

THE BOYS WHO CAUGHT THE KAISER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

not understand why he was allowing himself to be mopped up by his unskilful antagonist, who was all brute force and no skill.

At the end of the second round the baron was triumphant, and the sailors were dumfounded.

In the third round all the funk had gone out of Baron von Slyden.

He felt that he was Arty's master. It brought back the old duelling days to him, when he had been master of the field.

He was certain of winning now, and with certainty of winning all the old German brutality rose in him.

Full of condescence, he faced his antagonist.

He did not notice the wary look which had come into Arty's eyes.

He struck out fierce and hard with tremendous blows, but a yell of delight went up from the sailors as Arty suddenly pulled himself together and started boxing in his best style.

Von Slyden was astounded. Over and over again he thought that he had Arty at his mercy.

Yet, somehow, he found himself hitting thin air.

Then suddenly Arty seemed to turn upon him.

He found himself flying all over the ring beneath a shower of sledge-hammer punches, which stung his face, his ribs, and his chest red-hot.

His own fists fanned the air.

Then suddenly Arty's glove shot out of the mist that was gathering before his eyes.

There was a jolt on his jaw, and the baron remembered no more for a while.

He found himself with his head pillowed on Pongo's knee.

"Vot has happen?" he asked Pongo in

a dazed voice. "I tink I vas kick in der neck!"

"That's all right, Sausage; don't worry yourself," replied Pongo in a soothing voice. "You're licked, that's all. Arty knocked you out in the third round. Now, come along, and put your head under the tap. We've got to go to school this morning."

The crestfallen baron allowed his seconds to haul him along the deck to the bath-room, where they sponged his head and put him on a clean collar.

His German pride was humbled. He could not understand these British boys and their queer lack of enmity and their feeling for fair-play.

He could only think that they were mad—or, worse still, fools.

For that is the German way of thinking.

They put him on a clean collar, and made him brush his hair and wash.

Then they ran the baron along to the saloon-companion, for the school-bell was ringing.

"Look out there!" exclaimed Pongo, pointing to a tall, conical shadow which rose from the horizon miles ahead of the ship. "That's the shadow of the Peak of Teneriffe. It's a hundred miles away. We shall be there in the evening."

The baron looked at the distant shadow across the blue sea.

A gleam of hope showed in his sombre, ferrety eyes as he made up his mind that at Santa Cruz, the only port at which the South Star was likely to call, he would have a chance of escaping from this exceedingly undesirable British school in which he found himself.

All that morning he sat in school thinking out his plan of escape.

He was so absent-minded that Lal found him but a poor scholar.

Indeed, Lal was greatly surprised to find how little this highly-placed official of the German Empire knew.

Arty was not proficient at Euclid, but he had Sausage Slyden beat on the fifth proposition.

Dick Dorrington always declared that algebra made him ill, and gave him pains in his chest.

But he made a better show in this subject than the Kaiser's pet.

"Slyden," said Lal sharply, in the course of the geography lesson, "to what nation does Aden belong?"

"Shermany!" replied Von Slyden, still wrapped in his dream of escape.

There was a ripple of laughter from the boys at this answer, and the baron looked round on them, his fat face turning red with anger.

"It did belong to us if we did not lose dis war, English pigs!" he snarled.

Lal produced his cane from under his gown.

"Stand out, sir!" he said. "You shall not address your schoolfellows as pigs in class. It is unseemly to your master, and provocative of great quarrels. You shall have three handers of the best. Stand up, sir!"

The unhappy Von Slyden stood up.

He could scarcely believe his eyes when Lal motioned with his cane that he should approach to receive castigation.

Skeleton laughed out loud.

In a second Lal had turned upon him. "Ah, Mr. Skeleton!" he said. "You make laughs at the execution of justice, do you? You shall have two handers first. Stand there in front of Slyden. He shall see how we teach geography and manners!"

The Skeleton ruefully took his place in front of the German.

"This, Mr. Skeletons," said Lal, "will teach you not to make laughs even at enemies in adversity."

Up went his cane, and Skeleton took

two of the best, which made him feel as though he had handled a red-hot poker.

Then it was the baron's turn. "I will not be by a black man be castigated!" he said, refusing to hold out his hand.

In a second Lal had got him scientifically in Chancery.

"Twelve you shall have, Slyden—not on the hand," said Lal. "That will teach you to respect masters, and not to call Hindu gentlemen black mans. You will furthermore write me ten thousand lines! The Hindu gentleman is a British subject, and not a black mans."

Then the baron caught it.

He caught it hot.

He howled as Lal's cane coiled round his legs, picking out the soft parts.

Lal gave him twelve of the very best.

Then he ordered him off, to be locked in his cabin, to write his lines on a huge ream of impot paper.

Even the boys were sorry for the baron.

Somehow, since he had turned up amongst them, with his moustache shaved off, and his fat limbs stretching the seams of Arty's Etons, they had taken him amongst them as one of themselves.

During the afternoon, as the ship approached the Canary Islands, they dropped him bullseyes down the ventilators of the locked cabin, where he sat writing his lines.

Skeleton sent him a huge chunk of cake in with his tea, although Lal had said that he was only to have bread and butter.

It was late in the evening before the ship, skirting along the black lava cliffs of the island, dropped anchor in the little port of Santa Cruz.

It was too late to go ashore that night, and the boys amused themselves by watching the lights ashore, and the barges which came off with water and coal.

From one of the shore-boats which

came alongside, Skeleton purchased a huge bunch of bananas, golden and glorious, and a huge basket of oranges.

Then his hospitable soul reminded him of the prisoner, shut up in his hot cabin down below, toiling over his lines.

He went along to Mr. Lal Tata's cabin and knocked on the door.

Lal was lying in his bunk reading "Tom Brown's Schooldays."

"Ah, Skeletons!" he said. "What you want now?"

"Please, sir," said Skeleton, "I've got a job line of bananas. May I give some to the Sausage?"

"A noble heart, Skeletons, is always pitiful for fallen adversary," said Lal. "Yes, you may unlock the cabin and present the Hun with bananas. But you shall be careful to take Dick and Arty with you, as precaution against escapes, and to lock the door again."

"Thank you, sir!" said Skeleton, and off he went to call his chums to assist in carrying the fruit to their prisoner.

They reached the door of the cabin, dragging the huge bunch of bananas between them.

Skeleton slipped the key in the lock with a cheery greeting.

"Hallo, old Sausage!" he exclaimed. "Have a banana?"

There was no answer from the cabin.

Hastily Dick switched on the light.

The German's cabin was empty.

On a single sheet of impot paper, which stood on the top of the pile, was written the words:

"Good-bye, you English pigs! I will have my revenge!" SAUSAGE.

Baron von Slyden had escaped!

(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.)



Schoolmaster AND Cracksman!

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

By OWEN CONQUEST.



The 1st Chapter.

What Mornington Know.

"Morny!"

"Well?"

"Be reasonable, old scout!" Mornington, of the Classical Fourth, shrugged his shoulders.

Jimmy Silver spoke very quietly and earnestly, but Valentine Mornington did not seem in a very reasonable mood.

It was nearly time for morning classes at Rookwood School, and some of the Fourth were gathering round the Form-room door, when Jimmy addressed Mornington in the corridor.

Mr. Egerton, the new master of the Fourth, had not yet appeared.

When he did, it would be a signal for the juniors to scuttle into the Form-room.

Mornington's face was very dark, and there was a glimmer in his eyes that told of an angry spirit within.

Morny, in fact, had not quite recovered from the licking the new master had bestowed on him the previous evening.

Morny's look boded trouble, and Jimmy was a little uneasy for the dandy of the Fourth.

For Mr. Egerton was not the kind of man to be trifled with.

Most of the juniors liked him, but they had recognised his firmness of character.

"It's no good sharpening your knife for Egerton, you know," continued Jimmy Silver, in a tone of sweet reasonableness.

"And it really isn't like you, Morny, to bear a grudge for a licking. Bless your little heart! I had lickings enough from Mr. Bootles when he was here, and I always liked him."

"This is a bit different!" snapped Morny.

"I don't see it. The new man found you in his study, and you admitted you'd come there to rag the room. What the merry dickens did you expect, if not a licking?"

"He went for me like a ruffian!"

"Well, he may have laid it on a little," said Jimmy. "But, of course, he was in a wax."

Mornington sneered.

He was generally on good terms with Jimmy Silver since their old differences had been made up, but he was not in a good temper this morning.

"You all seem to be jolly fond of Egerton!" he said, with a curl of his well-cut lip.

"He's a decent man!" chimed in Arthur Edward Lovell.

"You may think so. I don't."

"Morny, old man—" murmured Kit Erroll.

Erroll was Morny's best chum, but even he was troubled by the line the dandy of the Fourth was taking.

"Et tu, Brute!" grinned Morny.

"Thou, too, Brutus! Don't you jaw me as well as the rest!"

"But really, Morny—"

"Oh give a chap a rest!" said Mornington crossly. "I tell you I'm up against the new man. Why, hang it all, so were the lot of you once! Wasn't it agreed to rag every new master we had, till the Head allowed Mr. Bootles to come back?"

"Ye-es but—"

"Well, I'm stickin' to it. What sort of a crowd are the new masters the Head has got in from goodness knows where?" demanded Mornington. "There's all the old masters resigned, and stick-

ing at Coombe, and a scratch gang brought in to run Rookwood—and Egerton the scratchiest of the lot!"

"Stuff!" said George Raby. "The rest are a weird gang, I know, but Egerton is all right."

"Right as rain!" said Arthur Newcome.

The Fistical Four of the Fourth were all agreed upon that point evidently.

They were loyal to Mr. Bootles, their dismissed master; but they did not see any reason to be down on the new man, who had given them no cause for offence, and who had, indeed, been kind and considerate.

The opinion of the Fistical Four did not weigh with Valentine Mornington, however.

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"You're mistaken in him," he said coolly. "I could prove it to anybody but an ass!"

"Thanks!" said Jimmy Silver drily.

"Not at all; you're welcome to my opinion of your intellect."

"Look here, you cheeky ass—"

"Look at the facts!" said Mornington.

"Mr. Bootles met the Egerton man the day he came, and recognised him. He let drop something that showed he had a grudge of some sort against the man. Then Egerton forbids us to hold any communication with him. Bootles comes here and forces his way in to the Head. Well, what did he do that for?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"My opinion is that he was warning the Head against the new man. He knows him, and knows something about him."

"He would naturally be a bit prejudiced against the man who's taken his place here," said Erroll.

"Prejudiced be blessed! It's not that. But there's somethin' more," said Mornington. "I was in the man's study yesterday evenin', and he caught me there. I'd dodged behind the screen, and he didn't see me at first. Well, I saw what he was doin'." He unpacked a trunk—

"Nothing very wicked in that, is there?" asked Lovell.

"Fathead!" He got out writing materials—

"Why shouldn't he? Perhaps he wanted to write a letter home," suggested Lovell gravely.

The juniors chuckled, and Mornington flushed with annoyance.

