



**Fun at Rookwood!**  
**Captain Tubby**  
 Exerts His Authority!

**Skull Island!**  
 Thrilling New Story of the  
 Schoolboy Treasure-Hunters.



# The BOYS' FRIEND 1<sup>1d</sup>/<sub>2</sub>

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending May 31st, 1919.]

## Captain Tubby Muffin!

By Owen Conquest.



### A Warning for Bulkeley!

Tubby lifted a podgy forefinger and wagged it reprov- ingly at George Bulkeley's frowning face. "I don't want any cheek from you or any of the Sixth!" he said severely. "I sha'n't cane you, Bulkeley, unless you ask for it. But if there's any cheek from you, I shall give you the ashplant. Bear that in mind!"

**The 1st Chapter.**

**The New Captain of Rookwood!**

"Captain Tubby!"  
 "Ha, ha, ha!"  
 "Hurrah!"

There was a roar of mingled laughter and cheering in the old quadrangle at Rookwood School.

Bulkeley of the Sixth looked out of his study window, with a puzzled expression on his face.

A peculiar scene met his gaze.

Nearly all the Lower School of Rookwood seemed to be in the quad, where the dusk was falling. An extraordinary procession was passing within view of Bulkeley's study window.

First came Jimmy Silver & Co.—the Fistical Four of the Fourth Form. On their shoulders they supported a fat figure—that of Tubby Muffin—and it needed all four of them to keep the fat Tubby successfully in his elevated position.

Round them, and following them, came a swarm of the Fourth, the Third, and the Shell, Classics mingled with Moderns.

Bulkeley looked on at the scene in amazement.

Why Tubby Muffin should be chaired

round the quadrangle was a mystery to the former captain of Rookwood.

Tubby was distinguished for nothing but his circumference—though that, certainly, was very distinguished indeed.

Tubby's fat face was quite beatific in expression. He was enjoying himself, as he was impressed with a due sense of his own importance. Everybody else seemed to take the matter more or less as a joke; but to Tubby Muffin it was extremely serious.

Teddy Grace was beating a tin can with a cricket-stump, by way of musical accompaniment, and Mornington added to the musical honours with a pair of saucepan lids, which served as cymbals. Crash, crash! Bang! Jingle!

"Hurrah!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Upon my word!" murmured Bulkeley, staring from his window. "What on earth can it mean? They'd better stop that row!"

Bulkeley was about to throw open his window and call to the processing juniors, but he paused. He remembered that he was no longer captain of Rookwood—and no longer even a prefect. He possessed no more authority now than any other senior in the school.

So he stood looking out in silence. His

study door opened, and Neville of the Sixth came in. There was a very peculiar expression on Neville's face, as Bulkeley noted, looking round at him.

"What's that row about, Neville?" asked Bulkeley, with a nod towards the shouting procession in the quad.

"The election's over," answered Neville. "All the seniors stayed away from Hall, as we agreed; but I've just learned the result from Smythe of the Shell."

"Is Carthew elected?"

"No."

"Well, I'm glad of that," said Bulkeley. "Carthew isn't the kind of fellow to make a captain of Rookwood. But I understood that the election would be a walk-over for him, as no other senior would put up. What has happened?"

Neville pointed to the window. "That's happened," he answered. "The juniors put up a candidate—Tubby Muffin of the Fourth!"

Bulkeley started. "What utter nonsense!" he exclaimed. "Nonsense or not, they did it—and Muffin of the Fourth has been elected captain of Rookwood—by an overwhelming majority, too," said Neville, with a grimace. "The seniors boycotted the election, and the juniors weren't likely

to vote for a bully like Carthew. A few did, I think, but they didn't count. Muffin of the Fourth is captain of the school."

"My hat!"

Bulkeley turned to the window again, and stared out at the uproarious procession. The juniors were celebrating their victory, such as it was. They were making a great deal of noise—rejoicing in unaccustomed freedom, in fact. For since Bulkeley's dismissal by the Head had been followed by a "strike" of the prefects, in protest, the Lower School were no longer in dread of those great Panjandrums of the Sixth.

It was as in the old days, when there was no King in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

"This is simply absurd!" exclaimed Bulkeley, at last. "It's turning the election, and the captaincy itself, into ridicule!"

Neville smiled.

"I fancy that's the idea," he answered. "In fact, I'm sure of it. Some of the Fourth—Jimmy Silver and his friends—are at the bottom of it. They think the Head will come round, and reinstate you, old chap, rather than have that fat little duffer as captain of the school."

Bulkeley frowned thoughtfully.

"It's ridiculous!" he said.

He opened the window as the procession came along by the windows of the Sixth, and called out to Jimmy Silver.

"Silver!"

"Halt!" sang out Jimmy.

"Hurrah!"

The procession came to rather a disordered stop. The clanging of the improvised cymbals ceased.

"Hallo, Bulkeley!"

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Bulkeley. "What are you playing the fool like this for?"

"Oh!"

Tubby Muffin blinked at Bulkeley. On the shoulders of the Fistical Four, he was nearly on a level with the Sixth-Former at the study window. Tubby raised a podgy forefinger, and wagged it reprov- ingly at George Bulkeley's frowning face.

"Shut up!" he said.

"Wha-a-at?"

"Shut up!" commanded Tubby loftily.

"You're nobody!"

"Hurrah!"

"Don't cheek Bulkeley, you fat duffer!" growled Jimmy Silver.

But Tubby did not heed.

He was taking himself very seriously

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# CAPTAIN TUBBY MUFFIN!

(Continued from the previous page.)

as captain of the school—very seriously indeed—and he intended that his importance should be recognised and acknowledged. He brooked no rivals, and he did not intend to have another "Richmond in the field," so to speak.

"You were captain of Rookwood, Bulkeley," he said, more loftily than ever. "Now I'm captain! You've got to obey my orders. We obeyed your orders, didn't we, when you were captain? I'm going to have some discipline in this school, I can tell you!"

There was a roar of laughter from the procession. Tubby in his new state of dignity was entertaining.

"Go it, Tubby!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want no cheek from you, or any of the Sixth," went on Tubby. "The Sixth don't amount to much in this school now. I'm going to be fair all round, though. I shan't cane you, Bulkeley—"

"Wha-at!"

"Unless you ask for it. But if there's any cheek from you, I shall give you the ashpant. Bear that in mind!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bravo, Tubby!"

"So put that in your pipe and smoke it, Bulkeley!" said Tubby Muffin. "You're nobody! You're less than nobody! And if you—Yarooooh!"

Tubby Muffin broke off, with a loud yell, as the Fistical Four let him down with a run. The new captain of Rookwood disappeared all of a sudden from his elevated position.

Bump!

"Yoooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

## The 2nd Chapter.

### Tubby the Great!

Tubby Muffin sat on the cold, unsympathetic quadrangle and roared. The procession roared, too, with laughter. But Tubby Muffin was not laughing. He roared with anguish.

"Yaroo! You silly asses! Wharrer you bumping me for? Don't you know how to treat a captain of the school? Ow, ow, ow!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. glared down at him.

"If you cheek Bulkeley," said Jimmy Silver, in measured tones, "we'll bump you till you burst!"

"You fat chump!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. "If you cheek Bulkeley—"

"We'll scalp you!" said Raby. "We'll scalp you in oil!" said Newcome impressively.

Tubby Muffin blinked up at the Fistical Four in wrath and dismay. They had been his firmest supporters at the election. But this, certainly, was not the support a captain of Rookwood had a right to expect.

It began to dawn upon Reginald Muffin that his captainship was not being taken with proper seriousness.

"Look here," he howled, in great wrath, "you cheek rotters, who's captain of Rookwood, I'd like to know?"

"Bulkeley is—or he's going to be," answered Jimmy Silver. "You're a silly stopgap, till the Head comes round. See?"

Tubby scrambled to his feet.

"You cheeky ass!" he roared. "I'll show you whether I'm captain of Rookwood or not. Bulkeley!"

Bulkeley stared at him from the window.

"Throw me out your ashpant!" commanded Tubby Muffin.

"What?"

"Your ashpant—sharp!"

"You little idiot!" was Bulkeley's reply.

"Buck up—I'm going to cane Silver!"

"Cane me!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather! Captain of the school canes whom he chooses, doesn't he?" demanded Tubby.

There was a yell of laughter. It was pretty certain that the new captain of Rookwood would not be allowed to exercise his new authority to that extent. There was much disillusionment in store for Reginald Muffin.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Never mind the ashpant," he said.

"But I do mind!" howled Tubby Muffin. "Bulkeley, hand out that ashpant at once, or I shall cane you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bulkeley closed his study window.

"Mornington!" thundered Tubby. "Hallo!" grinned Morny.

"Fetch me a cane!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Isn't he a corker?" chuckled Tommy Dodd. "Oughtn't he to be on the cinema? Shut up, Tubby!"

"I shall cane you, too, Dodd!"

"Not just yet, I think," chuckled the Modern Junior. "Come on, you fellows; we haven't talked to Carthew yet."

"Up with Tubby!"

Up went Reginald Muffin again to the shoulders of the Fistical Four. He was borne along to the window of Carthew's study. Mark Carthew of the Sixth was in his study, with a black brow and a heart full of rancour. At the last moment, unexpectedly, his ambition had been foiled; the election he had counted on as a walk-over had turned into an overwhelming defeat for him, and to add to the bitterness of his humiliation, he had been defeated by so absurd a rival as Muffin of the Fourth.

It was a well-deserved punishment. He had deserted the cause of Bulkeley, and abandoned the rest of the prefects in their strike—for this! He had earned the contempt due to a "blackleg," in order to see the fat and egregious Tubby elected captain of the school over his head.

