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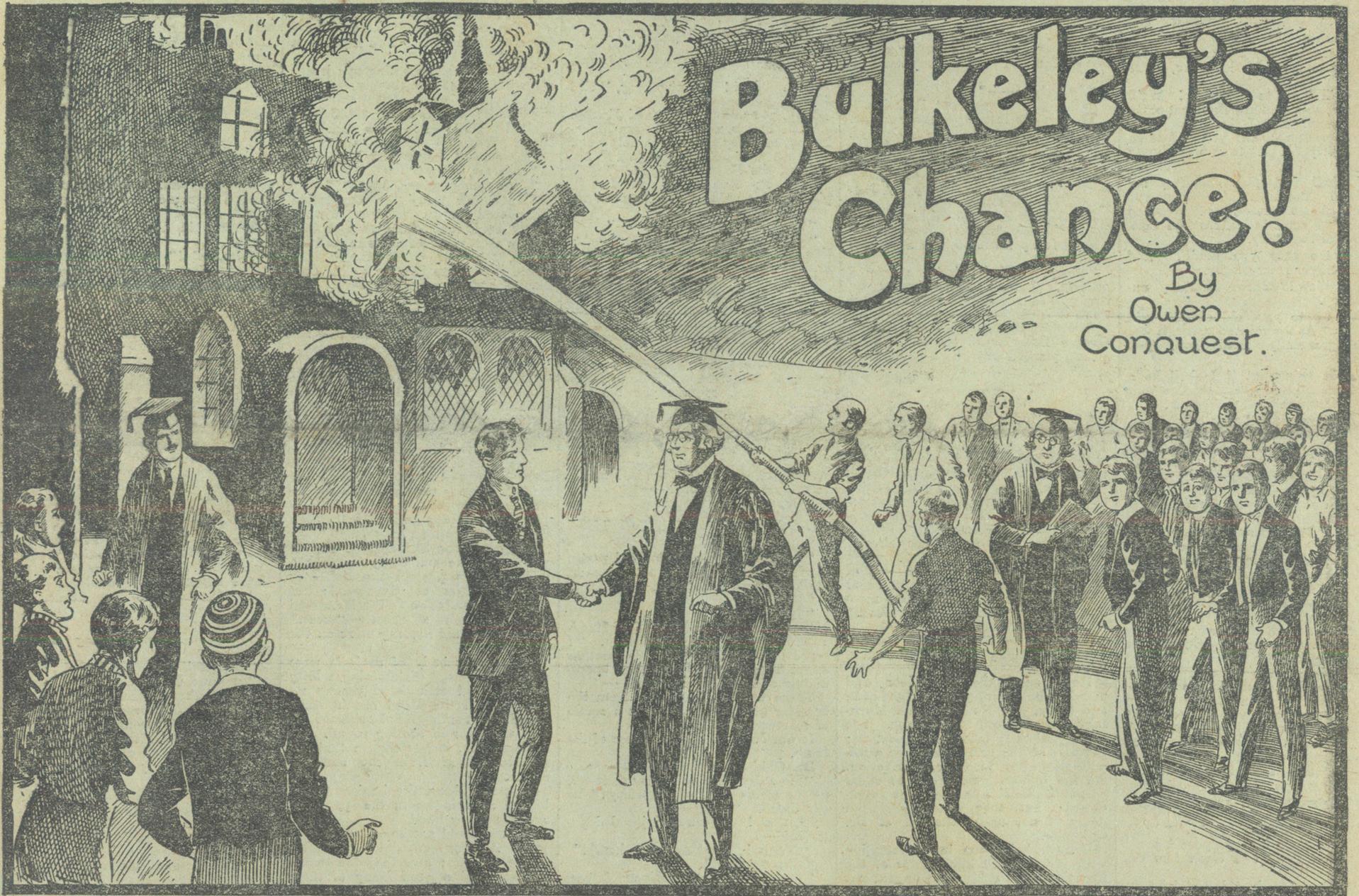
TWELVE PAGES!

The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1d} _{1/2}

No. 941. Vol. XIX. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending June 21st, 1919.



RECONCILED AT LAST!

"It is owing to you that no lives have been lost this night!" said the Head, holding out his hand, frankly. "To-morrow, Bulkeley, I request you to resume your old position in the school. You will not refuse, I am sure."
"I—I shall be glad, sir!" stammered Bulkeley, shaking hands with the Head mechanically.

The 1st Chapter.

Nice for Raby!

"Raby's the man!"
"Yes, rather!"
George Raby of the Classical Fourth looked doubtful.
"You—you see—" he began.
"You're the man!" said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "It will be all right, Raby. We shall be there to back you up."
"Yes. But—"
"The Head won't eat you!" remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.
"I know he won't; but he may jolly well give me a licking," said Raby. "I don't want to be licked!"
"My dear chap," said Newcome, in a tone of patient remonstrance, "your personal wishes don't count at a time like this!"
"Ass!" said Raby.
"Now, look here, old chap—" began Jimmy Silver & Co. in chorus.

The Fistical Four had been in council in the end study, and they had come to a decision—at least, three of them had. Raby did not seem enthusiastic.
"I think it's up to Jimmy, as captain of the Fourth!" said Raby. "I shouldn't mind, of course—ahem!—but I really think that!"
Jimmy Silver shook his head. "I'd take the lead, like anything," he said. "But you're the man, you see!"
"I don't see!"
The door of the end study opened, and Mornington of the Fourth looked in.
"You fellows ready for the giddy deputation to the Head?" he asked.
"Nearly," said Jimmy Silver. "We're talking to Raby. He doesn't want to be spokesman, for some reason."
"Jolly good reason, I think!"

hooted Raby. "Suppose the Head cuts up rusty—" "Likely enough!" remarked Mornington.
"Well, then, the spokesman is likely to get it in the neck, isn't he?"
"I shouldn't wonder!"
"I say, Mornny can be spokesman," said Raby. "Mornny's the man! I resign in his favour!"
"I'm ready!" said Mornington at once. "Only—" "Only!" snorted Raby. "I knew there'd be an 'only' or a 'but.'" "Mornny's no good," said Jimmy Silver. "It's up to you, Raby. It was on your account that the Head came down on old Bulkeley, and pushed him out of the captaincy, and stopped his being a prefect. It was your fault—" "How was it my fault?" hooted Raby.
"Well, it was because Bulkeley

gave you a thumping licking, and the Head thought he'd laid it on too thick."
"You—you silly ass! Did I ask Bulkeley to give me a thumping licking?"
"You wander from the point, old scout!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "Whether you asked for it or not, you got it, and the Head caught Bulkeley at it, and was down on him. That was the beginning of the trouble."
"I know it was. But—" "And it's up to us to stop it," said Jimmy. "All the prefects have gone on strike in support of Bulkeley, and things are going from bad to worse. Of course, prefects don't matter to us. But the fags of the Second and Third want keeping in order."
"Hear, hear!"
"Besides, Carthew of the Sixth is the only prefect now, and he's a

beastly bully. If Bulkeley were made head prefect again, he would keep Carthew in order, as he used to."
"Tain't our business!" grunted Raby.
"That's where you make a mistake; it is! The present state of affairs can't go on—and the Head can't stop it, and the Sixth can't stop it; so it is up to the Fourth—that's us!"
"Little us!" grinned Mornington.
"It was on your account, Raby, that—" "Oh, I've had all that!" grunted Raby.
"I tell you it was on your account that—" "It was Putty's fault! Putty laid the booby-trap that Bulkeley pitched into me for—" "But it was you got the licking, not Teddy Grace, and that licking was the cause of the Head dropping"
(Continued on next page.)

BULKELEY'S CHANCE!

(Continued from the previous page.)

gains
on Bulkeley. Now, if a deputation of the juniors goes to the Head, and asks for Bulkeley to be reinstated, the Head may take it as cheek—

"He will," growled Raby.

"The Head means well," said Jimmy. "He thought he was standing up for justice and so forth, when he downed Bulkeley—owing to you getting that thumping licking on Puffy's account. Bulkeley was a bit too previous, and he was to blame—but not so much as the Head thought. Now, you were the injured party, Raby."

"I was!" said Raby reminiscently. "I was!"

"So, you see, as the injured party, you place yourself at the head of the deputation to ask for Bulkeley to be reinstated. That will show the Head that he's made a mistake—see? If the injured party himself speaks up for Bulkeley, that ought to make it all right. I believe the Head's getting tired of affairs as they are now, and it may give him the excuse he wants to put Bulkeley up again, and let the matter drop."

"It may give him an excuse for laying into me with his cane, more likely!"

"You'll have to risk that! We'll be there, too, and we shall get some of the cane. But I think the Head may be reasonable if you put it to him nicely in a few well-chosen words."

"I shall feel like choosing my words—I don't think—with the Head's gimlet eyes on me!" groaned Raby. "I shall feel more like bolting out of the study."

"I'll see that you don't!" said Jimmy Silver reassuringly.

"Oh, blow!" answered Raby ungratefully.

"It's up to you, old chap!" said Lovell. "As the injured party, it will come gracefully from you, you know."

"Looks to me as if I shall be a still more injured party by the time we get through with the Head!"

"Oh, never mind that!"

"But I do mind!" howled Raby.

"Buck up!" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "Think of giddy old Horatius at the bridge—"

"Bother Horatius!"

"Then none were for a party—then all were for the State!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's how it is now! Then out spake brave Horatius, you know! Just put yourself in his place—"

"You put yourself in his place!" suggested Raby.

"Erroll and Conroy looked in, over Mornington's shoulder.

"Ready?" asked Conroy.

"Yes, we're coming. Got all the fellows together?"

"Nearly all the Fourth, Modern and Classical," answered the Australian junior. "Even Tubby Muffin has joined up! Who's spokesman?"

"Raby! As the injured party—"

"I think Conroy ought to be spokesman," said Raby. "As a Colonial, he's suitable to take the lead."

"I'm your man, if you like!" said Conroy at once.

"Oh, are you?" said Raby. "Well, you could do it, I suppose I could do it, and I will! I don't like the job, though."

"We have to do a lot of jobs we don't like in this world," said Jimmy Silver. "Think of Nelson—"

"Blow Nelson!"

"And Oliver Cromwell—"

"Bother Oliver Cromwell! Is this a meeting to hear you spout history-class bosh at us, Jimmy Silver?"

"I'm calling to your mind the giddy heroes of ancient times, to buck you up!" said Jimmy Silver. "Think of—"

"For goodness' sake, let's get going!" exclaimed Raby. "I'd rather face the Head's cane than Jimmy's chin! Come on!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And the heroes of the Fourth started from the end study. In the passage outside there was a large assembly—nearly all the Fourth Form and a sprinkling of the Shell and the Third. Bulkeley, the fallen captain of Rookwood, was popular with nearly all the juniors, and fellows had joined up on all sides to support Jimmy Silver's scheme of a deputation to the Head.

The army of juniors marched down the big staircase, with the Fistical Four in the lead.

Raby was not looking happy.

He was quite as much concerned about "old Bulkeley" as any other fellow at Rookwood; but he had great misgivings when he thought of facing the Head and talking to him on the subject. He felt that he was

not likely to put it into a few well-chosen words, as Jimmy Silver suggested. His words were only too likely to be ill-chosen, under the sharp eyes of Dr. Chisholm—with the cane handy.

But he had made up his mind to do it now.

As the "army" marched down the broad corridor towards the Head's study, Bulkeley and Neville, of the Sixth, met them in full career. There was a general halt, as Bulkeley held up his hand.

"What is this game?" demanded Bulkeley.

"Deputation to the Head," answered Jimmy Silver.

"You young donkeys!"

"Oh!"

"You'd better cut off!" said Bulkeley.

"It's on your account," said Mornington.

"My account?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"Yes; we're going to ask the Head to reinstate you."

Bulkeley frowned.

"Don't be a young ass!" he exclaimed. "Don't do anything of the sort! You're not to use my name at all."

"Look here—"

"Cut off!" rapped out Bulkeley.

The juniors looked at one another. This could not be called grateful, on the part of the late captain of Rookwood. Possibly so great a man as the head of the Sixth was not pleased at having his cause taken up by fags of the Fourth Form.

But Jimmy Silver stood his ground. When "Uncle James, of Rookwood," had made up his mind, the thing was settled.

"Sorry, Bulkeley," he answered politely, "I don't like to remind you that you're not a prefect now. But there it is—and we're going on."

And the army marched on, leaving George Bulkeley of the Sixth with quite a peculiar expression on his face.

The 2nd Chapter. Not a Success.

"Come in!"

Jimmy Silver had tapped at the Head's door, and the deep voice from within did not, somehow, sound reassuring in the ears of the juniors.

Some of them showed a disposition to execute a strategic movement towards the rear. Tubby Muffin disappeared round a corner.

But Jimmy Silver did not falter.

"Come on!" he said. "You six come in with me—and the rest of you stay in the passage, and cheer when you hear Bulkeley's name mentioned. That will impress the Head."

"Right-ho!" said Oswald.

"I—I say—" murmured Raby.

"Keep smiling!" answered Jimmy Silver.

He opened the study-door and marched boldly in, followed by Lovell and Raby, and Newcome and Mornington, and Erroll and Conroy. The seven juniors formed the deputation; the rest of the army remained without—somewhat to their satisfaction. All the fellows were ready to cheer when Bulkeley's name was mentioned; but they really preferred doing it not under the eye of Dr. Chisholm.

Dr. Chisholm was in conversation with Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, in the study, and he was not looking amiable. The "strike" of the prefects had caused the Head a great deal of worry—and the appointment of prefects from the Fifth Form had proved a hopeless failure. The Head was probably not in a mood to be trifled with just now, and his eyes glittered a little as they were turned on the junior deputation.

"What is this?" he exclaimed sharply. "What does this mean? What do you want here, Silver?"

Mr. Bootles blinked at the juniors over his glasses. He was as puzzled as the Head.

"If you please, sir—" began Jimmy Silver meekly.

"Kindly state what you have come here for, Silver."

"We—we're a deputation, sir."

"What!" ejaculated the Head.

"A—a deputation from the Lower School, sir—"

"Is this impertinence, Silver?"

"Nunno! Not at all!" Jimmy pinched Raby's arm. "Go it, you duffer!" he whispered.

Raby gasped.

"If—if if you please, sir—" he began.

"What nonsense is this?"

"We—we're a deputation, sir," gasped Raby.

"Nonsense!"

"We've come to—to ask you, sir, to reinstate Bulkeley as head prefect and captain of the school—"

"What!" thundered the Head,

"Hurrah!" came from the passage. Bulkeley's name had been mentioned, and the juniors outside had chimed in, to do their bit, as it were. Dr. Chisholm jumped as he heard the roar. The cheer was, perhaps, a little premature.

"We—we—we—" stammered Raby.

"Raby!"

"As the injured party," whispered Jimmy.

"As the injured party, sir—" mumbled Raby.

"It being on my account that Bulkeley was dismissed—"

"It being on my account that Bulkeley was dismissed!" gasped the unhappy spokesman.

"Hurrah!" from the passage.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the Head.

"I feel it my duty to come here as spokesman of the deputation—" whispered Jimmy in Raby's ear.

"I—I feel it my duty to come here as spokesman—I—I mean spokesman—of a—a—a what, Jimmy?"

"Deputation, fathead!" whispered Jimmy.

"Deputation, fathead!" gasped Raby.

"Oh, my hat!"

"What—what—what did you say?" stammered the Head. "What—what—what expression did you apply to me, Raby?"

"Oh, dear! N-n-nothing, sir! Jimmy, you ass—"

"Oh, you duffer!" groaned Jimmy.

"The fact is, sir—" began Mornington, as Raby stammered helplessly.

"That will do, Mornington!" exclaimed the Head. "Boys—"

"Go it, Raby!" hissed Lovell, pinching his unfortunate chum's arm.

"Yow-ow!"

"Raby! How dare you—"

"We—we've come here as a deputation, sir," stammered Raby. "As the injured Bulkeley—"

"Hurrah!"

"I—I mean, as the injured party, sir, I feel it my deputation—I mean, my duty, to—to come here as—as an injured party!" floundered Raby.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"And as—as an injured party, sir," gasped Raby, "we, the Fourth Form of Rookwood, request you to—to—"

"Reinstate!" whispered Jimmy.

"To reinstate Bulkeley—"

"Hurrah!"

"As prefect of Rookwood—I mean, as captain of prefect—that is, I mean, as prefect of the school—"

"Oh, you ass!"

"I—I—I mean—that is, as Bulkeley is an injured party—"

"Hurrah!"

"I mean as I am an injured party, I feel it my duty to reinstate Bulkeley as a deputation—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" thundered the Head, rising to his feet in great wrath. "I repeat, silence! If there is another sound from the corridor, I shall immediately cane every boy there—"

There was another sound from the corridor at once; but it was a sound of scampering feet.

It was followed by the silence of the tomb.

Dr. Chisholm picked up his cane.

"How dare you come to my study, to enact this scene of absurdity?" he exclaimed. "Raby—"

"Oh, sir! As—as an injured deputation—"

"Silence! Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"But, sir—" began Jimmy Silver, in dismay.

"Silence! I shall cane every boy in the study," said the Head. "This

absurd impertinence must be put down with a severe hand."

"Oh!"

"Hold out your hand, Raby!"

"Oh, dear!" mumbled Raby.

He held out his hand. There was nothing else to be done. It was only too clear that the Head was not in a mood to listen to words—even well-chosen ones.

Swish, swish, swish, swish!

For some minutes there was a steady sound of swishing in the Head's study, as the hapless deputation "went through it."

