

THE BEST PAPER FOR SCHOOL & SPORT STORIES!

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

TWELVE PAGES!

TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending March 27th, 1920.

## RODNEY STONE



BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

### IN THE NICK OF TIME!

It wanted but twenty seconds to the hour, when there was a sudden swirl in the crowd, a shout, and high up in the air there spun an old black hat, floating over the heads of the ring-siders and flickering down within the ropes. "I rather fancy," said Sir Charles calmly, "that this must be my man!"

(For Opening Chapters turn to next page.)

#### Foul Play.

My uncle's impatience would not suffer him to wait for the slow rotation which would bring us to the door, but he flung the reins and a crown-piece to one of the rough fellows who thronged the side-walk, and, pushing

his way vigorously through the crowd, he made for the entrance.

As he came within the circle of light thrown by the windows, a whisper ran round as to who this masterful gentleman with the pale face and the driving-coat might be, and a lane was formed to admit us.

I had never before understood the popularity of my uncle in the sporting world, for the folk began to huzza

as we passed with cries of "Hurrah for Buck Tregellis! Good luck to you and your man, Sir Charles! Clear a path for a bang-up noble Corinthian!" whilst the landlord, attracted by the shouting, came running out to greet us.

"Good evening, Sir Charles!" he cried. "I hope I see you well, sir, and I trust that you will find that your man does credit to the George."

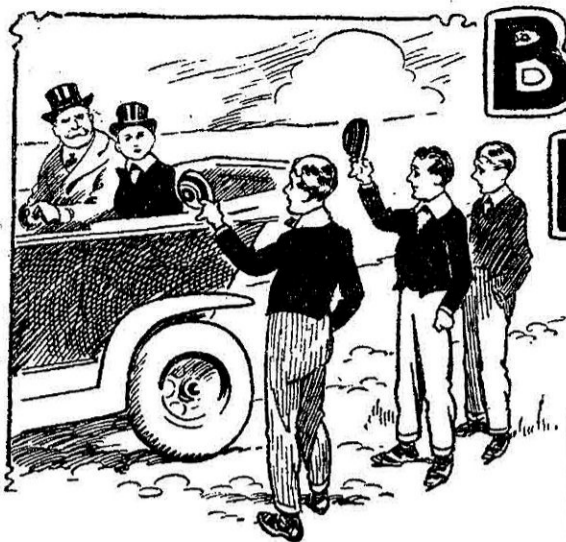
"How is he?" asked my uncle quickly.

"Never better, sir. Looks a picture, he does—and fit to fight for a kingdom."

My uncle gave a sigh of relief.

"Where is he?" he asked. "He's gone to his room early, sir, seein' that he had some very partic'lar business to-morrow mornin'," said the landlord, grinning.

"Where is Belcher?"  
"Here he is, in the bar parlour."  
He opened a door as he spoke, and, looking in, we saw a score of well-dressed men, some of whose faces had become familiar to me during my short West End career, seated round a table, upon which stood a steaming soup-tureen filled with punch.  
At the further end, very much at his ease amongst the aristocrats and



# Bagging Beresford- Baggs!

A Grand, Long, Complete Story of  
Jimmy Silver & Co., at Rookwood.  
By OWEN CONQUEST.

## The 1st Chapter.

### A Very Special Occasion!

"Jimmy—"  
"Hallo!"  
"Will you lend me—"  
"No!"  
"Will you lend—"  
"Rats!"  
"Will you—"  
"Buzz off!"

The dialogue was taking place in the end study. Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, was doing lines at the study table; Tubby Muffin was standing in the doorway.

Jimmy was in a hurry. His chums, Lovell and Raby and Newcome, were waiting for him downstairs. But the lines had to be handed in to Mr. Bootles before Jimmy was at liberty that sunny afternoon.

So his answers to Reginald Muffin were short but not sweet; and he went on with Virgil while he answered, without looking up.

But Reginald Muffin was not to be disposed of easily.

"Jimmy, old chap—" he recommended.

"Seat!" snapped Jimmy Silver.

"Will you lend me—"  
"Buzz off!" roared Jimmy Silver, looking up at last. "Can't you see I'm busy? Dry up and travel!"

"Will you lend me—"  
"I'll lend you a thick ear, if you don't travel!" howled Jimmy Silver.

"How am I to get through my impot at this rate?"

"Will you—"  
Jimmy grasped the inkpot. Tubby Muffin made a swift, strategic retreat into the passage. And Jimmy Silver, with a grunt, laid down the inkpot again, and proceeded with P. Vergilius Maro.

But his pen was no sooner scratching than Tubby Muffin's fat face came round the door again.

"I say, old chap, you might lend me—"

"You—you—you fat villain!" hooted Jimmy Silver. "I've got nothing to lend! Stony! Stony! Stony! Savvy?"

"But—"

"Nothing to lend—and I wouldn't lend it if I had! Now clear, before I take the poker to you!"

"If you think I've come here to borrow money of you, Jimmy Silver—" began Tubby Muffin, with a great deal of dignity.

"Eh—haven't you?" ejaculated Jimmy.

"Certainly not!"

Tubby Muffin was lofty; he felt that he had a right to be lofty. For once he had been misjudged. Amazing as it was, he was not seeking financial aid.

"Well, my hat!" said Jimmy Silver, in astonishment. "What do you want, then?"

"I want to borrow—"

"If it's a dictionary, you can take it. And buzz off with it."

"It isn't a dictionary!"

"If it's a lexicon—"

"It isn't a lexicon! Look here, Jimmy, I want you to lend me—if you don't mind, you know—"

"What?" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

"Your Sunday topper."

"Eh?"

"Your Sunday topper, old chap," said Tubby Muffin. "I—I've got to meet a chap this afternoon—rather an important chap. Awfully rich, you know. My topper has never been the same since it got mixed up with the toffee, and—and I want to look rather nice, as it's a special occasion."

"You want to look nice?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"Yes, that's it."

"Then you'd better go to a barber and—"

"What?"

"And ask him to shave off your features. You'll never look nice with that lot."

"You silly ass!" exclaimed Tubby Muffin wrathfully. "I don't want to hear any of your jealous remarks about my good looks. It's not my fault I'm the best-looking chap in the Fourth."

"Oh, my hat!"

"What I want is a really decent topper," said Tubby Muffin. "Meeting a rich chap, I want to look well. Will you lend it to me?"

"No, I jolly well won't!" answered Jimmy Silver. "You've got one of your own—"

"It's rather mucked up with toffee, and—"

"Well, I don't want mine mucked up with toffee!" growled Jimmy Silver. "Ask Morny! Morny's toppers are better than mine."

"I've asked the beast, and he clucked Liddell and Scott at me."

"Good! Now clear off, or I'll chuck P. Vergilius Maro at you!"