"Will you let me finish?" he exclaimed.

"He wrote five or six letters one after another—but all the same letter, as it turned out. He was making it up awfully careful. Then he picked out a paper with an engraved heading on it—"

"He would write on Rookwood note-paper naturally," said Jimmy Silver.

"But it wasn't Rookwood paper."

"I don't see what else it could have been."

"The heading on the paper was 'Highwood school,'" answered Mornington.

"Eh?"

"That surprises you, does it?" grinned Mornington. "It surprised me. He copied out his letter on that paper, and burnt all the sheets he'd written. Now, how does he come to have Highwood school paper in his writing-case?"

"May have visited there, and brought some away by chance—same as you do at a seaside hotel sometimes."

"But why should he pick it out to write a special letter on?"

"I'll give that up."

"Well, I'll tell you," said Mornington. "He was writing a letter for some kind of spoof—to make out that the letter was written at Highwood School. He couldn't have had any other reason. When I saw that I knew he was fishy."

"Look here, Morny—"

"Then he found me there," said Mornington, between his teeth. "He didn't know I'd seen the Highwood School paper. But he was nervous—he thought I might have—and he pitched into me. He was scared at the idea of any fellow nosing about his study. It was quite plain. He pitched into me as a warnin'."

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows thoughtfully.

Morny's story was news to the Fistical Four, though Erroll had already heard it, and it was extremely puzzling.

Why a man at Rookwood should write a letter on Highwood School paper—not by chance, but with intention—was a mystery.

"What do you think now?" demanded Morny triumphantly.

"I don't quite know what to think," answered Jimmy Silver. "Are you sure of what you say?"

"Yes, ass!"

"Perhaps you went to sleep behind the screen and dreamed it," suggested Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Fathead! I'd never even heard of Highwood School before—I don't know now where the place is. The name couldn't come into my head of its own accord, could it?"

"Well, no," said Jimmy. "Still, he may have had his reasons. I dare say he could explain—if it was necessary."

"But it isn't," remarked Lovell.

"Tain't our bizney!"

"It's queer, but it's his bizney, not ours," said Jimmy, "and though I stand by Bootles as much as ever, I don't see ragging a man who's decent, and who's doing his best. And the fact is, Morny, he's not a man to stand it. He's not like Snaggs and Mobsby and the other new masters. The Third are leading poor little Mobsby a dog's life. But Egerton is a different kind of man. He's good-natured, but he's as hard as a rock inside."

"I'm up against him," said Mornington obstinately; "and as for his order not to speak to Bootles, I sha'n't take any notice of it. In fact, I'm goin' down to Coombe specially to see Bootles after lessons."

"Now, look here, Morny—"

"Shush! Here he comes!" said Raby. The stalwart figure of Mr. Cyril Egerton, the new master of the Fourth, appeared at the end of the corridor.

The discussion broke off abruptly. Jimmy Silver & Co. went into the Form-room, and the Fourth were all in their places when Mr. Egerton came in.

The 2nd Chapter.

Mornington Rebels.

"Good-morning, boys!"

"Good-morning, sir!"

Mr. Egerton's greeting was cheery and hearty.

It was scarcely possible to look at his cheery, good-humoured face, and listen to his hearty voice, without liking him.

Even Mornington had liked him at first, till that unfortunate encounter had taken place in the master's study.

"You're not!" said Mornington coolly.

"Mornington, if you do not hold out your hand at once, I shall thrash you severely!" exclaimed the Form-master.

"Will you?" said Morny, between his teeth.

He had been backing towards the door, and now he made a sudden run, and tore the door open.

Before the new master could realise his intention, Mornington was outside the Form-room.

Mr. Egerton stood astounded for a moment.

But as the rebel junior's footsteps pattered away down the corridor, he strode to the door.

"Mornington," he thundered, "come back at once! How dare you leave the Form-room?"

Mornington did not answer. He was already making for the quadrangle, and, without a glance behind him, he scudded out of the School House.

Mr. Egerton stared after him, from the Form-room, blankly.

Such utter recklessness on the junior's part was a surprise to him, as well as to the Fourth.

He made a step into the passage, and halted.

Valentine Mornington, plainly, did not intend to be caught, and an undignified chase of an elusive junior was scarcely the thing.

Mr. Egerton, with knitted brows, turned back into the room, and closed the door.

The Fourth Form sat with bated breath.

The new master resumed the lesson with quiet calmness as if nothing had happened, Mornington's punishment being left over for the present.

There was nothing else, in fact, that Mr. Egerton could do.

He could not leave his class to itself while he engaged in a chase round the quadrangle after a rebellious junior.

But it was quite certain that a flogging from the Head awaited Mornington when he turned up again.

Kit Erroll sat looking very distressed; he was concerned for his reckless chum—as were some of the other fellows.

Lessons continued in a very quiet atmosphere.

Some of the juniors expected to see Valentine Mornington come back as soon as he was cool and make the best of his submission, but it did not happen.

While lessons were going on in the Form-rooms of Rookwood, Mornington had dropped quietly over the school wall into the road.

He had snatched up his cap as he fled, his mind having been already made up as to what he was going to do.

He could not venture near the gates, where old Mack would certainly have stopped and detained him, but the wall was easily climbed, and Mornington was soon free.

With his hands in his pockets, the dandy of the Fourth sauntered away down the lane towards Coombe.

He knew the risk he was running—or, rather, the certainty—but there was no hesitation in his manner.

He wondered whether Mr. Egerton would have left him unpursued if he had known his destination.

But Mr. Egerton, grinding Latin with the Fourth Form in the school, had no suspicion that Valentine Mornington was on his way to see Mr. Bootles.

The 3rd Chapter.

Startling News!

"Bless my soul!"

It was Mr. Bootles, late master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood School, who made that remark.

A group of gentlemen were pacing sedately along the lane, near the village of Coombe, with rather gloomy faces.

They were the old "staff" of Rookwood, now resigned—or, rather, on strike!



(Continued from the previous page.)

He was holding forth on the subject of the absurd obstinacy of Dr. Chisholm, the Head of Rookwood, and debating whether it would be judicious to make an appeal to the governors of the school, to end the present unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Mr. Greely had been the leader of the masters' strike in support of Mr. Bootles, whom they regarded as having been unjustly dismissed by the Head, with some reason.

Mr. Greely had not changed his mind in the least, but he was growing very restive and dissatisfied, as the days passed, and no sign came from the Head of Rookwood.

Certainly he had expected the "strike" to bring the headmaster to reason, but it had not had that result.

New masters had taken the places of most of the old, and though they had been hurriedly engaged, and were certainly not giving satisfaction, the Head was contriving to work with them, somehow.

It really looked as if the strikers would be left out in the cold, and that they might as well disperse as remain in their quarters at the inn.

They were taking their morning walk in a body, Mr. Greely holding forth, and the other masters giving him his head, so to speak, when Mr. Bootles sighted Mornington coming along the lane.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles. "This is very irregular. There seems to be very little order in the school. Here is a boy out of gates—"

"What is to be expected?" snorted Mr. Greely. "As I was saying—"

"Matters are very unsatisfactory in my Form," said Mr. Mooney, with a sigh. "Rookwood is certainly suffering from this unhappy state of affairs."

"Mais oui, oui!" murmured Monsieur Monceau.

Mornington came up, and raised his cap very respectfully to the masters.

"My dear Mornington," said Mr. Bootles mildly. "Surely you should be in your Form-room at this hour?"

"I've cut, sir!" said Mornington.

"What?"

"I came out."

"Without permission?" exclaimed Mr. Bootles.

"Yes, sir."

Snort from Mr. Greely.

"This is what Rookwood is coming to!" he boomed. "As I was saying, the Head certainly ought—"

"I was coming to see you, sir," said Mornington to Mr. Bootles. "I have something rather important to say, sir."

The masters halted.

"You may speak, Mornington," said Mr. Bootles.

"About our new master, sir," said Mornington.

Mr. Greely & Co. exchanged significant looks.

They had already heard a good deal from Mr. Bootles about the new master of the Fourth.

"Is Mr. Egerton still at Rookwood, Mornington?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is he taking the Fourth this morning?"

"Yes."

"Extraordinary!" said Mr. Bootles.

"After what I said to Dr. Chisholm—most extraordinary!"

Mornington's eyes gleamed.

He could quite understand the significant look of the masters and Mr. Bootles' manner of shocked astonishment, and it bore out what he had already surmised—that what Mr. Bootles knew of the Fourth Form-master was something very serious indeed.

"The man must have satisfied Dr. Chisholm somehow," said Mr. Bootles, with a worried look. "He has, of course, deceived him. Ah—h'm—"

Mr. Bootles remembered that a junior was present, and broke off. "However—"

"I've something to tell you, sir," said Mornington. "Mr. Egerton has a secret of some kind, and I know he is shady—"

"What, what?"

"The boys are finding it out already!" snorted Mr. Greely. "I am not surprised—not surprised at all! This is what Rookwood is coming to!"

"Mon Dieu!" murmured Mossoo.

"Ahem! Mornington, I sympathise with you, but I am afraid I cannot discuss Mr. Egerton with a boy in his Form," said Mr. Bootles.

"I must tell you what has happened, sir."

"Let the boy tell what has happened!" boomed Mr. Greely. "Knowing what we do of the man, Mr. Bootles, we are bound to take measures, if necessary, to frustrate him."

"You—you may proceed, Mornington," Mornington proceeded.

He related, with minute detail, what had occurred in the new master's study the previous evening, dwelling especially upon the letter which had been written upon Highwood School notepaper, after such careful concoction.

The masters listened in silence, broken only by occasional snorts from Mr. Greely.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Bootles at last.

"Now, sir," said Mornington, "I know you know something about the man. You may know what he played this trick for. He can't be honest to be playing such a game. He's a brute, too! I can't go to the Head; he wouldn't listen to me. That's why I've come to you."

Mr. Bootles was very agitated.

"It—it is very extraordinary!" he said feebly.

"It is clear enough!" thundered Mr. Greely. "The man was a master at Highwood School, and he was dismissed for theft. You informed Dr. Chisholm of the facts. Obstinate as the Head undoubtedly

is, he could not avoid asking the man to give him some explanation. What explanation could he give? He could not refer the Head to Highwood. Dr. Woodward would have exposed him utterly. Therefore he has concocted this letter on Highwood paper. His motive, sir—his only possible motive—was to deceive the Head with that letter—a pretended letter from Highwood School."

Mornington started.

He was learning more now than was suspected.

"But—but a letter in his own hand!" stammered Mr. Bootles.

Snort!

"His own hand? Nonsense! What use would a letter in his own hand be?" boomed the Fifth Form-master.

"The letter is not in his own hand, but in a disguised hand. That letter, sir, purports to be from the headmaster of Highwood School—that is the only possible explanation—and it clears the man of your accusation. That letter, sir, is a forgery—an impudent forgery!" snorted Mr. Greely.

"Bless my soul!"