When the infliction was finished, Dr. Chisholm pointed to the door with his cane.

"Leave my study!" he said.

"But, sir—" began Jimmy Silver, as he rubbed his hands.

"Do you desire a further caning, Silver?" thundered the Head.

"Nunno, sir!"

"Then leave my study at once!"

And Jimmy Silver left.

In the passage, as the door closed upon them, the deputation looked at one another, and rubbed their hands, with feelings almost too deep for words.

"Ow!" murmured Lovell.

"You ass, Raby!" said Jimmy Silver witheringly. "You mucked it all up!"

"It didn't want mucking up; it was all rot from the beginning, like all your stunts!" groaned Raby. "Ow! My hands! You're a silly ass, Jimmy Silver! Ow! You're a burbling idiot! Wow!"

"Yow-ow!" murmured Newcome.

"You thumping ass, Jimmy!"

Slowly and sadly the deputation meandered away. Even Jimmy Silver could not claim that it had been a success. And as he rubbed his hands, the captain of the Fourth found it hard to live up to his own maxim, and "keep smiling."

The 3rd Chapter.

A Case of Smoke Without Fire!

"Yow-ow-ow!"

Thus Tubby Muffin.

The fat Classical came along the Fourth Form passage, squeezing his fat hands and uttering sounds of woe.

"Shurrup!" called out Jimmy Silver.

"Wow-wow!"

The Fistical Four were chatting in the passage on the subject of cricket. It was the day following the deputation to the Head, and the subject of the deputation had been dropped by common consent.

Jimmy Silver had averred that it was up to the end study to make a finish of the present unsatisfactory state of affairs at Rookwood; but since the deputation to the Head had ended in such a ghastly "frost," Jimmy had said nothing more on the subject.

The august body of prefects were still "on strike," maintaining a lofty and dignified attitude of passive resistance, till the Head should come round. But the Head showed no sign whatever of coming round.

Meanwhile, it was certain that the school suffered from the state of affairs.

Fags slid down the banisters, and kicked up shindies in the passages, almost as they liked.

Masters could not be everywhere at once. A great many duties had fallen to the prefects; now they fell to the masters, and a good many of them were left undone.

Carthew, the only prefect who refused to join in the strike, was "cut"

by the rest of the Sixth, and very considerably "checked" by the juniors.

The Fistical Four, indeed, were at open war with Carthew, who, prefect as he was, found it rather too difficult to deal with Jimmy Silver & Co., having no support from the other seniors. Even fags of the Third would take the liberty of yelling opprobrious epithets through Carthew's door and bolting.

Tubby Muffin squeezed his fat hands and blinked at the Fistical Four reproachfully, evidently in expectation of sympathy.

"I've had a fearful licking, Jimmy!" he said pathetically.

"I dare say you wanted one," answered Jimmy.

"It was that beast Carthew!" groaned Tubby Muffin. "I simply went to his study to take him lines—he'd given me lines, the beast! He was smoking—"

"Nice prefect!" grunted Lovell.

"I suppose he was waxy at a fellow catching him smoking!" groaned Tubby. "He pitched into me. Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Jimmy Silver knitted his brows.

"Dash it all, that's too thick!" he said. "Carthew's a beastly bully; and he's no right to smoke. As a prefect, he ought to be setting us a good example."

"Catch him!" snorted Lovell.

"Sure he was smoking, Tubby?" asked Jimmy.

"He had a cigarette in his mouth, and there was no end of smoke in the study," said Tubby. "I saw fags in the grate, too. The beast smokes no end. Yow-ow! And he pitched into me just because I saw him."

"Smoke in the study!" repeated Jimmy.

"Yes, lots!"

Jimmy Silver's eyes glistened.

"What have you got in your noddle, fathead?" asked Raby. "A rag on Carthew?"

"Well, not exactly a rag," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "If there's smoke in Carthew's study, it looks as if the study must be on fire."

"Tubby says he was smoking."

"But we have a right to suppose that a prefect of the Sixth wouldn't smoke," said Jimmy Silver calmly.

"Taking it for granted that Carthew is incapable of breaking the rule—as we've a right to do—it stands to reason that his study must be on fire, if it's full of smoke."

"What the thump—"

"If Carthew's study is on fire, we're bound to roll up at once, and put out the conflagration," said Jimmy Silver.

"Carthew is a beast, but I suppose you wouldn't leave even Carthew to be burned to death."

"Wha-a-at?"

"Carthew's study being on fire it is—"

"But it isn't!" shrieked Lovell.

"It must be, if it's full of smoke, unless Carthew's smoking, and we've a right to refuse even to suspect him of smoking. Therefore, his study is on fire. Luckily, there are the fire-buckets at the end of the Sixth-Form passage, all ready in case of fire. Come on!"

"Where?" howled Lovell.

"To Carthew's study."

"What for?"

"To put out the fire."

"But there isn't a fire."

"My dear man, we're going to put it out, whether there is or not. If Carthew is not satisfied, he can explain to the Head how there came to be smoke in his study."

"Oh! Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell.

"I see!"

"Time you did, old chap."

"He, he, he!" cackled Tubby Muffin.

Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded downstairs to the Sixth-Form quarters, to act as an amateur fire-brigade. As Jimmy declared, they had a right to suppose that Carthew's study was on fire, if it was thick with smoke. They were going to exercise that right.

"But—but there'll be a row if we swamp Carthew's study with water," murmured Raby.

"Rot! It's our duty. Carthew won't complain to the Head."

"But the other prefects—"

"There aren't any other prefects now."

"My hat! I forgot that!" grinned Raby.

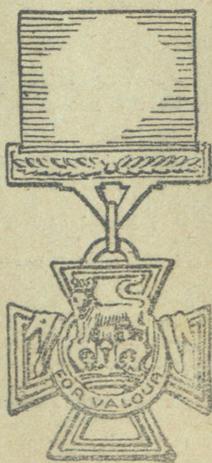
"There's some advantage in having no prefects," observed Jimmy Silver. "The Sixth can't interfere with us. This way!"

The Fistical Four scudded along the Sixth-Form passage to the row of little red fire-buckets. There was a tap round the corner, and the chums of the Fourth were filling the buckets, when Lonsdale and Jones major of the Sixth came along.

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"Chuck that!" said Lonsdale. "None of your fag tricks here!" Jimmy Silver looked at him. "May I respectfully inquire who you are?" he asked politely. Lonsdale reddened. He had forgotten for the moment that a prefect on strike was no longer an authoritative person.

"Look here—" he began. "Don't you chip in," said Jimmy Silver chidingly. "I should be sorry to chuck a bucket of water over you, Lonsdale!"

"What?" roared the Sixth-Former. "But I jolly well will, if you chip in! Besides, these buckets are put here to be used in case of fire. Do you want Carthew to be burned to death?"

"Is Carthew's study on fire?" exclaimed Jones major, in astonishment.

"There's smoke in it, anyhow; so it must be. How could there be smoke in it if it isn't on fire?"

The two Sixth-Formers grinned and walked on. It was not their business to interfere; they were not prefects.

Four juniors, each bearing a bucket of water, moved along to Carthew's study.

Jimmy Silver turned the handle, and threw the door open suddenly.

There was an angry exclamation within the study. Mark Carthew was there, sprawling in his armchair, with his feet on the table, and a cigarette between his lips.

The bully of the Sixth was taking his ease in his study; and he had certainly smoked a good many cigarettes, for the atmosphere of the study was quite hazy.

"What—" he began angrily. "Go it!" shouted Jimmy.

Carthew leaped to his feet as the Fistical Four rushed in with swamping fire-buckets.

Swoooooosh!
"Yoooooop!"

A flood of water deluged the Sixth-Former from head to foot. It swamped upon him from four buckets at once, choking him and blinding him. Carthew staggered back, spluttering wildly, and sat down in the fender with a crash.

"Yurrrrrggghh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Shall we get some more water, Carthew?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

"Gurrrrrgghh!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"

Carthew scrambled to his feet. He gouted the water from his eyes, and stood panting, dripping, and furious.

"You—you—you young scoundrels! I'll report this to the Head! I'll have you flogged! I'll—"

"Have us flogged for putting out the fire in your study!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in pained surprise.

"You young rascal, there's no fire here, and you know it—"

"Where does the smoke come from, then?"

"Wha-a-t!"

Carthew had seized his ashplant, and was striding towards the juniors, when Jimmy asked that question. He stopped suddenly.

"The—the smoke!" he repeated.

"Don't you notice the smoke?" asked Jimmy Silver sweetly. "It's quite thick, Carthew."

"You—you—you—"

"Bulkeley!" Jimmy called to the late captain of Rookwood, who was coming along to his study. "Will you look in here, Bulkeley?"

"What's the matter?"

"We want you as a witness," said Jimmy. "We've been putting out a fire in Carthew's study—"

"What?"

"And he's going to complain to the Head. We want a witness that the study really was full of smoke."

Bulkeley sniffed the smoke and frowned.

"That's tobacco smoke, you young ass," he said.

"Impossible!" said Jimmy. "A prefect of Rookwood wouldn't smoke in his study. He wouldn't dare to tell the Head so, anyhow. Come away, you fellows—the fire seems to be out. You needn't thank us, Carthew—you're quite welcome."

Carthew stood rooted to the floor, ashplant in hand. As the juniors were well aware, he dared not let the matter come before the Head. Jimmy Silver & Co. sauntered away, and hung up the fire-buckets. Bulkeley remained standing in the doorway of the study, looking at Carthew with a very expressive look.

"So you're smoking here?" he said.

"Mind your own business!" snapped Carthew. "Those young villains didn't think the study was on fire, and you know it."

"They know you can't take them before the Head, as you're breaking the rules of the school yourself," said Bulkeley contemptuously. "You've asked for this, Carthew, and it serves you right!"

He passed Bulkeley in the Sixth Form passage, and scowled at him; but Bulkeley did not give him a

"Oh, get out!"
"If I were still a prefect, I should report you myself."

"Well, you're not!" sneered Carthew. "I'm a prefect, and you're not, Bulkeley, and you're under my orders. Get out of my study!"

Bulkeley clenched his hand for a moment; but he turned quietly and walked away. Carthew kicked the door shut savagely after him. And for a long time afterwards the "blade" of the Sixth was busy with towels—what time he murmured anathemas, not loud and deep, upon the Fistical Four of the Fourth.

The 4th Chapter. Carthew Looks In.

"Bedtime, my boys!" said Mr. Bootles mildly.

The master of the Fourth blinked into the Common-room. In the days of the prefects it had been a prefect's duty to shepherd the juniors to their dormitories; but that was one of the many duties that now fell to the staff.

The Classical Fourth obediently marched out, and little Mr. Bootles walked after them, with a sigh. Mr. Bootles did not like the stairs. Carthew of the Sixth was coming downstairs, and he bestowed a dark scowl upon Jimmy Silver & Co.

Jimmy bestowed a sweet smile upon him in return.

A soft answer is said to turn away wrath; but Jimmy's sweet smile certainly failed to have that effect. Carthew made a stride towards him.

"Line up!" murmured Jimmy. Mr. Bootles blinked round.

"Dear me! Is anything the matter?" he asked. "What is it, Carthew?"

Carthew took a pink paper from his pocket and began to scan it, with a corrugated brow. His little speculations on "gee-gees" had not been fortunate of late. He glanced occasionally at the clock over his mantel-piece. He was waiting. The amateur firemen who had performed in his study that day were not to escape scot-free, if Carthew could help it; and as soon as the coast was quite clear, the prefect intended to visit them in the Fourth Form dormitory. It would be easy to explain afterwards that he had heard a disturbance there—Carthew not being a stickler for the truth. He intended to take a cane with him, and by the time he had finished with the cane, it was probable that Jimmy Silver & Co. would be sorry that they had extinguished that non-existent fire in his study.

He crumpled the pink paper in his hand and threw it angrily upon the

glance. Mark Carthew was a good deal of an outcast in his own Form now.

He went into his study and slammed the door savagely.

There he threw himself into his armchair and lighted a cigarette by way of solace.

Since Bulkeley's fall, Carthew had been a good deal more free and easy in this respect than of old. He had nothing to fear, as it was not likely that a master would drop into his study. His example was followed by the "doggish" youths among the juniors—such as Smythe & Co. of the Shell, and Towny and Toppy, Lattrey and Peele and Gower, of the Fourth. Those amiable youths found life much more free and easy without any prefects "nosin' around," as Adolphus Smythe expressed it.

Carthew took a pink paper from his pocket and began to scan it, with a corrugated brow. His little speculations on "gee-gees" had not been fortunate of late. He glanced occasionally at the clock over his mantel-piece. He was waiting. The amateur firemen who had performed in his study that day were not to escape scot-free, if Carthew could help it; and as soon as the coast was quite clear, the prefect intended to visit them in the Fourth Form dormitory. It would be easy to explain afterwards that he had heard a disturbance there—Carthew not being a stickler for the truth. He intended to take a cane with him, and by the time he had finished with the cane, it was probable that Jimmy Silver & Co. would be sorry that they had extinguished that non-existent fire in his study.

He crumpled the pink paper in his hand and threw it angrily upon the

smoke. Even then it was time for the growing fire to be stamped out, if Carthew had returned—but Carthew did not return. Little dreaming of what was happening in the study he had left, the bully of the Sixth had reached the dormitory of the Classical Fourth, and turned the handle of the door. He switched on the light and strode in, ashplant in hand.

Jimmy Silver started out of slumber and rubbed his eyes, startled by the light in the dormitory.

"What the thump—" began Jimmy drowsily.

Then he jumped, as he saw Carthew striding towards his bed.

"Carthew! What—Yaroooh!"

The ashplant came down on Jimmy Silver with a sounding whack. His yell rang through the dormitory, and awakened every other fellow there.

Jimmy rolled out of bed, but as he did so, Carthew grasped him by the back of the neck.

"Now, then, you young rascal!" said the Sixth-Former, between his teeth.

Whack, whack, whack!
"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy.

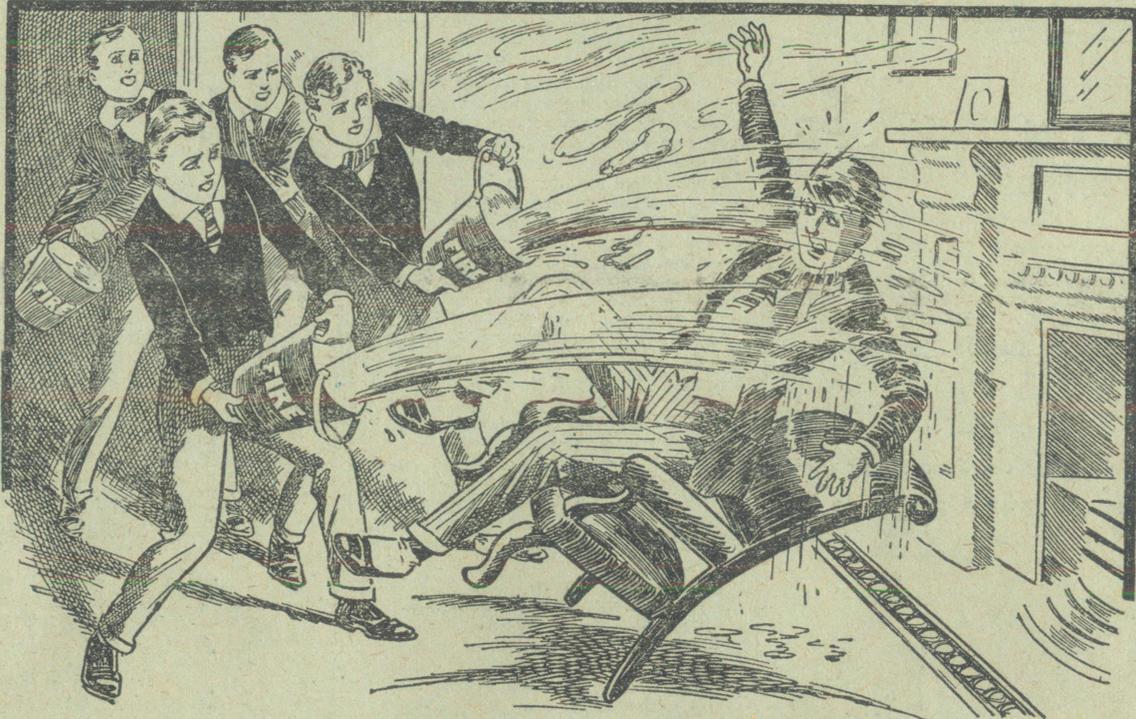
Lovell was out of bed with a bound, grasping his pillow. Raby and Newcome were only a second after him, and Mornington was next. They rushed at Carthew, brandishing pillows and bolsters.

"Stand back!" exclaimed Carthew fiercely.

"Sock it to him!" yelled Mornington.

"Pillow him!" roared Lovell.

Carthew, attacked by half a dozen swiping pillows, defended himself with his cane, letting Jimmy Silver go. Jimmy grasped his pillow at once, and joined in the attack.



PUTTING THE FIRE OUT! Swoosh! A flood of water deluged the Sixth-former. It swamped upon him from four buckets at once, choking and blinding him. He crashed into the fender with a thud. "Yurrrrrggghh!" "Want more water?" inquired Jimmy Silver.

The bully of the Sixth mumbled something, and went on his way. He had to see lights out for the Third; being the only prefect on duty. Jimmy smiled again as Carthew departed. The "blackleg" prefect never got much change out of the end study, as Jimmy remarked complacently to Lovell.

