give in, my pippins, and take it quiet, if you don't want your heads caved in at the back! We've got you!"

"Yaroo!"

"You can yell as much as you like," said Bob. "But I've got the butt of my riding-whip here to cave in your skull if you try any tricks! We've got you, my merry rustlers!"

"Bob Lawless!"

"Hallo! You know my name—ch?"

"You silly ass!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Gerrup! I'm Dicky Bird, you thumping idiot!"

"What?"

Bob Lawless recognised the voice now. He jumped off his prisoner, as if the latter's back had suddenly become red-hot to his knees.

The prisoner rolled over in the herbage, and disclosed a red and furious face.

Bob Lawless blinked at him petrified.

For the face was that of Richard Bird, of Hillcrest School, and certainly not that of a road-agent disguised under a flour-bag.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Frank Richards. "And who's this?"

"This" uttered a howl of wrath.

"Gerroff my back, you jay! You're s-s-quashing me! I'm Blumpy, you thumping idiot!"

"Oh!"

"Well, my hat!" murmured Beauclerc. The second prisoner was released, and the two rose to their feet, panting for breath, and evidently furious.

"You silly jays!" howled Dicky Bird. "What do you mean by creeping on galoots from behind, and jumping on them?"

"You fairly startled me out of my skin!" gasped Blumpy. "Blest if I didn't think the road-agents were on us for a minute!"

"What were you in cover for, watching the trail?" demanded Bob Lawless indignantly. "We spotted you from up the hill, and thought you were the Flour-Bag Gang watching for the post-wagon."

"What?" yelled Dicky Bird.

"The Flour-Bag Gang—us?" roared Blumpy.

"Well, what were we to think?" demanded Frank Richards. "What silly game were you playing, anyway?"

"You—you—you crass idiots!" panted Dicky Bird. "We're watching for the post-wagon—"

"And why?"

"Because we're after the road-agents, you fatheads!" snorted Dicky Bird. "We can watch the whole trail both ways from this point, and if the road-agents lay for the post-wagon, we're going to chip in! That's why we've brought our rifles. And you—you— Oh, you idiots!"

Frank Richards & Co. stared at the two Hillcrest fellows blankly.

They understood now.

Dicky Bird and Blumpy were making use of their holiday to look for the Flour-Bag Gang, with a good chance of success if the road-agents happened to work that trail that afternoon.

That was why they had been posted so carefully in cover, watching the trail when the post-wagon was due.

Bob Lawless' cheeks reddened.

Frank blushed, and Beauclerc burst into a laugh.

The surprise had been a complete success; but the capture was not a glorious one.

Certainly the Cedar Creek chums could not march off Dicky Bird and Billy Blumpy to the sheriff at Thompson, to be laid by the heels in the calaboose.

Dicky Bird was wriggling painfully; Bob Lawless' knee in the small of his back had not been gently applied.

But his face broke into a grin at last.

The comic side of the affair dawned on him—as it had already dawned on the chums of Cedar Creek.

"I've a jolly good mind to take you out into the trail, and mop it up with you!" he said. "But you can't help being funny, I guess! Ha, ha!"

"So you took us for road-agents? We look like road-agents, I guess! Ha, ha!"

"We only saw the tops of your hats!" grunted Bob.

"Is everybody who wears a Stetson hat a road-agent, then?"

"Look here—"

"By gum! We must tell the fellows this at Hillcrest!" grinned Dicky Bird. "It will tickle them to death! By the way, where are you chaps going?"

"White Pine!" growled Bob.

"Better turn round, and ride down to Kamloops."

"Why?"

"You can get a train there for a lunatic asylum!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Blumpy.

The chums of Cedar Creek looked at the Hillcrest fellows and looked at one another.

They turned and tramped back the way they had come.

They were sorely tempted to fall on the Hillcrest chums and smite them hip and thigh.

But they refrained and went their own way.

The chuckling of Dicky Bird and Blumpy followed them through the firs and birches as they went back to their horses.

They did not speak a word as they returned to their steeds.

On the upper trail they mounted in silence, and rode on their way over the hill to White Pine.

"I—I say, that was a bad break!" said Bob Lawless at last. "I don't see that we were to blame for taking them for—for the road-agents."

"Don't say 'we,' old chap," grinned Frank Richards. "It was your discovery

## The 2nd Chapter. A Slight Surprise.

Bob Lawless led the way as the chums of Cedar Creek plunged into the thickets on the wild hillside.

The chums had been riding over the hill on a visit to a homestead at White Pine; but they were not thinking of that visit now.

White Pine could wait.

Since he had come to the Canadian West, Frank Richards had picked up a good knowledge of woodcraft; but once he had plunged into the thicket the trail and the ambush were lost sight of, and Frank had to admit that he could not pick his own way in the right direction.