"He was bound to satisfy the Head after your information. He produces a letter to do it; and, first of all, forges the letter. Doubtless, when he left Highwood, he was careful to take away some of the school notepaper, in case such a necessity should arise. The matter, sir, is as clear as daylight!"

"What—what an excessively unscrupulous man!" murmured Mr. Bootles. "I am afraid it is as you say, Mr. Greely. I—I must see the Head. I must! But he has given orders that I am not to be admitted to the school."

"There is the telephone, Mr. Bootles."

"True, true! I must speak to him at once—at once!"

And Mr. Bootles, greatly flustered, and apparently forgetful of Mornington's existence, hurried back towards the village.

Mr. Greely & Co. followed him, with evident excitement; and Mornington was left standing in the lane alone.

He grinned.

"By gad!" murmured Mornington. "By gad! A thief—turned out of his last job for dishonesty! My hat! The Head's getting a precious set of blackguards to run Rookwood! Old Greely hit the nail on the head, that's clear. He's an old donkey, but he's got it right! By gad!"

Mornington turned, and strolled back towards Rookwood.

After what Mr. Bootles had to tell the Head on the telephone it was not likely that the new Form-master would remain another hour at Rookwood School, and Mornny had the pleasant prospect of escaping punishment for his defiance in the Form-room that morning.

The 4th Chapter.

Mr. Greely Rises to the Occasion.

Dr. Chisholm was busy in the Sixth Form-room when Tupper, the page, put his head in at the doorway.

"Please, sir—"

The Head turned irritably from his class.

"What is it, Tupper?"

"Telephone, sir."

"Take the call, then."

"If you please, sir, it's been took!" answered Tupper meekly. "Gen'leman says it's very important, sir. I've left the receiver off, sir."

"Go back and tell the gentleman I cannot speak to him till after twelve."

"Yessir."

LET US HEAR FROM YOU IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN

Write to me whenever you are in doubt or difficulty. Tell me about yourself; let me know what you think of the BOYS' FRIEND. All readers who write to me, and enclose a stamped envelope or postcard, may be sure of receiving a prompt and kindly reply by post. All letters should be addressed: "The Editor, the BOYS' FRIEND, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4."

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

With the departure of Mr. Egerton, the schoolmaster cracksman, affairs at Rookwood have come to a very serious pass. New masters have come, and new masters have been compelled to go, but still Dr. Chisholm declines to reinstate Mr. Bootles and the others. But in

"JIMMY SILVER'S CAMPAIGN!"

By Owen Conquest,

the title of next Monday's magnificent long complete tale, the Fistical Four decide to take the matter in hand and obtain the reinstatement of their old masters. They first of all resolve to get rid of the new masters, and the methods they adopt are drastic in the extreme.

But they are determined to make a complete success of the campaign, and, needless to say, the feelings of the new masters are not studied in the least. From which you will gather that Messrs. Snags, Pumphyre & Co. do not have a pleasant time. Whether the latter are compelled to depart from Rookwood you will learn next Monday.

The title of our next long complete tale of Frank Richards & Co. is

"CHUNKY'S LATEST STUNT!"

By Martin Clifford.

You will find this yarn a most amusing one. The chums get to hear that a mesmerist is giving a show at Thompson, and,

Tupper disappeared, but he returned in a couple of minutes.

"Gen'leman says he'll ring up again after twelve, sir."

"Very well."

Tupper backed out.

"What name did he give you, Tupper?"

"Never give any name, sir."

"Very good; you may go."

Tupper vanished promptly.

Dr. Chisholm dismissed the matter from his mind, and gave all his attention to the Sixth Form and Greek.

But when he stepped into his study a few minutes after twelve he found the telephone bell beginning to ring.

He took up the receiver.

"Well?"

"Is that Dr. Chisholm?"

"Yes."

"I am Mr. Bootles."

"Bless my soul! Really, Mr. Bootles—"

"Pray do not ring off, sir! I have a matter of the greatest possible moment to speak of."

"I presume you refer to your malicious and unfounded allegations against Mr. Egerton?"

"I refer to my accusation, certainly."

The Head smiled grimly over the transmitter.

"Well, Mr. Bootles, doubtless you will be pleased to learn that Mr. Egerton has completely rebutted your absurd charge."

"Impossible, sir!"

"Not at all—a fact!" said the Head. "He has shown me a letter from the headmaster of Highwood School, containing a complete apology for having entertained unfounded doubts of his honour, and requesting him, in the most flattering terms, to return and resume his duties there."

"Sir! I—I—"

"It is an old letter, Mr. Bootles, which the young man has preserved in case such malicious insinuations should ever be made against him. Very fortunately, too, considering your conduct."

"Dr. Chisholm, the letter is not genuine."

"Nonsense!"

"I assure you, sir—"

"Absurd!"

"I shall write at once to the headmaster of Highwood if you refuse to listen to me."

"You are welcome to do so."

"By to-morrow, at latest, you will hear from Dr. Woodward direct."

"I am not acquainted with Dr. Woodward, but I have no objection whatever to hearing from him if he chooses to write to me, Mr. Bootles. I have not the slightest doubt that he will confirm my high opinion of Mr. Egerton."

"He will expose—"

"Nonsense!"

"Meanwhile, I beseech you to be on your guard against that exceedingly unscrupulous young man—"

Dr. Chisholm jammed the receiver back into its place, and the rest of Mr. Bootles' sentence was lost.

The Head's face was very angry as he rose from the telephone.

"Outrageous!" he exclaimed. "I can understand a prejudice—even a bitter prejudice—but this unworthy persecution of an excellent young man—"

BZZZZZZ!

The telephone-bell rang loudly.

Dr. Chisholm did not approach it, however. He quitted the study, leaving the bell to ring.

At the other end of the wire Mr. Bootles was in a state of great perplexity and distress.

He made three or four attempts to "ring on," but it was in vain, and an acid feminine voice from the exchange informed him that he couldn't get "through." And then the little gentleman gave it up.

He turned away from the telephone, which was in the reading-room at the Coombe Arms, with a troubled brow.

Mr. Greely & Co. were all round him; they had the room to themselves.

"He will not listen to me!" sighed Mr. Bootles.

Snort from Mr. Greely.

"Then your only resource is to write to the headmaster of Highwood," said Mr. Mooney.

"Yes, yes; and at once!" said Mr. Wiggins.

Mr. Bootles nodded.

"I shall do so," he said. "Even Dr. Chisholm cannot refuse to heed a letter from Dr. Woodward."

"That letter," said Mr. Greely, "cannot arrive until to-morrow at the earliest."

"True! The man must remain another day at Rookwood."

Mr. Greely gave a still more emphatic snort.

"What object do you think the man has, Mr. Bootles, in coming to Rookwood at all? His meeting with you, certainly, was unexpected; but he must have known that any day, by any chance, his true character might be exposed. He could not have hoped to remain long at the school. Why, then, did he come? Evidently to feather his nest, sir."

"Eh?"

"He has been a thief once, and he is now a forger," said Mr. Greely. "That man's intention, sir, is to rob the school."

"Bless my soul!"

"Doubtless the Head will tell him what has been said on the telephone, and he will know, sir, that he has only twenty-four hours before him," said Mr. Greely.

"To-morrow, at latest, he will be turned out of Rookwood. If his intentions are dishonest, they will be carried into effect to-night; it is his last chance."

"Good heavens!"

"Is it not perfectly plain?" snorted Mr. Greely. "Doubtless he would have preferred a longer stay, to learn the lie of the land, sir, and ascertain where and how plunder is to be obtained. But I have not the slightest doubt that he made some investigations, at least, last night. And now that he knows the game is up he will take what he can get and bolt."

"It is very probable," remarked Mr. Mooney.

"It is not merely probable, sir, it is certain!" retorted Mr. Greely. "The Head is wilfully blind, and he will certainly be robbed to-night."

"The police—" murmured Mr. Bootles faintly.

Snort!

"You cannot go to the police. What are you to tell them? There is nothing—nothing whatever—against the man till his former employer, in Yorkshire, has been communicated with. Dr. Woodward may not even be at home—there may be delay—and even a reply to a telegram would not come to-day. Rookwood School remains at the mercy of a thief."

"Oh!"

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Greely, folding his arms, and looking round upon his conferees quite grandly. "Gentlemen! This is not a time to remember the obstinacy—the absurd obstinacy—of Dr. Chisholm. We must think of the school, in which we held honourable posts, and in which we may hold honourable posts again. We, gentlemen, must interfere to prevent this knave from carrying out his plans."

"Dear me!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

"It is our duty," said the Fifth Form-master. "Incidentally, we shall heap coals of fire upon the head of Dr. Chisholm. He may realise that he cannot so easily dispense with his staff as he apparently imagines. Gentlemen, this is our duty, and to-night we shall do it."

And there was a general nodding of bald heads.

The 5th Chapter.

In Doubt!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were out of the Form-room when Mornington came up to the school gates.

The gates were open now, and Mornny came in, nodding coolly to the chums of the Fourth.

"Come back for it?" asked Lovell.

"For what, old top?"

"The flogging."

"You'll get it pretty stiff, Mornny," said Jimmy Silver. "I really don't know what else you expected."

Mornington shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't think there's a flogging for me," he answered. "I've seen Bootles."

"No need to mention that to Mr. Egerton. It will only make him more down on you," said Newcome.

"My dear man, I don't care twopence whether he's down on me or not. I've learned some things from Mr. Bootles. The man is a thief."

"Rot!"

"He was kicked out of Highwood School for it. That's how he came to have the school notepaper with him."

"Don't be an ass, Mornny!"

"Mr. Bootles knows it."

"Did he say so?" grinned Raby.

"Yes."

"Oh, my hat! Draw it mild!"

"He's told all the others," said Mornington coolly. "He's going to tell the Head on the telephone. He's told him once, and now he's telling him again, and I fancy the Head will have to see it."

"Bootles went to sleep, and dreamed it, or else you're pulling our leg," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Do draw it mild, Mornny. Tell us something that's not quite so steep."

Mornington gave a shrug, and passed on into the quadrangle.

The Fistical Four looked at one another.

"There can't be anything in it, surely!" said Newcome.

Jimmy Silver shook his head.

"It's too steep!" he said. "Altogether too steep! The man seems decent enough—quite decent in every way, excepting that he pitched into Mornny a bit too hard; and, after all, Mornny was in his study to rag the place, and a master couldn't be expected to take that smiling. I'm afraid Bootles is a bit prejudiced."

"Blessed if I know what to think," said Lovell candidly. "But if it's true, it will come out soon enough. If the Head doesn't make inquiries, Bootles will make some move. He could get the headmaster of Highwood, wherever that is, to write to our Head, and that would settle it."

"If he does, that will settle it," said Jimmy Silver; "and if he doesn't, it will show there's nothing in the yarn. Keep an open mind, that's all—perhaps a trifle in favour of Mr. Egerton. I simply can't believe that he's a rotter of that kind."

The Fistical Four were following Mornington towards the School House.

They were interested to see what was going to happen to the dandy of the Fourth.