"Look here, Jimmy, old chap, you might stand by a pal on an important occasion!" urged Tubby Muffin. "It's really important. That chap Beresford-Baggs—"

"Who?"

"The new chap, you know, young Beresford-Baggs. He's no end rich, and a chap wants to look decent, meeting him at the station—"

"Never heard of him!" said Jimmy Silver, looking at Reginald Muffin with a little interest at last. "Is it a new chap coming into the Fourth Form?"

"Yes; I heard Mr. Bootles saying he was coming this afternoon," explained Tubby Muffin. "He mentioned that the chap would arrive at half-past three. That must mean the three train at Coombe, mustn't it?"

"I suppose so. Do you know him?"

"Well, I don't exactly know him," admitted Tubby Muffin cautiously.

"I'm going to, you see. As it's a half-holiday, I thought it would be only kind to walk down to the station and meet him."

"Because he's no end rich?"

grinned Jimmy Silver.

"Nunno! Of course not! Because he's a new chap, and I want to be kind to him."

"Br-r-r-r!"

"He's simply rolling in tin, you know," said Tubby Muffin, his round eyes glistening. "The Beresford-Baggses are millionaires, you know. I've seen their name in the papers. Made it out of munitions in the war, you know; piled it up tremendously. And young Beresford-Baggs is coming here. And I thought it would be only kind to look after him a bit. But a chap wants to look decent. Can I have your Sunday topper?"

Jimmy Silver rose to his feet.

"That's right!" said Tubby Muffin eagerly. "Hand it over, old chap. I'm really very much obliged!"

But Tubby Muffin's sense of obligation vanished the next moment.

Jimmy Silver did not hand over his Sunday topper; he handed over the business end of a cricket-stump.

There was a loud howl from Tubby Muffin as he received it.

"Yaroooh!"

Prod, prod!

"Yow-ow-owooop!"

Tubby Muffin fled—minus the topper. Jimmy Silver kicked the door shut after him, and sat down to finish his lines. And he was not interrupted again by Reginald Muffin. Apparently the fat Classical was seeking in other quarters for the loan of a Sunday topper.

## The 2nd Chapter.

### Only Civil!

"Some rotten outsider, of course!"

"No doubt about that!"

"Some awful cad," pursued Townsend of the Fourth. "Reekin' with money, you know."

"Smellin' of it!" agreed Topham. "Probably droppin' hisitches!"

"Most likely."

"Eatin' with his knife, very likely—"

"Oh gad! I suppose so!"

"What a catch for Rookwood!"

"Blessed if I know what the Head's up to, lettin' in such a rank outsider," remarked Topham.

Townsend nodded.

"All the same, I think we might as well be a bit civil to the fellow, at first," he said.

"Civil to him!" said Topham, with a stare.

"Yaas. I don't say we're goin' to be awfully friendly. But we may as well give him a trial," said Townsend.

"You see, whatever sort of a rank rotter he is, he's rollin' in tin, and that's somethin'. There's no doubt that he'll make plenty of friends at Rookwood. Smythe & Co., of the Shell will be after him, and Peele and his set. You see, I know somethin' about these Beresford-Baggses."

"What a name!" yawned Topham.

"Of course, their name's Baggs," said Townsend. "Since the millions happened, the old Johnny has tacked Beresford on to it. I think he took that up along with his title—you know he's a baronet, I suppose. I don't know what that cost him; titles are cheaper than they used to be, but they don't go for nothin'. Sir Japhet Beresford-Baggs—"

"Ye gods!"

"It does sound a bit of a curker," said Townsend. "But there's no doubt that they're a good bit sought after, and it may pay to be civil to the young sprig. I was thinkin' that, as we happen to know he's comin' this afternoon, we may as well walk down to the station an' meet him."

Topham made a grimace.

"I say, he's bound to be some awfully loud sort of an outsider," he objected. "Might be civil to him here; but walkin' about with him in public—"

"I've thought of that. If he's too awfully awful, we'll get a cab an' bring him in that way. He will take it as a kind attention; of course, we shan't explain that we don't want to be seen with him."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We've nothin' special to do this afternoon," went on Townsend. "It would be rather amusin' to steal a march on the other fellows. I can tell you, Peele an' Smythe will be after him like a shot. If he's anythin' like approachin' decency, we might bag him for our study. There's advantages in havin' a rich outsider in the study when a fellow happens to be hard up. He will be keen to get pally with decent chaps like us, an' we can make him pay his footin'—standin' motor-cars on half-holidays, an' all that."

"If we can stand him!" said Topham doubtfully.

"Well, we'll try."

"Oh, I'm game!" said Topham heroically.

"Come in an' get your topper, then. May as well impress him. He will feel no end backed at two decent chaps meetin' him an' speakin' to him."

"Bound to!" agreed Topham.

And the two nuts of the Fourth, who had been holding that important discussion in the quad, strolled into the School House, to put a few finishing touches to their attire, in order

to properly impress the heir of the Beresford-Baggs title and millions.

Townsend and Topham came along to their quarters in the Fourth Form passage. Rawson, their study-mate, was out of gates; but the study was not unoccupied. Tubby Muffin was there. He was standing before Towny's handsome cheval-glass—Towny's furnishings were all in great style—trying on a silk topper.

"That'll do!" Tubby Muffin murmured, as the two astonished nuts halted at the doorway, and glared at him. "Better than Jimmy Silver's old hat, and no mistake! Blow Jimmy Silver!"

"You cheeky rotter!" shouted Townsend. "What are you doin' with my hat?"

Tubby Muffin jumped. He spun round towards the doorway in great alarm.

"Oh! I—I say, I—I—I—" he stammered. "I—I didn't see you fellows! I—I was just tryin' on your hat, Towny, old chap—"

"Put it down!"

"I—I want you to lend me this hat, Towny. I—I was going to ask you, of—of course. I'm meeting a fellow this afternoon—Yaroooh! Keep off, you beast!" howled Muffin.

The topper went sailing across the study, as Tubby Muffin dodged round the table.

He just escaped Townsend's lunging boot.

But Topham was waiting for him near the door; and his boot was ready as the fat Classical fled for the passage.

Thud!

"Yarooop!"

Topham's boot was fairly planted upon Tubby's fat person as he dodged through the doorway. There was a crash as the fat Classical landed in the passage on his hands and knees.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Topham.

"Yow-ow-ow!"

"Give him another Topy!" panted Townsend. "Ho's been ruffin' my topper with his fat claws! Give him another!"

"What do!"

Topham rushed into the passage, to give Reginald Muffin another. But Muffin did not want another. He scrambled to his feet in frantic haste, and fled.

The fat Classical went down the stairs two at a time.

It was just ill luck that he met Lovell and Raby and Newcome coming up. The Co. were coming along to see whether Jimmy Silver had finished his impot. Tubby Muffin landed on them midway, like a bolt from the blue; or, to be more exact, like a barrel from the blue!