But Bob was an unfailing guide.

Probably he had fixed some landmarks in his memory, and was guided, too, by the lie of the hillside.

The rancher's son hesitated hardly once, as he led the way down the descent towards the trail.

He trod with great caution, making no sound—not even a twig snapped as he made his way through the thickets.

Bob Lawless led the way as the chums of Cedar Creek plunged into the thickets on the wild hillside.

The chums had been riding over the hill on a visit to a homestead at White Pine; but they were not thinking of that visit now.

White Pine could wait.

Since he had come to the Canadian West, Frank Richards had picked up a good knowledge of woodcraft; but once he had plunged into the thicket the trail and the ambush were lost sight of, and Frank had to admit that he could not pick his own way in the right direction.

But Bob was an unfailing guide.

Probably he had fixed some landmarks in his memory, and was guided, too, by the lie of the hillside.

The rancher's son hesitated hardly once, as he led the way down the descent towards the trail.

He trod with great caution, making no sound—not even a twig snapped as he made his way through the thickets.

Bob Lawless led the way as the chums of Cedar Creek plunged into the thickets on the wild hillside.

The chums had been riding over the hill on a visit to a homestead at White Pine; but they were not thinking of that visit now.

White Pine could wait.

Since he had come to the Canadian West, Frank Richards had picked up a good knowledge of woodcraft; but once he had plunged into the thicket the trail and the ambush were lost sight of, and Frank had to admit that he could not pick his own way in the right direction.

But Bob was an unfailing guide.

Probably he had fixed some landmarks in his memory, and was guided, too, by the lie of the hillside.

The rancher's son hesitated hardly once, as he led the way down the descent towards the trail.

He trod with great caution, making no sound—not even a twig snapped as he made his way through the thickets.

Bob Lawless led the way as the chums of Cedar Creek plunged into the thickets on the wild hillside.

The chums had been riding over the hill on a visit to a homestead at White Pine; but they were not thinking of that visit now.

White Pine could wait.

Since he had come to the Canadian West, Frank Richards had picked up a good knowledge of woodcraft; but once he had plunged into the thicket the trail and the ambush were lost sight of, and Frank had to admit that he could not pick his own way in the right direction.

But Bob was an unfailing guide.

Probably he had fixed some landmarks in his memory, and was guided, too, by the lie of the hillside.

The rancher's son hesitated hardly once, as he led the way down the descent towards the trail.

He trod with great caution, making no sound—not even a twig snapped as he made his way through the thickets.



HUNTING THE ROAD-AGENTS!

(Continued from the previous page.)

The Hillcrest fellows grinned at the sight of them.

"Not guilty, my lord!" was Dicky Bird's first remark.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Fisher and Blumpy.

"Oh, give us a rest!" said Bob Lawless crossly.

"You're really going to try and tackle the Flour-Bag, then?"

"Yes! And I guess you'd better keep off the grass.

"Oh, draw it mild! It's our stunt, isn't it?"

"That's just like you Cedar Creek gals; you can't think of anything for yourselves.

"Well, fair's fair," said Bob, unheeding the chuckle that followed Dicky Bird's remark.

"Oh, you can wander around on the other trails if you like!"

"It's not a bad idea," said Bob Lawless.

"Then if we start hunting the Flour-Bag Gang we'll leave that trail to you.

"I guess so," assented Dicky Bird.

"You're growing quite bright, old chap," said Bob.

"Too bright to take Dicky Bird for a road-agent, anyhow!"

"Well, what's it all about, Bob?" demanded Frank Richards.

"You're growing quite bright, old chap," said Bob.

"Shush!" said Beaulere.

"Well, said Bob, 'we're hearing no end of it because we—well, if you like—because I took Dicky Bird for a road-agent—'"

"And we're likely to hear a lot more," agreed Frank.

"But suppose it happened again, the other way round—"

"What?" yelled Frank.

"And next Saturday I guess the laugh's going to be on the other side," said Bob Lawless.

"My hat! But—"

"And that's the stunt," said Bob. "If it works, the fellows will have something else to cackle about."

The 4th Chapter. Hands Up!

"I guess we shan't be jumped on this time," remarked Dicky Bird.

"That it was risky they well knew; but they cared little for the risk."

What they thought of chiefly was the triumph over the rival school if Hillcrest fellows succeeded in ridding the valley of the gang of road-agents.

And Dicky Bird's plan was really good. If the road-agents were still lurking in the valley, it was probable that sooner or later they would make an attempt upon the post-wagon, which every Saturday brought down the miners' dust and nuggets from the claims in the upper ranges.

Under the tall fir the chums of Hillcrest had a wide view of the trail in both directions, themselves safely concealed.