That something would happen seemed assured.

Tubby Muffin met Mornington as he entered.

"You're in for it, Mornny!" the fat Classical announced.

"Well, Fatty, in for what?"

"Mr. Egerton has got the Head in his study with him," said Tubby, with a fat grin. "The 'phone bell's been going in the Head's study like—like anything, and now the Head's come buzzing to see Mr. Egerton. They're deciding what to do with you, I think. You'll get flogged, you know."

Mornington smiled.

He thought he could guess why the Head had gone to see Mr. Egerton after the 'phone bell had buzzed.

He glanced towards the Form-master's study, and as he did so the door opened, and Dr. Chisholm appeared.

The Head paused in the doorway to speak to the master within, and his manner, as Mornny noted, was all graciousness.

"My dear Egerton—the juniors heard his words—say no more! My confidence is complete—quite complete! I have simply informed you of Mr. Bootles' statements because I felt that you had a right to know. I regard them, personally, with utter contempt."

Dr. Chisholm had his back to the juniors, and did not see them.

The master of the Fourth was still invisible, inside the study, but Mornny and Tubby Muffin heard his reply.

"Thank you very much, Dr. Chisholm!"

"Not at all, Mr. Egerton. I may add that if I receive a letter from the headmaster of Highwood I shall place it in your hands immediately I have read it."

to him; and Morny wondered whether Mr. Egerton had reported it.

Jimmy Silver & Co. found Mornington lounging in the hall when they came in. "Not called over the coals yet?" asked Lovell.

"Not yet."

"That's queer."

Neither had Mornington been called up when the dinner-bell rang.

He came into the dining-room with the rest of the Classical Fourth, and took his place calmly at the dinner-table, with all eyes on him.

Mr. Egerton took Mr. Bootles' old place at the head of the table.

He gave a slight start as his eyes fell on Mornington.

It was pretty clear that he had forgotten all about the junior and his rebellious conduct in the Form-room, and only the sight of Morny recalled the affair to his mind.

That in itself was surprising enough to the Fourth; they could not easily imagine such an incident escaping a Form-master's memory.

It did not surprise Valentine Mornington.

He was aware that there were much more serious matters occupying Mr. Egerton's mind at present, if Mr. Bootles' statements about him were correct.

Taking that much for granted, the man must know that ere twenty-four hours had elapsed he would be exposed in his true colours, and the gates of Rookwood would close behind him, and in such circumstances he was not likely to give much thought to a disrespectful junior.

He did not speak to Mornington at dinner, at which he sat silent and thoughtful.

Mornington went out with the rest of the juniors, all of them wondering at Morny's good luck.

When the Fourth came into the Form-room for the afternoon, however, Mr. Egerton called Morny before the class.

The junior had no doubt whatever that Mr. Egerton did not care twopence about what had happened that morning, but it was necessary for him to keep up appearances so long as he remained at Rookwood.

"Mornington," said Mr. Egerton quietly and kindly, rather to the junior's surprise, "you acted very disrespectfully this morning."

"Yes, sir."

"I have considered whether to report your conduct to the Head," said Mr. Egerton. "You are aware, of course, that you would be flogged if I did so. I have decided to pardon you, Mornington, and to give you another chance. I hope that we shall become better friends in future."

"Oh!" ejaculated Morny.

"You may go to your place."

Mornington went back to his desk.

"He's a brick, Morny!" whispered Erroll reproachfully, as his chum sat down.

"He's a thief!" answered the dandy of the Fourth.

"Morny!"

"He's let me off because he's only playing Form-master, and doesn't care a rap, and because he'd rather I didn't talk to the Head. I can see now he suspects jolly strongly that I saw the High-wood paper yesterday—he puts Bootles' telephone call down to that—and he'd rather I didn't have a chance of telling the Head."

"The Head wouldn't listen to such a tale, Morny."

"Well, I might shout it at him, and he'd have to—and I jolly well would if I was sent in for a floggin'!" said Mornington coolly. "The dear man is treading warily now he knows his time here won't last long, but he wants it to last over to-night."

"Why to-night specially?"

Mornington smiled, but did not answer that question.

Mr. Egerton was probably aware of the murmur of voices, but he paid no heed. In fact, that afternoon he was very depressed and absent-minded, and even Tubby Muffin could see that he was thinking of some other matter than the Form work.

The Classical Fourth had a very easy time that afternoon, for which they were in nowise inclined to judge Mr. Egerton severely.

They had no objection whatever to an easy time.

In fact, Mr. Egerton's popularity was increasing, all the more because of his generosity towards Morny, and if his object was to make no enemies in Rookwood School he was quite successful—with the solitary exception of Valentine Mornington.

"Ass!"

"He didn't come here simply to go away empty-handed. My idea is that he will bolt before morning; and the Head will find that a good many things have gone with him."

"Bosh!" answered Jimmy Silver. "You're getting potty on the subject of Mr. Egerton, Morny!"

"You'll see. I'm goin' down, anyway."

"More duffer you!" answered Jimmy Silver.

"Like to come?"

"No fear; I'm not potty."

Jimmy Silver turned over and settled down to sleep again.

The dandy of the Fourth had almost finished dressing.

He put on a pair of rubber shoes and moved quietly to the door.

The door opened and closed with scarcely a sound.

Below, the house was in darkness; at half-past eleven everyone at Rookwood was in bed.

It was not likely that a thief, if thief there was, would be stirring until later, but Morny was leaving nothing to chance.

The darkness did not trouble him, he could have found his way anywhere about Rookwood blindfolded.

He descended the stairs without a sound, in his rubber shoes, and moved along cautiously and quietly to the corridor leading to the Head's study.

In that apartment was the safe, and if Morny's suspicions were well-founded that would be the thief's objective.

It was known well enough that the Head kept money and securities in the safe; probably a handsome haul for a cracksmen.

Morny reached the study door and turned the handle softly.

It did not open; the door was locked and the key gone.

The junior stepped back into a window-recess a short distance away, and waited.

He heard midnight toll out from the clock-tower.

The sound of the drill suddenly stopped. Mornington was moving away softly, his intention being to call Bulkeley of the Sixth before allowing the cracksmen to suspect that he was discovered.

But as he moved from the door it opened.

The light was out again, a shadow in the darkness loomed over Mornington, and he heard hard, quick breathing.

He could not repress a gasp, and the next instant a fierce grasp was upon him.

He had not been heard.

It was caution on the cracksmen's part that had made him open the door, to listen in the corridor before proceeding with his nefarious task—a long one.

But the action came as a surprise to Mornington, and he was discovered.

A shudder ran through the schoolboy as the fierce grasp closed on him, but he gathered all his courage and resisted.

"Silence!" hissed a voice.

A hand was groping for Mornington's mouth, while another held him in a grip of iron.

It was to silence him, but it was not quite enough.

"Help!"

That one loud shout rang through the silent House before the groping hand closed over the junior's mouth.

It rang and echoed far and wide.

There was a curse in the darkness, and Morny's mouth was covered, and he was borne to the floor.

A knee was planted on his chest, pinning him down, and the hard hand gripped his mouth with savage force, silencing him.

Morny, half throttled, wriggled painfully under the weight of the cracksmen, unable to struggle.

He knew that the man above him was listening with fierce intentness to learn whether his shout had been heard and the alarm given.

It had been heard; it could not have failed to be heard.

Already there was a sound of opening doors above.

Crash—crash!

Lights gleamed along the corridor.

The window looking on the quadrangle was flying in fragments under the cracksmen's desperate blows.

Bulkeley of the Sixth came dashing into the corridor with a mob at his heels, and even as he came the cracksmen leaped through the broken window and vanished into the darkness without.

The 7th Chapter.
Goals of Fire!

"Mr. Egerton!"

Bulkeley yelled out the name in astonishment.

The light of his lamp flared full upon the cracksmen as he leaped, and for one moment he saw the new master of the Fourth.

Then the darkness swallowed him up.

The captain of Rookwood stood rooted to the floor.

"Mr. Egerton!" shouted Erroll. "Then Morny was right!"

"Egerton!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

Mornington came panting up.

There was blood on his face, where the cracksmen's cruel blows had struck.

"After him!" he shouted. "It's Egerton—he's been opening the Head's safe! After him!"

"Hark!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

From the darkness of the quadrangle came the sounds of a desperate struggle.

"Somebody's got him!" yelled Lovell.

"The sergeant, perhaps! Come on—let's get out!"

There was a rush for the door.

Outside the sounds of struggle continued, with a scuffling of feet, a panting of hurried breath, and sharp ejaculations.

The big door was dragged open.

As it swung back the Head's voice was heard.

Dr. Chisholm, in his dressing-gown, had arrived, pale and startled.

"Bulkeley—what—what—" he stammered.

"Burglary, sir, I think!" said Bulkeley. "Mr. Egerton—"

Cyril Egerton was dragged to his feet. His face was deadly pale, his eyes hunted and despairing. The attack in the quadrangle had taken him utterly by surprise, at a moment when he had believed that his liberty, at least, was secure.

"Here comes the Head!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Dr. Chisholm, pale and agitated, came out of the School House and approached the group, the Rookwooders making way for him.

He started at the sight of his former staff, but his eyes fixed upon the haggard face of the cracksmen.

"You!" said the Head. "You have deceived me—you have attempted to rob me—" He broke off. "Mornington, it appears to be you who gave the alarm. I am very much obliged to you, my boy; you have saved me from a very serious loss!"

Dr. Chisholm glanced at his former masters.

Mr. Mooney and Mr. Wiggins were still holding the bound man.

Monsieur Monceau was still waving his arms distractedly and muttering: "Mon Dieu! Ma foi! Mon Dieu!"

Mr. Egerton had crossed his arms on his podgy chest, and stood confronting the Head in a Napoleonic attitude.

The portly gentleman was almost sublime in his hour of triumph.

"May I ask how you came here?" said the Head quietly.

"We came, sir," said Mr. Greely, in his rich, rolling voice—"we came by the side gate, sir, to which I have still a key. We came, sir, to watch for this scoundrel, whom we knew perfectly well would not wait here till to-morrow to be exposed, and whom, we were assured, would rob you before he left—that having been his purpose in coming to Rookwood!"

Mornington gave Jimmy Silver a grin.

Jimmy had nothing to say.

Morny had been right, that was plain enough now, and the grin was on his side.

"We heard the disturbance," continued Mr. Greely. "We had waited a considerable time. At the call of duty, sir, we were prepared to wait, putting aside all considerations of rheumatism. We saw the window smashed, and this scoundrel, sir, jumped fairly into our arms, and we seized him. That, sir, is the whole story."

Mr. Greely paused, like Brutus, for a reply.

Perhaps he expected an outpouring of fervent gratitude from the Head.

Perhaps he anticipated a grateful, gracious request to let bygones be bygones, and resume his old duties at Rookwood—himself and the rest.

If so, he was disappointed.

The Head's look was calm and icy.