And the Rookwood electors evidently meant to "rub it in." They halted under

Carthew's window, and there was a roar.

"Wake up, Carthew!"

"Carthew! Carthew!"

"Yah!"

"Hurrah!"

The window did not open, but the prefect's face could be seen within, pale with anger and chagrin.

"Make him come out!" ordered Tubby Muffin. "Bust the window if he won't open it!"

"He's a prefect, you know," murmured Jones minor.

"Captain of the school has authority over all prefects," answered Tubby. "Carthew is under my orders, isn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! I suppose he is," said Arthur Edward Lovell. "Captain of the school is always head prefect. Tubby is a prefect in virtue of his position as captain. That's Rookwood law."

"Jolly good law, too!" chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Carthew," shouted Tubby Muffin truculently, "open that window at once! I order you!"

The window flew open, though probably not in obedience to Tubby Muffin's order. Mark Carthew's furious face looked out.

"You young scoundrels—" he began. "Silence!" commanded Tubby.

The prefect did not heed.

"Stop this at once!" he exclaimed. "Go indoors immediately. You will take five hundred lines all round!"

"Yah!"

"Blackleg!"

"That's it!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin. "Give it him! You're a bully, Carthew! You're a cad! I'm going to keep you in order!"

"Bravo, Tubby!"

Carthew's face was a picture.

"Muffin!" he gasped. "Come to my study at once. I'll give you the licking of your life!"

Tubby Muffin indulged in a scornful sneer.

"I don't think!" he retorted. "It's you that's going to have the licking, Carthew. I'm down on bullies. Remember that I'm your superior now—now I'm captain of the school."

"You fat fool!" roared Carthew. "You forget yourself," said Tubby, with dignity. "That isn't the way to speak to the captain of Rookwood, Carthew."

"Come to my study!" roared Carthew, brandishing a cane at the fat Classical, who was fortunately beyond his reach.

"Rats! You come to my study!" answered Tubby. "In fact, I order you to come to my study in half an hour, Carthew. Don't fail!"

"You—you—you—" spluttered Carthew.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Come on," said Raby. "Tubby's rather a weight. Good-bye, Carthew—and don't forget to come up to the Fourth Form passage to be canded!"

And the procession marched on, leaving Carthew gesticulating at his window, in a state of fury that was quite Hunnish.

The procession "processed" to the School House doorway, where it came to a halt at last. The celebration was over, and Tubby's weight was telling on the Fistical Four, sturdy as they were.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, looked out as Tubby Muffin was set down on the steps.

"Boys," he exclaimed. "this—this disturbance—you must really—"

"Only celebrating the election, sir," said Jimmy Silver. "There's always a bit of noise on election nights, you know, sir."

"Yes, yes; but—but—" Mr. Bootles blinked at Tubby Muffin over his glasses.

"Quite so, but—but—"

"It's all right, sir," said Tubby Muffin cheerfully. "I can keep the juniors in order, Mr. Bootles."

"What—what?"

"Go to your studies," said Tubby, with a wave of his fat hand. "Order, please! Leave them to me, Mr. Bootles!"

"Bless my soul!" murmured Mr. Bootles.

Captain Tubby Muffin was a little too much for him. He beat a retreat, and the crowd of juniors dispersed in a more or less orderly manner.

## The 3rd Chapter.

### Cancelled!

"Preposterous!"

Thus Dr. Chisholm.

The Head of Rookwood was frowning, evidently very much annoyed. Mild little Mr. Bootles blinked at him, and said nothing.

"Preposterous!" repeated the Head. He stared at Mr. Bootles almost aggressively, as if daring him to deny that it was preposterous. But Mr. Bootles didn't! He knew better than to argue with the somewhat autocratic old gentleman.

He had reported the result of the captain's election to the Head, and he could not help wondering how Dr. Chisholm would take it. It was pretty clear that the Head was not taking it in good part.

"Preposterous!" said the Head for the third time, as the Fourth Form-master did not speak. "Unheard of! A junior captain of Rookwood—absurd! Such a thing has never been heard of!"

"Certainly not—before now," assented Mr. Bootles. "There is, however, no rule laid down upon the subject, I believe."

"Such a rule was not necessary; it is a matter of common-sense," said the Head tartly. "Only a Sixth Form prefect can be captain of the school. This election is an absurdity."

Mr. Bootles nodded assent to that. He

was quite of the Head's opinion there, but he did not quite see what was to be done. The election was a "fait accompli," and it was rather too late to make new rules on the subject.

"I fully understood that Carthew would be elected," continued the Head. "He has my approval. He is the only one of the prefects who had not set himself in opposition to my authority. He has a sense of duty."

Mr. Bootles coughed.

"He does not seem popular in the school, sir," he murmured.

"A sense of duty does not always make a prefect popular, Mr. Bootles. Carthew at least knows what is due to his headmaster. This election is an absurdity, and the result must be cancelled. I shall take steps to that end immediately. Pray request Carthew to come to my study, Mr. Bootles."

"Certainly, sir."

Mr. Bootles withdrew, perhaps glad to leave the presence of the angry old gentleman.

Dr. Chisholm was pacing his study with a knitted brow when Carthew of the Sixth tapped discreetly at the door, and entered.

The Head's brow cleared a little as he glanced at the prefect—the only prefect, at present, that Rookwood School could boast.

"This is an extraordinary occurrence, Carthew," said the Head.

"I agree with you, sir," said Carthew, in the meek, ingratiating tone he always adopted towards the Head. "I was very desirous, sir, of carrying out your wishes. I did my best—"

"I am sure of that, Carthew. You have my complete confidence. I shall not forget that you returned to your duty at once, when the other prefects took up their present inexcusable attitude."

"Thank you, sir," said Carthew meekly. He was well aware that his conduct was looked upon in a very different light by the rest of Rookwood. Most of the Rookwood fellows knew exactly how much "duty" had been Carthew's motive in deserting the prefects. But it was the Head whom Carthew desired to propitiate.

"This election will be cancelled," said Dr. Chisholm. "I shall not dream for one moment of allowing such a result to stand."

"I suppose so, sir."

"A new election will be ordered, and you will stand again, Carthew."

"Certainly, sir."

"The result will, no doubt, be different; if not, I shall take still more drastic steps," said the Head. "I assure you of my continued support as a reward for your faithfulness to duty."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I have written this notice," added the Head. "Kindly post it on the board for me, Carthew."

"Certainly."

The prefect left the study with the paper in his hand. He read it in the corridor, and smiled.

A few minutes later it was pinned on the notice-board for all Rookwood to read and comment upon.

A numerous crowd gathered before the board. In the crowd was the new captain of Rookwood, and he snorted with great indignation over the Head's paper.

"Rot!" said Tubby Muffin emphatically. "Check! That's what it is—check!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I've a jolly good mind," continued Tubby wrathfully, "to go to the Head and tell him so!"

"Do!" chuckled Smythe of the Shell. "We'll come and carry you away afterwards—what's left of you."

Tubby Muffin snorted again, but he decided not to go to the Head. He was captain of Rookwood, certainly; but the Head was rather too terrible an old gentleman for Tubby Muffin to face at close quarters. Barring the lion in his den was not in Reginald Muffin's line.

There was much comment on the Head's notice, which had been rather expected by the juniors. It was pretty certain, anyway, that the Head would not have allowed the election to stand without interference. The notice stated briefly that the late election was cancelled, and that a new election would be held on Monday to fill the vacant post of captain of the school.

"Isn't a vacant post at all, you know," said Tubby Muffin, in a greatly aggrieved tone. "The Head's right off the mark."

# NOTICE!

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**NEW**  
COMPLETE TALE OF  
**JIMMY SILVER & CO.**  
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"Can the Head cancel an election?" inquired Putty of the Fourth. "Isn't he getting a bit over the limit?"

Jimmy Silver rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I know," he answered. "I suppose the headmaster has power to cancel an election. But it comes to the same thing. We have the power to elect the same candidate over again, if we choose."

"And we shall jolly well choose!" said Conroy.

"Yes, rather!"

"Tubby's the man!" grinned Lovell. "Muffin for our money!"

"Hear, hear!"

Tubby Muffin beamed.

"That's right!" he exclaimed. "You fellows stand by me, and I'll stand by you. The Head can't cancel an election a second time. We won't take any notice of him if he does!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And I'll tell you what," continued Tubby. "After Monday's election even the Head can't make out that I'm not the captain of the school. And the first thing I'll do will be to cane Carthew before all the chaps."

"Bravo!"

"We'll back you up, Tubby!"

"Of course, I shall expect to be backed up," said Muffin, with dignity. "Loyal support is what I want."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was no doubt that Reginald Muffin would get plenty of loyal support. As Jimmy Silver put it, Rookwood would keep on giving the Head Tubby Muffin till the Head gave them Bulkeley. And Jimmy added that they could keep up that game quite as long as the Head could.

## The 4th Chapter.

### Tubby Takes Command!

Monday was a day of some excitement at Rookwood School.

Rookwood was still without prefects—with the exception of Mark Carthew, who was careful not to over-exercise his solitary authority. Carthew's aim was to conciliate the fellows as much as possible till the election was over. He restrained his bullying propensities, and he was remarkably civil even to fags in the Second Form. Carthew hoped to catch votes—and he hoped, too, that the Head's displeasure would prevent a ridiculous candidate like Muffin from being put forward again.

But it skilled not, as a novelist would say. Carthew was too well known for his "soft sawder" to have any effect on the fags; and, besides, the "lark" of electing the egregious Tubby appealed to their sense of humour. And the fact that they were, in a perfectly constitutional way, "dishing the Head" appealed still more to the juniors.