Crash! Bump!

"Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Lovell & Co. went spinning on the lower landing. Tubby Muffin sat down on the stairs and gasped.

"Oh! Ow! Ooooooch!"

"You—you—you mad porpoise!" shrieked Arthur Edward Lovell. "Wharrer you—ow!—up to?"

"Bump him!" howled Raby.

"Squash him!" shrieked Newcome, rubbing his head. "Oh, my hat! Burst him!"

"I—I—I say—" spluttered Tubby Muffin. "I—I say—"

But Tubby Muffin was not given time to say much. He was grasped by the vengeful three, and rolled down to the landing roaring, where he was given a bumping that changed his roars into feeble gasps. Tubby Muffin was still going through it, when Townsend and Topham strolled by, grinning as they passed, and went down to the quadrangle.

The two nuts disappeared, leaving the hapless Tubby still in the hands of the Amalekites.

"There!" gasped Lovell, at last.

"Now you'll think twice before you spin fellows downstairs again, you fat maniac!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Give him one more!" gasped Raby.

Bump!

"Wow-wow-ow!" moaned Tubby Muffin.

Then the Co. went on their way to the end study, and for several minutes Tubby Muffin sat and gasped. When he had recovered his wind, he staggered to his feet.

"Oh, oh! Ow!" he spluttered. "The awful rotters! I'd go after 'em and lick 'em all soundly, only—I've no time to waste! Ow! I suppose it will have to be Smythe's topper after all!"

And Reginald Muffin limped away to the Shell quarters in quest of the beautiful topper of Adolphus Smythe.

## The 3rd Chapter.

### The More the Merrier!

"Done!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Oh, good!" said Lovell's voice, in the doorway.

Jimmy rose to his feet. He had finished that troublesome imposition, just as his chums arrived in search of him.

"Cut in to Bootles with it," said Raby. "You've been a jolly long time, Jimmy."

"That ass Muffin interrupted me. Come on!"

The Fistical Four quitted the end study together and went towards the stairs. Three juniors met them near the staircase—Peele and Gower, and Lattrey of the Fourth.

"Hold on a minute, you chaps!" called out Cyril Peele.

"Well, what's wanted?" asked Jimmy, rather gruffly. The Fistical Four were not on good terms with the shady trio of the first study.

But Peele's manner was very civil. He was in search of information, and it was worth a little civility.

"Have you heard about a new fellow comin' into the Fourth?" he asked. "A new chap comin' this afternoon, I hear."

"Muffin was saying something about it," answered Jimmy. "A chap named Beresford-Baggs, according to Muffin."

"That's it! Is it the celebrated Beresford-Baggs?" inquired Peele.

"Blessed if I know! Is there a celebrated Beresford-Baggs?"

"Of course there is—the millionaire, you know."

"But I don't know," said Jimmy. "Muffin said something about the chap being rich, though."

"Then it must be the same!" remarked Gower.

"You fellows know when he's comin'?" inquired Lattrey eagerly.

The Fistical Four looked grim. They could guess the reason of Peele & Co.'s interest in the new junior, now.

"No," said Jimmy shortly. "Muffin said something or other—I forget. I'd like to know—"

"Better find out, then."

And with that reply, Jimmy Silver walked on with his chums. Peele & Co. looked at one another rather doubtfully.

"May as well get along to the station," said Peele, at last. "It won't hurt us to wait a bit there. If this is the genuine Beresford-Baggs, he's the son of a millionaire; his pater is simply rollin' in it. And it's not a common name."

"Rather unique, in fact," grinned Gower.

And the three black sheep of Rookwood grinned, as they went down the stairs after the Fistical Four.

Jimmy Silver & Co. proceeded to Mr. Bootles' study, where the impot was duly delivered to the master of the Fourth.

Then the chums strolled out into the quadrangle, just in time to observe Peele & Co. disappearing out of gates.

"Who on earth is this merchant Baggs that they're so keen about?" asked Lovell.

"Blessed if I know! According to Muffin, he's the son of a munition millionaire, and rollin' in tin," answered Jimmy Silver. "It looks as if he will have plenty of friends at Rookwood. Hallo, here's Tubby!"

Tubby Muffin came out of the School House rather hastily, looking very red and flustered. He cast a wrathful and reproachful glance at the chums of the Fourth as he passed, on his way to the gates. He was wearing a topper; but it was evidently his own topper, for it was decidedly untidy, and there were sticky stains of toffee on it.

"Hallo! Off to meet your Baggy pal?" asked Jimmy Silver cheerily, as the fat Classical rolled by.

Tubby Muffin paused.

"You fellows can sheer off!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"I don't want your company this afternoon," said Tubby loftily. "None of your wedgin' in, you know."

"Wedgin' in!" exclaimed Lovell. "That's it! You're jolly well not coming to the station with me!" said Tubby Muffin emphatically. "I've found out about young Beresford-Baggs, and he belongs to me—practically. You fellows should have found out for yourselves if you wanted to make up to him."

"Make up to him!" repeated Raby blankly.

"Yes; you leave him alone."

"You fat rotter!" roared Lovell. "Do you think we'd touch the boulder with a barge-pole?"

Tubby Muffin sniffed.

"Well, you sheer off," he said. "I don't want you wedgin' in. Beresford-Baggs is going to be my pal, and you can put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

"You—you—" stammered Jimmy Silver.

Tubby Muffin rolled on; but he paused again. "If you'll lend me your topper, Jimmy, I'll introduce you to Beresford-Baggs, later. Honour bright! I say, you might play up, you know. That beast Smythe of the Shell kicked me when I asked him for—"

"Then I'll follow Smythe's example," said Jimmy Silver, raising his foot.

Tubby Muffin rolled on hurriedly, without giving the captain of the Fourth time to follow Smythe's example.

"Young Baggs is going to be popular," grinned Newcome. "I suppose it's something to be a millionaire, even if it's made in munitions. I wonder what sort of an outsider the fellow is?"

"Oh, he may be decent," said Jimmy Silver tolerantly. "No need to be down on him before we see him. He can't be old enough to know much about the munitions, if he's coming into the Fourth, here. Hallo! Here's the merry Adolphus in all his glory."

Smythe of the Shell came out, with his chums Howard and Tracy. The great Adolphus certainly was in all his glory. He generally was glorious, so far as his garments went; in fact, the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Shell. Now he was more glorious than ever. Never had his topper looked so shiny, or his beautiful boots so polished, or his trousers so elegantly creased. Adolphus was evidently dressed to kill.

He condescended to bestow a nod upon the grinning Fourth-Formers. But that was not merely graciousness; it was soon apparent that Adolphus was in search of information, like Peele of the Fourth a short time before.

"You fellows heard about the new chap?" he inquired.

"Oh, yes!"

"Just a few!" grinned Lovell.