The Classical Fourth turned in, and Mr. Bootles put out the light and retired to his study. The Third went to bed rather less quietly. Carthew was in a bad temper, and he cuffed Algy Silver of the Third—and Jimmy's cousin "buzzed" a pillow at him in retort. Carthew's ashplant came into play—and so did several pillows and bolsters, although Carthew was a prefect!

Carthew quitted the dormitory by no means victorious, followed by hoots and howls from the darkness.

The Sixth-Former went down to his study with a black brow. His rank of prefect was not much use to him, when he was not treated with respect by anyone, and could only venture to "take it out" of fags who could not help themselves, like Tubby Muffin. The "strike" of the other prefects left him without support from the other seniors, and the juniors paid him little heed. Carthew attributed it chiefly to Jimmy Silver, and his feelings towards that cheery young gentleman were not pleasant.

He passed Bulkeley in the Sixth Form passage, and scowled at him; but Bulkeley did not give him a

hearthrug. Then he smoked a couple more cigarettes, while the clock-hand crawled round the dial.

When it indicated ten o'clock, Carthew threw away a half-smoked cigarette and rose to his feet, picking up his ashplant.

He turned out the light and quitted the study, and went quietly towards the staircase.

The room remained in darkness, save for a tiny red glow—the still burning end of the cigarette. Carthew had not noticed where the cigarette had fallen, in his carelessness; but it had fallen on the crumpled paper, and the paper was dry and inflammable.

The tiny red glow did not go out; it was increasing as it scorched the edge of the paper, which began to glow too.

It was an even chance whether the red ember died out or whether it burst into flame, and a draught from the door, which Carthew had left open, decided the matter.

There was a brighter glow in the darkened room as a little tongue of flame rose and flicked along the edge of the paper.

A few moments more and the paper was ablaze.

It flared up, and the fluffy rug on which it lay flared up, too, fanned by the draught from the corridor through the open doorway.

The flames licked round the armchair and caught the table-cover. The study was full of dancing light and shadow now, and thickening with

"Down him!" shouted Conroy. "Stand back!" yelled Carthew furiously.

Once more the bully of the Sixth had succeeded in awakening a hornet's nest. Nearly all the Classical Fourth were out of bed now, and scrambling over one another to swipe him with pillow or bolster. By that time, Mark Carthew probably regretted that he had made the venture.

He made a rush for the door; but it was too late. A crowd of juniors were round him, and the swiping pillows sent him spinning to the floor.

"Hurrah! He's down!" gasped Lovell.

"Keep off! You young villains—Oh, my hat! Yow-wow!" howled Carthew, as the Fourth-Formers piled on him.

"Collar him!" panted Jimmy Silver.

"We've got him!"

"Stretch him on a bed, and I'll give him his own ashplant!"

"Hurrah!"

Carthew—quite repentant now—struggled furiously, but in vain. In the grasp of a dozen hands, he was dragged to the nearest bed, and plumped upon it, face down. Then Jimmy wielded the ashplant.

Whack, whack, whack!
"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Ha, ha, ha! Go it, Jimmy!" Jimmy Silver "went it" with vigour.

Whack, whack, whack!

The 5th Chapter.

Fire!

"Neville, old chap!"
Bulkeley of the Sixth was leaning back in his chair, his hands driven deep into his pockets, and a deep line in his brow. He had been silent for some time, and Neville, who had dropped in for a chat after prep, was silent, too. He looked up as Bulkeley spoke.

"Well, old fellow?"
"This won't do!" said Bulkeley. "The prefects' strike, you mean?"

Bulkeley nodded.

"It won't do!" he repeated. "It's a rotten state of affairs for Rookwood. I'm grateful, of course, for the fellows backing me up as they've done, but—"

"I'd rather it came to an end. There must be a captain of the school, Neville—especially with the matches coming on soon. The Head's down on me—and I was partly to blame, as I've admitted. Well, if the Head won't alter his mind—and he won't do—"

"Sooner or later—" began Neville.

"He won't, Neville. I'd rather not let it go on. I'm not keen on being captain of Rookwood; excepting that I think I can do pretty well for the school. But you—"

"I'm not bagging your job," said Neville decidedly. "You've suggested that before. Nothing doing!"

"But it won't be bagging my job!" urged Bulkeley. "I'm out of it!"

"Not for good!"

"It looks as if it's for good. It's gone on a good time now. The discipline of the school is suffering—and it won't do, in many ways. Nobody in the Sixth, excepting Carthew, will put up as captain—and he's tried and failed, and was glad to chuck it up. The Head would consent to another election, if you put up, Neville—or Lonsdale, say, if you're determined. And—and I think the prefects ought to return to duty."

"And leave you in the lurch?" exclaimed Neville warmly.

"Well, I don't mind—in fact, I want them to. It's for the sake of the school," urged Bulkeley. "This can't go on!"

"It's jolly well going on till the Head sees reason!" Neville shook his head. "It's no good, Bulkeley—whether you like it or not, the Sixth are going to back you up to the last shot in the locker! The Head knows very well that he's made a mistake; but he won't admit it. Well, he will have to admit it, sooner or later. That's settled!"

Bulkeley did not answer; but the line in his brow deepened.

He was worried and distressed by the state of affairs; all the more because it was on his account. It was hard for him to find fault with the loyalty of the fellows who were backing him up; but he wished deeply that they would let him be set aside, and let affairs at Rookwood take their normal course once more.

There was silence in the study again. Neville broke it. He had sniffed once or twice, and now he rose to his feet.

"Something's burning somewhere," he said. "Do you notice it?"

Bulkeley started.

"Yes—now you mention it. I don't think there's any fires going this evening," he said. "Some ass has dropped a match on something. Look in the passage!"

Neville threw the door open and started back, with an exclamation. A volume of smoke was rolling down the corridor.

"What the dickens! It's a study on fire!" he exclaimed. "My hat! It's Carthew's study—"

He ran along the passage with Bulkeley at his heels. A rush of smoke, mingled with flame, from the study doorway drove them back.

Carthew's study was a mass of blaze.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "What—what—"

"Fire!" shouted Neville.

Doors opened on all sides, and voices called. Half a dozen of the Sixth came dashing out into the passage.

Mr. Bootles' voice was heard, high-pitched and excited.

"What—what—what—"

"Fire!"

"Bless my soul! The boys—the boys—"

"That fool Carthew!" said Bulkeley, between his teeth. "How has he done that? Where is he?"

"Fire!"

There was a roar of voices now. Bulkeley's clear tones rang above the din.

"The fire-buckets! This way! Neville, cut off and call the sergeant—the hose will be wanted! You fellows help me!"

Neville scudded away.

Bulkeley's voice calmed the confusion. The Sixth-Formers, as one man, backed him up. Buckets were filled and rushed along the passage, and the water hurled into the blazing study.

But the fire had gained a strong hold, and the water hissed and sputtered, with little effect. Furniture and floor were ablaze now, and a rush of flame drove the Rookwooders back from the doorway. Flames were creeping along the walls from the doorway, and shooting across the passage. Loud shouts from above announced that the fire had burst through the ceiling into the room over Carthew's study.

"The hose—the hose!" Mr. Bootles was shrieking frantically.

Bulkeley caught the excited Form-master by the arm.

"The fire's spreading, sir! I think we shall get it under, but all the boys must be got out of the dormitories!"

"Yes—yes!" gasped Mr. Bootles.

"I—I—I will call the Head—"

Mr. Bootles scuttled away, hardly knowing what he was doing in his excitement and confusion.

The alarm-bell was ringing now, into every corner of the great school the alarm had penetrated, and Rookwood, from end to end, rang with the cry:

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

"Silver, let me go! I—I—I'll—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

While the rest of the juniors of Rookwood were asleep in bed, there was very wide wakefulness in the dormitory of the Classical Fourth.

Carthew of the Sixth was sprawling on the floor, his wrists tied to the leg of Jimmy Silver's bed.

The unhappy prefect had been in that uncomfortable position for some time, the chuckling juniors paying no heed to his threats.

"My dear chap, you can stay there!" grinned Jimmy Silver.

"You came here to please yourself. You can stay to please us!"

"Let me go!" shrieked Carthew.

"All in good time, my pippin! You've got to beg the pardon of the Fourth Form, on your bended knees, first!" said Jimmy Silver coolly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I won't! I—I'll—I'll—"

spluttered the hapless bully of the Sixth. "I'll—I'll—"

"Then you can spend the night there!" chuckled Jimmy. "You shouldn't have come, you know. You weren't invited into this dormitory."

"I—I—I—"

"Tie a pillow over his chin, or he'll keep us awake!" suggested Mornington.

"Good egg!"

"Fire!"

That sudden shout from below silenced the chortling in the dormi-

tory. Jimmy Silver spun round towards the door.

"Hallo, what's that?" he exclaimed.

"Fire! Fire!"

"My only hat!"

Lovell ran to the door and threw it open.

A din of voices came from below, and a smell of burning, and an acrid taste of smoke.

"It's fire, right enough!" gasped Lovell. "The school's on fire! My only hat!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Tubby Muffin.

"Help!"

"Shut up, Tubby!"

"Help! Yooop! Fire! Help!" roared Tubby.

"Let me go!" shrieked Carthew.

Jimmy Silver hastily cut the prefect loose. Carthew staggered to his feet. The fire was below, and, as yet, nowhere near the dormitory; and it certainly was Carthew's duty, as a prefect of the Sixth, to think of the safety of the juniors. But he didn't! He made a rush for the door, and dashed out.

Carthew vanished from sight in a moment. But the sound of a collision came from the passage, and Bulkeley's voice:

"Carthew—"

"Let me pass, you fool!" shrieked Carthew.

"The juniors have got to be got out!"

"Let me pass!"

"You rotten funk! Get out, then, and good riddance to you!" roared Bulkeley.

Pattering footsteps died away down the passage and the stairs. The next moment Bulkeley looked into the Classical Fourth dormitory upon a sea of scared and startled faces.

"Order!" he rapped out, as two or three juniors rushed for the door. "Get into your clothes—quick! There's plenty of time to get out into the quadrangle. Don't lose your heads!"

"All serene, Bulkeley!" said Jimmy Silver quickly.

"Yarooop! Help!" came from Tubby Muffin.

"Quiet, you fat idiot!"

The Fourth-Formers dressed themselves quickly—or half-dressed. Under Bulkeley's eye, they marched out of the dormitory in order.

Down the big staircase they went, amid flying smoke. On the staircase was Neville, keeping order. Lonsdale, Jones major, and Scott were shepherding out the Shell, the Third, and the Second.

The prefects of Rookwood had taken charge, under Bulkeley's order.

Outside, in the quadrangle, the hose, handled by Sergeant Kettle, was hissing streams of water in at the window of Carthew's study.

Whether the fire would be got under before it spread over the build-

ing was still a question; but it was evidently wise to get the boys out into the safety of the quad while there was time.

Under Bulkeley's cool direction, the juniors were marched out, and stragglers were rounded up.

In a very short space of time nearly all Rookwood was in the quadrangle, and the Form-masters were calling the roll of their Forms, to ascertain that all were there.

Dr. Chishelm, with a pale but calm face, was standing by the sergeant, as he flooded water into the blaze.

Smoke, mingled with sparks, rolled skyward in dense volumes, obscuring the stars.

The fire was going under at last. The promptness with which it had been tackled had prevented a catastrophe that bade fair to rival that of the air-raid that had taken place during the war.

"Bulkeley!"

The Head spoke quietly, as a blackened, smoke-begrimed figure passed him. Bulkeley stopped, gasping.

"Yes, sir."

"Are all the boys out, Bulkeley?"

"I'm just going the rounds, sir, to make sure."

"Very good. Please let me know as quickly as possible."

"Yes, sir."

Bulkeley hurried away, with a

(Continued on page 203.)



Our Special Cricket Article

This Week:—STROKES ON THE OFF. By WILFRED RHODES.

The off-drive, when properly done, is one of the—if not the—most powerful strokes in the whole game of cricket. Then comes the hit between point and cover, and which has so often been described as a cut, but which is really half a cut and half a drive.

The square-cut comes next, and last, but not least, that lovely stroke, which requires the very minimum of effort, called the late cut.

There have been many occasions when, listening to cricketers discussing various points of the game, I have heard men say, "The shot which gives the batsman a glorious feeling of satisfaction is the leg hit, which sends the ball flying through the air to the square-leg boundary."

And it is quite likely that immediately I have played such a stroke I may have had a similar opinion; but in my quiet moments, when I can review the game in all its phases, I cannot help thinking that the offside is that part of the field where the most exhilarating and most graceful shots are made.

Taking the off-drive first, I may say it is a stroke which is not played often enough. Time after time I have looked on at quite good-class cricket, and noticed batsmen simply play forward shots when they might have driven the ball to the off boundary.

Of course, the particular delivery to hit is the one which is anything from slightly overpitched to that which is not quite a yorker, and is either in a straight line with the off stump or anywhere outside it, provided it is not too wide, but can be reached with ease.

The greatest fault which even some men of big repute make is that of not getting the left foot well up beside the bat as the hit is made. By this I mean it is frequently the habit of some men to get the left foot towards the ball, but not close enough.

Let us imagine that the right ball to hit comes along, and, if allowed to go straight through, would pass a foot and a half outside the off stump. The left foot should go as near as possible to the pitch of the ball, or, say, in a direct line from the given point, quite a foot outside the off stump.

If the foot merely goes but half-way toward the oncoming ball, at least 50 per cent. of the strength disappears from the shot, and, furthermore, the ball is likely to strike the edge of the bat instead of the middle.

When the stroke is properly made, the bat should follow through in the exact direction in which the ball has been hit; while it stands to reason that the earlier the stroke is made the

loftier will be the hit. When the ball travels all along the ground, the shot has been made at the last possible moment.

I suppose that every player who makes the off-drive one of his regular scoring strokes imagines his execution is perfect; but even while I have watched some of the best batsmen at the wicket I have witnessed that waste of strength of which I have above written.

And so I ask those of my readers

WILFRED RHODES,



the Famous Yorkshire and All-England Professional, who has written this Article especially for readers of THE BOYS' FRIEND.

who are satisfied with their own method of play to find out for themselves if they get the most out of the off-drive. Mind you, I am probably very often at fault myself.

To get a proper idea of the shot, you want to see such batsmen as R. H. Spooner and Jack Hobbs when they are hitting just the right sort of ball. Mr. Spooner is marvellously clever all round the wicket, and there is not a shot of which he is not the master. Still, there cannot be any question as to which is his favourite, and I give this as the hard off-drive.

Jack Hobbs makes this shot in such a manner that the veriest tyro can see that he gets the maximum of pleasure out of it. The freedom of the hit, as Hobbs makes it, is distinctly peculiar,

for he jumps out, and, as the bat meets the ball, his right leg gets into a sort of kneeling position high off the ground.

I have seen others play the same stroke at the half-volley just outside the off-stump; indeed, I often play it myself; but nobody I have ever seen gets quite the same amount of fulness behind it as Hobbs does.

One of the most beautiful strokes, and one which appeals to the experienced cricketer more than any other, is the cut. At one time there was only one stroke called the cut, but now we have several varieties of it, the two most important being what are termed the late cut and the square cut. I don't mind telling you that the former is very much more difficult than the latter, because, unless you play the shot perfectly, it is likely to result in a catch.

The ball which the batsman cuts is generally more or less outside the off stump, and just short of a good length. Those of good length are probably just as easy to deal with, but the majority of good batsmen nowadays prefer to let the good-length ball go by, as the slightest mistake may send the ball into the hands of one of the fieldsmen in the slips.

In making this shot the right leg is shifted so as to take the batsman across the ball; then the bat is used more or less horizontally, and not perpendicularly; and the work is done by the wrists and forearms.

The easiest ball to cut is one not too short, about twelve inches outside the off stump. Directly the batsman realises the situation, out goes his right leg, which should touch the ground at about the same moment as the bat hits the ball, or even a moment before, the two wrists moving the bat with a sort of "flicking" movement, impossible to describe, so that the ball is struck just as it has passed the right foot.

It is a stroke which must be seen to be imitated; but if all goes well that ball will travel square with the wicket, just past "point's" left hand, or even farther behind it, as a clever "cutter" can place the hit with much precision.

If the ball rises much—is a foot higher than the wicket, for instance—it should be left severely alone, as a catch is very likely to ensue. The cut is one of the few strokes made across the path of the ball; in most instances bat and ball travel along the same path, but in opposite directions. It is a difficult stroke to acquire; indeed, some batsmen never get proficient at it. Of course, the later you make the shot the less square with the wicket will the ball travel.

If any one of my readers finds a difficulty in "hitting" this particular ball, let him try "guiding it," in other words, let him frame for the cut, and as the ball passes the right leg just lay the bat against it without attempting to strike. The pace imparted to the ball by the bowler will hardly be checked, and many a run may be got by the stroke, while in process of time the man who has mastered this will master the cut pure and simple as well.

W. Rhodes

ROOKWOOD PERSONALITIES

No. 1. JIMMY SILVER.

SPECIAL NEW FEATURE!

Hats off to the immortal James!
The loyal Classic leader,
Whose boyish japes, and skill at games,
Delight each ardent reader.
He plays far more amusing pranks
Than heroes in a book would;
Both now and evermore he ranks
The chosen son of Rookwood.