The "strike" of the prefects still continued, and though the Head gave no sign the other masters were growing restive. A great deal more work fell upon them in consequence of the prefects' strike. A prefect was not merely an ornament, by any means. They had their uses and their duties—and now their duties fell on the masters. Mr. Bootles had to see lights out for his Form, and to attend to many other matters that had usually been taken off his hands by a prefect. The supervision of the games, too, was a rather serious matter, and certainly little Mr. Bootles was not the man to take the Fourth Form in charge at cricket practice.

And the masters could not be everywhere at once. Sliding down the banisters, shrill whistling in the passages, "rows" in the studies and the Common-room, became frequent and painful and free.

Probably all the staff would have been very glad if the Head had decided to close the matter by reinstating Bulkeley, and thus conciliating his supporters. But the Head did not waver. The fact that the whole school was against his decision only rendered him the more determined; and he was, to do him justice, far from suspecting that his firmness par-took of the nature of obstinacy.

He would have been surprised, as well as shocked, if he had known that the Rookwooders regarded him not so much as a firm man as a mulish one.

After lessons on Monday the new election took place in Big Hall.

Rookwood came to it in a swarm. The seniors stood out of the proceedings, as before. The Sixth were solid behind Bulkeley, and the Fifth followed the Sixth. In fact, the seniors regarded the proceedings not only with disdain, but with a certain grim satisfaction. Their captain was rejected by the Head—and the Head could make the best of Tubby Muffin—and they charitably hoped that he would like it!

Carthew's hopes of a majority had been faint, and they were soon dissipated. The election was a still more overwhelming triumph for Reginald Muffin of the Fourth. His majority was well over ten to one, and could have been larger if more votes had been wanted.

Loud laughter and cheers greeted the announcement of the result.

Tubby Muffin beamed on his majority. He had received the loyal support he desired, and he was once more captain of Rookwood, in spite of the cancellation of the first election.

Tubby seemed two or three inches taller as he rolled out of Hall, in the midst of cheering.

He grinned at Carthew, who was striding away with a savage brow.

"Beaten you again, old top!" he remarked cheerily.

Carthew gave him a furious look.

"Don't scowl at me," continued Tubby. "None of your cheek, Carthew. For two pins, I'd—Yoooop!"

Tubby Muffin went spinning, as the enraged prefect smote him, and he rolled along the floor with a loud yell.

Carthew strode away.

"Yow-ow-ow!" roared Tubby Muffin, sitting up dazedly. "Yow-ow! I'll thrash

you! I'll cane you! Yooop! Gimme a hand up, somebody! Wharrer you all cackling at? Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Putty of the Fourth helped Tubby Muffin to his feet, and the fat Classical clung to him, gasping.

"Where's that rotter?" he panted. "Mizzled!" answered Jimmy Silver, laughing.

Tubby raised a fat hand commandingly. "Silver!"

"Ha, ha! Yes, my lord."

"Go and tell Carthew to come to my study at once," ordered Tubby Muffin. "I'm going to put the stopper on his cheek!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And bring me a cane!" added Tubby. "You can get Bootles' cane from the Form-room. I authorise you to do so."

"You authorise—Oh, my hat!"

"Do as I tell you, Silver! Tell Car-thew I expect him in my study in five minutes. We'll see who's captain of this school, I can tell you."

And Tubby Muffin gasped away to his study, leaving the juniors yelling.

"All the same, Tubby's within his rights," said Mornington. "We won't let him cheek Bulkeley; but Carthew's a bully, and he's fair game."

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll give him our giddy captain's message, anyway," chuckled Jimmy Silver.

"Go it!"

Captain Tubby Muffin's authority depended on what support he might get; and the juniors were quite prepared to support him against the unpopular bully of the Sixth. Calling Carthew of the Sixth up for judgment seemed an excellent idea to the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver followed Carthew at once to his study. He found the Sixth-Former with a black brow. Carthew fixed a savage look on him.

"Does the Head—" he began. Car-thew was expecting a summons to the Head.

"I haven't come from the Head, old bean," answered Jimmy Silver. "I've an order for you from the captain of the school."

"What?" roared Carthew.

"Tubby Muffin—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!"

"Not at all," answered Jimmy Silver blandly. "I leave that to you, Carthew; it's your stunt. Tubby Muffin requires you in his study at once."

"You—you—"

"You're to go immediately."

Carthew clutched up a cane.

"Come here, Silver!" he rapped out.

"No jolly fear!" answered the captain of the Fourth, backing out of the study. "I order you—as a prefect—"

"My dear man, I'm acting under orders of the captain of Rookwood," answered Jimmy coolly. "I suppose you know the captain of the school has authority over prefects?"

Carthew's reply was a rush, with the cane brandishing in the air. Jimmy Silver scudded down the passage.

"Come back!" roared Carthew, from his doorway.

"Bow-wow!"

And Jimmy Silver went cheerily up the staircase, to report to the captain of Rookwood. He found Tubby Muffin in his study, with a good many other fellows—all grinning, with the exception of Tubby. The fat Classical had Mr. Bootles' cane in his hand, Lovell having obligingly fetched it from the Form-room.

"Is he coming?" demanded Muffin, as Jimmy Silver looked in.

Jimmy shook his head.

"He's refused, Tubby."

"Refused!" thundered Muffin. "Refused to obey the captain of the school!"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

"Don't cackle, Jimmy Silver! It's disrespectful."

"Oh!"

"So he's refused to come, has he?" exclaimed Tubby, evidently greatly incensed. "He won't obey the captain of the school! I'll show him! Carthew is going to be canded—very severely canded."

"How are you going to do it?" asked Erroll, with a smile.

"Go and fetch him, Tubby," suggested Mornington. "As the mountain won't come to Mahomet, you know, Mahomet will have to go to the mountain."

Tubby Muffin shook his head.

Seriously as he was taking his new powers and authority as captain of the school, he had no desire to tackle Carthew of the Sixth in his study—by himself. Carthew was rather too hefty for that. Besides, as commander-in-chief, Tubby felt that there was no necessity for him to go into action, as it were. It was the duty of his loyal followers—privates, so to speak—to go into action, while he directed operations from headquarters.

"Silver, Lovell, Raby—" he rapped out.

"Adsum!" grinned the juniors.

"Newcome, Mornington, Erroll—"

"Here!"

"Conroy, Pons, Van Ryn—"

"Here we are, mighty chief!" grinned the Colonial Co. in the doorway.

Tubby raised a fat hand commandingly. "Fetch Carthew of the Sixth here," he said.

"Oh!"

"I authorise you to use force!" said Tubby grandly. "As captain of the school, I authorise you, and will see you through. If Carthew won't come, carry him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Get a move on!" rapped out Tubby. "But—" began Erroll.

"Silence!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Obey orders, and no back-chat, please," said Tubby, frowning. "Who's captain of the school, I'd like to know? Fetch Carthew here! I command you! Go!"

And Jimmy Silver & Co.—after a grinning glance at one another—went



The 5th Chapter. Captain's Orders.

Tubby Muffin sat down again with lofty content. His followers were obeying orders, which—to Tubby's fat mind—was exactly as it should be. True, they were obeying with their tongues in their cheeks, but that did not matter—Tubby wasn't aware of that.

Jimmy Silver & Co. intended to suit themselves exactly how far they obeyed the orders of the new captain of Rookwood. But when it suited them to do so their obedience was prompt. It suited them in this case. Handling the bully of the Sixth was no trouble—it was a pleasure—and the thought of the prefect being caned by Tubby of the Fourth made them chuckle with glee. And, as captain of the school, Tubby was acting within his rights; and certainly Jimmy Silver & Co. were acting within their rights in obeying him—if they chose!

The juniors realised that a Fourth Form captain had his uses; it enabled them to deal with the Sixth in a hitherto undreamt-of manner.

True, if the other seniors interfered, there was no doubt that Tubby's followers would be driven in rout from the Sixth Form passage. But they were not likely to interfere on behalf of the "blackleg" who had sold them. If they did not, Carthew hadn't much chance against nine sturdy juniors.

The cheery nine arrived in the Sixth Form passage, and Jimmy Silver hurled Carthew's door open. There was a whiff of tobacco-smoke in the study. Mark Carthew was consoling himself with a cigarette.

He threw it hastily into the grate as his door flew open, and started to his feet, catching up an ashplant.

"Carthew, you're wanted!" shouted Lovell.

"Clear out of my study!" exclaimed the prefect angrily.

"You're wanted!"

"Captain's orders!"

"This way, Carthew!"

Carthew came that way—with a rush. Lovell yelled as he caught the ashplant with his shoulder, and Conroy roared as he captured the next "lick." But the bully of the Sixth had no time for more.

Jimmy Silver was gripping him, and Raby and Newcome got hold, and Pons and Van Ryn piled in, and Carthew was borne backwards. He went down on his carpet with a crash, the juniors sprawling over him.

"Hands off!" shrieked Carthew.

"Pile in!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

"Down him!" roared Lovell.

"Hurrah! Down him!"

Like a wave the invaders flowed over the unhappy bully of the Sixth. Carthew struggled desperately, but he could not throw them off. The odds were much too great even for the big Sixth-Former.

His arms and legs were captured, and Morny took a good grip on his back hair, while Pons and Van Ryn captured an ear each.

Carthew, still wriggling, was a prisoner; he could not do much more than wriggle with so many hands on him.

"Bring him along!" shouted Raby.

"Are you going to walk, Carthew?"

"Yaroooh!"