"Know exactly when he's arrivin' at Rookwood?" asked Smythe.

"Not exactly!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "But he's coming this afternoon. His father's a munition millionaire, and he's rolling in oof. His family crest is an oof-bird, on the wing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I suppose he'll come by the three train," remarked Adolphus carelessly.

"Muffin thought so," smiled Jimmy Silver. "You fellows going to meet him?"

"Well, we thought of strollin' along. Nothin' special to do; and a chap may as well be civil to a new kid."

"Oh, quite! This is the first time you've wasted any civility on a new kid in the Fourth; but better late than never. Give him our kindest regards," said Jimmy Silver, "and tell him we'll have him to tea if he's sufficiently gilt-edged."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Adolphus Smythe replied with a snuff, and walked on with his nutty comrades.

"Hadh't we better go along to the station?" grinned Lovell. "A good part of Rookwood seems to be congregating there this afternoon. We don't want to be the only chaps who don't know the Oof King."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. headed for the gates, but did not turn into the road to Coombe. They were rather curious about the new fellow, whose coming was causing such a flutter in a certain section of the Lower School at Rookwood. As a matter of fact, they might have dropped in at the station to speak a word or two to a new fellow who was unacquainted with anyone at the school; but on the present occasion, such a kind attention would certainly have been misunderstood.

Moreover, there was no lack of fellows to welcome Master Beresford-Baggs. Certainly he wouldn't feel lonely when he arrived.

So the Fistical Four turned into a path that led to the Rookham road. They were out for a ramble, and were quite willing to leave making the acquaintance of Beresford-Baggs till a later time; indeed, they were not particularly anxious to make it at all.

"Hallo! That's a whackin' car," Arthur Edward Lovell remarked, as they came out of the footpath into the high-road to Rookham.

An immense motor-car was halted there; and the chauffeur seemed to be in discussion with a stout, red-faced gentleman, in a white waistcoat and silk hat, inside the car. Beside the stout gentleman sat a lad in Etons—a rather good-looking lad, with a chubby face and a cheery manner. The Fistical Four glanced at them; and as they came by, the stout gentle-

man ceased speaking to the chauffeur and called to them:

"Hi!" Jimmy Silver & Co. stopped politely.

"Which is the turning for Rookwood School?" inquired the stout gentleman, blinking at them over a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. "There seems to be no sign-post about. Do you know, what?"

"Certainly!" answered Jimmy Silver, rather interested to find that the "whacking" motor-car was bound for Rookwood. "Turn to the right about a quarter of a mile on."

"Oh, are you sure?"

"Oh, yes!" said Jimmy, with a smile. "We belong to Rookwood, you see."

"Oh! Rookwood boys, what?" said the stout gentleman, staring at them. "Arthur, these are some of your future schoolfellows."

"Yes, father."

The boy in the car looked at the Fistical Four, and the Fistical Four looked at him. The same thought came into four minds at once. Evidently this was the new fellow.

"Oh!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "The new chap for the Fourth! Might I ask if your name is Beresford-Baggs, sir?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Lovell. The car restarted, the chums of Rookwood respectfully "capping"

"Fancy meetin' you!" grunted Townsend.

"Waitin' for somebody?"

"Oh, yes! What do you fellows want?"

"Oh, we're expectin' a new chap."

Townsend and Topham exchanged a glance. This was confirmation of their suspicion.

"Look here—" began Topham. "You waitin' for the same chap?" asked Gower sarcastically.

"We're thinkin' of showin' some civility to young Beresford-Baggs," said Townsend haughtily. "I don't see why you fellows need wedge in."

"I suppose we can be civil to a new chap, can't we?" demanded Lattrey warmly.

"I think I know what your civility to a millionaire's son means!" retorted Townsend, with a curl of the lip.

"And what does yours mean?" sneered Lattrey.

"If you mean, Lattrey, you cad, that—"

"Oh, I don't mean any more than you mean," said Lattrey. "I'm goin' to be civil to young Beresford-Baggs, that's all."

"Don't rag," suggested Peele. "Not to put too fine a point on it, we're all on the same game, an' I suggest whackin' out the Baggs bird. There's enough of him to go round."

"That's fair!" grinned Gower.

Five pairs of eyes were turned upon him at once.

"That fat rotter!" murmured Peele. "Surely he's not got the cheek to—Hallo, Muffin, what are you here for?"

Tubby blinked at him suspiciously. "I've come along to meet my friend Beresford-Baggs," he answered. "What are you fellows doing here?"

"You don't know Beresford-Baggs!" exclaimed Gower angrily. "Well, you don't, either," retorted Tubby.

Peele made a threatening gesture. "You clear off, Muffin!" he exclaimed.

"I'm jolly well not going to clear off!" exclaimed Reginald Muffin indignantly. "Clear off yourself, if you come to that! I'm going to be civil to the new kid, and make him feel at home—"

"We'll do all the civility that's required—"

"You jolly well won't!" said Tubby emphatically. "I know what you want, Peele; you're after the new kid's money! That's your sort. I'm going to protect him from you rotters, I can tell you!"

"Look here—"

"Yah!"

Townsend and Topham exchanged a lofty glance of scorn.

"What a scene!" murmured Townsend loftily. "Awful gang of out-

"What may you fellows be happenin' to be doin' here?" asked Adolphus.

"I'm waiting for Baggs!" piped Tubby Muffin.

"We're waiting for a new chap," said Peele, glowering at Adolphus Smythe. "Chap comin' into the Fourth! I suppose you're not here to meet him."

"Yaas, as it happens."

"You fags had better clear off!" suggested Tracy.

There was a snort of angry dissent from the Fourth-Formers.

"You clear off!" exclaimed Gower. "The new kid's Fourth, not Shell; he's nothin' to do with you!"

"Look here—"

"You look here—"

"Rats!"

"I jolly well tell you—"

"Hallo! Here comes the train!"

The altercation ceased as the three o'clock train came rolling into the station.

"Keep together, you chaps," whispered Peele. "We've got to bag him before any of those pushin' cads can get hold of him."

"Yes, rather!"

The train stopped, and three or four doors were thrown open. Nine pairs of eyes watched the passengers hungrily as they alighted.

Nine faces gradually lengthened.

Exactly what Master Beresford-Baggs was like the Rookwooders did not know, but there was no one among the passengers in the local train from Rookham that could possibly have been a new fellow for the Fourth Form at Rookwood.

There was, in fact, no boy at all among the half dozen passengers who alighted and made for the exit.

The train rolled out, leaving nine disappointed and angry millionaire-hunters glowering on the platform.

"He's not come!"

"Oh dear!"

"Rotten!"

"After all, we weren't sure of the train," murmured Peele. "Better wait for the next."

"That's an hour!" groaned Gower.

"Can't be helped."