"I am very much obliged to you," he said. "It appears to be Mornington who prevented the robbery, and you have prevented the escape of the criminal. No doubt a very meritorious action."

"What!" gasped Mr. Greely.

It dawned upon the Napoleonic gentleman that there was to be no outpouring of gratitude.

It was even possible that the Head would have preferred the escape of the cracksmen rather than the talk and scandal of a trial in connection with Rookwood School, and a man who had figured there as a Form-master.

Be that as it might, Dr. Chisholm showed no disposition whatever to fall upon the necks of his dismissed staff.

Mr. Greely drew himself up to his full height.

"Sir," he said, "we have done you a service. We have done the law of our country a service. Meritorious!" Mr. Greely snorted. "Yes, sir; no doubt the action is meritorious. Gentlemen, we had better go. This man shall be lodged in the police-station, Dr. Chisholm; after that the affair concerns you, and not us. If you do not perceive, sir, that coals of fire have been heaped on your head, the fault is not ours. Gentlemen, let us go!"

And they went—with the prisoner in their midst.

Dr. Chisholm glanced round.

"You will all go back to bed at once," he said.

The Rookwooders crowded into the House.

Mornington went up to the Fourth-Form dormitory with his Form-fellows, and in the dorm he bathed his damaged face before turning in.

Eager questions showered on him on all sides as he towelled his face.

"Morny was right," said Jimmy Silver. "The man took us in—there's no mistake about that. We've lost our Form-master again!"

"And a good riddance!" said Lovell.

"No doubt about that. And—and I think the Head ought to have made it up with the masters, after what they've done!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And I've got this to say," continued Jimmy Silver. "The Head can be as obstinate as he likes, but we're fed-up with his new masters, and with the whole game—and we're going to have Bootles and the rest back. And the campaign begins to-morrow!"

And there was a loud cheer in the Fourth-Form dormitory. That point was settled at last, without a dissentient voice, and the morrow was to see the beginning of Jimmy Silver's campaign.

"The 6th Chapter.

In the Dead of Night!

"What—who's that?"

Jimmy Silver awoke suddenly, and sat up in bed.

It was two hours since Bulkeley of the Sixth had seen lights out in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

The half-hour after eleven had chimed out.

There was a movement in the darkness of the dormitory, and Jimmy Silver sat up and blinked round him in the gloom.

"Who's getting up?"

"Quiet!"

"Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, as the whispering voice came from the shadows.

"Yes; hush!"

"But what's this game?" asked Jimmy. "I suppose you're not going to raid the Moderns on your lonesome?"

Mornington laughed softly.

"No. I'm goin' down, though."

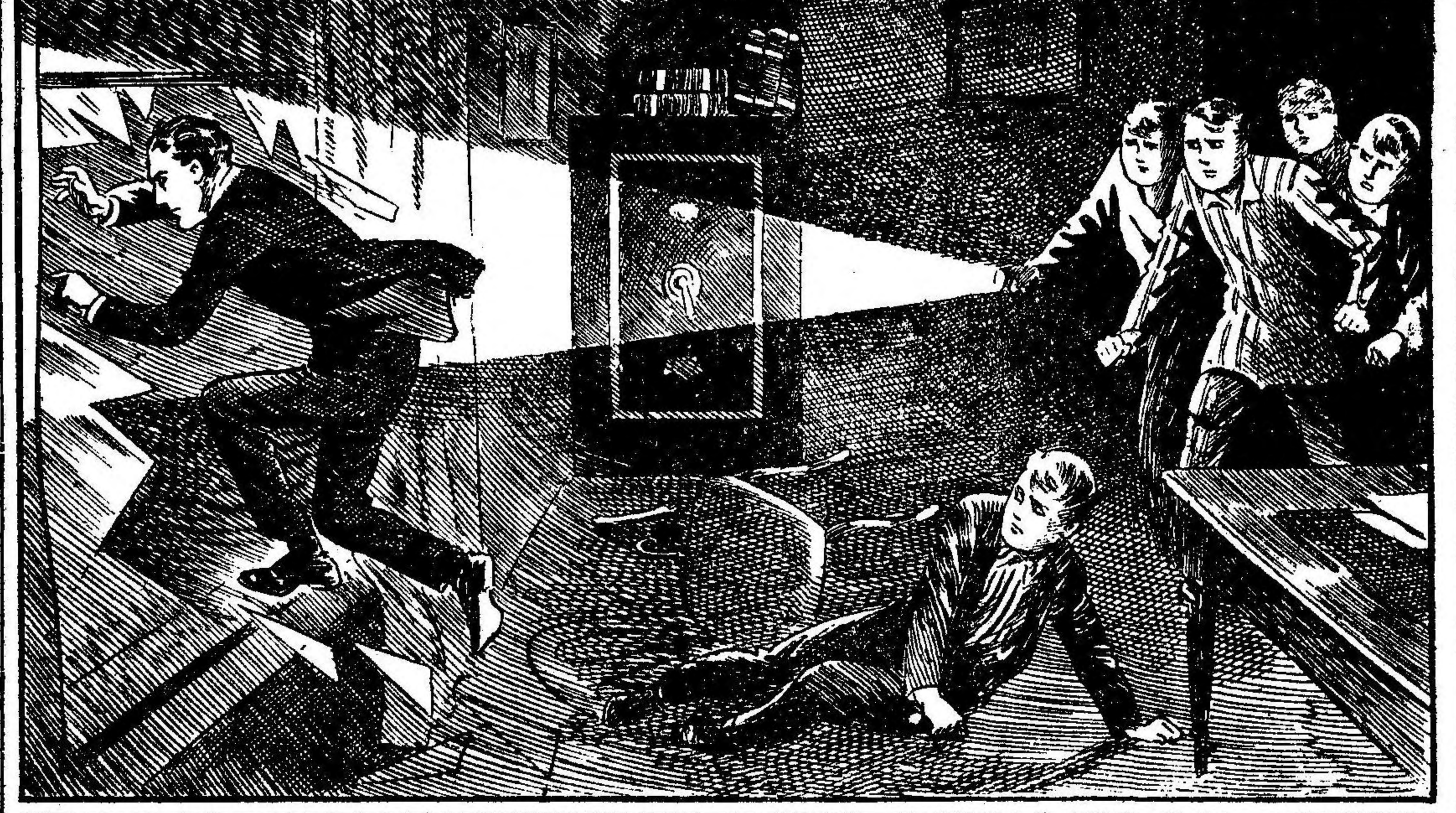
"What for?"

"To see that the school isn't robbed to-night."

Jimmy Silver jumped.

"Wha-a-t?" he stammered.

"This is dear old Egerton's last night here," answered Mornington coolly. "He will be shown up to-morrow, and given the order of the boot."



THE CRACKSMAN IN FLIGHT!

It was cold in the corridor, and Mornington shivered a little, but his resolution did not falter.

He was determined to keep up the watch, if he had to wait there through all the long, dark hours till dawn.

One!

In the deep silence of the night the solitary stroke from the clock-tower boomed eerily.

Dead silence followed.

It was broken at last, and Morny felt a thrill run through him.

In the corridor, a soft, stealthy footstep came faintly to his ears.

He was not the only one stirring in Rookwood.

He had been certain; yet this confirmation of his certainty made his heart throb.

He did not move, but his eyes were strained to penetrate the deep darkness of the corridor before him.

A glimpse of a moving shadow caught his eye, and the stealthy footsteps stopped outside the door of the Head's study.

Click!

Mornington smiled in the darkness.

The study door was open now.

It had been locked when Mornington tried it, and now it was open.

The lock had been picked, and little more proof was wanted.

Another faint, stealthy sound—the shadow had disappeared into the Head's study.

The door softly closed.

Mornington tiptoed towards it.

From within the study came a glimmer of light.

And then there came a faint, grinding sound, the sound of a steel drill working upon iron.

Mornington's eyes glittered.

There was no doubt now, if there had been any doubt before.

The cracksmen was at work upon the safe, and had already left traces that could not be concealed or denied.

It remained only to give the alarm, and to effect the capture of the false Form-master.

"Who's that? What is it?" It was the deep voice of Bulkeley, of the Sixth Form. "Who called?"

"It was Morny's voice," came the tones of Jimmy Silver in the distance. "Morny calling for help— Good heavens!"

The shout had been heard in the Fourth-Form dormitory.

Mornington, silent, breathing with difficulty, heard a savage oath above him.

His mouth was released; it was useless to keep him silent now.

Blows rained upon him from his unseen assailant.

In his rage and desperation the ruffian was wreaking his wrath upon the junior who had foiled him.

"Help!" yelled Mornington. "Oh, help! Burglars! Help! Help! Help!"

Lights flashed on the staircase.

"We're coming!" shouted Bulkeley.

"We're coming, Morny!" It was Erroll's voice. "Where are you? Morny!"

There was a buzz of voices in the House now, and lights were gleaming in a dozen directions.

The whole School House was alarmed.

"Help! Help!"

Mornington shouted desperately as the ruffian struck him again and again.

But the approaching lights and footsteps recalled the cracksmen from useless vengeance.

He had little time left him.

He sprang to his feet, leaving the junior breathless and panting on the floor.

"Help!" shrieked Mornington. "This way! Help!"

There was a rapid pattering of footsteps in the corridor.

The cracksmen was fleeing.

There was no thought in his mind now of the plunder he was compelled to abandon.

In the Head's study the electric lamp and the steel drill were left where he had laid them down.

He was only thinking of his liberty now.

There was a crash of breaking glass.

"This way!" shrieked Mornington. "Stop him!"

"Impossible!"

"He's left his drill in your study, sir," said Mornington. "He's been drilling your safe."

"Impossible!"

"He smashed through the study window and jumped out, sir!" said Bulkeley. "He's hurt Mornington, too! Look at him!"

The Head passed a hand over his dazed brow.

Without a word he hurried along to his study, and turned on the light there. But he went alone.

Bulkeley and the rest rushed into the quadrangle in a shouting mob.

Half Rookwood was downstairs now, in a state of more or less attire—mostly less.

A dozen lamps or bike-lanterns shone in the shadowy quadrangle.

The struggle there had ceased.

A bunch of figures could be seen gathered round a man on his back on the ground, holding him down.

"Mr. Bootles!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

"The merry strikers!" said Lovell.

"Oh, my hat! The old masters have bagged the new master!"

"Great Scott!"

Mr. Greely's fat knee was planted on the cracksmen's chest.

Mr. Mooney and Mr. Wiggins were holding his wrists.

Mr. Bootles, hardly conscious of what he was doing in his excitement, was trampling on the hapless man's legs, and Mr. Bull had both hands buried in the man's hair, and was tugging.

Monsieur Monceau was dancing round the group in frantic excitement, gesticulating as if for a wager.

Mr. Mooney and Mr. Wiggins were binding the wretched man's wrists together with a cord; they had evidently come prepared.

The Rookwood crowd surrounded them with wondering stares.

"Safe now!" said Mr. Greely grimly; and he removed his heavy knee from Mr. Egerton's chest at last. "Let the scoundrel get up!"