"Yaroooh yes, or yaroooh no?" asked Mornington.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You young rotters! I'll have you flogged! Lemme go! Oh, crumbs!"

panted Carthew, wriggling frantically in the grasp of the Fourth-Formers.

"If he won't walk, carry him!" said Jimmy Silver. "March!"

The juniors crowded out of the study with Carthew in their grasp. He roared for help as they came out with a rush. Neville and Lonsdale and Jones major appeared on the scene.

"What are you fags up to?" demanded Neville.

"Taking Carthew to the captain's study," answered Jimmy Silver. "Orders from the captain of Rookwood, Neville."

"But Bulkeley—" began Neville.

"Captain Muffin!" explained Jimmy.

"Oh!" Neville grinned and went back into his study.

"Help me, you fools! Jones, Lonsdale, lend me a hand!" howled Carthew desperately.

Lonsdale gave him a contemptuous look.

"You're a prefect," he said; "I'm not—now. I've no right to interfere, not being a prefect. You've authority. Use it."

"You silly idiot!"

Lonsdale gave a shrug and turned away.

"Jones! Do you hear, Jones—"

"I hear you, my boy," answered Jones major. "But I'm not a prefect now, you know. You've gone back on us, and you can help yourself. The fags can do as they like, for all I care."

Jones major stepped out of the way, and Carthew was rushed on towards the staircase, his arms and legs flying wildly. He yelled for help again, and Mr. Mooney, the Master of the Shell, rushed up.

"Boys!" exclaimed Mr. Mooney. "What—what does this mean?"

"Captain's orders, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

"I do not understand you, Silver! What—"

"The captain of the school has ordered Carthew to come to his study, sir, and he won't come. He's ordered us to bring him."

"We're bound to obey the captain of the school, sir!" said Mornington.

"Do you—do you mean Muffin?" ejaculated Mr. Mooney.

"Yes, sir."

"Bless my soul! Really—"

"Make them let me go, sir!" howled Carthew.

Mr. Mooney stood nonplussed.

"I—I think you had better let Carthew go," he said dubiously. "Muffin cannot—ahem!—be regarded very seriously—ahem!—as captain of Rookwood."

"It's captain's orders, sir!" said Jimmy

Silver firmly. "We're bound to obey our captain—asking your pardon, sir."

And, leaving the perplexed Mr. Mooney rubbing his chin, the juniors rushed Carthew up the staircase. He opened his mouth to yell again, but Conroy pushed a folded handkerchief into it, forcibly. The juniors did not want their own Form-master to be brought on the scene.

Carthew, gargling and wriggling spasmodically, was brought up to the Fourth Form passage, and to the doorway of No. 2, where the new captain of Rookwood sat in state.

Jimmy Silver & Co. whirled him into the study and set him upon his feet, dishevelled and breathless.

"Here he is, Muffin!"

"We've brought the boulder!"

Carthew stood panting for breath, with a crimson face, and in a state of fury that was beyond words.

Tubby Muffin rose to his feet, with a lofty look, and picked up the cane.

"Carthew!" he rapped out.

"Grooooh!"

"You laid hands on me, the captain of Rookwood! I'm going to cane you!"

"Groogghb!"

"I'm going to maintain discipline in this school, or know the reason why!" said Muffin. "Hold out your hand, Carthew!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" roared Tubby. "How dare you fags laugh?"

"Fags!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Oh, my hat!"

"Draw it mild, fatty!"

"Do you want to be caned, too, Jones minor? You'd better be careful. Now, Carthew, hold out your hand! Sharp's the word!"

that. He was rather too dangerous to be let loose.

Carthew disappeared under seven or eight juniors on the floor, who pinned him down by sheer weight. His nose was grinding into the carpet, as Putty of the Fourth sat on the back of his head. A wild and inarticulate gurgling came from the unhappy senior.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Tubby Muffin. "I'm hurt! You rotters, why didn't you drag me off? Yow-ow-ow-ow! Yaroooh! I'll cane the lot of you! Oh, crumbs! Ow-ow-ow-ow!"

"All serene now, Tubby—"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Aren't you going to cane Carthew?" chuckled Lovell.

"Ow! Oh, yes, rather! Gimme the cane!"

The cane was handed to the fat junior, and he gripped it, with a vengeful gleam in his eyes. It was Tubby's turn now, and Carthew was evidently going to get it hot and strong. Certainly he had asked for it by the way he had treated the captain of the school.

"Hold him!" exclaimed Tubby. "Face down—that's it! Pin him, you know! Mind you don't let the beast gerrup! That's important!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, then! Count five hundred, Jimmy Silver!"

"Five hundred? Oh, crikey!"

"No; a thousand!" said the vengeful Tubby. "I'm going to give him a thousand! Keep clear!"

Whack!

Part of Carthew was left clear for the licking, the juniors standing or sitting on the rest of him to keep him pinned to the carpet. The cane came down with all the strength of Tubby's podgy arm. It rang

traculently. "I'm going to have discipline in this school, I can tell you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, gad!" said Adolphus. "That fat idiot is too funny to live! Look here, you kids, the Head's sent me for Carthew. He's in Carthew's study now, waitin' for him. He looks waxy."

"Phew!"

"Better let him clear!" said Mornington.

"Rot!" exclaimed Tubby. "I've only given him about twenty! You're not counting, Jimmy Silver! You'd better be careful, if you don't want some of the same. I'm going to give him a thousand!"

"But the Head—" said Lovell.

"Let the Head wait!"

"Good old Tubby!" grinned Mornington. "Isn't he swelling? Mind you don't burst, like the giddy frog in the fable, fatty!"

"Shut up!"

"Whack, whack, whack!"

"Yow-ow-yooop! Help!" came in frantic tones from Carthew. "You young villains! Help! Yoooop! Help!"

"The Head will hear this!" said Smythe, with a scared look.

Tubby Muffin snorted.

"Let him hear!" he answered. "The Head's no right to interfere with the captain of the school executing his duty."

Flynn put an excited face into the study doorway.

"Cave! The Head's coming!" he gasped.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Hold him!" shouted Tubby Muffin, as the juniors crowded off Carthew. "Keep him pinned! I haven't finished yet. He's got to have a thousand—"

"You fat idiot! The Head—"



A LICKING FOR CARTHEW! Tubby gripped the cane with a vengeful gleam in his eyes. "Hold him!" he exclaimed. "Mind you don't let the beast gerrup—that's important!" The cane rang upon Carthew like a pistol-shot, and it was answered by a fearful yell from the Sixth-Former.

"Hold out your hand, Carthew!" roared the juniors in great merriment.

Carthew did not hold out his hand. Having recovered his breath, he made a rush at Tubby Muffin. The new captain of Rookwood roared as the bully of the Sixth seized him.

"Yaroooh! Help! Back up!"

The cane was snatched from Tubby's fat hand, and Carthew, grasping the fat Classical by the collar, laid it on Tubby.

Whack, whack, whack!

It was a most disrespectful way to treat the captain of the school. It was very painful, too, as Tubby's fiendish yells testified. Carthew laid the cane on as if he thought he was beating carpet.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yoop! Help! Rescue! Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Whack, whack!

The 6th Chapter. The High Road.

Jimmy Silver & Co., for a moment or two, were laughing too much to go to the aid of the hapless captain of Rookwood. In those few moments Carthew put in a good many lashes with the cane, and Tubby's frantic yells rang through the study and to the end of the passage. In those awful moments the captain of Rookwood probably repented of having sent for Carthew.

But Jimmy Silver came to the rescue, and the other fellows followed his lead. Carthew was seized and dragged off, some of the juniors getting lashes of the cane in the process.

But the bully of the Sixth was downed again, in spite of his furious resistance. And the juniors did not let him go after

like a pistol-shot, and it was answered by a fearful yell from the Sixth-Former.

Whack, whack, whack!

Wild yells from Carthew answered every whack. Tubby was laying it on, not wisely but too well. The prefect struggled furiously, but quite in vain; he was too well held. Whack, whack, whack!

"How many's that, Jimmy?" gasped Tubby, pausing for breath.

"About a dozen," gasped Jimmy. "I think that will do, Tubby."

"Shut up!"

"Wha-a-at?"

"Don't argue with me!"

"Oh!" stuttered Jimmy.

"I'm captain of Rookwood! I'm going to give him a thousand, and you're to count. Shut up!"

Whack, whack, whack!

Tubby Muffin was laying it on again. He was smarting from the cane himself, and so long as he smarted he was not likely to think that Carthew of the Sixth had had enough. It was fortunate for the hapless prefect that Tubby Muffin was not an athlete.

There was a step in the passage, and Smythe of the Shell came through the laughing crowd of juniors.

"You've got Carthew here?" he asked. "Oh, my only aunt!"

Adolphus Smythe started at the scene in amazement, as Tubby Muffin laid on the cane again.

"You—you—you're whacking a prefect!" he gasped.

"Captain of the school can whack anybody he likes, can't he?" retorted Tubby Muffin independently. "If I have any cheek from you, Smythe, I'll whack you."

"Will you, by gad!" said Adolphus.

"Yes, I will!" roared Tubby

"Bother the Head!"

"Look here—"

"Hold Carthew, I tell you!" roared Tubby Muffin. "Do you hear? Aren't I captain? I order you!"

His new dignity had evidently got into Tubby Muffin's head with an intoxicating effect. But, captain as he was, his order was not obeyed. The juniors released Carthew as Dr. Chisholm's step and the rustle of his gown were heard in the passage outside.

The prefect sat up dazedly, howling with pain, as the Head appeared in the doorway—majestic.

Dr. Chisholm gazed at the scene speechlessly.