Peele & Co. decided to remain. Towny and Topy evidently came to the same decision, for they continued sauntering at their end of the platform.

Smythe & Co. stood in a group, discussing the situation; but they wound up by staying. As for Tubby Muffin, he was a fixture. He would have waited from early morn till dewy eve for the first chance at a new fellow who was "rolling in tin."

So the nine juniors waited, with growing impatience and chagrin. It seemed an age before the next train came in from Rookham.

But it came in at last.

And again it was drawn blank. Peele, gritting his teeth, cut away to the booking-office to make an inquiry. He returned with the news that the only other local train that afternoon would come in at six—evidently too late to be the bearer of the new junior.

"He—he—he isn't coming, after all!" babbled Gower.

"Oh crickey!"

"Or—he's come down another way!" mumbled Peele. "May have come by car."

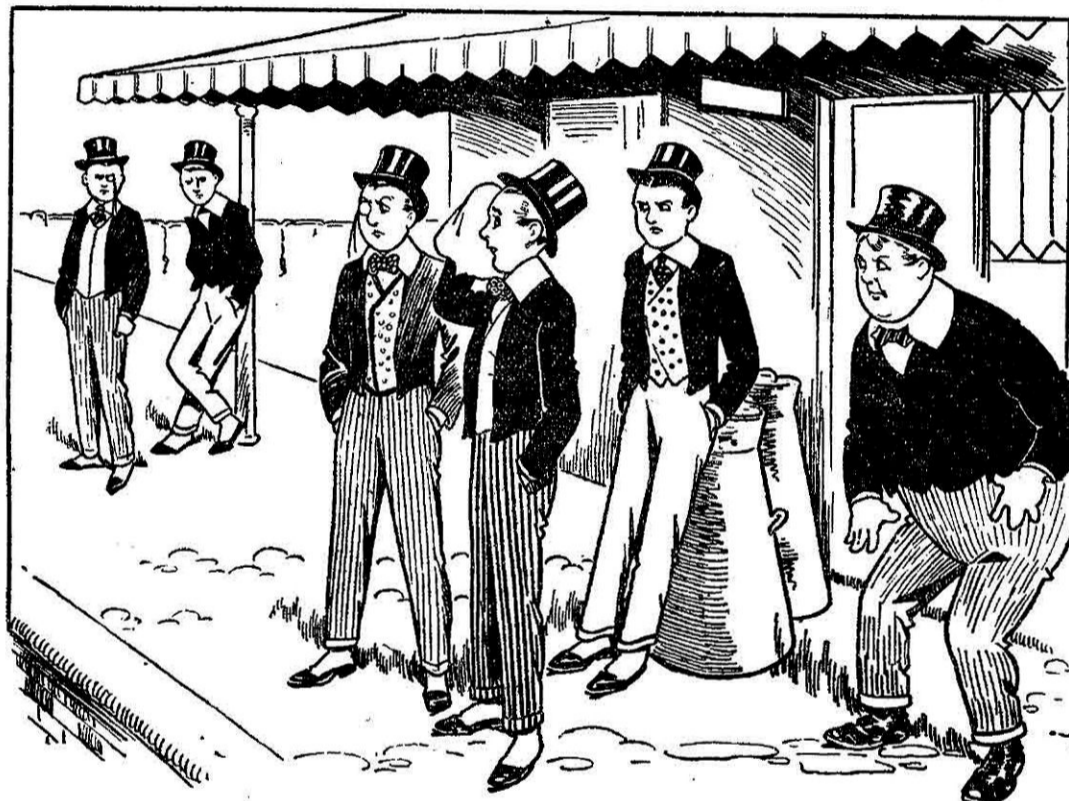
"You ass, not to think of that before!"

"Well, you didn't think of it."

"Oh rats!"

Peele & Co. stamped savagely out of the station. Smythe & Co. followed them. Then came Townsend and Topham, and last but not least, Tubby Muffin.

A tired and chagrined procession started for Rookwood School, Tubby Muffin wearily bringing up the rear.



**WAITING FOR THE NEW BOY!** The two parties were eyeing one another morosely, when there came an interruption in the shape of Tubby Muffin. Fat and shiny, in a sticky silk hat, he rolled on to the platform. "Hallo, Muffin, what are you doing here?" asked Peele. "I've come to meet my friend Beresford-Baggs!" answered Tubby.

the stout gentleman as he departed. The huge car disappeared in a whirl of dust.

Then the Fistical Four looked at one another.

"Beresford-Baggs!" murmured Jimmy Silver. "That's the giddy millionaire, and that's the new kid! He's not coming down by train, after all—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And those silly asses are waiting for him at the station!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The big car whirled and thrashed on to Rookwood—and at the station in Coombe several youths waited to welcome the millionaire's son who was arriving by another route. And Jimmy Silver & Co., as they thought of it, chortled loud and long.

**The 4th Chapter. He Cometh Not!**

"Oh gad! What do they want?" Townsend and Topham were lounging elegantly on the platform in Coombe Station when Peele & Co. arrived. The nuts of the Fourth looked at the new arrivals with considerable suspicion.

They knew why they themselves were there—so they couldn't help suspecting why Peele & Co. were there.

Peele, Lattrey, and Gower seemed equally suspicious. They came along to speak to Towny and Topy.

"Fancy meetin' you fellows here!" remarked Cyril Peele.

Townsend curled his aristocratic lip still more. He was far too lofty to have it put on that footing. There was, in fact, a difference between Towny and Peele.

Townsend and Topham intended to make of the millionaire's son a useful acquaintance, whom they would patronise and snub and make use of; while Peele & Co. were planning to initiate the hapless youth into the mysteries of banker and poker, and thus relieve him of some of his too ample cash.

Towny and Topy had no idea whatever of placing themselves on a level with the shady trio.

Instead of accepting Peele's offer to "whack out" Master Beresford-Baggs, therefore, Townsend turned haughtily upon his heel, and walked away with Topham to the other end of the platform.

"Cheeky cad!" said Gower angrily. "They're on the same lay, but they won't give it a name."

Peele shrugged his shoulders. "Anyhow, we're going to bag Baggs!" he said. "If necessary, we'll jolly well mop up those two noodles. Baggs is our game."

"Hear, hear!"

It was still very early for the three train, and the five juniors waited—the two parties eyeing one another morosely. There came an interruption to the suspicious mutual eyeing, however. Tubby Muffin, fat and shiny, in a sticky silk hat, rolled on to the platform.

siders, the lot of them. It will be rather pleasant for the new chap to find a couple of decent fellows here to speak to him; otherwise, I wouldn't remain."

"Oh, exactly!" concurred Topham. There was a further exchange of compliments between Tubby Muffin and Peele & Co., but the fat Classical had his way—he stayed. It was not quite feasible to eject him by force from the station—and certainly there was no other way of getting rid of him.