THE END.

NEXT MONDAY.

"JIMMY SILVER'S CAMPAIGN!"

By OWEN CONQUEST.

DON'T MISS IT!

BARKER, THE BOUNDER!

(Continued from the previous page.)

He allowed his torch to drop to the ground, and flung both his arms round Barker's neck.

Panting from shortness of breath, Barker kicked out savagely.

He caught Bob more than one nasty crack on the shins, but the latter did not release his hold on the runaway.

"Help, you fellows!" he shouted.

Appleby and Hawkins recovered from their surprise, and rushed to the rescue.

They quickly lent their assistance, and Barker, almost at his last gasp, was forced to give in.

"Where the dickens was the rotter going?" asked Appleby.

"Trying to make his escape," said Bob Travers. "I suppose he hadn't got the pluck to face a flogging and expulsion, so he slid down the rain-pipe."

"Pretty daring for the bounder," said Hawkins, with a grin. "What are we going to do with him?"

"Take him back to the School House, of course," said Bob Travers. "I don't

believe in being hard on a chap, but I'm afraid I haven't got much sympathy for this rat. He's deserved his flogging, and I'm going to see that he gets it."

"Let me go!" panted the bounder.

"Let me—"

"Rata!" said Bob. "You're coming back to the school. Help him along, you fellows!"

Appleby and Hawkins were quite prepared to carry the bounder if necessary. But the necessity did not arise.

Barker was knocked to the wide, and with the exception of an occasional protest, he allowed himself to be led back to the school.

A number of juniors were standing in the Hall, and they gazed in surprise at Barker, as the latter, looking as white as a sheet, was forced in through the open door.

"What the merry dickens—" began Jimmy Wren of the New House.

"Don't ask questions, old 'son," said Bob Travers. "Have you seen old Chambers?"

"Old Chambers, as you term him, is here!"

Bob Travers stopped as he heard the Fourth Form-master's voice in his rear. Mr. Chambers had just returned from the New House.

He frowned portentously as he caught sight of Barker.

"Bless my soul!" he gasped. "What—what—How do you come to be here, Barker?"

The bounder did not reply.

Bob Travers explained.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Chambers relentlessly. "To think that a boy would run such a risk. He might have met with a terrible death had he missed his hold on the rain-pipe. Bring him along. I will give orders for the window in the punishment-room to be screwed up."

Barker was led back to the detention-room, and when at length the juniors went up to their dormitory, it was with the knowledge that the bounder was locked in the detention-room, and that the screwed window prevented any further attempt to escape.

Not a single junior had any sympathy to waste on Barker; they felt that he fully deserved the fate that awaited him.

But they were more concerned for Jack Jackson.

They fully believed now that Jackson had gone off with his father, and the majority hoped that they would soon see their schoolfellow back again.

The next morning there were inquiries for news from Jackson.

But not a word came.

Bob Travers and Dicky Turner went into the class-room for morning lessons in considerably puzzled frames of mind.

Bob Travers had quite expected to receive a letter or telegram from his chum.

He could not understand why Jackson had failed to send a message.

He decided to send a wire to Jack Jackson's home, and directly morning school was over he left the School House with Dicky, for the purpose of carrying out this intention.

They were half-way across the quadrangle when a man of middle-age, tall, clean-shaven; and a pleasant smile on his face, entered the gates.

He walked up to the juniors.

"Excuse me," he said, in kindly tones; "but can you tell me where I can find Jack Jackson?"

"Jackson?" gasped Bob Travers, taken aback. "He—he—"

"I'm his father," said the man, somewhat surprised at Bob's anxious face. "If you have any idea where—"

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bob Travers, in amazement. "He—he—"

Mr. Jackson scrutinised the junior's startled face.

"Has anything happened to my son?" he asked concernedly.

"He—he went out to see you yesterday afternoon," explained Bob Travers, in a halting voice, "and—and he hasn't returned."

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Jackson. "I—I haven't seen him. I had no idea he had any intention of visiting me, in fact. But tell me, where was he going to meet me—at the office, at home, or where?"

But neither Bob nor Dicky could explain at the moment.

Mr. Jackson's statements had completely taken their breaths away.

They gazed open-mouthed at their chum's father, too flabbergasted to utter a word.

(This serial will be concluded in next week's issue of the BOYS' FRIEND. I should be glad if readers would read the announcement concerning our new serial in next week's CHAT.)

PAYING THE PENALTY!

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

The 1st Chapter. Absent!

"Where's the Cherub?"

"Isn't Beauclerc coming?"

Several fellows at Cedar Creek School asked those questions as Frank Richards and Bob Lawless arrived and jumped off their horses at the gates.

Frank Richards & Co. invariably came to school together, and the other fellows noticed at once that Vere Beauclerc was absent.

"I suppose he doesn't care to turn up under the circus," remarked Chunky Todgers. "I guess it's hard lines on the Cherub."

"He wouldn't find anybody here down on him," said Lawrence.

Frank Richards shook his head.

"That isn't why Beau hasn't come," he answered. "He won't be back at school for a few days. He's busy about something else just now."

"What will Miss Meadows say to that?" grinned Chunky Todgers.

"We're going to tell her."

Frank Richards and Bob walked towards the lumber school house.

It was not yet time for morning school, and the Cedar Creek boys and girls crowded in the playground, most of them discussing the startling happenings of the previous night, when Judge Lynch had been abroad in Thompson Town.

Frank tapped at the door of Miss Meadows' sitting-room in the school house, and the clear voice of the Canadian schoolmistress bade him enter.

Miss Meadows gave the two chums a very kind smile.

"Has Beauclerc come this morning?" she asked.

"No, ma'am," answered Frank. "He's sent a message by us. I—I suppose you've heard of what happened in Thompson last night?"

"I have heard that Beauclerc's father has been arrested on the charge of being the leader of the Flour-Bag Gang," said Miss Meadows. "I am sure that there is some mistake."

"Beau's father is innocent, Miss Meadows," said Bob Lawless. "It has been planted on him, I guess."

"And he was not harmed last night?" asked Miss Meadows. "I have heard that a lynch mob tried to take him from the prison."

"They did, but the sheriff chipped in in time, and he's in the sheriff's house now," said Frank. "He will be safe there till he goes for trial. But Beauclerc wants you to excuse him from school for a time."

"It would be better for him to come to school," said Miss Meadows gravely. "He cannot help his father, and it is better for his mind to be occupied."

"He thinks he can help his father to prove his innocence," said Frank.

"I do not see how that is possible, but if he thinks so he shall be at liberty to do as he wishes," said the schoolmistress. You may tell him he is free to stay away for the present."

"Thank you, ma'am! And—and—"

Frank Richards hesitated.

"Well, Richards?"

"If you would give us leave, ma'am, we should like to be with him," said Frank. "We could help him."

"In what way, Richards?"

"Ahem!"

"I do not see what you would be able to do," said Miss Meadows. "Mr. Beauclerc is in need of a lawyer to undertake his defence, but you boys could be of no



THE WATCHER ON THE ROCKS!

assistance to him. I am afraid that I cannot give you leave, unless on a direct request from Mr. Lawless."

The chums exchanged glances.

Miss Meadows could see in their faces that Bob's father had already been asked, and that his reply had been in the negative.

"I will leave the point to be settled by Mr. Lawless," added Miss Meadows, with a slight smile.

"H'm! Thank you, ma'am!" murmured Frank.

And the chums left the schoolmistress' room.

In the playground they looked at one another.

"Just as I expected, I guess," remarked Bob Lawless. "We couldn't get leave without explaining—"

"And we couldn't, if we did explain!" said Frank.

"I guess not."

"I wonder what Miss Meadows would have said if she had known of Beau's idea?" said Frank. "It was better not to tell her, for Beau won't come to school, leave or no leave, till it's settled. But if she knew that Beau was going to try to trail down the Flour-Bag Gang, and find the man who ought to be in his father's place, in the sheriff's hands—"

Bob whistled.

"No good telling her," he said. "I'm afraid poor old Cherub is on a wild-goose chase. I wish we could be with him, though. He may run into danger—in fact, he's pretty sure to—and he hasn't any chance of laying his finger on the road-agents."

Frank Richards shook his head.

The two cousins understood well enough their chum's feeling, and they sympathised, but they could not help seeing that Beauclerc had little or no chance of success in the task he had undertaken.

Yet they could not attempt to dissuade him, when his father lay a prisoner, charged with the guilt of another.

The Cedar Creek fellows surrounded the two chums, demanding a full description of the exciting scenes in Thompson the previous night.

Frank and Bob were given little rest on that subject, till the school-bell rang and they had to go in to classes.

During morning lessons they were thinking much more of their absent chum than of school work.

That morning Vere Beauclerc was beginning his impossible task, and they knew well what dangers might lie in wait for him in the foothills.

Bob's father had opposed the wild scheme, but Beauclerc's duty was to his own father, and though he had listened to the rancher with respect he had gone his own way.

He could not rest while the unfortunate remittance-man lay in confinement, charged with a crime he had not committed.

The chums wondered where he was while they sat in the school-room at lessons with Miss Meadows.

Probably the schoolmistress noticed that their thoughts were wandering, but she was very lenient with them.

They were glad, however, when morning lessons were over and they were able to get out of the school-room.

The 2nd Chapter. A Job for Injun Dick.

"I've got an idea, Franky."

"About Beau?"

"Sure. Come and get your geegee."

The chums walked away to the corral for their horses.

They led them down to the gates, and mounted in the trail, thus escaping a good many fellows who wanted more particulars of the lynching outbreak in Thompson.

"Where are we going, Bob?" Frank Richards asked.

"Thompson."

"May as well," assented Frank; and they set their horses in motion. "But what's the idea?"

Bob knitted his brows.

"I guess I've been thinking it out," he said. "According to what the Cherub says, his father knew that Poker Pete, the sport, was the leader of the Flour-Bag Gang, and that's why some of the stuff stolen from the post-wagon was fixed up in his shack, to get the lynch mob after him. Now, when Poker Pete was in Thompson, he used to hang out at the Red Dog saloon. And last night it was the Red Dog crowd who were hottest to lynch Old Man Beauclerc."

"That's so."

"And that man Keno Kit, who claims to have seen Old Man Beauclerc with the flour-bag on, is one of the Red Dog crowd," said Bob. "Taking it that Beau's father is innocent, it looks like a frame-up, with most of the Red Dog galoots in it. Keno Kit, for example, must be one of the Flour-Bag Gang himself, if he's giving false evidence at the order of the leader of the gang."

"That seems clear enough to us. The Thompson folk won't look at it like that, though," said Frank ruefully.

"But that is what I'm coming to; they didn't succeed in lynching Old Man Beauclerc after all, and Poker Pete will still have to keep away from Thompson, the witness against him being still alive. I guess he's not very far away, though, as he must have had a finger in last night's business."

"Well?" said Frank.

"And Keno Kit will be in communication with him, I guess."

"That's pretty certain."