The juniors outside the study had fled, but there were nine or ten inside the room, and they were cornered. They showed a remarkably unanimous desire to avoid meeting the Head's eyes.

All excepting Tubby Muffin. That egregious youth was quite "beyond himself," so to speak; "swank" had mounted to his head like new wine. He stood, cane in hand, and confronted the Head, the juniors spellbound at his audacity. But Tubby was not aware that he was being audacious. He was acting with proper dignity as captain of the school, that was all!

"What—what—" The Head found his voice at last. "What does this scene of ruffianism mean?"

"Come in, sir!" said Tubby Muffin cheerily.

"What?"

"You're welcome to witness Carthew's punishment, sir," said Muffin, with dignity. "I have been compelled to give Carthew of the Sixth a rather severe licking, sir."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"Insubordination, sir," explained Tubby, as the Head blinked at him, speechless again. "Carthew was wanting in proper respect to the captain of the school. He actually laid hands on me—me, sir, the captain of Rookwood. I've had to give him a rather severe warning."

"Yow-ow-ow!" came from Carthew, in tones of deep anguish.

"Muffin!" thundered the Head.

"Yes, sir?"

"You—you have dared to assault a prefect—"

"Not at all, sir! I've caned him."

"Caned him—caned a prefect—you, a junior in the Fourth Form!"

"Captain of Rookwood, sir," said Tubby Muffin respectfully but firmly. "The captain of the school has authority over the prefects, sir."

"Boy!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Muffin, I—I think you must be out of your senses. Give me that cane!"

"Are you going to cane Carthew, sir?"

"No!" thundered the Head. "I am going to cane you, Muffin."

Tubby jumped.

"C-c-c-cane me!" he stuttered.

"Yes, decidedly. Hold out your hand!" Tubby Muffin blinked at him.

"B-b-but, sir," he stammered, "the— the captain of the school can't be caned, sir! It's—it's against all the rules! Nobody ever heard of the captain of Rookwood being caned! Oh, no, sir!"

"You utterly absurd boy—"

"Excuse me, sir, that isn't the way to speak to the captain of the school."

"What?"

"It's liable to cause insubordination among the fags, sir," said Tubby Muffin.

"Captain of the school expects to be supported by the Head, sir. It's always been the rule."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head. "How dare you laugh at the absurdities of this ridiculous boy! Muffin, give me that cane at once, and hold out your hand!"

"But, I—I say, sir—"

Tubby Muffin broke off in dismay, as the Head jerked the cane from his hand and took him by the collar. The cane rang upon Tubby's plump person, and Tubby's yells resounded far and wide.

Carthew staggered to his feet, and looked on, gasping. Tubby Muffin wriggled in anguish under the infliction.

He had woke up, as it were, and descended with a rush from his exalted position as captain of the school, and he was once more a fag of the Fourth, yelling under an unusually severe licking!

It was a painful awakening for the new captain of Rookwood!

"Yow-ow-ow! Yow-wow-wow!" howled the hapless captain of the school. "Oh, Ah! Ow! Stop it! Yooop! Yah! Phew! Oh, crikey!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. looked on in stony silence. They had rescued Tubby from Carthew's grasp, but they could not rescue him from the Head. The captain of Rookwood had to take care of himself when he came into conflict with the headmaster, and he did not seem quite equal to the task.

"There!" exclaimed the Head. "Now, Muffin, I trust that will be a warning to you, you utterly absurd boy!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

"Carthew, kindly come with me."

"Yes, sir," gasped Carthew.

He was wriggling painfully as he followed the Head from the study. He had been well licked before the Head arrived, and that was some solace to the juniors. Tubby Muffin was beyond solace, however, for the present. He was rocking with woe and anguish.

"Wow-wow-wow!" he moaned. "Oh, dear! Ow-yow! Is that the way to treat the captain of the—yow-ow— school? Oh, dear! The Head never caned Bulkeley—yow-ow-ow! You fellows ought to have stopped him—wooop! I—I say, what's a captain of the school to do, you fellows, if the Head goes on whopping him just as if he's a—yow-ow-ow!—fag?"

But there was no answer possible to that question. Jimmy Silver & Co. really didn't know what it was proper for a captain of the school to do under such circumstances, and Tubby Muffin was left to work out the problem for himself. But the general opinion of the juniors was that Tubby's days as captain of Rookwood were numbered.

And they were!

That evening a new notice appeared on the board in the Head's hand, and it was read with keen curiosity by crowds of Rookwood fellows. The notice was brief, but to the point. It stated that Mark Carthew of the Sixth Form had been appointed captain of the school by authority of the headmaster, and it was signed by Dr. Chisholm.

"Appointed captain of the school, without an election!" said Jimmy Silver, with a deep breath. "That's rather thick."

"Unconstitutional!" said Lovell.

"Check!" said Mornington.

"The Head can't do it!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"But he's done it, by gad!" remarked Smythe of the Shell.

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows!" he said. "The Head's overridden all our rights of election, and appointed a captain of the school! We refuse to recognise any such captain!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We refuse to acknowledge Carthew as captain of Rookwood, and any fellow who does acknowledge him will be sent to Coventry—"

"Bravo!"

There was a roar of assent. Carthew of the Sixth had reached the goal of his ambition, but it did not look as if he would find the captaincy a bed of roses!

(Another grand tale of Rookwood School, entitled "School versus Captain," by Owen Conquest, in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. Order your copy in advance.)



# CONDEMNED BY THE SCHOOL!

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

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



## The 1st Chapter.

### The Out Direct.

"Molly!"

Frank Richards stood rooted to the ground.

He was leaning on the gate of Cedar Creek School when Molly Lawrence came along. Frank was waiting for his chums—Vere Beauclerc and Bob Lawless—to come up from the creek, but he detached himself from the gate with a bright smile as Molly appeared.

To his amazement the girl walked on with a set, averted face, not even glancing at him.

"Molly!" repeated Frank blankly.

Molly Lawrence went on into the playground, seemingly deaf.

Frank Richards looked after the Canadian girl's graceful form, the colour rising in his cheeks.

He had always been good friends with Molly Lawrence and her brother Tom ever since he had come to the school in the backwoods; and now Molly, for reasons utterly unknown to Frank, had cut him dead at the school gates.

Frank could do nothing but blink after her in blank amazement, and he was still rooted to the spot when Bob and Beauclerc came up from the creek and found him.

Bob Lawless clapped his English cousin on the shoulder with a powerful clap, and Frank jumped.

"Hallo! Gone to sleep standing up, like a horse?" inquired Bob.

"N-no!" stammered Frank Richards. Beauclerc looked at him curiously.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Ye-es. I—I think so, at least."

"What's wrong?"

"Molly—" began Frank.

There was an explosive chuckle from Bob Lawless.

"Molly!" he repeated. "Oh, Franky! Thinking about Molly—eh? What's the row? Has Molly been giving another galoot the glad eye? Has she turned on you the stony shoulder? Poor old Franky!"

"Fathead!" was Frank's reply.

"Has Chunky Todgers pushed you out of favour?" grinned Bob. "Or is it Yen Chin?"

"Look here, Bob, don't be an ass!" said Frank, rather gruffly. "Molly's offended about something, I think—at least, she's just passed me without speaking, and she wouldn't look at me."

"Then she doesn't know a good thing when she sees it," said Bob Lawless gravely.

"Be serious, Bob. I don't know what's the matter—"

"Why not ask her?"

"Well, she wouldn't stop—"

"Let's follow on, then, and if she won't stop I'll get a trail-ropo, and we'll lasso her!" said Bob, still humorous.

"Ass!"

"Well, I only want to be obliging. But if you can think of something else instead of Molly, what about having a ride down to Hillcrest? I want to punch Gunten's nose."

"Bother Gunten! I—I wish I knew what was the matter—"

"With Gunten?"

"No!" roared Frank. "Hang Gunten!"

"All in good time," answered Bob. "At present, punching his nose will do. If you're coming for a ride—"

"I'm not!" growled Frank Richards.

"Don't play the goat, Bob," said Vere Beauclerc, who could see that Frank was really distressed. "Let's go and see Molly. I dare say there's nothing much the matter."

"Oh, all right!" said Bob. "There she is, talking to Katie Dawson. We certainly can't have her giving Franky the marble-eye, and making him ratty with his old pals. Come on!"

The Co. of Cedar Creek crossed the playground to where Molly Lawrence was standing by the schoolhouse.

The girl made a movement as if to go into the house as she saw them, but Bob Lawless called to her.

"Hold on, Molly!"

Molly Lawrence hesitated. But the three schoolboys had joined her in another moment.

Molly's face was a little flushed, and she carefully avoided looking at Frank Richards.

"Molly!" said Frank in a low voice.

The girl did not answer.

Bob and Beauclerc exchanged an odd look. It was pretty evident that Molly was seriously offended, though why they could not guess. Frank Richards certainly was not the fellow to give any girl cause for offence. And Molly, on the other hand, was a straightforward and sensible girl, not at all liable to take offence for a frivolous cause.

It was rather a mystery, and a painful one to Frank Richards. The flush in his cheeks deepened.

"Won't you speak to me, Molly?" he asked.

Then the girl looked at him.

"No!" she answered.

"Why not?"

"You know well enough!"

"But I don't!" said Frank in distress.

"I really don't Molly!"

"Don't call me Molly!" exclaimed the girl sharply.

"But—but why not?"

"Because I don't like it—from you!"

Kate Dawson looked on in amazement.

"I say, what on earth's the row, Molly?" asked Bob Lawless in bewilderment. "What has poor old Franky done?"