Six juniors now were waiting for Arthur Beresford-Baggs to arrive; and they were all feeling very restive. They could not help wondering what effect such a reception would have upon Master Baggs. One or two or three fellows welcoming him was all very well, but half a dozen—divided into three hostile parties—was really rather overdoing it.

But none of the rival parties was inclined to yield the prize to the others, so they all remained, glowering at one another.

And then came the arrival of Smythe & Co., of the Shell. Smythe and Howard and Tracy sauntered elegantly upon the platform, and stopped dead at the sight of six Rookwood juniors there.

"By gad!" ejaculated Adolphus Smythe.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Cyril Peele in dismay. "The Shell have got on to it now!"

Smythe & Co. came elegantly on, after a pause of astonishment.

**The 5th Chapter. Bagging Baggs!**

Jimmy Silver & Co. came in from their ramble as a tremendous car snorted out of the gates of Rookwood School. In the car sat the stout gentleman in the white waistcoat, lofty and important.

It only needed a glance at that stout gentleman to see that he was what Reginald Muffin would have called "rolling in it." He was a very expensive-looking gentleman from top to toe, worth probably, as Raby remarked, a couple of hundred "quid" in what he stood up in.

The car was worth two thousand in all probability. It was very apparent that in war-time munitions were more profitable to the men who made them than to the men who used them.

"Looks a good-natured old codger, all the same," Lovell observed, as the Fistical Four stood aside for the big car to pass. "Loud as a big drum, but I dare say his heart's in the right place, though perhaps his features aren't quite."

"So he's a bit!" said Jimmy Silver, as the car whirled away. "He's left young Hopeful to the tender mercies of Rookwood."

"Rookwood's mercies will be tender enough to the heir of that motor-car and that waistcoat."

The juniors chuckled. "He's made lots of friends already!" grinned Lovell. "There's that noble army of martyrs waiting for him at the station—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And there will be plenty more to take care of him here. I wonder who will bag him for a pal?" continued Arthur Edward Lovell reflectively. "He will have his uses as a pal. Shall we rope him into the end study and make him exude pound notes?"

"Well, a pound note would come in handy this afternoon," remarked Jimmy Silver. "Never mind. Rawson's asked us to tea, and, as we're next door to stony, we'd better drop in on Rawson."

"Right you are!"

The Fistical Four walked into the School House, where they found a good many fellows discussing the newly-arrived heir of millions. Mornington came up to them.

"Seen him?" he asked.

"Whom?" inquired Jimmy Silver carelessly.

"Haven't you heard? Where were you born?" grinned Mornington. "Don't you know young Beresford-Baggs, the son of Sir Shrapnel Howitzer, or something of the sort, has arrived? Didn't you spot the motor? Talboys of the Fifth was offerin' two to one that it was too big to get through the gates. Millions of money—made in munitions. The old gent was breathin' it. He tipped the junior Baggs before he went, and what do you think he tipped him?"

"Well, what?"

"Two tenners!" said Mornington. "Before all the fellows—a couple of tenners! Quite a little dramatic scene, with a dozen chaps lookin' on! How does that strike you?"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"Well, if the poor man is happy with his tenners, let him be happy," he said indulgently. "Perhaps he hasn't always had tenners."

"That's jolly certain. It's pretty

well known that he was poor before the war," said Mornington. "He hasn't even yet learned to take care of his finger-nails, and he doesn't know that he oughtn't to put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat. He did it."

"A man may put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and yet be honest!" said Jimmy Silver sententiously.

"Possibly," yawned Mornington; "but he is a merry old coker, an' no mistake. The kid seems a bit better—not exactly a chip of the old block. He's with Bootles now. Conroy saw him comin' out after seein' the Head, and he says the Head looked quite pale. I suppose that old jolney could buy up Rookwood lock, stock, and barrel without missin' the money. I call it rotten! If a boulder must make a fortune out of munitions, he needn't send his son to Rookwood on the strength of it."

Morny's tone was a little bitter.

"Why not join in the chorus and bag some of his superfluous cash?" suggested Lovell. "I dare say he's been sent here to get on friendly terms with some of the nob. You're a nob, Morny."

"Oh rats!" said Morny ungraciously. "I shall cut him, I know that!"

And he walked away.

"Poor old Morny's got his rag out!" murmured Raby. "Everybody don't seem keen on young Munitions, after all. I don't see being down on the kid, but for goodness' sake let's keep clear of him, or we shall be lumped with Peele and Smythe and that crowd."

"Yes, rather!" agreed Jimmy.

The Fistical Four made their way to the Fourth Form passage, not failing to observe as they went that several fellows were hanging about near Mr. Bootles' study, with the evident object of fastening on to the youthful millionaire when he came out.

The 6th Chapter. Enter Beresford-Baggs.

"Hallo, you fellows!" Tom Rawson called out, as the Fistical Four came along to the fifth study. "Come in!"

"Right-ho!"

There was tea in Rawson's study. Townsend and Topham were absent; they were just then still on their weary way home from Coombe, Jimmy Silver & Co. were not sorry that the nuts of the Fourth were not there. The table was spread, and Rawson was making a mountain of toast. It was not often that Rawson "stood" tea to anyone, having little in the way of cash apart from his scholarship allowance; but for once he was in funds, and he had asked the Fistical Four, who were his best friends in the Fourth.

Jimmy Silver & Co. lent a hand, and the five juniors soon sat down to tea in a cheery mood. They chatted, but not on the subject of Master Beresford-Baggs, being probably the only fellows in the Fourth who were

not discussing that interesting young gentleman. As a matter of fact, in discussing the cricket prospects of the coming season the Fistical Four forgot all about the existence of Master Baggs.

But they were destined to be reminded of him. Tea was half over when there came a tap at the door of the study, and it opened.

Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth, presented himself. The five juniors rose respectfully to their feet.

"Ah! I am sorry to interrupt!" said Mr. Bootles, blinking over his glasses at the tea-table in his kind way. "You may come in, Baggs."

"Yes, sir."

Arthur Beresford-Baggs followed the Form-master in. Apparently, Mr. Bootles found the double-barrelled name rather too cumbersome for common use. At all events he addressed the new junior simply as "Baggs."

"Is not Townsend here?" inquired Mr. Bootles.

"He's out, sir!" said Rawson.

"And Topham—"

"Out with Towny, sir."

"Well, well, never mind!" said Mr. Bootles. "I have brought Baggs here to introduce him to his future study-mates. You will be his study-mate, Rawson, as well as Townsend and Topham."

"Yes, sir!" said Rawson.

"Baggs, this is Rawson of the Fourth Form, who will be your study-mate. He will introduce you later to the others. I hope you will be very comfortable here, Baggs."

"Thank you, sir!"

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

"As-h'm!—head boy in my Form it would be an act of kindness on your part to—h'm!—give Baggs any information he may require, and any assistance in your power," said Mr. Bootles.