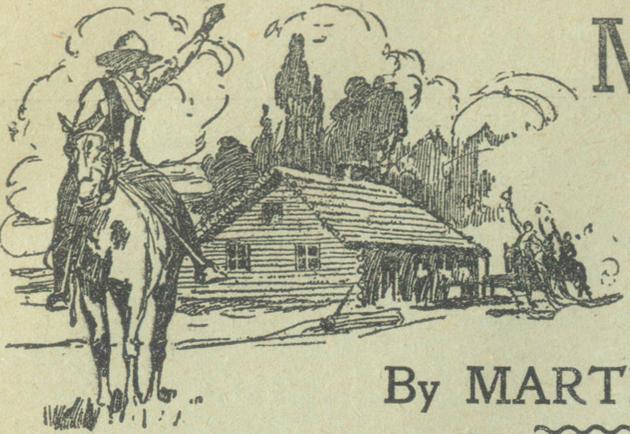
Though Harry Wharton fills the bill,
And likewise good Tom Merry;
And hosts of loyal readers still
Bow to the charms of Cherry,
It cannot be denied that when
One's spirits are at zero,
They very soon revive again,
Thanks to this Rookwood hero!

The daring japes of Tommy Dodd
Compel our admiration;
He figures as a young tin god
In some chaps' estimation.
But even Tommy Dodd is done
When Silver takes the platform;
The Fourth Form Classics are A 1.
There's nothing wrong with that Form!

And yet, despite their feuds and scrapes,
Their fierce and breathless tussles,
And all the merry fistic japes
That exercise their muscles,
The Classic chums are staunch and true,
Not merely gay and skittish;
And we're convinced they'd never do
A thing that wasn't British!

Then here's to Silver! May he rule
Within our hearts for ever!
Supreme alike in sport and school,
Courageous, swift, and clever!
And British boys are all agreed
They'd have to make a long quest,
To find such ripping yarns to read
As those of Owen Conquest!

—THE ROOKWOOD RHYMESTER.



MISSING!

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

By **MARTIN CLIFFORD.**

The 1st Chapter.

By Whose Hand?

"Here's Richards!"
"Any news, Frank?"
"Have you found Beauclerc?"
Half a dozen voices greeted Frank Richards as he jumped off his horse at the gate of Cedar Creek School.

Chunky Todgers rolled forward to hold his horse.
"Found him?" he exclaimed.
Frank Richards shook his head.
"No, Beauclerc hasn't been found yet," he answered.

"But you've come back to school?" asked Chunky.
"No; only to speak to Miss Meadows."

Frank Richards hurried through the crowd of Cedar Creek fellows to the lumber schoolhouse. Frank's cheery face had lost its brightness now. His chum, Vere Beauclerc, had been missing for twenty-four hours, and as yet not a trace of him had been discovered. Anxiety for his missing chum was weighing like lead upon Frank's heart.

Miss Meadows, the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek, met him as he came into the porch of the lumber school. She had seen him from her window.

"I am glad to see you back, Richards!" she said kindly. "I hope you have good news of Beauclerc."

"No, ma'am," answered Frank. "I haven't come to school this morning. Mr. Lawless asked me to ride over and tell you. He wants you to let off Bob and me from lessons, so that we can help in searching for Beauclerc."

Miss Meadows nodded at once.
"Certainly!" she said.
"Thank you very much, ma'am!" said Frank, in relief. "I—I don't think I could do much, anyway, while I'm worried about poor old Beau. I know something's happened to him, though I can't guess what."

"You may both remain away from school so long as Mr. Lawless requires you," said Miss Meadows kindly. "I hope you will soon be successful in finding poor Beauclerc."

"Thank you, Miss Meadows!"
Frank raised his hat to the schoolmistress and hurried back to the gates, where Chunky Todgers was holding his horse.

The school bell was ringing now, and the boys and girls were making for the schoolhouse.

"Going out?" asked Chunky, as Frank took his horse.

"Yes, Chunky. I'm off lessons for the present."

"Lucky galoot!"
Frank smiled faintly.

"I don't feel very lucky, Chunky. I'm going to help look for Beauclerc."

"I guess I'll come and help," said Chunky Todgers thoughtfully, "if Miss Meadows will let me off, too."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't be much use, Chunky."

"I guess I'll ask the schoolmarr. The fact is, I really reckon I'm the very antelope that's wanted on this job!" said Chunky Todgers confidently. "You wait a minute, and if I come back you'll know I'm coming."

Chunky Todgers rolled off towards the schoolhouse, and Frank led his horse into the trail. He waited there—rather to rest his horse than in any expectation of seeing Chunky again.

Miss Meadows was not likely to allow the fat Chunky to get out of lessons so easily as all that.

A swarthy, lithe schoolboy had remained at the gate after the rest had started for the house, and he came out to Frank in the trail. It was Ricardo Diaz, the Mexican—a new fellow at Cedar Creek, with whom Frank Richards & Co. had been on the worst of terms, until the day Frank pulled the drowning Mexican from the creek. Since that incident Frank Richards had been on very good terms with Diaz, though they had little to do with one another.

"Your amigo—Beauclerc—he has

disappeared, so the fellows say," said Diaz, fixing his black eyes curiously on Frank's face.

The English schoolboy nodded.
"It is strange!" said Diaz. "How did he disappear, mi amigo?"

"On his way to school yesterday morning," answered Frank. "So far as we can find out, Beauclerc left his horse somewhere on the trail, and the horse wandered to the plains. Billy Cook, my uncle's foreman, roped it in yesterday afternoon—riderless. Why Beauclerc left it, and what happened to him afterwards, we can't guess."

"There is no reason why he should run away?"

"None at all; besides, if he was going away on his own accord, he would go on his horse, not on foot."

"If he was thrown—"

"Denton wouldn't throw him—he was too fond of him; but if he had been pitched off, we should have found him on the trail. But there was not a sign of him."

The Mexican schoolboy wrinkled his brows in thought.

"You cannot guess what has happened?" he asked.

"Not so far."

"In Mexico—" Diaz smiled. "In my country, we should say at once that the senorito had met an enemy."

"But this is not Mexico," said Frank, with a slight smile. "Beauclerc had no enemy who would seek to injure him."

"What of Gunten?"

"Gunten!" repeated Frank.

with a strange expression on his face. He rode away thoughtfully down the trail.

The Mexican's suggestion had startled him. For the first moment or two he was inclined to dismiss it as absurd; Canada was not Mexico, and it seemed incredible that Kern Gunten, of Hillcrest School, rascal as he was, could have had a hand in Beauclerc's disappearance.

But on reflection, it did not seem so impossible. More than once the chums of Cedar Creek had experienced the treachery of Kern Gunten. And only a few days before Gunten had suffered disgrace and punishment for having forged a letter in Frank Richards' hand.

As he galloped away on the timber trail Frank could not help wondering if the Mexican had hit upon the truth, and if Kern Gunten had any knowledge of what had happened to Vere Beauclerc!

It was, perhaps, a wild idea, but it was the only gleam of light in the deep darkness of the mystery that surrounded Beauclerc's disappearance. Frank knew instinctively that his uncle, Mr. Lawless, would not entertain such a thought for a moment. But he was determined to take Bob Lawless into counsel on the subject as soon as he arrived at the ranch.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Chance of a Clue.

Bob Lawless met Frank on the



IN A TIGHT CORNER! Bob Lawless lay helpless at last on his back, with the half-breed's knee planted on his chest, pinning him down. The swarthy face of Leronge grinned down at him. "The bird is snared, I guess!" said the half-breed.

"Gunten is your enemy—and the enemy of your friends," said the Mexican. "You have not thought of that."

"My dear chap, Gunten is our enemy, certainly; but he cannot have done anything to Beauclerc. Beauclerc could knock him into a cocked hat with one hand!"

The Mexican smiled again.

"Possible," he said. "But Gunten might not attack openly. It is nothing to me—but I have not forgotten that you saved me from drowning, amigo mio; and for that reason, I would help you find your friend if I could. In Canada your customs are different from ours in Mexico; but in my country, in such a case, I should say—call to mind if your missing friend had an enemy, and seek him."

And, with a wave of his dusky hand, the Mexican went in at the gate, and hurried to the schoolhouse. Frank Richards mounted his horse,

impossible. If he'd met with an accident we should have found some trace of him. He must have been collared by somebody—somehow."

"I guess it looks like it, Frank; but—but—but—who—and why—"

"Gunten!"

Bob stared.

"Gunten—a schoolboy—Frank!"

"I know it sounds rot!" admitted Frank Richards, colouring a little. "But look how the matter stands, Bob. Gunten was the only enemy we had—the only enemy Beauclerc ever had. And isn't this the work of an enemy? What else can it be?"

"But—"

"I know Gunten couldn't touch Beauclerc alone. But we know that he was friends with that gang of half-breed traders who're camped in the timber—Louis Leronge and his crowd. They may have helped him!"

"But—but what could be his object? He wouldn't dare to hurt Beauclerc—"

"I don't know. But it looks to me as if Gunten may have had a hand in the business—he's the only chap I can think of who could have had a motive."

Bob Lawless nodded slowly.

"I guess it's not much good saying that to poppa," he said. "He wouldn't think of it for a moment."

"I'm not thinking of that. We're free from school now, till Beau is found. We can take the matter in hand ourselves."

"And see Gunten—"

"It won't do any harm, if it won't do any good," replied Frank Richards.

"That's so. And I guess we might tell, by his looks, whether he knows anything of Beau," said Bob Lawless.

"We can ride over to Thompson, and see him when he comes home to dinner from Hillcrest."

"That's what I was thinking of."

"Let's, then."

And the chums of Cedar Creek, having arrived at that decision, took the trail to Thompson town.

They had plenty of time on their hands, for Gunten was not to be seen till after morning lessons were over at Hillcrest School. They went by way of the timber trail, and looked in at the Beauclercs' shack. But Vere's father was not there. The shack was deserted; the remittance-man was

Frank pulled in his horse.

"Not yet," he answered.
"Queer where he's gone to, isn't it?" said Mr. Gunten, eyeing him.
"He's cleared out of the section, it seems."

Frank did not answer.

"I guess it would be all the better for the section if his father followed him!" added the storekeeper, with a sneer. "We can do without remittance-men in the Thompson Valley."

He returned to his store before Frank could answer.

"Pleasant old galoot!" grinned Bob Lawless. "It will be rather a surprise for him if his precious son had a hand in this business, and we spot him. We'd better wait about here for Gunten."

Outside Thompson, on the side of the town towards Hillcrest School, the chums dismounted, and waited in the trail.

They were in good time, and it was a quarter of an hour later that Kern Gunten came in sight, tramping home to dinner.

The heavy face of the Swiss schoolboy was darkly clouded, and his eyes glittering under his knitted brows.

Since the exposure of his rascality, Gunten had not had a pleasant time at Hillcrest. Dicky Bird and the rest had left him in no doubt as to what they thought of him, and Gunten was a good deal of an outcast in his school.

"Stop!" called out Bob Lawless. Gunten looked up quickly, and scowled at Frank Richards and Bob.

"Oh, you!" he exclaimed, halting.

"We want to speak to you!" said Frank.

"The want's all on your side, then!" snapped Gunten. "I don't want to speak to you!"

"About Beauclerc?" said Frank.

"Hasn't he turned up yet?" sneered Gunten.

"No."

"Anything valuable missing when he went?"

Frank's eyes flashed.

"You rotter!" he exclaimed hotly. "How dare you suggest—"

"Well, I don't see why he should be so good for no reason!" said Gunten coolly. "He must have had a motive for going, I suppose."

"He did not go of his own accord."

"I guess that's a tall story. Do you think he's been raided off by Redskins, like kids in the old days?" grinned Gunten.

"No," said Frank, with his eyes fixed on Gunten's face searchingly. "I think he's been kidnapped, Gunten!"

"Wha-a-t?"

"And I think you had a hand in it!"

The 3rd Chapter.

Under Suspicion.

Kern Gunten started back. For a moment his heavy, sallow face was pale and startled.

Frank Richards was watching him, to see the effect of his words, hoping that Gunten would be taken off his guard, if he really had a guilty knowledge of Beauclerc's disappearance.

And for a moment or two, at least, Frank Richards thought that his shot had struck home. Gunten stared at him, pale and startled and breathless.

But he recovered himself quickly.

"I!" he repeated.

"Yes, you!"

"Oh, you're mad, I reckon!" said Gunten, speaking quite coolly now.

"I've seen nothing of Beauclerc, of course. If that's the yarn you're going to spin, Frank Richards, I warn you that it won't wash. It's not good enough, you know. You won't get any galoot in the valley to believe that your pal has been kidnapped. And as for me having a hand in it—

Ha, ha! Do you think I've got him headed up in a molasses-barrel at the store?"

And Gunten laughed loudly.

"No, I don't think that," said Frank Richards quietly. "But he has been taken away by somebody, and I believe you know something about it."

"Oh, come off!"

"You deny it?" asked Frank, watching him.

Gunten shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess it's not worth the trouble," he answered. "Tell that yarn in Thompson and you'll be laughed at. You know it, I reckon. How could I kidnap the fellow? He could handle me, I reckon."

"Alone, yes—but you could find help!"

Gunten laughed again.

"He started for school yesterday morning, I hear?" he asked.

"Yes."

"And disappeared on the way?"

"That's so."

"Well, I reckon all Hillcrest can bear witness that I was in school as usual yesterday morning," said

Frank Richards.



MISSING!

(Continued from the previous page.)

camp to give him the tip to keep on his guard. That is, if we're right. We're going to make sure, Frank!"

"How?"

"By keeping an eye on Gunten," answered Bob. "If I'm right, he'll try to nip out to the timber, and speak to Leronge at the camp, before he goes to school this afternoon. If he does, that will settle it!"

"But if he sees us—"

"He won't see us! We'll get a snack of lunch at the Occidental, and then keep an eye open for Gunten—without his seeing us."

Frank Richards nodded assent.

His suspicion of Gunten was strengthened now, and it nearly amounted to a certainty. If Gunten did seek the camp of the half-breeds, it would be very nearly proof.

As they rode into Main Street, the chums caught sight of Kern Gunten again, entering the store. They rode on to the Occidental Hotel, where they had a hurried lunch. In ten minutes they returned to their horses, and as they mounted, Bob Lawless made a gesture towards the store.

"Look—without turning your head, Franky," he said.

Frank glanced towards Gunten's store.

Kern Gunten stood in the doorway, watching them from the distance with a scowling brow.

"He wants to make sure we're clear off before he starts for the timber," said Bob with conviction. "We'll let him see us off, Frank; and he won't know when we come back, I guess!"

The chums rode out of Thompson, on the trail towards the Lawless ranch, as if homeward bound.

Gunten, from the doorway of the store, watched them till they were out of sight.

Bob and Frank followed the trail for some distance, till they were out of view of Thompson, and then Bob led the way into the timber.

The Canadian schoolboy's face was very grim now. It was evident that he believed that they were on the track of the missing Cherub at last.

"I guess it's a cinch, Franky," he said. "If we can spot Gunten on the way to Leronge's camp, that will settle it; and he may even lead us to where the Cherub is at this minute, for all we know. But we've got to take care that he doesn't know we're trailing him."

Bob reflected a few moments. Frank Richards waited in silence. In this matter it was for his Canadian cousin to take the lead.

"There's two ways Gunten can get to the half-breeds' camp," said Bob slowly. "He can strike straight for it, through the forest from Thompson, or he can go round by Hillcrest way, as if he were going to school, and enter the timber by the trail on that side. That's more likely, I guess, as he would risk less being seen. Then, if he found us hanging round, he could keep on straight for school, and leave it all till after lessons, see?"

"Likely enough, Bob!"

"I reckon I'll keep watch on the Hillcrest side, and you can watch the town from the edge of the timber," said Bob. "I'll post you, Franky, as you're not so well up in woodcraft as I am, and then I'll mosey along Hillcrest way. If you see Gunten coming into the timber, you're to follow him without showing yourself. You can do that?"

"You bet!"

"Come on, then!"

The chums rode through the timber at a good pace, till the trees and undergrowth were too thick for them to proceed on horseback.

Then they dismounted and tethered their steeds.

On foot they plunged on through the thickets.

It was not long before they reached the edge of the timber towards the town of Thompson, where a wide space of clearings lay between the trees and the first buildings of the town.

"If Gunten comes this way, you'll spot him easily enough," said Bob Lawless. "Keep in cover, Franky!"

"Rely on me, old chap—"

"I'll get on Hillcrest way. I reckon Gunten's more likely to go round that way. So-long, old scout!"

And Bob disappeared into the trees, leaving Frank Richards to watch the buildings of Thompson, and the paths that lay between the town and the wood.

The 4th Chapter.
Tracked Down!

Bob Lawless lost no time. The chums had ridden out of Thompson to the south, and Hillcrest lay on the northern side of the town, so the Canadian schoolboy had a good distance to cover.

He followed a track through the wood, winding among the trees, finding his way without a fault, though much of the timber was quite untrodden.

The camp of the half-breed traders was in the heart of the forest, and Bob did not pass within two miles of it, as he kept on his way.

He came out of the timber at last on the side towards Hillcrest and Cedar Creek.

Keeping in cover, he scanned the open trail, which ran on either hand towards Thompson in one direction, and Cedar Creek School on the other, Hillcrest beyond it over the tree-clad hill, at the foot of which the trail wound.

Bob was pretty well assured that if Gunten intended to pay a visit to the half-breeds' camp, he would come by that direction. He knew that the chums suspected him, and might be watching, and if he was seen leaving Thompson on that side, it would only be supposed that he was going to school as usual.

It was getting towards school-time now, and Bob, as he kept in cover and watched the trail, saw several fellows belonging to Hillcrest pass by.