"Well, it looks to me that if a galoot kept an eye on Keno Kit he might get on the track of the road-agents," said Bob. "He's bound to go sooner or later to see his chief."

"But we can't keep an eye on him, Bob. We've got to be at school, for one thing; and another is if we hung about the Red Dog saloon we should be spotted at once."

"I guess I've been using my thinker, Franky, and you haven't. We can't watch the Red Dog saloon and follow Keno Kit when he moseys out, because we might as well tell him at once what the game is. But we can get some other galoot to do it—somebody they won't suspect. I'm thinking of Injun Dick."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank.

"That old Apache simply lives against the post outside the Red Dog," said Bob. "He's inside the saloon quenching his thirst when he's got any money, and outside leaning against the post when he hasn't got any. And he's a good chap in his way. You know he chipped in once when we had a row with Four Kings. And we've done him some good turns, too. You remember we toted him home to his shebang once when he was overcome with tanglefoot, and Gunten wanted to cut his hair off. He's lazy, but he remembers a good turn. And besides, we can pay him."

"Bob, old son, you're a genius!" said Frank. "It's the best idea you ever had in your head. Injun Dick's the man!"

"We'll try him, anyway," said Bob. "Better than Beau's idea of trailing through the foothills without a clue. I wouldn't say so to him, Franky, but he's only wasting his time. It's like looking for a needle in a haystack. Poor old Cherub knows it, I guess, only he can't rest while his father's up against it like this."

The chums rode rapidly on the trail to Thompson.

They reached the town, which presented its usual quiet midday appearance—a startling contrast to the wild excitement of the previous night.

The miners were away on their claims, and most of the other citizens were about their various avocations.

But in the almost deserted main street Injun Dick, the derelict Apache, could be seen in his usual position, wrapped in his tattered blanket, leaning against the post outside the Red Dog saloon.

Within the saloon there was a buzz of voices and a clinking of glasses. The Red Dog crowd were not among the industrious citizens of Thompson.

The old Apache cast an occasional glance towards the door of the saloon, so

doubt in the hope that some kind-hearted individual would call him in and "stand" him a dose of the fiery tanglefoot.

At other moments the Apache's copper face was set in an expression of almost lifeless stolidity.

He glanced up as the schoolboys came riding up the street.

Bob Lawless beckoned to him as he slackened rein without stopping, and the Apache stepped out into the road.

"Follow us—dollar!" said Bob briefly. He did not wish to talk to the Apache within sight of the Red Dog.

Injun Dick nodded.

As the horsemen rode on the Apache gathered his tattered blanket round him, and stalked along on their track.

Bob did not draw rein till they were outside the town, and he stopped in a clump of firs off the trail.

Injun Dick came up in a few minutes, and, without speaking, stood waiting.

Bob Lawless took a dollar bill from his pocket and placed it in the brown hand of the Apache.

"Little white chief bully boy with a glass eye!" said Injun Dick gratefully.

"I want you to do something for me, Injun Dick," said Bob.

"All O.K. You talk—me do!"

"Good!"

The red man listened without interruption, while Bob Lawless explained what he wanted.

He nodded when the schoolboy had finished.

"You'll do it?" asked Frank.

"You bet!"

"Without letting Keno Kit suspect you?" added Bob.

Injun Dick raised his head disdainfully.

"Apache trail the cloud on the mountain, the wind on the prairie," he answered. "Easy! Keno Kit bad white man—steal Injun's tanglefoot once—drink him! Fix him, I guess! I have spoken!"

"You'll keep him under watch till he gets away to wherever Poker Pete is hanging out," said Bob. "Then you'll let me know. Come along to the school and see me to report. A dollar every day for you, Injun Dick, and ten dollars if you find out where the road-agent is hidden. That good enough?"

"You bet!"

And, with a dignified salutation, the old Apache walked back into the town.

Frank Richards and Bob remounted their horses, and rode back to Cedar Creek by another route without passing through Thompson again.

What would come of their alliance with Injun Dick they could not tell, but they were hopeful.

The 3rd Chapter. Waiting for News.

"There's the Cherub!"

Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were riding home from school, in the dusk, when Vere Beauclerc was sighted ahead of them on the trail.

They rode on faster and overtook their chum.

Beauclerc turned his head, and greeted them with a nod and a somewhat worn smile.

Beauclerc and his black horse both looked dusty and fatigued, and it was evident that they had had a hard day.

"What luck, Cherub?" asked Bob.

"None!" answered Beauclerc quietly. "I couldn't expect it, you know."

"But you're sticking it?"

"Yes. And—and this will be my last night at the ranch, Bob. I'm going to camp out after this and stick to the trail."

"I guess you're not," said Bob, with a chuckle. "We know a trick worth two of that, Cherub. Don't we, Franky?"

And Bob Lawless explained, Beauclerc listening, with a gleam coming into his tired eyes.

"It's a good idea," he said. "Bob, you've used your brains while I was using my limbs, and you've scored. Injun Dick is the man for us!"

"I think so," said Frank Richards. "And the best thing you can do, Beau, is to come back to school and wait for news from Injun Dick. Otherwise, you may be miles away in the mountains when he brings us information, and you won't be able to take a hand in dealing with the Flour-Bag Gang."

Beauclerc knitted his brows in thought.

"I think my father is to be taken away to Kamloops next week," he said.

"We shall have news before that—perhaps to-morrow," said Bob Lawless confidently. "Come along to Cedar Creek to-morrow, Cherub, and wait till we hear from Injun Dick. It's your best chance."

"I think so, too," assented Beauclerc. "Anyway, I'll give him a chance for three days before I go on the trail for good."

"Right!"



PAYING THE PENALTY!

(Continued from the previous page.)

"Keno Kit he mosey on—Injun mosey on," resumed the Apache. "Go into hills on foot—Injun go. Keno Kit look round sometime—no see Injun. Wah! Apache know track gopher and lynx—track fool white man easy."

The rancher smiled. "Go on," he said.

"Injun watch," continued the Apache. "Keno Kit stop in arroyo—"

"In what?" asked Frank. "That's a Spanish word from Arizona," said Bob. "He means a ravine."

"Keno Kit stop in arroyo—look round—no see Injun. Whistle. 'Nother whistle come. Keno Kit go in cave. Injun watch."

The hearers were almost breathless now.

"Injun watch," repeated the Apache. "Look in from behind rock. Fire in cave—camp-fire—horses there. Two men."

"And the men—who were they?" "Poker Pete, great poker chief, one—other man Injun no can tell. Keno Kit go in. Take two bottle whisky. Sit down, talk. Injun watch! Flour-bag on rocks in cave—six—seven. Rifles, too. Injun watch! Creep closer, like lynx in forest. Hear talk, you bet! Injun Dick cunning old rascal! Keno Kit say Old Man Beauclerc taken to Kamloops next week—Poker Pete and other to lay on trail, shoot!"

Beauclerc uttered a cry. "Old Man Beauclerc know Poker Pete chief of Flour-Bag Gang—Poker Pete no feel safe," said the Redskin. "Injun watch. Keno Kit go away—other two galoots sleep in cave. Injun hop it, you bet. Wah! I have spoken."

He paused a moment, and added: "Injun thirsty."

Mr. Lawless led the Indian away to the kitchen, where food and drink were placed before him, and returned to the sitting-room.

"The case is pretty clear," he said. "I could see that the Apache was telling the truth. He's nosed out Poker Pete's hiding-place, and from what he says there's enough evidence there to convict the whole gang. Most likely some of their plunder will be found there, too. It's pretty plain that Keno Kit acts as a spy for the gang in the town, and takes news to the rustlers in the hills. And they're in our hands now."

"What will you do?" asked Mrs. Lawless rather anxiously.

The rancher smiled. "There's only one thing to do," he answered. "The Indian can guide us to the place, and I shall go there with half a dozen men from the ranch to-night and rope them in. Don't be alarmed, my dear; there won't be any danger. They will be under fire before they know what's happening."

And the rancher went out to make his preparations.

"It is time you boys were in bed," said Mrs. Lawless, with rather uneasy looks at her son and his chums.

Beauclerc smiled slightly.

He was not likely to go to bed, when the clearing of his father's name depended on that night's happenings.

The same thought was in the minds of his chums.

But they would not make Mrs. Lawless anxious, and they bade her good-night and went up to their room.

"I guess you galoots are coming?" said Bob, when the door was closed.

"Yes, rather!" said Frank, with a smile; and Beauclerc nodded.

"No need to tell mopper—she'd only worry. We can drop from the window."

"Good!"

In a few minutes more the chums of Cedar Creek were taking their horses from the corral for the night ride.

The 5th Chapter. Run to Earth!

There was a glimmer of starlight on the prairie.

On the trail at a little distance from the ranch-house a group of horsemen had gathered—Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, and five or six of the sturdy Canadian cattlemen.

Each of them had a rifle at his back, and Mr. Lawless was similarly equipped as he came from the ranch-house and mounted the horse Billy Cook was holding for him.

Injun Dick, the guide of the party, came out and mounted his shaggy pony, and the party started up the trail.

Behind them, keeping the dim bunch of riders in view in the starlight, came Frank Richards & Co.

A mile out on the trail the schoolboys quickened their pace, and rode to overtake the ranchmen.

Mr. Lawless glanced round at the clatter of hoofs on the trail.

"Bob!" he exclaimed sharply. "You'll let us come, dad!" exclaimed Bob pleadingly. "It was our Injun who found them out, you know."

Mr. Lawless knitted his brows. "I guess you can come," he said. "But if there's shooting, you'll keep in the background. What have you got those rifles for, you young duffers?"

"Only for ornament," said Bob humorously.

The rancher laughed. "Well, follow on," he said.

And the schoolboys rode on with the horsemen.

It was a long ride under the glittering stars.

Mile after mile of the dark prairie vanished under the galloping hoofs, and the night grew older.

The foothills lay like a black bar against the starlit sky, and soon the horsemen were riding up a rocky valley, with rocks and pines and stunted firs round them.

Clink, clink! the hoofs rang on the stones.

Injun Dick rode a little ahead of the party, without speaking a word or turning his head.

His lead was followed in silence, save for the clinking of the hoofs and the rattle of bridles and bits.

The Apache slackened rein at last, and the party behind him slowed down.

Injun Dick turned his head. "No horse—foot!" he said laconically. "Dismount!" said Mr. Lawless.

The horses were tethered to pine-trees, and one of the party remained on guard with the animals.

The rest, after unslinging their rifles and looking to them very carefully, followed the Apache on foot.

Frank Richards & Co. brought up the rear.

The way was difficult enough now, steep and rough, over heavy rocks and jagged boulders.

Horses could have been led, but hardly ridden, on such a route, and it was evident that the Flour-Bag Gang had to reach their den on foot.

How Injun Dick found his way in the wilderness of rock and stone under the pale light of the stars was a mystery to Frank Richards, and even Bob Lawless wondered.

But the Apache had been bred to the trail, in forest and plain and mountain, and he never paused.

It wanted but two hours to dawn when Injun Dick halted at last at the opening of a deep, dark ravine.