"Oh, certainly, sir!" answered Jimmy Silver, wondering whether the Baggs' millions had not been quite without their effect even upon Mr. Bootles.

"I will now leave you to your new Form-fellows, Baggs."

"Yes, sir."

And Mr. Bootles retired from the study, leaving the new junior with the Fistical Four and Rawson. There was rather an awkward silence. Rawson had heard all about the new boy, but was not much interested in him, and as the poorest fellow in the Form he was conscious that too much civility on his part was likely to be misconstrued. Jimmy Silver gave his thumbs a rather conical look. They had determined to keep clear of the heir of millions, in order to avoid misconstruction, and here he was landed on them at the very beginning! They certainly could not leave the study with their tea unfinished to avoid him.

Master Baggs had coloured a little, and he looked rather shy, as any fellow might have looked in the circumstances. It was up to Rawson to

make him welcome, as it was Rawson's study, and after an awkward moment the scholarship junior did his duty.

"Here you are, kid!" he said, pulling along a chair for Beresford-Baggs. "Sit down! You haven't had your tea, I suppose?"

"N-n-no."

"Then you're just in time!" said Rawson cheerily. "Shove the kettle on again, Lovell, will you? Where's that toasting-fork?"

The supplies of tea and toast were renewed, and under their genial influence the new junior looked rather more happy and comfortable. The Fistical Four felt that it was up to them to talk, so they talked.

"How do you like Rookwood?" said Lovell genially.

"I haven't seen much of it so far," answered Beresford-Baggs. "I like it, though. Jolly old place."

"Been to school before?" asked Raby.

"No; I've had a tutor."

"That's rather jolly," remarked Lovell; not that he thought it was specially jolly, but for the sake of politeness.

"I had a first-class man," said Master Baggs. "Cambridge M.A. Father paid him a whopping salary."

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Hem!"

Beresford-Baggs seemed a little puzzled by those non-committal ejaculations, and he turned his attention chiefly to the tea and toast. By the time tea was interrupted, Lovell, as he remarked afterwards, had noted that Master Baggs had made precisely fifteen references to money. Apparently, Lovell was keeping count. Possibly Master Baggs would have made some more references to the important topic, but the interruption came.

There was a tramp of feet in the Fourth Form passage, a thump at the door, and it was thrown open. Quite a little dusty army crowded the doorway. Smythe & Co. of the Shell, Peele and Gower and Lattrey, Townsend and Topham, and Tubby Muffin, all arrived together.

They had come home at last, and they learned that the valued new junior was in Study No. 5. To Study No. 5, therefore, they marched, tired as they were. They were not too tired to make the acquaintance of a millionaire. Towny and Topy were smiling. Fortune had played into their hands; without effort on their own part the new junior was landed in their study as an inmate.

"Here he is!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "I say, Beresford-Baggs, old chap—"

"Good-evenin', kid!" said Adolphus Smythe.

"Glad to meet you!" said Peele. And they crowded in.

Jimmy Silver & Co. rose. Tea was over, and evidently their presence was no longer required for the entertainment of the new fellow. That could be left in abler hands.

"Well, so long, Rawson, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver. "See you again sometime, Baggs."

And the Fistical Four departed. Rawson stared at the crowd of invaders.

"What the thump do all you fellows want in here?" he demanded.

Smythe & Co. eyed him scornfully. They certainly did not want Rawson's company, but they wanted that of Beresford-Baggs very much indeed.

But for once Townsend and Topham, who were generally at variance with their study-mate, were in full agreement with him. They were anxious to see the last of their rivals.

"Get out of this, Muffin!" snapped Townsend.

"Look here, Towny—"

"Travel!"

"Look here, if you think you're going to keep him to yourself—"

gawled Tubby Muffin in great indignation. "Yow-ow-ow! Keep off, you beast!"

Beresford-Baggs looked on in great astonishment as Reginald Muffin departed suddenly, with the assistance of Townsend's elegant boot.

"So you're the new chap, kid!" said Townsend, with great genially.

"Been having tea? My dear chap, we're going to stand you somethin' better than that. Sit down, dear boy."

"You're very kind," said the new junior, with a stare.

"Not at all! Jolly glad to have you in our study! I'm Townsend—this chap is Topham. Smythe, do you want anythin' here?" continued Townsend in the most pointed way.

Adolphus Smythe gave a sniff, and walked out with Howard and Tracy. His designs on the new boy, whatever they were, had to be postponed. Peele and Gower and Lattrey looked rather surly, but they felt that Towny and Topy had the upper hand in their own quarters, and after some hesitation they followed Smythe & Co. Never had Towny and Topy been so glad to see their backs. And to add to their satisfaction Tom Rawson quitted the study. There was a scornful expression on his face as he went; but Towny and Topy did not mind that. They had eyes only for the new junior, whom they had bagged against all rivals.

When next Arthur Beresford-Baggs was seen by Rookwood he was walking between Townsend and Topham, who had linked arms with him on either side. And it was quite a triumphant march.

Whatever the friendship of his new friends might be worth, the heir of the munition millionaire seemed to have fallen into clover. He looked very merry and bright. His troubles at Rookwood had not begun yet. But they were going to begin.

THE END.

(Don't miss next Monday's stirring story of the new boy at Rookwood, entitled: "MORNINGTON'S ENEMY." By OWEN CONQUEST. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance.)

OUR SPECIAL FOOTBALL ARTICLE.



By JAMES CANTRELL,

The Popular Centre-forward of Tottenham Hotspur, the team that is out for the Second Division Championship.

As, no doubt, all my readers are enthusiastic followers of the fortunes of the various big football clubs, there is no necessity for me to point out that my own club—Tottenham Hotspur—has done pretty well this season.

Don't be frightened, though. I am not going to use up the space which your editor has placed at my disposal for the sheer purpose of blowing my own trumpet, or my club's trumpet, either, for that matter. At the same time, however, perhaps if I tell as plainly as possible some of the reasons why we are winning, you may find in those reasons a few lessons which will help your side to success on the field.

In the first place, I want you to feel assured that some of our success, at any rate, has been due to the fact that we have tried to play the game as it should be played. We have always made up our minds that we should beat the other fellows, of course, but we have never decided

that to beat them anyhow should be a part of our policy.

Doubtful tactics have been kept out of our play as far as humanly possible, and I am a firm believer in the ultimate success of players who go on the field determined to play the game according to the rules. In other words, the policy of going for the man and leaving the ball is much more likely to bring failure than success.

I don't mean to suggest that in our games the referee has never had to whistle for a foul by a Tottenham man. With the best intentions in the world, the energetic footballer will overstep the strict letter of the law occasionally. And sometimes, too, it is not always easy to keep one's temper.

Still, as I said before, I am a believer in playing the game, because, to put the point on its lowest plane, I am convinced that that is the best way to win matches.