Kern Gunten came in sight at last. The trail was deserted, save for the Swiss, as he came tramping along, looking well about him.

Bob kept closer than ever in a thicket, watching the Swiss through the foliage.

As Gunten tramped on, the rancher's son wondered whether he had been mistaken, and whether the Swiss was, after all, simply going to school.

But his doubts were soon set at rest.

Gunten slipped suddenly from the trail, and ran into the timber, moving so quickly, with the evident intention of escaping observation if any eye should chance to be on him.

Bob Lawless breathed quickly.

Gunten was out of sight now in the timber, but he knew where to look for the Swiss, and he glided silently through the trees to pick him up again.

In a few minutes he was near enough to hear the sound made by Gunten in brushing through the thickets.

Bob made no sound as he moved along. He parted the bushes with care, and hardly the rustle of a twig followed his passage.

Kern Gunten was not so cautious.

Having, as he believed, entered the timber without being observed, he was no longer in fear of watchful eyes, and he tramped on carelessly through the thick wood.

Bob Lawless hung upon his trail, occasionally catching sight of the heavy figure of the Swiss, through openings in the bushes.

Once or twice Gunten looked back, though evidently without suspicion that he was followed; but the Canadian schoolboy was not to be seen. One of the Redskins who had haunted the forest in ancient days could not have followed in the track of the Swiss more cautiously and cunningly.

Trackless as the timber was at this point, Bob was well aware of the direction the Swiss was taking; it led towards the camp of Black Louis and the North-West traders.

It was still possible that Gunten was simply visiting Black Louis, as he had visited him before, to play poker with the half-breed; but Bob did not think so. Gunten was missing school for the purpose, and though he was a favourite with Mr. Peckover, he would not do that without a strong motive.

The conviction was growing in Bob Lawless' mind that Vere Beauclerc had been kidnapped by the half-breeds at Gunten's instigation—and his heart was beating as they drew nearer and nearer to Black Louis' camp.

Gunten gave utterance to a sudden shrill whistle. It was answered from the half-breeds' camp, which was close at hand now.

There was a sound of tramping feet in the timber, and Gunten stopped, as a lithe, muscular, swarthy man came into view under the trees. It was Louis Leronge, the leader of the North-West traders.

"Corbleu! You have come, then," said Leronge, as Gunten stopped.

"Yes," gasped Gunten, breathing hard after his long tramp.

"Why?" asked the half-breed. "It was arranged that you should not come near the camp, in case of suspicion. This is an act of folly."

Bob Lawless was on his hands and knees now, creeping through the thickets with the caution of a lynx.

He could hear the voices ahead, and he knew that Gunten had met one of his associates on the border of the camp. As he moved silently through the thick undergrowth, Gunten's voice came to his ears.

"I didn't choose to come, Leronge. It was necessary. I came to warn you."

"Why?"

"They're searching everywhere for Beauclerc," said Gunten, in a low, hurried voice—which came clearly enough to the ears of the Canadian schoolboy in the undergrowth, however. "Have you see anything of them?"

Black Louis shook his head.

"No; they are not likely to trouble me."

"There was no trail—"

"Do you think I am a fool?" said the half-breed contemptuously. "The boy was roped in from a tree above the trail, and his horse ran on. It went against the grain to let the horse go; but if it had been taken, they would have thought of my crowd at once." The half-breed grinned. "The sheriff of Thompson came moseying along the other day to inquire after a missing horse. Well, we let the boy's horse escape, and roped him in to the tree. When we brought him along to the camp, one of us stirred the trail after we passed, leaving no sign that a lynx could have detected."

Gunten nodded.

"But the others—we have had no chance at them yet," said Black Louis. "But do not fear, we shall finish our work."

Bob's eyes glittered.

The half-breed's words were enough to reveal the whole plot arranged between Kern Gunten and the ruffian from the North-West ranges.

"But you came to warn me, you say?" continued Leronge. "Of what? There is no danger?"

"They suspect me."

"Mon Dieu! You?"

"Yes, I've seen Richards and Lawless this morning, and they suspect that I had a hand in Beauclerc's disappearance—"

"You were at school, and could prove it."

"I guess so; but they suspect you, too; they know that I've been associated with you, and so—"

"They told you so?" exclaimed the half-breed.

"Sure!"

Black Louis uttered an angry exclamation.

"And you have come here? How do you know you have not been watched?"

"I guess that's safe enough. I went out of town towards Hillcrest, as if I were going to school as usual, and cut into the timber from that side. You will have to be prepared for a visit to the camp—perhaps a search—"

Black Louis did not answer.

His head was bent, as if he were listening. His black, penetrating eyes were fastened upon the thicket close at hand.

"What is it?" asked Gunten, impatiently. "Are you not listening to me, Leronge? I tell you, Bob Lawless may bring his father and the ranchmen to your camp to search for Vere Beauclerc, and if they find him, it may be a case of lynch law. What the thunder—"

Gunten broke off in angry astonishment, as the half-breed made a sudden spring past him, and plunged into the thicket.

"Leronge! What— Oh, gum!"

There was a panting cry from the thicket. Gunten rushed after the half-breed, and gave a startled cry, as he saw Black Louis and Bob Lawless, locked in a fierce struggle, rolling in the herbage.

"Lawless!" panted Gunten. "Bob Lawless!"

Bob struggled furiously in the powerful grasp of the half-breed.

Black Louis' spring into the thicket had been so sudden, so unexpected, that Bob had had no chance of guarding against it. He did not know that the lynx-eared half-breed had detected his presence, till Black Louis was upon him. Gunten had not suspected; but to the half-breed, trained amid danger, bred to the forest and the plain, the slightest rustle of a twig was warning enough. His iron grasp was on the rancher's son now, and hard as Bob struggled, he struggled in vain.

The ruffian was too powerful for him. And Bob was underneath, his plucky resistance growing weaker. Not a word was spoken; both the combatants needed all their breath for the struggle.

Gunten stood looking on, with drooping jaw.

But as he saw that Black Louis was gaining the upper hand, the fear died out of his face, and he grinned.

Bob Lawless lay helpless at last, on his back in the herbage, with the half-breed's knee planted on his chest,

pinning him down. The swarthy face of Leronge grinned down at him.

"The bird is snared, I guess," said the half-breed. "Gunten, there is a cord in my wallet—take it out and bind his hands while I hold him."

Gunten obeyed.

Bob Lawless, bound and helpless, lay in the grass. Black Louis rose, breathing hard after his exertions. He lighted a cigarette, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

Gunten and the half-breed exchanged a few words in a low voice, and then the Swiss disappeared through the trees, without another look at Bob Lawless.

Louis Leronge stooped over Bob, picked him up as if he had been an infant, threw him across his shoulder, and bore him away through the timber towards the camp.

The 5th Chapter.
Under the Shadow.

Frank Richards watched, as the sun sank lower towards the far Pacific, and waited. He had watched in vain, as the afternoon wore away; and he wondered whether his chum, miles away through the timber to the north, had had better luck. He wondered, too, whether his suspicion of Gunten was well-founded, after all, or whether he had spent the day upon a wild-goose chase.

It was not till dusk was deepening over Thompson and the town clearings that Frank left his post.

The long, weary afternoon had worn away without result—so far as Frank Richards was concerned. He wondered why Bob had not returned. Even if he had found Gunten and followed him, he should have rejoined his chum long since. Frank was puzzled and he was not clear as to what he had better do; but it seemed useless to remain on the watch after dusk had fallen. If Gunten came then, he might pass unseen within a dozen yards.

Frank determined to seek his chum towards Hillcrest; but he soon found that that was impracticable. He was not equal to picking his way, surely, through the trackless timber as his Canadian cousin had done, and the fall of evening made the task still more impossible. His only resource was to return to his pony, and ride round by way of Thompson. He returned to where the horses had been tethered, and there he stopped to reflect again.

It was a good hour's ride, round by the trail, and through Thompson, to the Hillcrest side. And at any minute Bob Lawless might return for him. On reflection, Frank decided to remain with the horses. Bob Lawless was certain to return to that spot sooner or later, unless he was prevented, and it did not occur to Frank that he might be prevented.

Darkness settled more deeply upon the forest.

Frank Richards moved about uneasily, pacing the wood, near the tethered horses, his uneasiness growing. Strange and eerie sounds of night came from the shadows of the wood; but Frank did not heed them; he was not troubled by nerves. But he was growing alarmed for Bob.

Half a dozen times he whistled—a whistle his chum knew well, as a signal to him if he was within hearing. But only the echoes of the timber answered.

One by one the stars came out in the vault of heaven, glistening down through the foliage overhead.

Frank's disquietude increased with every passing minute now.

There would be anxiety at the ranch if he did not return with his cousin. Where was Bob?

Something had happened—but what? With a shudder, Frank wondered if the mysterious fate that had overtaken Vere Beauclerc had also overtaken the brave lad who was searching for him.

He could bear the anxiety no longer; and he returned to the spot where he had been keeping watch for Gunten, in the faint hope of finding that Bob had returned there for him. But there was no sign of him; and then he hurried back to the horses, fearing that he had missed the rancher's son in his brief absence. But the tethered horses were still cropping the herbage undisturbed; Bob had not come.

The hour was growing late now. Black darkness lay under the forest trees, broken only by glimmerings of starlight through the high branches.

Where was Bob?

Had he followed Kern Gunten to the half-breeds' camp? Had disaster fallen upon him there? Careless of danger to himself, Frank would have started for the camp of Black Louis, to seek his chum, but the impenetrable forest baffled him. Somewhere in the gloomy shades of the timber the camp of the half-breeds lay; but Frank knew that he could not have found it.

The hour was late, and he left the spot at last; it was useless to wait

longer. There was a faint hope in his breast that Bob might have returned to the ranch, for some reason he could not guess. He left Bob's horse tethered, cropping the grass, in case the rancher's son might yet return, and mounted his own steed.

With a heavy, anxious heart he rode back to the trail beyond the timber, and took his homeward way.

The trail to the Lawless Ranch ran by the Beauclercs' shack, and as Frank passed he saw a light in the little building. He rode up to the door, and Mr. Beauclerc looked out.

The remittance-man's face was pale and worn. Frank Richards did not need to ask whether he had news of his son; Mr. Beauclerc's look told that his search had been fruitless.

"Has Bob been here?" asked Frank breathlessly.

"Lawless! No!" said the remittance-man. "I have not seen him, at all events. But I have only returned an hour ago."

"You've found nothing?"

"Nothing."

"And—and you've seen nothing of Bob?" asked Frank hopelessly.

"No."

Mr. Beauclerc stepped out of the shack, eyeing Frank curiously.

"Has anything happened to Lawless?" he asked.

"I don't know. He left me in the timber this afternoon, and he has not come back," muttered Frank.

"But—but he may have gone back to the ranch—it's possible, at least. Good-night, Mr. Beauclerc."

"You will find him at the ranch, most likely, my boy," said the remittance-man. "Good-night!"

He stepped back into the shack, and Frank Richards rode off into the darkness. Frank's face was pale and set as he galloped on the trail towards his uncle's home. He clung to the hope that Bob might have returned to the ranch; but in his heart of hearts he knew that it was not so. The mysterious shadows of the forest hid Bob Lawless' fate as they hid the fate of Vere Beauclerc, and Frank Richards' heart was aching with fear and anxiety as he galloped homeward.

The lights gleaming from the ranch-house came in sight at last. A shadowy figure loomed up on the trail. It was Billy Cook.

"Oh, here you are, you young scallywags!" exclaimed the ranch foreman. "You've come back!"

"I've come back," said Frank heavily.

Billy Cook stared at him.

"Isn't Bob with you?" he demanded. "Old man Lawless is reger mad at your staying out so late, I can tell you. Where's Bob?"

Frank's heart was like lead.

"He hasn't come home, then?" he asked.

"I guess not," answered Billy Cook. "And I guess his poppa and moppa are anxious about him, and you. Where is he, if he hasn't come with you, the young scallywag?"

"I don't know. Something's happened to him—just as it has to Beauclerc," answered Frank huskily.

"Waal, I swow!" ejaculated the ranchman.

Frank Richards rode on towards the ranch. Bob Lawless had not returned. His faint, lingering hope was scattered to the winds. What, then, had happened in the dark shades of the forest?

Frank Richards hardly dared to ask himself that question, or to attempt to answer it. The ranch-house door was open, and the stalwart figure of Mr. Lawless stood there, framed in the light. And Frank Richards dashed on at a gallop, with black news for Bob's father!

The 6th Chapter.

The Search.

Tramp! Tramp!

Frank Richards started from an uneasy slumber.

There was a trampling of hoofs outside the Lawless Ranch as the early sunlight glimmered down upon the green plain.

Frank was alone in the room which he shared with his cousin, Bob Lawless. Bob's bed was empty; it had been empty all night. Frank Richards had hardly slept that night, and he awoke at once, as the trampling of hoofs sounded outside the ranch-house.

He jumped from his bed and bundled hastily into his clothes. In a few minutes he was downstairs.

Outside, six or seven horsemen were gathered in the early light, each of them with a rifle at his back. A Kootenay cattleman held a horse ready for Mr. Lawless, who was finishing a cup of coffee in the doorway.

"You're starting, uncle?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

The rancher looked round at his nephew's pale, anxious face.

"Yes, Frank. You'd better get back to bed."

"I'm coming, uncle."

The rancher looked dubious.

"I guess you'd better not, Frank," he answered. "You know where we're going to—the half-breeds' camp in the timber. If they've got Bob there, there will be trouble—and there may be shooting. It's no place for a schoolboy."

"But I must come, uncle!" pleaded Frank. "I believe Bob's there—and Beauclerc, too. I'm certain now that they've both been kidnapped by Louis Leronge and his crowd, and that Kern Gunten is at the bottom of it."

"I guess it sounds a tall story," said Mr. Lawless. "But it's a fact that Bob hasn't come home—and Beauclerc is still missing. We're going to search Black Louis' camp for them, at any rate. But as for Gunten—"

"You know what I told you when I got in last night, uncle? Bob left me to keep watch on Gunten, and to trail him if he visited the half-breeds' camp. He never came back."

The rancher nodded.

"We shall see," he said. "If he's there, we shall find him. If you're set on coming, you can come, Frank. Take a cup of coffee and something to eat, and get out your horse."

Five minutes later the cavalcade started from the ranch. Mrs. Lawless looking after them with anxious eyes. Frank Richards rode with the ranchmen, his face clouded. Both his chums were missing—it was in searching for Vere Beauclerc that Bob Lawless had disappeared—and Frank was certain that they had fallen into the

hands of Louis Leronge, the half-breed trader from the North-West.

Leronge was the associate of Kern Gunten, the former schoolfellow and old enemy of the chums of Cedar Creek School, and Frank did not doubt that Gunten was at the bottom of the whole affair.

The hoof-beats rang on the prairie, as the sun rose higher over the distant summits of the Rocky Mountains.

The horsemen entered the timber trail that ran towards Cedar Creek School. Half-way to Cedar Creek they turned from the trail into the timber.

Billy Cook, the ranch foreman, was the guide now. He dismounted from his horse, and led the animal on through the thickets, and the rest of the party followed his example.

They proceeded on foot through the thick wood; and at a word from Mr. Lawless the ranchmen unslung their rifles and looked to them. They were close on the traders' camp now; and what was to happen when they reached it, no one could guess. But it was only too probable that there might be "trouble."

Louis Leronge and his followers were a rough crowd, and trouble was very likely if they really had the missing schoolboys in their hands, prisoners at the camp in the heart of the timber.

"I guess we're close on them now, boss," said Billy Cook at last.

"Keep your guns ready!" said Mr. Lawless.

"You bet!"

A few minutes more, and the ranchmen emerged into a shadowy glade, where the sunlight fell filtered through wide-spreading branches overhead.

A camp-fire smoked in the middle of the glade, near a group of rough shacks, and several swarthy-faced men were gathered round the fire, some of them engaged in cooking.

They were preparing breakfast in the traders' camp; but at the sight of the ranchmen, breakfast was forgotten. The half-breeds gathered together, and one or two of them ran into the shacks for their rifles.

"I guess they've been expecting us, boss," remarked Billy Cook. "Here comes Black Louis."

A lithe, muscular half-breed came towards the ranch with a rifle in the hollow of his arm.

His sharp black eyes glittered at them.

"What do you want here?" he asked abruptly.

Mr. Lawless stepped forward to meet him.

"You are Louis Leronge?" he asked.

The half-breed nodded.

"I am John Lawless, of the Lawless Ranch. I am looking for my son," said the rancher. "I want to know whether he is here."

Black Louis shrugged his shoulders.

"He is not here," he said.

"I guess I want to be sure of that."

"Why should he be here? I do not even know your son, that I remember," said Leronge. "What should he be doing here?"

"I'll be plain," said Mr. Lawless. "The other day, Vere Beauclerc was missing, and yesterday, my son, who

"We shall search, all the same."

"We are armed here," said Louis Leronge. "What if we resist?"

"I guess I'm sorry for you, if you do. If there's any shooting, I don't reckon your crowd will get the best of it."

"I calculate not!" chimed in Billy Cook emphatically.

Black Louis gave the ranchmen an evil look. There were eight men in all from the ranch, without counting Frank Richards, and they had their rifles ready. It was very doubtful whether the half-breed gang would have stood up to them in combat, even if Black Louis had been prepared to lead them in such a desperate affray.

"Well, what do you say?" demanded the rancher. "Are we going to search the camp quietly, or is there going to be trouble?"