This was evidently the "arroyo" of which he had spoken in his report at the ranch.

The Indian raised his coppery hand, and pointed down the ravine.

"Look!" he muttered. "A fire!" murmured Bob Lawless.

In the darkness ahead there was a flicker of ruddy light, which died down and flickered again every moment or two.

It came, as was plain, from the camp-fire in the cave where Poker Pete had found a secure hiding-place—secure until he was tracked out by the Apache.

In the bitter cold of the hills the road-agents were keeping up the fire through the night, feeling safe from observation in that secluded recess, miles from the nearest settlement.

"Quiet, now, men!" said Mr. Lawless, in a low voice. "Rifles ready?"

"I guess so, boss!" answered Billy Cook's deep voice.

"Don't shoot if you can help it. Cover them at sight, but don't burn powder unless they show fight."

"You bet!"

"You follow Injun!" said the Apache. He plunged on into the darkness of the ravine.

Treading carefully, to avoid giving the alarm to the Flour-Bag Gang, the ranchmen pressed on after their guide.

The flickering of the fire was a guide to them, in the black darkness of the cleft in the hills.

The ruddy light grew stronger as they advanced.

It showed up the outline of the mouth of the cavern, a deep, high opening in the rocky hillside.

Silently, with deep-drawn breath, the ranchmen gathered round the cavern's mouth.

They looked in, with raised rifles, ready for the alarm; but as yet there was no alarm.

The glow of the fire, low and red, showed up the cavern, full of moving shadows.

Half a dozen horses were sleeping on a rough bed of branches and leaves in one corner.

There were two or three boxes and bags, and cooking utensils, to be seen; and the flour-bags, with slits for eyes and mouth, which were used by the road-agents when engaged on a raid, hung on points of rock, at hand.

Three men lay asleep with their feet to the fire, rolled in blankets.

Apparently another of the gang had come in, since Injun Dick had watched Keno Kit leave the cave after visiting his leader.

There were rifles by the sides of the sleepers, but it was plain that they had no expectation of being tracked to their lair, for no watch was being kept.

Their deep breathing could be heard, as the ranchmen gathered in the mouth of the cave.

Mr. Lawless smiled grimly. "Cover them!" he whispered.

Rifles came up to shoulders, with the muzzles bearing on the sleepers.

The Flour-Bag Gang were utterly at the mercy of the men from the ranch. And still they did not stir, till the deep voice of the rancher rang through the cave awakening its echoes.

"Wake, men—wake!"

The 6th Chapter. The Clouds Roll By!

"By gum!"

A lithe, swarthy man threw off his blanket and leaped to his feet.

It was Poker Pete, the "sport" of Thompson.

His two companions started up, heavy with sleep, blinking in dazed alarm at the ranchmen.

"Hands up!" shouted Mr. Lawless. "Don't touch a gun, or we fire!"

Poker Pete muttered a curse. His companions put up their hands promptly.

They had no intention of arguing the point with levelled rifles.

But the sport was desperate. He backed farther away from the fire, his eyes on the enemy, and glittering savagely.

"Stop!" shouted the rancher. The sport's movement revealed that there was another way out of the cave, and he guessed that the Flour-Bag leader was seeking to escape.

Mr. Lawless strode forward. "Will you surrender?" he exclaimed.

"No!" yelled the sport; and he sprang back into the shadows, and at the same moment a revolver glittered in his hand. Crack!

There was a fearful yell from Poker Pete, and at the same moment a pistol-ball whizzed a foot from the rancher's head.

A rifle-bullet had struck the sport even as he pulled the trigger, disordering his aim.

Mr. Lawless, with hardly the movement of a muscle of his face to show that he knew how narrow his escape had been, strode forward.

Poker Pete lay groaning on the rocky floor of the cavern.

The rancher kicked the revolver from his nerveless hand, and looked down on him grimly.

"Your own fault!" he said. "Who fired that shot, Billy?"

"I guess it was young Beauclerc," answered Billy Cook.

Vere Beauclerc's rifle was smoking. "I guess the Cherub was quickest!" said Bob Lawless, with a deep breath. "I lost my aim as he jumped back in the shadow. The Cherub did the trick, popper!"

"I think you saved me from a bullet—and Poker Pete from a rope, my boy" said the rancher quietly.

He stooped over the wounded road-agent and bared his wound.

Poker Pete groaned deeply as it was touched.

The bullet was in his shoulder, and his right arm hung useless.

"Is he—is—?" Beauclerc did not finish, and his voice trembled a little.

"No, no, my lad!" said the rancher reassuringly. "He's had his hit, but he will live to be hanged yet."

Beauclerc drew a deep breath of relief. Mr. Lawless proceeded to bandage the road-agent's wound; it was impossible to extract the ball.

That had to wait till Poker Pete could be taken to Doc Jones at Thompson.

Meanwhile the ranchmen secured the other two ruffians, binding their arms with trail-ropes.

Then the cavern was searched. A good many discoveries were made in the search.

The plunder of more than one lawless raid was stacked in the cavern—gold-bags taken from miners robbed on the trails, canvas bags of money and notes, and a good many articles of value raided from lonely homesteads.

The road-agents looked on sullenly as the plunder was packed up to be carried off by the ranchmen.

The horses were led out—most of them stolen animals, to be restored later to their owners.

Poker Pete was placed upon a horse, his face deadly pale.

The first gleam of dawn was whitening the sky as the party set out from the cavern and threaded their way through the rocky ravine, leading the horses.

Bob Lawless squeezed Beauclerc's arm as they started, and Beauclerc gave him a cheery smile.

"All serene now, Cherub!" murmured Bob. "Your father's accusation against Poker Pete is proved up to the hilt. And I guess your popper won't be long before he's free again."

Beauclerc nodded. "I am sure of it now," he said. "Thank Heaven for it, Bob! This will be good news for my father!"

"Hipping!" said Frank Richards. The ranchmen reached the spot where their horses had been left, and mounted. They headed for the town of Thompson when they rode out of the hills with their prisoners.

It was full day and Thompson was astir when the party reached the little town.

A buzz of voices greeted them as they rode into Main Street.

They rode direct for the Red Dog saloon, where Billy Cook and a couple of sturdy cattlemen entered, emerging in a few minutes with Keno Kit in their grasp.

The ruffian, newly awakened from sleep, was dazed and furious, and he was expostulating loudly; but his expression changed at the sight of Poker Pete and his comrades.

His jaw dropped as he stared at the captured road-agents.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" he mumbled. "I guess we've got the hull family now!" grinned Billy Cook. "There's a little place in the calaboose ready for you, Kit!"

"Oh, gum!" said the ruffian dismally. "Boss, I reckon this hyer game is up. I reckon I knowed it was no use in the long run, but Poker Pete was set on it. Canady ain't the place for this hyer game. It was all Poker Pete from first to last, and that I'll swear to!"

"Same here!" came simultaneously from the two captured road-agents.

Frank Richards smiled. The leader of the Flour-Bag Gang was paying the penalty of failure. His ruffianly followers were ready to turn upon him in the hope of making their own punishment a little lighter.

"To the calaboose!" said Mr. Lawless. And the party headed for the lumber gaol, Keno Kit led along with the other prisoners.

Oakes, the deputy-sheriff of Thompson, was already there to meet them.

The news had spread. Nearly half Thompson was following the cavalcade as they arrived at the calaboose.

Mr. Lawless explained, and handed over his prisoners to the deputy-sheriff. They were lodged safely in the calaboose, and Doc Jones was sent for to attend the leader of the Flour-Bag Gang.

Vere Beauclerc touched Mr. Lawless's arm, as the rancher was leaving the gaol with the deputy-sheriff. Billy Cook and his comrades had already started for home.

"Mr. Lawless—"

"Yes, my boy?" said the rancher kindly. "My father's innocence will be proved now?"

"I guess so."

"Beyond doubt, my lad," said John Oakes, with a kind glance at Beauclerc. "There's evidence enough to send a dozen Poker Petes to the penitentiary. Your father will not be a prisoner long. Keno Kit has already confessed that the gold-bags were put in the roof of the shack—he was with Poker Pete when it was done. He is turning evidence against the rest."

"Then, sir, can I see my father?"

"Yes. Come with me."

Beauclerc, with a bright face, followed the deputy-sheriff to Mr. Henderson's house, where the remittance-man had been confined since the outbreak of the lynch mob.

Mr. Oakes opened a locked door, and signed to Beauclerc to enter.

Mr. Beauclerc was already up, and was pacing his prison-room when his son entered.

He stared in blank amazement. "Vere! You here!" he exclaimed. Beauclerc ran towards his father. "Father!"

He could say no more for the moment. His heart was too full.

"My dear lad, what has happened?" asked Mr. Beauclerc. "How is it that you are admitted here?"

"It's all O.K.!" sang out Bob Lawless from the door. "We've got Poker Pete, and Keno Kit has confessed! And you're going to be released, Mr. Beauclerc!"

"Good heavens!"

And Frank and Bob left, to leave Beauclerc alone with his father.

They waited for their chum outside the sheriff's house.

Vere Beauclerc came out at last, his handsome face very bright.

"You're looking chippy, Cherub!" said Bob, with a grin.

Beauclerc laughed. "I'm feeling happy," he answered. "My father cannot be released for a few days, but it's all right. All Thompson knows that he is innocent. I don't care for anything else!"

"Hurrah!"

"Popper's lit out for home," said Bob. "and we'd better follow, I think. I'm as sleepy as a Mexican greaser full of pulque. Eh?"

"Same here!" said Frank Richards, with a laugh. "No school for us to-day, I fancy. We'll have to get a message sent to Miss Meadows. Hallo! Here's Injun Dick!"

The Apache was waiting for the chums of Cedar Creek, and as they came away from the sheriff's house he stopped in their path and held out a coppery hand.

"Ten dollar!" he said laconically. Bob Lawless chuckled. But the three chums made up the sum of ten dollars among them, and it was placed in the red man's palm.

"Little white chief good boy!" said the Apache solemnly. "Me, Injun Dick, bully boy with a glass eye! Wah! I have spoken! Injun thirsty!"

And the noble red man started off for the Red Dog saloon.

Frank Richards & Co. mounted their horses and rode away for the Lawless Ranch, where they were glad to tumble into bed.

A few days later Old Man Beauclerc was released by order of the sheriff, and many of the Thompson folk came to the shack by the creek to congratulate him.

Poker Pete and his associates were taken away to Kamloops for trial, and the sentences they received relieved a busy world of their attentions for a good many years to come.

The attempt to start the road-agent business in the Thompson Valley had been a disastrous failure, and the Flour-Bag Gang was likely to be the last, as well as the first, to operate on the valley trails.

All Cedar Creek crowded round Vere Beauclerc with congratulations when he returned to school, and even Dicky Bird & Co. came over from Hillcrest School to tell him how pleased they were.

Life was very bright to the remittance-man's son now that the Flour-Bag Gang were to pay the penalty!

THE END.

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