"He knows!" said Molly, with a disdainful curl of the lip.

"I don't!" said Frank.

"He would not like you to know as you would despise him, I suppose," said Molly bitterly. "That is why he is telling falsehoods now."

Frank Richards almost staggered.

"Falsehoods!" he repeated.

"Molly!" exclaimed Bob.

Molly Lawrence turned and walked into the schoolhouse. Kate Dawson, after a curious look at Frank Richards, followed her. Frank and his chums looked at one another.

"For goodness' sake, Frank, what have you done?" exclaimed Bob.

"Nothing."

"But—but Molly—"

"I can't understand it!" Frank said. His eyes gleamed. "Bob! Don't you believe me? Why, I—I—"

"Shush!" said Bob soothingly. "Of course I do! Don't I know you're the real white article? So does the Cherub—don't you, Cherub?"

"Yes, certainly!" answered Beauclerc. "Molly has some queer bee in her bonnet. Or perhaps somebody's been making mischief. Perhaps her brother may know what's the matter."

"Good! Tom may be able to explain," said Bob Lawless. "Let's look for Tom. This is getting interesting."

regard it as a matter of much importance.

Frank Richards took a different view—perhaps because he was not Molly's brother. And his handsome face was sombre as he went into class with his chums.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### A Warning to Gunten!

Miss Meadows found Frank less attentive than usual to lessons that afternoon.

A dozen times, at least, Frank Richards stole a glance towards the spot where Molly sat.

Miss Lawrence certainly was aware of it; but she did not turn her head in his direction, and appeared unconscious of his existence.

It was all the more disconcerting for Frank, because the other boys and girls in the class noted it, and were surprised. Frank and Molly had been good chums, and this open and palpable rift in the lute could not fail to excite remark.

Tom Lawrence, now that his attention had been called to the matter, seemed surprised, too, and he glanced several times at his sister and at Frank Richards. He was plainly as puzzled as the rest.

After school, when the Cedar Creek boys and girls came out, Molly went to the gate to wait for her brother to lead out the horses. Chunky Todgers, who was all curiosity, bestowed his valuable company upon her; but Molly appeared deaf to the inquisitive Chunky's remarks. Little Yen Chin, the Chinese, met the Co. as they came from the corral, and shook a yellow finger admonishingly at Frank Richards.

"Flanky velly bad boy!" said the little Chinese.

"What do you mean, you silly heathen?" exclaimed Frank crossly. He was in a rather restive mood. Molly's un-

crimson. "Never thought of such a thing. Why, I'll scarp that beastly little heathen—"

"Easy does it, old fellow!"

Frank, with an angry brow, led on his horse. Tom Lawrence arrived at the gates at the same time with his horse and his sister's. Frank looked at Molly, who took no notice of him.

Frank stepped towards her. He was angry now, as well as mortified.

"Look here, Molly!" he exclaimed. "Will you tell me what's the matter?"

"I won't speak to you," answered Molly quietly. "Let us go, Tom."

"But, I say, old girl," said Tom Lawrence, puzzled and perplexed. "what's the matter with Franky? If he's done anything, can't you give it a name?"

"Let us go."

"I've done nothing that I know of," said Frank.

Molly gave him a scornful look, but did not speak.

"If he has, you can tell me, Molly," said Lawrence, and he was looking a little grim now. "If any galoot here has offended you, I'm the fellow to punch his head."

Without answering, the girl mounted her horse and rode up the trail. Tom looked at Frank Richards rather darkly.

"What have you been up to?" he demanded.

"Nothing."

"Oh, rot!" said Lawrence gruffly. "Molly wouldn't get her rag out like this for nothing."

"If you don't believe me—" began Frank hotly.

"I guess I don't! I stand by Molly."

Frank's eyes flashed.

"Then you can put your hands up!" he exclaimed. "I can't row with Molly, but I'm not taking any nonsense from you, Lawrence."

"I'm your man!" answered Tom at once. "Hold my horse, will you, Chunky?"

But Bob Lawless pushed between.

"Hold on, both of you!" he said. "You're not going to scrap. Nothing to scrap about. Keep your temper, Franky; and you'd better light out, Lawrence."

Beauclerc caught Frank's arm and pulled him back. Lawrence gave him rather a surly look; but he mounted his horse and rode on up the trail after his sister.

They disappeared through the timber.

"Now for Hillcrest," said Bob, and the Co. rode away, Frank with a gloomy and thoughtful brow.

He was worried and troubled by Molly's conduct, and by his quarrel with her brother also. He had always been chummy with Tom Lawrence, but it was pretty clear that the present state of affairs would end in a "row."

"It's all serene, Franky," said Beauclerc, as they rode under the trees. "Tom will ask Molly what the trouble is, and it will all be cleared up to-morrow. I'm

Kern Gunten, the Swiss, came tramping along the trail, with his chum Keller. He stopped, with a scowl, as he saw Frank Richards & Co. Dicky Bird and his friends went on. They were always ready for a row with Cedar Creek, but they had no intention of championing Kern Gunten. The blackguard of Hillcrest was nothing to them.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Gunten, between his teeth, as Frank Richards jumped down into the trail.

"I think you can guess," answered Frank. "You've been playing cards again with Yen Chin, the Chinese. You've got to let the heathen alone."

"Is it your business, hang you?" snarled the Swiss.

"I guess it is," answered Bob Lawless. "We're looking after the heathen. I've given him the trail-ropo this morning, and now there's the same for you."

"You can put up your hands if you like," said Frank Richards scornfully.

The Swiss gave him a bitter look.

"You'll be sorry you've made an enemy of me," he said, in a low voice. "More sorry than you guess at present."

"Are you going to lambaste us all?" asked Bob humorously.

Kern Gunten was backing away towards the trees that bordered the trail. He made a sudden spring to escape into the timber; but Bob Lawless had a coiled rope in his hand, and it flew at the same moment.

Gunten, caught in the noose of the lasso, came spinning back into the trail, with a yell.

He crashed down into the grass.

"Just where you're wanted, old scout!" grinned Bob Lawless.

He jumped from his horse and caught up the lasso, and laid the loose end of it upon Gunten with a strong arm. The Swiss schoolboy yelled and squirmed in the trail.

"Now will you give Yen Chin a wide berth?" asked Bob politely. "We're looking after the heathen, as I think I mentioned. I'll keep this up till you promise."

"Ow! Yow! Let up!" roared Gunten.

"Will you promise?"

"I—I—ow! Yes!" howled Gunten.

"Good man! Better keep your promise this time, or you'll really get a licking."

Bob Lawless coiled up the trail-ropo and jumped upon his horse. Gunten sat up in the grass, and shook a furious fist after the chums of Cedar Creek as they rode away.

## The 3rd Chapter.

### Blow for Blow!

Frank Richards & Co. arrived at Cedar Creek only just in time for lessons the following morning, and Frank did not see Molly until he joined the class in the lumber school-room.

He glanced at her, but her face was averted.

His glance next sought her brother; and Tom Lawrence surprised him with a grim and threatening look.

There was evidently trouble brewing in that quarter.

It was not a happy morning for Frank Richards.

He was feeling sore and angry; but he did not want to fight Tom Lawrence, with whom he had no quarrel—and that, it was clear, was what he was booked for when morning lessons were over.

The whole affair was intensely puzzling and irritating.

Miss Meadows was quite sharp with Frank two or three times that morning as he made random answers.

He was glad enough when the class was dismissed. As he left the lumber school with his friends, Eben Hacke tapped him on the arm.

"Lawrence is going to wait for you in the timber," he said.

"Oh, rot!" growled Frank.

Hacke sneered.

"I suppose you're coming?" he said.

"What does he want me for, then?"

"I guess you know—he's going to lambaste you for insulting his sister!" answered Hacke.

"That's a lie!" said Frank savagely.

"I reckon you can tell Lawrence that!"

"I'll tell him so fast enough! Are you chaps coming?" asked Frank, turning to his chums.

"I guess so!" answered Bob. "Come on, Cherub!"

The Co. went out of gates, followed by a good part of Cedar Creek. The news of the coming fight had spread.

None of the girls joined the procession, however. The affair had not been mentioned to them.

Lawrence was waiting in a glade near the creek, with Dawson and Hopkins. He gave Frank Richards a grim and angry look.

"Are you ready?" he exclaimed.

"Quite!" answered Frank. "I'd rather know what we are to fight about, though."

"You know well enough, you rotter! Molly's told me."

"I can't even guess what she's told you, then."

"Listen to him!" exclaimed Lawrence savagely. "If you two fellows know what he's done, you're as rotten as he is, for keeping friends with him!"

"Rot, my son!" answered Bob Lawless. "Franky's done nothing he's ashamed to tell his friends—and he's told us nothing. You're talking out of your back teeth!"

"Well, I reckoned he wouldn't tell you," said Lawrence. "You wouldn't speak to him again if I told you!"

"You're welcome to tell them, if you've anything to tell," answered Frank Richards, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"He's written to Molly," said Lawrence, in a voice trembling with rage. "She wouldn't tell me at first, because she was afraid it would lead to a fight; but I made her tell me. He's written to her—a letter only a sneaking cad and coward would write!"

"I haven't!" shouted Frank. "It's a lie!"



ROPED IN! Kern Gunten was backing away, but Bob Lawless had a coiled rope in his hand, and it flew at the same moment. Gunten, caught in the noose of the lasso, came spinning back into the trail, with a yell.

The Co. looked for Tom Lawrence. But he had gone on the creek in a canoe, and did not reappear till nearly time for afternoon classes. Frank Richards & Co. caught him hurrying to the schoolhouse.