"Search the camp, and be hanged to you!" answered Louis Leronge; and he turned on his heel, and walked back to the camp-fire.

The 7th Chapter. Diaz' Warning.

Frank Richards had felt his hopes rise of finding his chums as the half-breed argued with Mr. Lawless. But as Louis Leronge walked back to the fire Frank's face clouded again.

If the half-breeds had resisted a search, it would have been pretty clear proof that the kidnapped schoolboys were there; but they evidently did not intend to resist. Yet if the missing chums were found in the camp it meant prosecution and imprisonment for the kidnapers. The

oblivious to the search that was going on.

It ended at last, so far as the camp was concerned. Then the ranchmen spread among the surrounding timber, hunting in the thicket and among the trees, and even in the branches above.

Two more hours glided by before they gathered in the glade again, unsuccessful.

Mr. Lawless' brow was knitted darkly.

There was no sign at the camp of Bob or of Vere Beauclerc, and the rancher could not help suspecting that he had been engaged upon a wild-goose chase.

The mystery of the schoolboys' disappearance was so baffling that, in the absence of any clue, he had been willing to act upon Frank Richards' suspicion; but it certainly seemed now that that suspicion was unfounded.

"You are going, uncle?" asked Frank, as Mr. Lawless went towards his horse.

"We're finished here, Frank."

"They're not found," said Frank miserably.

"I guess they're not here—they can't be. It was only a suspicion, anyhow, and I reckon there was nothing in it, my boy," said the rancher.

"I think Leronge must have expected this search, uncle!" exclaimed Frank eagerly. "Most likely he's hidden them somewhere else."

"Where?"

"Somewhere in the timber, I suppose."

"If they're in the timber, I guess they'll be found," said Mr. Lawless, and he took his horse to lead it away.

"Come on, boys! We're done here."

The ranchmen left the glade. Frank Richards glanced at Black Louis before he followed them. The half-breed looked up from his cards with a derisive grin on his swarthy face. Frank followed his uncle with a heavy heart.

The ranchmen reached the trail and mounted, Billy Cook and his men going back to the ranch for the day's work, and Mr. Lawless riding to Thompson to consult the sheriff. Frank Richards turned his horse in the direction of Cedar Creek School.

He was free from school for the present, while his chums were missing. Miss Meadows had given him leave of absence. The Cedar Creek fellows were coming out after morning lessons, when Frank arrived at the lumber school. Chunky Rodgers was the first to see him, and he hailed Frank with a shout.

"Found the Cherub yet, Franky?"

"No," answered Frank moodily. Chunky grinned.

"I met Gunten this morning, on the Hillcrest trail," he said. "Gunten calculates that the Cherub has lighted out of this section, Frank. He told me so."

"Rubbish!" said Frank.

"Well, that's what Gunten reckons; and he hinted that Beauclerc had his reasons for going," said Chunky sagely. "Of course, I don't think so. But Gunten does. He asked me whether anybody had missed anything valuable about the time the Cherub disappeared."

Frank Richards gritted his teeth.

Gunten's attempt to blacken the missing schoolboy's name was an added proof, to his mind, that the rascally Swiss had had a hand in the affair.

"Where's Bob?" asked Tom Lawrence.

Frank Richards explained. There was a buzz of excitement among the Cedar Creek fellows when they learned that Bob was missing, too. Frank had had, perhaps, a vague thought that some of the fellows might have seen something of his missing cousin; but that was evidently not the case. Ricardo Diaz, the Mexican schoolboy, joined Frank, as the latter walked moodily away, leading his horse, after a talk with his schoolfellows.

"You have not found your friend. And now your other amigo, he is also gone," said the Mexican.

Frank nodded.

"I believe it was Gunten, as you suggested to me, Diaz," he said. "But I don't know how to prove it. Black Louis' camp has been searched, but nothing has been found there."

"Black Louis would not keep them where they could be found," said Diaz, with a smile. "I have heard that the half-breeds are soon starting for the north-west again. They have earned an evil name in this section—there have been too many horses missing, and they are suspected. You will need to look out for yourself, mi amigo."

"I" repeated Frank.



A HOPE OF RESCUE! "Look!" muttered Beauclerc suddenly. "Look at Louis Leronge! There's something on the plain!" It was clear that the half-breed saw something in the dusty distance that caused him uneasiness. And hope revived in the breasts of the kidnapped chums.

conviction forced itself upon Frank's mind that they were not there—that, if they were in the hands of the half-breeds at all, they were hidden elsewhere, beyond the reach of a search.

But he joined the ranchmen, as they began to search the camp.

If his chums were there, he did not mean to leave a stone unturned to find them.

Billy Cook and three of the ranchmen remained with the horses, keeping their rifles ready, in case trouble should crop up. The rest of the party, with Frank and his uncle, searched the camp.

The rough shacks, built of branches and skins, were soon hunted through. There was no trace of a prisoner in any of them.

Then the quest extended farther. Piles of logs, placed ready for the camp-fire, were overturned, and even large packages of goods belonging to the traders were opened. No space that could possibly have hidden a bound and gagged prisoner was left unsearched.

But at the end of an hour almost every inch of the camp and its surroundings had been ransacked—in vain.

Meanwhile, the half-breeds, with an air of indifference, cooked their breakfast and lounged round the fire eating it, and then smoked in the grass, watching the searchers with sarcastic grins.

Black Louis began a game of poker with one of his comrades, apparently

was hunting for him, disappeared, too. He was watching Kern Gunten, whom he suspected of having a hand in Beauclerc's disappearance; and my nephew, Richards, thinks that he followed Gunten to this camp."

The half-breed's eyes glittered at Frank Richards for a moment.

"Richards is mistaken," he said. "I have nothing to do with Kern Gunten."

"That's not true," broke out Frank Richards. "Gunten came here often enough to gamble with you, Louis Leronge. You were hand in glove with him. And I'm certain he was coming here yesterday when Bob was trailing him."

"Enough said," broke in the rancher. "We're here to look for my son, Mr. Leronge. That's the long and short of it."

Louis Leronge waved his hand.

"Look, then!" he said. "There's my camp. Look!"

"You don't object to a search?"

"Have you the sheriff's authority to search my camp?" demanded Black Louis.

"I guess not. I haven't wasted time riding over to Thompson to see the sheriff," answered Mr. Lawless. "It's only a matter of form, though. The sheriff would have come with me, if I'd had time to ask him."

"You have no right to make a search here, then."

"So you object?" asked the rancher grimly.

"Suppose I refuse—what then?"



MISSING!

(Continued from the previous
page.)

"You, amigo mio," said Diaz. "If Gunten has laid this plan he has not laid it for two, but for three. First Beauclerc, and then Lawless—and then it will be your turn, if they can lay hands upon you. You will find your friends, and you will lose your freedom."

Frank Richards knitted his brows. He had hardly thought of danger to himself so far, but he realised that the Mexican schoolboy was right. If the whole affair was a scheme laid by the revengeful Swiss, certainly Frank Richards was not likely to be left out. "I shall take care," he said at last. "Thank you for the warning, Diaz." "Vaya! But I shall take care, too," said the Mexican. "I do not forget that you pulled me out of the stream, mi amigo. If anything shall happen to you, you have a friend who will not forget. If you, too, are missing—"

Frank smiled. "I shall not be missing," he said. "I shall be too careful for that." "So Lawless would have said; but he is gone, and no one knows whither," answered Diaz quietly. "If you are missing, amigo mio, I shall know where to look for you, and you will not remain unsought. If you are gone, I shall follow the trail of the half-breeds when they break camp for the north-west. You will remember that."

"I will remember!" smiled Frank. The Mexican nodded, and left him; and Frank walked on down the trail with his horse. Diaz's words made little impression on his mind—he did not mean to fall into the hands of the rascals who had kidnapped his chums. But there was to come an hour when the remembrance of the Mexican's words was to be the only ray of light in black gloom.

The 8th Chapter.
Fallen Among Foes!

Frank Richards stopped on the timber trail, and turned his horse loose to graze under the trees; he could trust the animal to come to his call when he wanted it.

He plunged into the timber on the trail, in the direction of the half-breeds' camp.

The tracks left by the ranchmen that morning were a sufficient guide to him.

Frank was in an almost desperate mood. His chums were gone, and he was convinced that they were in the hands of Black Louis and his gang. He had no heart for school, or for hanging about the ranch a prey to bitter anxiety. He felt that he must be doing something to help his chums; and any action was preferable to idleness. But there was a plan in his mind as he plunged into the deep shadows of the forest.

If the missing schoolboys were in or near the half-breeds' camp, they were too carefully hidden to be found in a search—as that morning had proved. But the idea had come into Frank's mind to keep a watch upon the camp from cover, and observe the movements of Black Louis and his crowd. Unseen himself, he could watch them, and sooner or later he must learn whether his chums were held prisoners in their hands.

At all events, he hoped so; and the slightest chance was better than doing nothing.

He was very cautious as he approached the lonely camp. Smoke rising through the trees warned him when he was near. He dropped on his hands and knees, and crept towards the glade.

From the edge of the glade, hidden by the thickets, he watched the camp, not twenty yards distant from him.

Two or three of the half-breeds were lounging about the shacks and the smouldering camp-fire; but some of them seemed to be absent—doubtless on business along the Thompson valley.

Frank's eyes gleamed as he caught sight of a schoolboy seated on a log close by one of the shacks, playing cards with Louis Lorange. It was Kern Gunten, the Swiss schoolboy of Hillcrest.

Frank was aware that his old enemy was accustomed to visiting the camp

of the half-breeds to gamble, and he was not surprised to see Gunten there. He lay in the thickets and watched patiently.

In half an hour Gunten rose from the log, with a black look on his face. Lorange was smiling derisively.

Frank was too distant to hear what was said; but he could read Kern Gunten's face accurately enough. The rascal of Hillcrest had been losing money.

In a few minutes the Swiss left the camp, and disappeared in the wood towards the north, evidently on his way to Hillcrest for afternoon school.

Lorange went into one of the shacks.

Save for a couple of half-breeds lounging in the grass, smoking cigarettes, and the grazing horses, there was nothing to be seen.

But Frank Richards did not lose patience.

He was growing hungry, but he had corn-cake and cheese in his wallet, and he ate as he lay under the bushes, watching.

He intended to keep up his vigil until he was, at least, assured that his chums were not at the camp.

An hour or two later there was a rustling in the underwood, and three or four half-breeds came from the forest into the glade, leading their horses. They were leading three other horses without saddle or bridle, and Frank guessed easily enough that the animals had been stolen—"roped in" on the plain and run off by the rascals.

Lorange came out of his shack, and Frank watched his next proceedings with curious interest. The stolen horses were daubed with paint to change their appearance, and one of the gang led them away through the forest, and disappeared with them.

Evidently the rascal was on his way to take them to a distance, where they could be disposed of in safety.

It was proof enough of the real business of the "traders," as the gang called themselves.

After the stolen animals had been taken away, there was nothing but idleness at the half-breed camp. The sun was sinking in the west now, and shadows were lengthening in the forest.

Frank's heart was heavy.

He had watched through the afternoon; but as yet nothing had happened to confirm his suspicion that the half-breed traders had anything to do with the disappearance of his chums.

The schoolboy gave a sudden start as there was a rustle in the underwood behind him.

He turned his head, half expecting to see a lynx, or perhaps a puma, and ready with his hunting-knife.

But it was no quadruped that had disturbed the bushes. A grinning, swarthy face was looking at him through the foliage.

Frank sprang to his feet.

It was one of the half-breeds returning to the camp—and the way had lain by the spot where Frank was in cover. Coming on him from behind, the ruffian had seen the schoolboy in the thicket.

He came through the bushes with a rush as Frank jumped up.

"Stand back!" exclaimed Frank breathlessly.

His hunting-knife was his only weapon. He flashed it out as the half-breed rushed upon him.

A clubbed rifle swept through the air, and struck the weapon from his hand. The next moment a powerful grasp was laid upon him.

The schoolboy struggled desperately.

But he was a boy against a powerful man, and even as he struggled he realised that it was in vain.

The half-breed was shouting as he grasped him, and two or three men came running from the glade, Louis Lorange at their head.

"What is it?" shouted Lorange, as he came speeding up. "Mon Dieu! What is this clamour about?"

"Voyez!" grinned the half-breed. "Corbleu! Frank Richards!" shouted Lorange.

His grasp was on Frank the next moment.

Frank's struggles ceased; he was helpless now. In the grasp of Black Louis, he was hauled out of the thickets into the open glade.

"So you are here again, corbleu!" exclaimed Lorange, shaking him savagely. "Are you alone here? Answer me!"

"Find out!" gasped Frank.

"Fool! Are you alone here? Where are the others—the ranchmen?" demanded Lorange fiercely.

Frank Richards did not answer.

Louis Lorange gave him a savage, surly look, and then rapped out an order to his comrades.

"Search—quick—see if there are others near!"

The order was obeyed at once.

But in a few minutes the half-breeds came back into the glade.

It had not taken them long to discover that Frank Richards was alone.

"No others?" asked Lorange.

"None—not a sign!" grinned the ruffian who had seized Frank.

"It's curious that he should be here alone," muttered Lorange, with a black scowl at his prisoner.

"He was lying in the bush, watching the camp, when I found him."

"Looking for his friends, I guess," Lorange's scowl gave place to a grin.

"Corbleu! He has walked finely into the trap! He shall see his friends again!"

He dragged the schoolboy towards the camp.

Frank's heart was like lead. He had found out the truth now, beyond the shadow of a doubt; Black Louis and his gang were the kidnapers of Beauclerc and Bob Lawless. But in finding it out he had fallen himself into the hands of the kidnapers.

Diaz' warning, which he had little heeded at the time, had been uttered in vain.

Instead of helping to rescue his chums, he was to join them in captivity, and the future was dark. What fate was in store for him, and for his friends, he could not even guess—but he knew that there was little to hope.

The 9th Chapter.
Three in the Toils!

Louis Lorange dragged the schoolboy of Cedar Creek into the camp, amid the grinning glances of the half-breed traders. Lorange seemed to be in a merry mood now—Frank Richards had fairly walked into the trap, and the kidnapper's task was done.

"You came to look for your friends, n'est ce pas?" asked the half-breed, as he bundled Frank into the shack which the schoolboy had seen him enter during the afternoon.

"Yes!" panted Frank.

"You thought they were here?" said Lorange, in a bantering tone.

"I knew it!"

"You were right—they are here!" grinned Lorange. "You shall see them, since that is your wish."

Frank Richards, still in the powerful grip of the half-breed, looked round the hut. There was nothing to be seen but a pile of skins on the ground.

"Jacques!" called out Black Louis. "Jacques! Venez donc!"

The ruffian who had seized Frank Richards entered the shack.

"A rope!" said Lorange.

In a couple of minutes Frank's wrists were bound together. He did not resist—that was futile. A feeling very like despair had settled upon him now.

"That will do," said Lorange.

"And now, Jacques, tell the others to get ready. We are finished here, and we break camp to-night."

"The boy may be searched for."

"He will not be found, any more than the others. And we leave before midnight."

Jacques left the shack. Frank stood, with his hands bound, while Louis Lorange dragged aside the pile of skins on the ground.

Under them nothing was to be seen but the flattened grass, and Frank wondered what the half-breed's action meant. But he soon discovered.

Lorange thrust his hand into the grass, and, to Frank's amazement, lifted a board covered with turf. He understood now. A cellar was excavated under the hut, and covered in with planks, on which the turf had been carefully laid again. It was a cunningly-contrived hiding-place.

Below was darkness.

Lorange pointed to the opening as he lifted the board at one end.

"Descend!" he said.

Frank Richards did not move.

"Descend!" repeated the half-breed, with an oath. "Descend—or I will call one of my men to fling you in!"

There was no help for it. Frank Richards stepped to the opening. As his eyes grew more used to the gloom below, he saw that the floor of the cellar was not more than six feet down. There was a clear space below, and as Louis Lorange held the big plank clear, Frank jumped down.

He landed on his feet, but rolled over, and came in contact with another form in the gloom. From above, the half-breed grinned down at him.

"You have found your friends, mon ami," he said. "Enjoy their society

while you may—you will part company in a few days, when we reach the North-West. I wish you joy!"

The plank came down in its place.

Black darkness shut in the kidnapped schoolboy.

Lorange replaced the plank, and carefully flattened out the turf where it had been disturbed, and threw down the pile of skins.

There was nothing in the shack now to indicate that it concealed a hiding-place.

Frank Richards struggled to his feet in the earthy excavation, and stared round him in the blackness.

"Bob! Vere!" he breathed.

There was a faint mumbling sound from the gloom.

"You're here!" exclaimed Frank. Mumble!

Frank Richards realised that his chums were there, and that they were gagged and could not speak. He made a desperate effort to break the cord round his wrists, but they were too well tied for that.

He dropped on hands and knees, and groped for his chums in the darkness. He soon came in contact with them. His head struck against a nose, and there was an inarticulate grunt.

His face was against another face, though he could not see it. He felt the cloth that was tied over the mouth, and though he could not use his hands, he could use his teeth. He fastened his teeth in the cloth and dragged at it. It was tied in its place with a cord that passed several times round the prisoner's head, but Frank soon loosened it sufficiently for speech.

"Frank!"

It was Bob Lawless' gasping voice.

"Bob, old chap!"

"The Cherub's here!" panted Bob. "Thank goodness I can use my tongue again, anyhow! So you're here, too, Franky. I—I hoped you'd find us—but not like this!"

"You're tied up, I suppose?" said Frank.