Dicky Bird had a well-known reputation in the valley as a crack shot.

The three schoolboys settled down in the thicket close by the tall fir, as Frank Richards & Co. had found them a week before.

But they waited cheerfully, with rugs round their legs to keep off the cold.

They chuckled as they remembered the surprise of the previous Saturday.

"I shouldn't wonder if those Cedar Creek jays are on the trail somewhere," observed Fisher.

"Not the least!" agreed Dicky Bird.

And the Hillcrest chums fell silent.

But Dicky Bird & Co. were patient.

After the Redskin had passed the trail lay silent and deserted for nearly another hour.

Then Dicky Bird pricked up his ears at the sound of hoof-strokes.

Three pairs of keen eyes were fastened on the trail, ready to fix on him as soon as the intervening boulders allowed him to be seen.

As he came into sight Dicky Bird drew a quick breath.

He made a sign to his chums, and grasped his rifle silently.

Steadily the horseman came on.

He was wrapped in a long coat, with the collar turned up against the wind, which hid him and gave him a bulky appearance.

The flour-bag concealed his face, and over it was a Stetson hat.

The horseman halted again, almost directly opposite the ambush.

There he backed his horse into the thickets.

The three chums felt their hearts thump.

He kept his face towards the trail as he backed his steed into the bushes.

That was proof enough of the man's character. If the flour-bag was not sufficient for why should an honest man take the trouble to disguise his horse?

The 5th Chapter. Not a Triumph!

"My hat! Here they come!"

Frank Richards and Vere Beaulere were trotting in a leisurely way on the trail outside Thompson, when Dicky Bird & Co. came in sight, with the masked man a prisoner in their midst.

"Only one of the Flour-Bag Gang!" answered Dicky Bird, with a lofty and rather assumed indifference.

"Gammion!" said Frank incredulously.

"Well, my hat!" said Frank. "We'll come along."

"I guess this rather lays over anything that Cedar Creek can do!"

"I guess it does!" agreed Frank, rather unexpectedly.

The schoolboys rode on together, with the bound and silent prisoner in their midst.

There were loud exclamations as they rode up Main Street in Thompson, as the tall-tale flour-bag was recognised.

Questions were shouted on all sides, and the victorious Hillcrest fellows shouted back jubilant answers.

By the time Dicky Bird & Co. halted outside the sheriff's house in Main Street half-Thompson was gathered round.

"What the thunder—" ejaculated the sheriff.

"Road-agent, sir!" chortled Dicky Bird.

"One of the Flour-Bag Gang! We've roped him in and brought him to you, Mr. Henderson."

He descended the steps of the piazza.

Round the riders the crowd surged close in great excitement—miners and ranchmen and lumbermen, and a good many boys of Hillcrest and Cedar Creek Schools, who were in town that afternoon.

The 6th Chapter. The Sheriff's Prize!

"I guess Bob Lawless ought to be here to see this!" called out Chunky Todgers to Frank Richards.

"You'll see him soon, Chunky," said Vere Beaulere, with a laugh.

He cut through the trail-ropes that fastened the prisoner, and dragged off, first, the big greatcoat that gave him so bulky a look.

The sheriff whistled.

"I guess you started this game early, my fine fellow," he remarked.

"The sheriff cut the cord that fastened the flour-bag round the horseman's neck, and pitching off the hat, drew the bag off over the man's head.

The face that was disclosed was almost black, thickly bearded, and extremely villainous looking.

"Who are you?" demanded the sheriff, staring at the man.

To the astonishment of the sheriff and the onlookers the road-agent grinned.

"I shouldn't wonder if that beard would come off," remarked Dicky Bird.

It came off in his hand, with the moustaches along with it.

For the removal of those hideous adornments disclosed quite a shapely and boyish mouth and chin, sunburnt, but fresh and healthy, and strangely contrasting with the blackened hue of the upper features.

"What does this mean, young Lawless?" thundered the sheriff.

"No harm, sheriff. Dicky Bird was looking for a flour-bag road-agent, so I found him one. Only a joke, sir."

He did not seem to have a keen appreciation for Bob Lawless' little joke on the Hillcrest fellows.

"No putting me in the calaboose, Dicky?" asked Bob Lawless, grinning at the petrified leader of Hillcrest.

"You—you—you—" stammered Dicky Bird.

"Net the only jay present, I guess!" chuckled Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The crowd broke, grinning and chuckling.

Dicky Bird, Fisher, and Blumpy looked at one another with sickly looks, and wheeled their horses.

"I guess," remarked Bob Lawless, "that this puts the lid on Hillcrest for a bit."

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

THE FLOUR-BAG GANG!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

LOV'T MISS IT!