"What's the matter with Molly, Tom?" asked Frank.

"Nothing that I know of," answered Lawrence.

"She won't speak to me!"

"Won't she? Well, that doesn't hurt you, does it?" asked Tom cheerily. "She talks to me too much sometimes."

"I seem to have offended her somehow."

"So have I, lots of times," answered Molly's brother. "You should have seen her the day my dog got her new hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Bob.

"She was wrothy, I can tell you!" grinned Lawrence. "I remember now she was grumpy this morning about something. It wasn't my dog, though. Hallo, we shall be late!"

The bell had ceased to ring, and Tom Lawrence hurried into the lumber school. Frank Richards & Co. followed. Molly's brother had been unable to shed any light on the mystery, and evidently he did not

accountable conduct, and the curiosity it caused in the lumber school, worried him.

"Miss Molly velly much mad," said Yen Chin. "Give ole Flanky marble eye. Flanky velly bad boy. Oh, yes!"

"I've done nothing, you pigtailed ass!"

Yen Chin shook his head.

"Me tinkee knowee," he said. "Flanky kissy pool lil' Molly, and pool lil' girly velly closs."

Frank clenched his hand.

"You silly heathen! If you talk such rot, I'll jolly well—"

Yen Chin jumped back.

"No punchee pool lil' Chinese!" he exclaimed. "Me no tellee that Flanky kissy lil' Molly—"

Frank Richards made an angry stride towards him, but Beauclerc caught his arm, and Yen Chin scuttled away.

"Hold on, old chap!" murmured Beauclerc.

Frank looked at his chums, his face flushed and his eyes glittering.

"If you fellows think—" he began.

"Don't be a jay, old chap!" said Bob cheerfully. "I guess you wouldn't kiss Molly unless she wanted you to."

"I've never done anything of the kind!" exclaimed Frank, his cheeks

afraid somebody has been making mischief."

Frank Richards nodded without replying.

The three chums, with Bob Lawless leading, rode by a short cut through the timber, towards Hillcrest School. They came out into the trail between Hillcrest and Thompson town, in time to meet the Hillcrest fellows on their homeward way.

Dicky Bird and Fisher and Blumpy came along together, and they stopped at the sight of the Cedar Creek fellows.

"Hallo! Looking for trouble?" called out Dicky Bird.

"Not this time," answered Bob Lawless, laughing. "We're looking for Kern Gunten."

"He's coming along the trail," answered Dicky. "What has Gunten been up to this time?"

"Same old game," answered Bob. "We've promised him a hiding every time he plays poker with a Cedar Creek chap. We shall cure him in the long run."

Dicky Bird frowned.

"That rotter is a disgrace to the school," he said. "I wish you had him back at Cedar Creek. Here he comes."



"Molly said so!"  
 "She—she couldn't have said so. I tell you—"  
 Frank broke off as Lawrence struck full at his face.  
 "Now come on!" said Tom, between his teeth.  
 The invitation was not needed; Frank was coming on. He was utterly bewildered by the accusation; but his anger was at boiling-point now, and the blow was the finishing touch.  
 He came on with a fierce rush, and in a second more the two were fighting hammer-and-tongs.  
 A breathless circle of fellows surrounded them, looking on.  
 Bob Lawless and the Cherub were looking dismayed, as they felt. Their faith in Frank Richards was not shaken; they knew that he was loyal and honourable to the core. But the accusation was a staggering one. Molly could not be mistaken in such a matter; and her word was above doubt. They simply could not guess what it all meant.  
 Frank's fierce rush drove Lawrence back, but he disputed every inch of the way, fighting furiously.  
 There was a breathless silence in the crowd as the fight proceeded.  
 The adversaries were pretty well matched. Frank had a more scientific knowledge of boxing, but Lawrence was rather the bigger of the two; and it was, as Chunky Todgers remarked, anybody's fight. It was pretty plain that the sympathy of nearly all the onlookers was with Tom Lawrence. Bob and Beauclerc were probably the only fellows present who retained their belief in Frank Richards.  
 Crash!  
 Frank Richards went down on his back, the first to touch grass. Lawrence stood panting, waiting for him to rise.  
 "Bravo!" sang out Eben Hacke.  
 Frank staggered to his feet.  
 His head was singing, and he was dazed; but he was full of pluck and resolution. He came on again fiercely.  
 "Go it, Lawrence!"  
 "Pile in, Tom!"  
 The cries were all for Molly's brother. But in spite of Frank's heavy fall, he was gaining the upper hand now, and Lawrence was driven round the ring. He went down at last, and he was not so quick to rise as Frank had been.  
 Hopkins helped him to his feet.  
 Frank Richards stepped back. Lawrence had one eye closed, and his nose was streaming red. The sight of his former friend's face recalled Frank to himself and calmed him.  
 "Lawrence—" he began.  
 "Come on!" gasped Lawrence.  
 Frank backed a pace or two.  
 "Lawrence, I tell you, on my honour, I never wrote—"  
 "Liar!"  
 "Go it, Lawrence!"  
 Frank Richards had to defend himself as Lawrence came fiercely on. His teeth were set now, and his eyes gleaming. There were mocking murmurs from the crowd, where Frank's attempt at peace-making was taken for a sign of failing pluck.  
 He did not think any more of peace; but put all his skill and strength into the combat.  
 He was gaining now, and his success seemed assured, though he was paying dearly for it.  
 Lawrence was staggering, and it was clear enough that he was beaten; but he would not give in.  
 With failing strength, but dogged determination, he fought on to the finish.  
 Crash!  
 There was a murmur in the crowd as Lawrence went down again, and sank back helplessly into the grass after a feeble attempt to rise.  
 Frank Richards stood a little uncertainly on his feet, looking down at his fallen enemy.  
 Lawrence made another attempt to rise. But he had over-taxed his strength, and he could not get upon his feet. He sank back again with a groan.  
 "All over, I guess," said Bob Lawless, in a low voice. "Here's your jacket, Franky."  
 "I'm not done yet!" gasped Lawrence.  
 "You are done," said Frank Richards quietly. "And I'm sorry we came to this, Lawrence! I'm willing to give you my word that I don't even understand what you've accused me of."  
 "Liar!"  
 Frank set his lips.  
 "And there's plenty of us here to back up Lawrence!" exclaimed Eben Hacke, pushing forward.  
 Frank gave the bully of the lumber school a contemptuous look.  
 "I'm ready for you, if you choose!" he answered. "I've licked you once, Hacke, and I dare say I can do it again!"  
 "I guess I'll give you the chance—"  
 "I guess you won't!" growled Bob Lawless, pushing him back. "Franky's not fit now for another fight. That may do for Dakota, Hacke, but it won't do for Canada! Shut up!"  
 "Leave him to me!" muttered Tom Lawrence. "He's a liar and a coward, and another time—"  
 "I'm neither," said Frank; "and if you could stand up, I'd make you sorry for giving me those names!"  
 Lawrence made an effort to rise, but he could not. As he sank into the grass again there was a sudden cry, and Molly came running through the trees.

The 4th Chapter.

Miss Meadows' Inquiries.

"Oh, Jerusalem!" muttered Bob Lawless in dismay.  
 Molly ran to her brother's side, the schoolboys making way for her. She dropped on her knees in the grass.  
 "Tom!"  
 Lawrence's bruised face became crimson.  
 "I—I've done my best, Molly," he mut-

tered. "I—I've got the worst of it. Another time—"  
 He staggered to his feet with Molly's help. The girl's flashing eyes turned upon Frank Richards.  
 "You coward!" she breathed.  
 "Molly!"  
 "You brute!"  
 "Dash it all, it was a fair fight, Molly," exclaimed Bob Lawless, "and your brother started it!"  
 But Molly did not heed.  
 "Coward!" she repeated. "Brute!"  
 "Molly," muttered Frank wretchedly, "I never wanted to touch him! He will tell you himself that he forced me—"  
 "Yes, because you insulted me!" exclaimed Molly Lawrence. "That was why! You deserved it! It is shameful!"  
 "But I never did, Molly!"  
 "Don't speak to me! Come away, Tom!"  
 "Look here, don't you interfere, Molly!" said Tom Lawrence sturdily. "It was a fair fight, and Richards got the best of it. Next time I'm going to get the best of it. I'm going to thrash him for writing that letter, if I get a licking every day for a whole term!"  
 "I've written no letter!" said Frank. "I don't even know what you mean!"  
 "I dare say you're ashamed of it now," said Lawrence.  
 "I tell you—" shouted Frank.  
 "Go ahead!" said Lawrence bitterly. "You can bully now! I can't lift a finger. Go ahead!"  
 "That's unfair, and you know it!" said Frank, calming himself. "I tell you both—"  
 "That's enough!"  
 Lawrence turned away to bathe his face in the creek, his sister going with him. Frank Richards put on his jacket, and looked round at the lowering faces of the Cedar Creek fellows. He saw in almost every face that he was condemned.  
 "I'd like you fellows to know that it's all a mistake, somehow," he said. "I've never written a letter to Molly Lawrence in my life! Why should I write to her when I see her every day but Sundays?"  
 "Molly's word is good enough for us!" said Dawson curtly.  
 "Quite good enough!" chimed in Chunky Todgers. "I'm shocked at you, Richards! I am really, you know! What was it you wrote?"  
 "Nothing, you fat fool!" shouted Frank. Chunky shook his head solemnly.  
 "Molly's got the letter," he answered. "I saw her take it out of her pocket and read it. She wouldn't show it to me. But she's got it."  
 "Come on, Frank!" said Beauclerc. "You must do something to your face before you go in."  
 Frank Richards nodded and left the glade with his chums.  
 It was little enough that could be done to his face. After all that could be done it showed very plainly the marks of the combat, though it was not so bad as Lawrence's.  
 It was pretty certain that Miss Meadows' eyes would be upon both of them when they returned to the lumber school. In a case of slight damage Miss Meadows knew how to be judiciously blind, being aware that boys would be boys, and that a little "scrap" generally meant no harm. But the present case was rather more serious.  
 Frank Richards and Lawrence were both among the number of the Cedar Creek fellows who stayed at the lumber school for dinner, and when they went into the dining-room, Miss Meadows, who was at