"Hand and foot—and so is Beauclerc," Bob Lawless panted for breath. "I don't know how long we've been here—but I guess it seems like years. How long since you missed me, Franky?"

"Only yesterday."

"Great Gophers! Seems more like last year!" said Bob Lawless. "We've fairly walked into their hands, Franky."

"You've not been in this black den all the time?" exclaimed Frank.

"Nope! When I was brought in, I was put in the shack above, and found the Cherub there. They shoved us down here when there was an alarm about a search, and gagged us so that we couldn't call out. They haven't been near since, the brutes! By gum, I'm famished! I followed Gunten yesterday, and found out what I wanted—but Black Louis spotted me, and I was collared. And so—"

"The same with me," said Frank glumly.

"I guess it's cruel luck—and Gunten's at the bottom of it! If ever I get near the foreign rascal again—"

Bob gritted his teeth.

Frank Richards groped for Beauclerc, and after some difficulty succeeded in loosening his gag, as he had done with Bob Lawless. Vere Beauclerc's voice was husky as he spoke.

"I'm sorry you're landed in this, too, Frank. I was afraid it would happen, when I found what Gunten's scheme was."

"And what is it?" asked Frank, with a sinking heart.

"We are to be taken to the North-West when the half-breeds break camp," answered Beauclerc.

"And then?"

"Then—if they have their way—we shall never see home again," said the remittance-man's son. "Black Louis has told us. We're to be taken up into the Yukon country with them, and sold among the savages."

"Good heavens!"

"Gunten dare not let us get home again, of course, after this," said Bob Lawless. "He's bargained with the half-breeds to clear us out of his way, because we showed him up. I guess, over that forged letter. This is rather the limit, even for that foreign rascal; it was the half-breeds happened to be camped here that put it into his head, of course. We're to be left among the Redskins north of the Yukon—if they have their way. But I guess we're not there yet. There's many a slip!"

Frank Richards did not answer.

There was little hope in his breast. He had wondered what was the plan of the kidnapers, but he had hardly dreamed of anything like this. Yet this was evidently the only way of safety for Black Louis—and for Gunten too. If Frank Richards & Co. returned to their homes, punishment for the kidnapers was certain and severe. It was clear that the kid-

nappers intended to run no risk of their returning.

"We shall be searched for," said Beauclerc. "They may come to this camp and search."

Frank suppressed a groan.

"The camp has been searched," he said. "I was here this morning with Mr. Lawless, and Billy Cook, and the ranchmen. The camp was searched inside out. But we never suspected this."

"That's why they dropped us in here," said Bob Lawless. "I wondered whether a search was going on while we were lying here. There's stuff in this cellar, too—stolen stuff, I reckon—enough to get Black Louis and his gang a good stretch in the penitentiary, if it were found. They didn't risk much more by adding us to it. By gum, it looks as if we were booked! But they'll have to get us out when they break camp."

"They're breaking camp to-night," said Frank. "There won't be another search before then; and even if there were, this den would never be found."

"Outside this, we may get a chance," said Bob hopefully. "It's a far cry to the Yukon country, and they won't get us there easily."

"I—I suppose there's some chance," muttered Frank.

"I guess so."

A gloomy silence fell in the dark recess under the shack. The breaking-up of the traders' camp meant the beginning of the journey to the far North-West, and captivity among savage tribes, if the half-breed's plan was carried out. But the chums of Cedar Creek were anxious for the move to be made. Once in the open air, there was at least a chance that they might regain their freedom; and anything was better than confinement in the darkness and the foul air of the secret hiding-place.

Hours—it seemed like days and nights to the hapless three—passed; but at last the silence was broken. The covering of the cellar was raised again, and a light gleamed down.

The 10th Chapter.
The Last Hope!

Frank Richards looked up.

Beside the lantern appeared the swarthy face of Louis Lorange, with a mocking grin upon it.

The light glimmered upon three white faces below.

As Lorange held the light, a couple of the half-breeds dropped into the cellar. They began to hand up packages to Lorange above—undoubtedly stolen goods, which had been kept in that carefully-prepared hiding-place. The cellar extended a dozen feet under the earth, but not more than six feet of the space had been opened above, and that was covered in with thick planks, covered in turn by turf. Lorange had removed a single one of the planks to give admission to his confederates. As soon as the packages were handed up and taken out of the shack above, the prisoners followed—swung up by the ruffians below, and pulled out by Lorange above.

When the cellar was empty, the plank was replaced, and the turf arranged over it with care. Lorange meant to leave no clue behind him for discovery, if the deserted camp was searched again.

The three schoolboys, their hands still bound behind their backs, were taken out of the shack into the glade. The camp-fire had been stamped out, and all was darkness, save for a faint glimmer of starlight through the tree-tops.

The preparations of the half-breed gang were made for departure. Horses were saddled, and two or three mules loaded with packs. Louis Lorange gagged the three prisoners in turn, with great care. The half-breeds intended to follow lonely trails; but nothing was left to chance.

In the dim starlight, Frank Richards & Co. looked hopelessly at one another.

Within a few miles were friends who would have come eagerly to their rescue, but there was no help! From the dark forest surrounding the glade came no sound but the sough of the wind in the branches, and the occasional cry of a night-bird.

The three chums were mounted upon the pack-mules, and ropes secured them to the animals when they were mounted. Louis Lorange gave the word to start.

Leading the horses and mules, the half-breeds quitted the glade. Behind them the camp lay silent and deserted; before them stretched the dark forest.

Frank Richards & Co. could not speak; they could not move. They could only resign themselves to their fate, for the present. But even in

(Continued on page 204.)

coming back, in the shape of a neatly-written note on lavender-coloured notepaper, from Percy Poppleton, which intimated that the swells of St. Winifred's, who lived in a batch of cabins which were known on the ship as Grosvenor Square, would be delighted to accept the kind invitation of the Glory Hole.

And, this social function having been arranged to the satisfaction of everyone, they all trooped off to supper.

The bullies were seated at their table, looking as black as thunder. They had recovered from the jar which Chu had given their arms, but they had not recovered from the jolt which he had administered to their self-importance. It was plain that they were plotting mischief.

"Those lads are up to something!" muttered Chip, keeping his eye on the crowd.

"Never mind them!" replied Dick contemptuously. "I'm curious to see if Chu is going to eat with a knife and fork, or his hands, or chopsticks."

Somewhat to the disappointment of the boys, Chu ate with knife, fork, and spoon, just like any ordinary human being.

And they all ate sparingly at the Glory Hole table. Even Skeleton kept off food, for he did not want to spoil his appetite for the real ceremony of the day, or, rather, of the night—the Glory Hole Midnight Feast.

And the boys noticed that the swells of St. Winifred's looked in the direction of their table in quite a friendly fashion. Someone had told them, doubtless, that Chu's Chinese father was a mandarin of the fifth class, and wore the crystal button. So they evidently regarded Chu as being quite a knowable sort of nob, even though he was only a Chink.

The Genoese stewards were greatly perplexed when Skeleton refused dish after dish.

"S'poseee you no feel well, Mr. Skeleton?" said Alessandro, their table-steward, when Skeleton had waved away his fifth dish. "You like a little rice-pudding?"

"Alessandro," said Skeleton sternly, "don't talk to me of rice-pudding! When the clock strikes the witching hour o' midnight-to-night we are going to regale ourselves on bird's-nest soup and puppy-dog pie! Savvy?"

Alessandro savvied. He had made a trip on the Bombay Castle before, and he knew the signs of a midnight feast.

Before prep that evening, Skeleton, who had been appointed manager of the feast, found time to lead Chu away to the Glory Hole, and to take stock of the contents of his extraordinary tuck-box.

Chu unlocked his coffin. It had a small drawer at the head of it in which was some rice and some Chinese coins.

"Rice and money for me when me go dead!" said Chu solemnly, pointing to the little store of food and money which, according to Chinese custom, was to accompany him to the Happy Hunting Grounds. "Cheer up, Chu!" said Skeleton, clapping his new chum on the back.

"Never mind what you are going to eat when you are dead! Let's have a look at some of the stuff that your Japanese mamma has packed up for you to eat whilst you are alive!"

Chu unlocked his coffin and exposed his stock of grub.

Skeleton's eyes bulged. There were all sorts of Chinese and glass jars of tuck, beautifully packed and sealed with great, important-looking Chinese seals.

Chu looked up anxiously at his pal as he produced a huge jar of young ginger preserved in honey.

"Ginger—him allee light?" he asked.

"What ho! That's the stuff!" said Skeleton, taking the jar. "My hat! That's ginger—the real hot stuff! Not like the pickled ropes end we get in England. We'll put that aside for the feast!"

Chu beamed. He had found a winner. He had been a little bit anxious and doubtful as to whether some of his Chinese delicacies might suit the Western palates of his new friends.

He had another shot into his coffin, and brought up a beautiful blue porcelain jar, sealed with a great strap of yellow silk and golden wax.

"Him velly good!" said Chu.

"It looks top-hole!" said Skeleton, taking the jar. "Why, the pot is worth a quid alone. What's inside?"

"Pickle mousey!" replied Chu, looking as proud as a dog with two tails over the great delicacy he was bringing forth for the regaling of his chums.

"What?" cried Skeleton. "Mousey!" repeated Chu. "Nice lil' mousey, go to sleep allee winter!"

"Pickled dormice!" cried Skeleton. "No thanks, Arthur! That's a bit too Chinesey. You had better put that back where it belongs—in the coffin."

But Chu did not put the pickled dormice back in the coffin. He unlocked his school tuck-box, which had been packed full of clothing, and he stowed away the rejected delicacy in that.

"You no likee mousee, you no likee lat," said he, producing a jar of rats' legs preserved in honey.

"No, Chu!" said Skeleton firmly. "Crystallised rats is off! Put 'em in the cemetery, old bean!"

And Chu stowed the rejected rats in his official tuck-box.

A jar of the priceless jelly, made of the nests of the hirundo esculenta, or sea-swallow, which fetch in China the market price of £800 per cwt., was likewise rejected by Skeleton.

"It's very nice," said he, "but I don't want any birds'-nests in my stomach."

But he accepted a pot of the young shoots of the bamboo preserved in syrup, a box of lychee-fruit, a Chinese sausage, which was painted red, and lettered in gold leaf till it looked too good to eat, and some wonderful cakes with gold pictures on them.

Then Chu dived into his coffin once more, and produced his winner. It was the most precious thing he had—a tinned puppy-dog pie—one of the real, old-fashioned dog pies which are only to be obtained by the most exclusive of the epicures amongst the governing mandarins of China. It was not one of the rough old dog

see, we don't eat dog in our country. We eat sausages, and, of course, you never know. But what the eye don't see the heart don't grieve after. But puppy pie is off."

So the pie was packed away in the tuck-box, and as Skeleton refused to have any more of the stores from the coffin, this most cheery store cupboard was securely locked, and the key once more hung round Chu's neck.

Skeleton hid the feast materials away, and the school tuck-box, with all the strange delicacies in it, was shoved under Chu's bed.

Then off they went to prep.

It was a glorious night on deck. The Bombay Castle was shoving slowly along at half-speed through the warm tropic sea, leaving a wide wake of phosphorescent foam behind her. Away to port loomed the shadow of the Island of Molokai, whilst far away ahead a dull glow in the sky showed where the great volcano of Mauna Loa, on the Island of Hawaii, was sending up its clouds of vapour.

The boys would have liked to have stepped on deck to breathe the balmy, spice-laden breeze that blew off from the land.

But Scorcher Wilkinson was adamant about prep.

And prep that night seemed to last for years. But the worst of times must come to an end, and even Scorcher sighed with relief as the hands of the clock crept slowly round to nine p.m.

Scorcher was looking forward to a quiet rubber of whist with Captain Handyman and Mr. Lal Tata, and as soon as the clock struck he was off.

The boys lounged on the deck enjoying the warm breeze till the ship's

behind him stealthily as a cat—or a Chinese.

"Me come too!" whispered Chu. "Right-ho!" assented Chip. "But don't make a row."

There was no need to tell Chu not to make a row. He was nothing more than a shadow as he glided along the dark deck, almost invisible, for he was wearing a suit of pyjamas of dark-blue, with dark-blue dragons embroidered all down the back of it. And, in that suit, he showed no more in the darkness than a black cat.

The chart-room windows—which were on this deck—were wide open, to admit the cool evening breeze, and the boys crept up to them.

"Ha, Lal, got you there! I had all the trumps that time!" they heard Captain Handyman's voice saying.

Then Scorcher yawned. "I'm very sleepy to-night!" said he. "I don't think I'll look round when we've finished this rubber. I'm for bed. The boys are all right. They're tired to-night after their run ashore, and I gave 'em a good old doing at prep, poor little beggars!"

That was a good hearing. Scorcher was really a very nice man, thought Chip. He had heard all he wanted. Scorcher was not coming round. Lal would go straight to his bunk to read, according to his custom, the latest news of Bunter. Chip knew that he had received a big package of books about W. G. Bunter by the American mail to Honolulu. They had come on board with Chu and the mails that day.

So the coast was all clear for the great feast.

Chip signed to his companion, and

BULKELEY'S CHANCE!

(Continued from page 196.)

rather curious expression on his face under the smoke grime. He had laboured like a Hercules, and he had been the last out of the building. The Head had not spoken to him hitherto; but probably he had observed. His tone was very quiet, but very cordial, as he had addressed Bulkeley as if there had never been any trouble between them.

Bulkeley returned to him in a few minutes.

"All out, sir!"

"Thank goodness!" said the Head. "The fire will be got under, I think; but it would be dangerous to be indoors in the smoke now. It would mean suffocation. You are sure all are out, Bulkeley?"

"The masters have called the roll, sir. None missing."

"Thank you!"

Dr. Chisholm hesitated a moment, and Bulkeley, seeing that he had something more to say, waited, wondering what it was. There was a brief struggle in Dr. Chisholm's breast, but the obstinate pride of the old gentleman was vanquished at last.

"Bulkeley, I have observed you during this unfortunate affair, and—and I thank you, my boy. But for your promptness and coolness, I do not like to think what might have happened. If the boys had not been got out before the smoke filled the house—" The Head paused a moment. "Bulkeley, I think you may have saved many lives this night."

"At least, none have been lost, sir, thank goodness!" said Bulkeley cheerily.

"I think that is owing to you, my boy." There was another pause, and the Head watched the last spluttering flames that sank under the hissing streams of water. He turned to Bulkeley again, and held out his hand frankly. "My dear boy, there has been a misunderstanding between us. It is over, and I am sorry that it ever occurred. Tomorrow, Bulkeley, I request you to resume your old position in the school. You will not refuse, I am sure."

"I—I shall be glad, sir!" stammered Bulkeley.

He shook hands with the Head mechanically. Never for a moment had he expected this concession from the lofty old gentleman. But the Head had made it, and Bulkeley's heart was lighter.

"By gad! There's the Head shakin' hands with Bulkeley!" murmured Mornington, in the ranks of the Fourth. "Does that mean that the trouble's over?"

"Let's hope so," murmured Jimmy Silver. "The Head's not a bad old sort; and surely he must have seen to-night that Bulkeley's the man to be captain of Rookwood."

The rift in the lute was healed at last. Rookwood School had its old captain back once more.

The next day a considerable part of the Sixth Form passage in the School House was a charred mass of ruins. Apart from the damage done by smoke, however, the rest of the building had escaped. Rookwood was able to "carry on" as usual while the workmen were busy on the burnt-out studies.

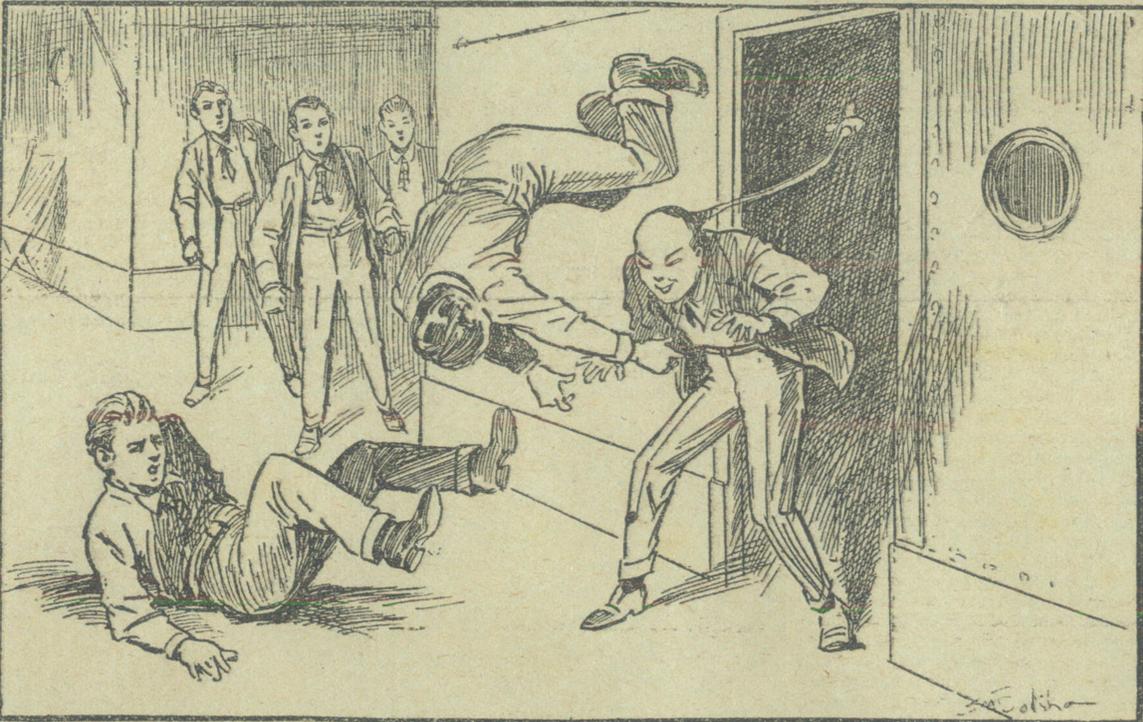
The origin of the fire was not discovered—luckily for Carthew of the Sixth. It was known that it had started in Carthew's study, and that was all. Carthew professed ignorance of the cause; and if he remembered the cigarette he had thrown carelessly down, he took great care not to mention it.