the head of the table, glanced at them very severely.  
 She made no remark for the present, however, but her expression showed that the matter was to be inquired into later.  
 After dinner Frank Richards went out with his friends, feeling very limp and restless. The fight had told severely upon him, though he had finished the victor.  
 "Feeling bad?" asked Bob Lawrence sympathetically.  
 "Rotten!" answered Frank.  
 "I'm afraid there's going to be trouble with Miss Meadows," said Beauclerc uneasily. "She can't pass this over. Frank, have you really no idea what it's all about?"  
 Frank Richards shook his head.  
 "Not the least!" he answered.  
 "You haven't written any letter to Molly?" asked Bob.  
 "I've said I haven't!" exclaimed Frank angrily. "Are you beginning to think the same as the rest?"  
 "Easy does it, old scout. Don't quarrel with your pals," answered Bob soothingly. "It beats me hollow. If Molly says she's had a letter, she's had a letter right enough."  
 "Not from me!"  
 "She thinks it's from you, then. And she knows your fist well enough—she sees it every day in class. It beats me to a frazzle!"  
 And Bob Lawless shook his head hopelessly. His faith in his cousin and chum was being put to a very severe test.  
 As for the rest of the lumber school, there was no doubt as to their opinion. When Frank came in to afternoon classes grim looks were given him on all sides—from girls as well as boys. He was condemned by all excepting his chums. Even the junior classes of Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd looked over towards Frank with disapproving looks. Frank's handsome face—not so handsome now—were a rather dogged expression. But for the faith of his two loyal chums he would have felt very bitter indeed.  
 Miss Meadows came into the school-room, looking unusually stern. Lessons did not begin at once. Frank Richards and Tom Lawrence were called out before the class.  
 "You two boys have been fighting?" asked Miss Meadows sharply.  
 "Yes, ma'am."  
 "I understood that you were friends," said the schoolmistress. "Yet, to judge by your looks, you have been fighting in a savage manner. I require to know the cause of this."  
 The two schoolboys were silent.  
 "I will ask you first, Richards," said Miss Meadows very quietly. "For what reason have you quarrelled so bitterly with Lawrence?"  
 "I haven't quarrelled with him, Miss Meadows," answered Frank.  
 "Then it is your fault, Lawrence?"  
 "I don't mean that, Miss Meadows," exclaimed Frank hastily. "We—we had a row. Lawrence thinks—"  
 "Well?"  
 "I don't mind telling you, ma'am," said Frank, his cheeks flushing. "In fact, I'd like you to know, so that you can find out what's happened, if you care to. Everybody's down on me for what I'm supposed to have done, and I don't even know what it is!"  
 Lawrence's lip curled, but he did not speak. Miss Meadows glanced sharply from one to the other.  
 "I shall certainly inquire very closely into this," she exclaimed. "Lawrence, what is it you accuse Richards of?"

"He can tell you, if he chooses," answered Lawrence.  
 "Very well; tell me, Richards. If you have committed no fault you need not object to telling me."  
 "I don't object at all, Miss Meadows. Lawrence thinks I've written to his sister—"  
 "I know you have!" interjected Lawrence.  
 "That's not true!"  
 "I've seen the letter!"  
 "That's not true, either, as I've never written—"  
 "Be silent, both of you!" exclaimed Miss Meadows. "If Richards has written to your sister, Lawrence, what does it matter, as they are friends?"  
 "He knows what rot he wrote!" growled Tom.  
 "I did not write!" shouted Frank.  
 "Oh, you deny it now, of course!" said Tom Lawrence, with a sneer. "It's your own fault, though, if Miss Meadows knows. I wasn't going to say a word."  
 "I shall certainly know the whole matter," said Miss Meadows. "Do you mean to say, Lawrence, that there is some offence in a letter written by Frank Richards to your sister?"  
 "He knows," answered Tom doggedly. "Is the letter in existence now?"  
 "Yes."  
 "It can't be!" said Frank. "I repeat that I've never written—"  
 "Your sister has the letter, Lawrence?" asked Miss Meadows, motioning Frank Richards to be silent.  
 "Yes, ma'am."  
 Miss Meadows glanced towards the breathless class.  
 "Molly, you have a letter written to you by Frank Richards, which is the cause of this quarrel?"  
 "Yes, Miss Meadows," answered Molly quietly.  
 "Bring it to me at once."  
 "Very well."  
 There was a breathless hush as Molly Lawrence went out before the class, taking a letter from her pocket as she did so. Frank Richards stared at her blankly. As he saw her hand the letter to Miss Meadows he began to wonder whether he was dreaming.

The 5th Chapter. Condemned!

Miss Meadows took the letter from Molly's hand.  
 All eyes were fixed upon her face as she quietly unfolded it and glanced over it.  
 The schoolmistress' brows knitted as she read.  
 "Richards!"  
 "Yes, ma'am?" faltered Frank.  
 "How dared you write this?"  
 Frank Richards felt as if his head were turning round.  
 "Write that!" he repeated. "I—I didn't! I've never seen it before."  
 "Silence! I will read this letter out to the class, as the matter has become so public," said Miss Meadows. "I desire that all Cedar Creek should know what to think of a boy who could write such a letter to a good and self-respecting girl such as I know Molly to be."  
 There was deep silence in the school-room as Miss Meadows read. Frank Richards listened like a fellow in a dream. The letter ran—audible in every corner of the big school-room, as Miss Meadows read in her clear voice:  
 "Molly Lawrence,—I'm fed up—fed right up—with your running after me as you do. I haven't cared to say so, but

it's getting too tiresome. A fellow wants some of his time to himself, and doesn't want to be always having girls hanging after him. I don't want to be brutal, but that's how it stands. Give some other fellow the glad eye, and give me a rest."  
 "F. R."  
 It seemed to Frank Richards that he was dreaming, a hideous dream, as he listened to that string of offensive brutalities. That was the letter—the letter he was believed to have written! He stood dumb, his face quite pale—while Molly's was crimson, and Tom Lawrence was gritting his teeth.  
 Bob Lawless jumped to his feet, and ran out before the class, his sunburnt face furious.  
 "It's not true!" he shouted. "Not a word of it! Frank never wrote that—he couldn't! Only a beastly cad and worm could have written such a letter, and Frank didn't—he couldn't!"  
 "He couldn't!" exclaimed Beauclerc. "Miss Meadows, it's impossible!"  
 "You are evidently unacquainted with this boy's true character," said Miss Meadows. "I am sure you were no parties to his conduct."  
 "Frank couldn't do it!" shouted Bob. "He's always respected Molly, as we all do. He would rather have been hanged than write such a letter. Molly, how could you think—"  
 "It's in his fist!" growled Tom Lawrence. "It's full of lies—you all know it's all lies—and Frank Richards wrote every lie there!"  
 Frank panted for breath.  
 "In his fist!" repeated Bob, taken aback. "It's got his initials at the end, you mean. That's all."  
 "It's written in his hand," said Molly. "I couldn't have believed it otherwise."  
 Frank Richards found his voice.  
 "It's not true," he said huskily. "Molly, how could you believe I'd be such a cad—such a coward, as to write that! I never did. I'd never heard a word of it before."  
 The girl gave him a sad glance.  
 "I wish I could believe you," she answered. "But it's in your hand."  
 "It isn't! It can't be! You're mistaken!"  
 "That is enough, Richards!" broke in Miss Meadows sternly. "You need not add miserable falsehoods to your offence."  
 "Miss Meadows, let me see the letter!"  
 The schoolmistress handed him the letter with a cold, contemptuous look. Frank stared at it, and Bob and Vere Beauclerc looked at it, and then they stepped back without a word. For the letter was in Frank Richards' handwriting—the clean, neat, handsome handwriting that was well known at Cedar Creek, and had often been remarked upon. Every turn and trick of his writing was there, and it was impossible to believe that it was not Frank Richards' pen that had traced the words.  
 Frank stood dumbfounded.  
 For a moment his brain swam, and he wondered whether in some moment of aberration he could possibly have written that cruel, insulting letter. There was a deep murmur from the class—a murmur of anger and scorn.  
 Frank looked round with a haggard face, and he almost staggered as he saw that his chums' looks were averted. His eyes sought Miss Meadows' face, to read only stern condemnation there.  
 "Richards—" the schoolmistress was beginning.  
 Frank panted.  
 "I—I— Believe me, I—"  
 "You need say no more, Richards. How to deal with you I scarcely know. This is a very painful shock to me."  
 "I—"  
 "For the present, Richards, you may leave the school-room. I must consider how to deal with you. You may go home now."  
 "I—I—" muttered Frank.  
 "Go, please!"  
 Miss Meadows' hand pointed towards the door. Frank Richards cast a last look round, but his chums did not meet his glance; and then, with slow and faltering steps, the unhappy boy tottered from the school-room.

THE END.

**IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN**

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**FOR NEXT MONDAY!**

The next grand, complete story of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood is entitled

**"SCHOOL versus CAPTAIN!"**  
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Next week's cricket article is called

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This first-class cricketer makes a plea

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