The fire had been an exciting episode; and it was fortunate that matters had turned out no worse. In the opinion of most of the Rookwood fellows, they had turned out very well, in fact. For the reinstatement of Bulkeley as head prefect and captain was followed by the return of the other prefects to duty; the "strike" was ended and done with, and nothing more was said on that subject.

Carthew of the Sixth was probably the only fellow who was not satisfied. But as Jimmy Silver remarked, Carthew did not matter. And the rest of the school rejoiced that the Prefects' Strike was over, and that "Old Bulkeley" was once more Captain of Rookwood.

THE END.

(An extra-long story of Jimmy Silver & Co. at Rookwood next Monday, entitled, "The St. Jim's Match," by Owen Conquest. Order in advance.)



THE BULLY MEETS HIS MATCH! The new boy ducked again with lightning rapidity, and Goadger was likewise hurled through the air, out of the cabin door. He descended upon his chum Smarler, and both bullies rolled into the scuppers together.

pastries which are labelled: "Just what mother used to make," but the sort of dog pie which was the pride of the Imperial kitchens in the good old days of H.L.M. the late Empress Dowager of China.

"What's that?" asked Skeleton.

"Pie!" replied Chu, holding up the beautifully-packed pie, which was tied up with silken riband embossed with gold, and sealed up like a Royal Charter.

"Pie's right!" said Skeleton.

"Lil' puppee doggie!" replied Chu, beaming and triumphant. "Im velly, velly nice indeed."

"Look here, Chu," said Skeleton. "You just keep that pie and eat it yourself. It's too good for the likes of us. We aren't up to all these delicacies. Nice puppies! No, thanks, Chu!"

The good-hearted Chu nearly wept when his friend turned down this special treat. He was a generous soul, and he had taken to these English boys. He wanted to give them everything he had got which he prized. If Skeleton had only wanted it, he would have given him his precious coffin, and would have contented himself with going home in an egg-box if anything had happened to him.

"You no likee pie?" he asked, in pained surprise.

"I expect we should have liked it all right if you hadn't told us about it, Chu!" replied Skeleton. "You

bell, ringing out the four bells in the First Watch, told them that it was ten p.m., and bed-time.

They retired to their berths and turned in. But not to sleep. Five and six bells sounded. Then seven bells announced half-past eleven p.m. At eight bells, or midnight, their aristocratic guests of St. Winifred's were due to arrive from the Grosvenor Square cabins.

The Glory Hole Gang were just a little bit nervous of their entertainment. They were like a society hostess who has not had a great deal of experience in entertaining aristocratic guests.

But there was no doubt that the meal which Skeleton had provided was top-hole.

The first thing to be done was to locate Scorcher Wilkinson.

Scorcher had an uncomfortable trick of drifting round between-decks at all hours, instead of going to bed like a reasonable being.

So Chip was told off to scout for Scorcher.

Chip made his way forward by devious routes. He dodged out on the engineer's walk astern, which was always deserted at this time of night, and climbed up the steel monkey-ladder which went right up to the height of the boat-deck.

There were no lights up here, and it was very dark. And as soon as Chip had reached it, he was aware of a hand squeezing his heel softly as he still stood on the ladder.

It was Chu, who had climbed up

they slid round the back of the chart-house, Chip leading.

But there were other listeners at the windows of the chart-house besides themselves.

Out of the darkness on the other side of the chart-house rose a black shadow—the slinking shape of a man!

(Another exciting, long instalment of "Skull Island" next Monday.)

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MISSING!

(Concluded from page 200.)

that dark hour there was one glimmering of hope in Frank Richards' breast. The breaking-up of the North-West traders' camp had brought back to his mind the words of Diaz, his Mexican schoolfellow. In the Mexican he had a friend who had not forgotten him, and who would suspect, at least, what had become of him when he found that he was missing, and that the half-breeds' camp in the timber was deserted.

Ricardo Diaz would know, and he would do what he could. There was, at least, a glimmer of hope in that.

For two or three hours the half-breeds led their horses, winding by lonely forest tracks, till the ground was clearer of trees, and they were able to mount. Then they pushed on at a greater rate of speed.

Overhead, the stars glimmered in the dark sky, paling towards morning, when the timber was left behind at last, and they rode out upon the plain. Wide, open prairie lay before

them, swept by the keen wind. As fast as the pack-mules could go, the half-breeds pushed on, and mile after mile disappeared under the hoofs.

In the eastern sky, a rosy flush appeared—the herald of the dawn. It strengthened, and the sun climbed above the distant summits of the Rockies. Still the half-breeds did not halt. Apart from the kidnapped schoolboys, they had good reasons for leaving their late camp as far behind them as possible before they stopped to rest. The plunder of more than one thievish expedition was packed upon the mules.

Fatigued, half-dozing, the three schoolboys hardly noticed their surroundings as they were carried on by the jogging mules. How many miles they had traversed they did not know or guess, but they knew that the distance was great. The half-breed traders were following the loneliest trail across the plains towards the upper Fraser River. Ahead of them now was a range of low, stony hills, where the green plain ended in barren wastes. As the sun rose higher, the heat streamed down on the plain, the half-breeds pushed on without a pause towards the hills.

Black Louis hardly glanced at his prisoners during the journey; he seemed to have forgotten them.

At intervals he glanced back along the way they had come. Once the cavalcade changed its direction a little, as a smoke-cloud showed on the horizon. The sun was almost at the meridian, and the heat was oppressive, when the horses' hoofs rang at last on the stony, barren slopes of the hills.

In the shadow of a big rock, amid huge boulders, the half-breed traders halted at last. A spring bubbled up there amid the rocks, and the wearied horses and mules were cast loose to drink. Then the three schoolboys were released from the ropes that bound them to the mules, and were able to use once more their numbed limbs.

Black Louis jerked away the gags, with a grin.

"You may yell now as loudly as you like," he said derisively. "There are only the rocks and the coyotes to hear you."

The chums of Cedar Creek did not answer the half-breed's mockery. Their mouths were aching, and their lips numbed. They sat down on a rocky bank and watched the half-breeds as they camped. No camp-fire was lighted. Evidently Black Louis feared that the smoke might betray them. The ruffians ate corn-cake and deer meat, and smoked their pipes and cigarettes afterwards, lying

under the rocks for shelter from the blaze of the sun.

After the meal was over, Black Louis came to the prisoners with a pannikin of food. Coarse as it was, it was welcome enough to the three schoolboys. He untied their right hands, so that they could eat, and left them.

"By gum! I guess I feel better now," muttered Bob Lawless, as he finished the last fragment of deer meat. "But I reckon it's a bad outlook, Franky. We're a good forty miles from Cedar Creek, I reckon."

"And no one will think of following the trail, if those brutes have left a trail," muttered Beauclerc.

Frank Richards glanced round, to make sure that none of the half-breeds was within hearing, and sank his voice as he answered:

"There's just a chance. Diaz knows—"

"The greaser! What does he know, and what can he do?" grunted Bob.

Frank whispered an explanation. Beauclerc's face frightened a little, but Bob Lawless shook his head. Evidently he had little faith in the Mexican.

"It's a chance!" repeated Frank. "I guess I wouldn't bet a pile of dollars on it!" said Bob Lawless dismally.

"Look!" muttered Beauclerc suddenly. "Look at Louis Leronge. There's something on the plain—"

He broke off breathlessly. The three chums stared at Black Louis. He was standing on the rocks, shading his eyes with his hand, as he stared back across the sun-scorched plain. The expression on his face was grim and surly. It was clear that he saw something there, in the dusty distance, that caused him uneasiness.

He called to Jacques, who handed him a field-glass. Leronge looked through the glass, and muttered an angry oath, that reached the ears of the chums of Cedar Creek. The next moment he rapped out an order, and the half-breeds began to saddle up to resume the journey.

Frank Richards glanced at his chums, his heart beating fast, Bob Lawless and Beauclerc met his glance with brightening eyes. For what caused alarm to the half-breeds might mean rescue to the kidnapped schoolboys, and hope revived in their breasts at last.

THE END.

(Another exciting, complete story of Frank Richards & Co. next week, "Rescue!" by Martin Clifford. Order in advance!)

IN YOUR EDITOR'S DEN.

EMANCIPATION DAY!

The war is over—thank God for it! It is not a thing we can, or want to, forget, in view of the heavy sacrifices it has entailed on the part of so many noble people. But it is not necessary to harp on that here. I mention it because, with the issue of this number of the Boys' Friend, the last of the restrictions imposed by the war on my chums' favourite paper is removed for good and all—it is to be hoped. To-day is our Emancipation Day—to-day we come out once more with our full complement of twelve big pages, full of wholesome reading and bright pictures.

I am confident that this number of the Boys' Friend will earn the hearty approbation of my reader-friends. For next week I have a special treat in store—namely, a

DOUBLE-LENGTH ROOKWOOD STORY.

Two full pages of extra space have been set aside for Mr. Owen Conquest, and he has taken full advantage of this concession, as I think all my chums will agree when they read his extra-long story, which is entitled:

"THE ST. JIM'S MATCH!"

I will not touch upon the numerous other splendid features that will be found in next week's issue, but will pass at once to

OUR CHAT PAGE.

Now I want in future to have a longer chat with all my friends than has been possible while the paper restrictions have been in force. Furthermore, I want my friends to join me in this page, so to speak. The wish has been there right enough all through these long years of war, but space was too short, and—But enough said! I am tired of talking about space, and also a bit weary of the task of curtailing my remarks to my chums into so few inches. There was a man once who went to mow a meadow, and he made a song about it, and, what is more, secured the services of a crowd of fellows and also a dog, to help him. I am not going to make a song of the increased size of the Boys' Friend. I am merely going to say that I shall be pleased to receive short—say, two hundred words in length—original paragraphs from my readers about their adventures and experiences these holiday-times, about what they think and what they do, about—oh, any old thing, so long as it is interesting, not merely to themselves, but to the world at large. For those paragraphs which I consider worthy of publica-

tion I shall pay five shillings or half-a-crown, according to merit.

CONCERNING HEAPS OF THINGS.

So far so good, as the man said when he had eaten half the goose. But that is not all. I have not had a long chat with my friends for many a long day. I shall speak on this page of future stories, and of what is happening. I happen to know that my readers take a keen interest in the big world as well, say, as in the doings of Tubby Muffin, though, of course, T. B. belongs to the great world just the same as anybody. I have read many, many thousands of letters from all over the world—letters about clothes and politics, how to take holidays, how to cure rabbit-skins, and about the best remedy for blushing. I shall deal with things just as they come, and my aim will be to make this page both interesting and diverse. For this reason I shall not make any apology for introducing various subjects into this page, any more than the sensational cricketers at Red-Nose Flat apologised when they shot umpire after umpire who had given unfavourable decisions.

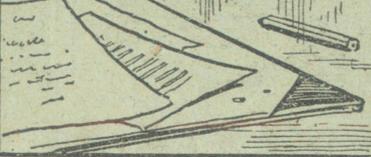
A HEFTY AUSTRALIAN.

I met a high official of the Australian Government the other night, and he told me an amusing story of an Australian in London. The latter was passing a hall where a meeting was being held. There seemed to be a terrific row on, with no end of noise. The noise would be the same that annoys a noisy oyster. The Australian turned to the friend he was with, and said, "I hate a noise like that! I'll soon put an end to it. I am going in. You stand just outside that window, and count the chaps as I fling them out." The friend waited. Presently a man came tumbling out of the window on to the pavement. "One!" shouted the watcher. "Shut up!" roared the individual who had been flung out. "It's me!" Which shows that it is not always well to interfere in other folks' affairs, for you never know, you know, what may happen. But the teller of this story said it was just the case with William Hohenzollern. The ex-Kaiser meant to throw everybody else out, and—well, we all know how his quaint little plan went wrong.

"The mills of God grind slowly,
But they grind exceeding small."

AUSTRALIA AND THE EMPIRE.

Talking about Australia—and one likes to talk about it—reminds one again of what Australia did in the war. It acted imperially, and the



story of the heroism of the men from the South should be written in letters of gold. Perhaps, better still, they are written in the hearts of Britons the world over. But these last few years have shown more than ever that there is an imperial way of doing things—I mean, the right way, the doing of the best thing, and seeing to it that the lame dog finds himself on the right side of the stile; and doing it in the thorough manner, taking both hands, as it were, to the job. I take it that the imperial way means being pretty tolerant of others' shortcomings, and generous all round. Then we shall get there.

CAN'TS FROM AN EDITORIAL POINT OF VIEW.

There are some things that can't be done. I receive letters which demand an immediate reply. They start something like this: "Dear Sir,—Friday night. Will you please send

WRITE TO YOUR EDITOR
—YOU WILL GET
A PROMPT REPLY!

me some back numbers?" Now, it isn't any manner of use sending off a consignment of the Companion Papers to "Mr. John Brown, Friday night!" The postman is a rare clever chap, but he could not stand it. He would have to throw up the duty in despair. What is more, I cannot supply back numbers. I never have them. If there is an odd copy left lying about, after all orders are executed, the office-boy takes it home to read.

THE DOINGS IN EUROPE.

It was rather odd that the Kaiser should have just rounded off his thirty years of life on a throne when he came down for good and all. It was in June, 1888 that he succeeded to the Crown, and it was prophesied then that there would be real big trouble, because he seemed to be one of those young men who acted in a hurry. That is all right enough at times. But it did not do in the case of the Prussian King. He was always trying to frighten folks, and it did not

come off with France. It is interesting and a bit more to think that France had friends all over the world in her hour of need. Her ancient quarrel with Germany was not understood in the old war of 1870, or there would have been a different ending then. I remember seeing the effect of the Prussian guns on the walls of Paris, but that was years after the Franco-Prussian War.

SOMETHING ABOUT RAILWAYS.

So much is being said concerning the railways just now, that it is rather interesting to remember how the railways were made. At first nobody would have anything to do with them. "No railroad here, please!" was what was said or thought, and that is how it is so many of the old cities up and down the country have their stations quite outside. There is Oxford, for example, and there are plenty more. It was private push and enterprise that made our railways the grand success they proved. The Great Western—which used to be called the Great Way Round!—has spread and progressed, until it is now the finest system, perhaps, in the world. With its shortened route to the North, and the new lines to South Wales and the West, it occupies a really proud position. There has been personal pride in the business. When old Isambard Brunel laid the foundations of Great Western greatness, he spared nothing. That is why the run from Paddington to Bristol is the smoothest travelling to be found anywhere. The same with the Midland, the Great Central, and the other lines. They are the work of individuals who gave their lives to the business.

G. A. HENTY.

It is still a name to conjure with. I had the pleasure of knowing Henty. He spent a great part of his professional life, in writing for the "Standard," and many were the wars he went through in the interests of that journal. He came back from Africa as brown as if he had been born with that coloured pigment as his characteristic. He was a most interesting fellow, and a chat with him was an enjoyable experience. I turned up some of his war correspondence the other day, and it showed how deeply versed he was in all the mazy difficulties of French and other politics. When at home in his pleasant headquarters in the South of London, he used to dictate his yarns regularly, and would hurry home from a club dinner to do his bit. But when he had the chance, he went yachting. That was his hobby. He loved the sea. He looked that way, with his massive common-sense and heartiness, and that big beard. Few

men look well with beards, but you could not imagine Henty minus one.

DUMAS.

Mention of one celebrated author suggests another one, in whom, I know, many of my readers are tremendously interested. Alexandre Dumas, the author of "Monte Cristo," and "The Three Musketeers," "Chicot the Jester," and hundreds of other stories, had a bitter fight of it at the start. He really started with a little play about sport, which the French call "la chasse." He dropped one manuscript in a street in Paris when he was tearing off to a publisher, and had to write it all again, for the missing work never turned up.

Luckily, Dumas had a prodigious memory, and was able to dash the yarn down again practically word for word. Dumas made vast fortunes—and spent them all! When he was dying in poverty, he made a joke of it. "I came to Paris with a twenty-franc piece in my pocket," he said, "and see, here it is—all I have! See how careful I have been!" One of Dumas' great hobbies was to cook the dinner—and he did it well, too!

THE NEWS OF THE DAY.

I know my chums are interested in what is happening in the world, in London and elsewhere—quite right, too. They like to read good yarns, but it always seems to me that the fellow who is out in the world, making his way in shop, office, or warehouse, or who is still piling in at school, likes to know of current events. My own private belief is that he does know. I gather this much from queries that blow in—a question about the Sinking Fund, or something of the kind. Some of you are on the way to inventing things which will help the world on its way. Some will take their part in public life. We cannot all be Prime Ministers, or leaders, but there is plenty doing, and so will it always be.

Never imagine that you will not be wanted. There is a place waiting, be sure of that. The world wants thoroughness, and never more did it want workers than now, whether in town or in country. I hope you will stick to that notion. It is the right one.

Your Editor