Talking about the referee's whistle reminds me of another lesson which we have learnt, and, as it happened, the learning of it cost us a point. The lesson is this: Always play to the whistle.

Let me tell you of the incident I have in mind, and my point will then be made clear. In a match in which we played a few weeks ago, one of our opponents rather palpably handled the ball. Our defenders, confident that the referee's whistle would go, stopped playing; but, as it happened, the official in charge of the game did not see the incident, so the player who had handled was allowed to go on.

And he had actually scored a goal before our fellows, who had stopped playing, could get into a position to prevent him from doing so. That goal cost our side a point.

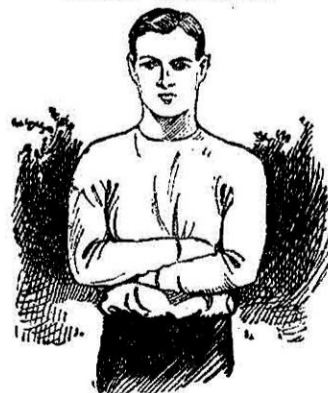
So, I say to my young readers, don't stop playing on the assumption that the referee's whistle will be blown for an infringement of the rules. Keep on. If the whistle goes no harm will be done. If the whistle does not go, then you will not have let your side down by stopping and waiting for it.

I expect you have been told more than once that the half-back line is the real heart of a football team, and that unless the heart is really good the other parts won't work well.

Never has that football truism been better illustrated than in the success of the Tottenham Hotspur side this season. Match after match have our half-backs dominated the exchanges, stopping the forwards of the other team from settling down to attack, and helping their own forwards to get goals.

In a way, too, we have been fortunate in regard to these half-backs, because they have managed to escape injury to such an extent that it has not been necessary to make much change in the composition of the middle trio. In fact, at the time of writing, I think our recognised half-back line has only missed about five

JIMMY CANTRELL.



The famous player who is the author of the accompanying article.

matches all told, and one of our men has played in every game up to date.

In other departments of the field we have not been quite so lucky; but, as I said, so long as your half-backs are all right, and in capital form, the rest of the team must do well.

Primarily, in the half-back line you want workers, and our three have been of the never-tired sort. Moreover, they have tried as far as possible

to keep the ball well down in passing to the forwards, and football is a game which ought to be played on the ground.

Taking it all through, our forward line is on the small side, so what chance should we have if our half-backs continually fed us with the ball high in the air? Such tactics simply mean that the opposing defenders get the ball practically every time.

Again, it is very difficult for forwards to get the ball under control when it comes to them through the air. Keep it low, should be the motto of the half-backs of any team which hopes to be successful. If they do that, and, in addition, are hard workers and good tacklers, their victories are likely to be more common than defeats.

Another point. The good of the side as a whole must be the first consideration of every player in the team if success is to be expected. A football eleven should not be a thing of units. It should be a combination in which every man Jack is prepared to sink all selfish feelings, and play all the time so that victory may come to his team.

If during an attack there is a player in your forward line in a better position to score than you are yourself, pass the ball to that player. Possibly he will get the applause, and your own unselfishness may be overlooked by the crowd. But don't worry about that. The footballer who plays for the applause of the crowd isn't likely to be of much use to the side.

Jimmy Cantrell



## The 1st Chapter.

## A Surprise for Frank Richards.

"That's a tough-looking galoot!" Bob Lawless made the remark as he rode away from the gates of Cedar Creek School, with his chums Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc.

The homeward way of the Cedar Creek chums lay through the timber; and as they entered on the trail under the trees, the schoolboys caught sight of the stranger.

He was sitting his horse motionless by the side of the trail, his gaze directed towards the backwoods school. He seemed to be waiting for someone or something; though why he should be waiting outside their school was rather a puzzle to the chums.

There was no doubt that, as Bob remarked, he looked "tough."

He was dressed in buckskin, very much the worse for wear, and the Stetson hat on his head was little more than a rag. His face was dark and lowering, the mouth and chin hidden by a long beard, the jaw square, the eyes deep-sunken and glittering. He did not look the kind of "galoot" that anyone would wish to meet alone on a dark trail.

As the three schoolboys rode by, the man in buckskin glanced at them searchingly.

He held up his hand suddenly, as a signal for them to stop; and, seeing that he wished to speak, Frank Richards & Co. drew rein.

"You're from the school?" he asked abruptly.

"Just out," answered Bob Lawless. "Stranger in these parts, hey?"

"I guess so." "Well, if there's anything we can do for you, you've only got to give it a name," said Bob cheerily. "Tough-looking as the stranger certainly was, the Canadian schoolboy was ready to oblige.

"I'm looking for a young galoot, name of Richards," said the man in buckskin.

"Frank Richards?" asked the owner of that name, with a smile.

"I guess so."

"That's my name."

The man in buckskin looked long and hard at Frank. The latter met his gaze with a smiling face, wondering what the stranger wanted with him.

"I guess I'll ride with you a way," said the stranger abruptly. "You're goin' through the timber?"

"Yes."

"That's my way, too."

The man in buckskin turned his horse into the trail.

Somewhat astonished, the chums of Cedar Creek rode in, in company with their curious companion.

They exchanged a glance as they started.

Between Cedar Creek School and the Lawless Ranch there was a long ride, and it was lonely in the timber; and the early Canadian dusk was already falling. And the long-bearded stranger was the least desirable-looking of companions on a lonely ride. But there were three sturdy schoolboys together, and they were not afraid. If the stranger's object was robbery, they had little to lose apart from their horses; and they were quite assured of their ability to take care of themselves and their steeds. But they were very much on their guard as they rode deeper into the shadows of the timber.

The man in buckskin kept pace with them in silence. Once or twice his gaze wandered to Frank Richards, but he did not speak. It was Frank who broke the silence at last, as the riders drew near to the fork in the trail.

"You seem to know my name."

"Sure!"

"I don't think I've ever seen you before."

"I guess not."

"Then how do you know me?"

"Only your name, I guess."

"You're jolly mysterious," said Frank, puzzled. "Have you any kind of business with me?"

"Yep."

"Well, go ahead and get it off your

chest," said Frank Richards. "I'm blessed if I understand you! How do you know my name if you don't know me?"

"Hold on hyer, and I guess I'll explain."

The riders were a good mile from Cedar Creek by this time. The man in buckskin pulled in his horse, and the schoolboys followed his example. They gave him plenty of room; keeping together in case of any sign of hostility. The man perplexed them utterly.

"I guess I've had a pow-wow with one of your schoolfellows," explained the stranger. "A little fat cuss—"

"Chunky Todgers, I suppose," said Frank.

"I dessey; I don't know his name. But I reckoned he was a galoot to chinwag, from his looks, and I had a jaw with him. He told me about you."

"My hat! What was there to tell?"

"You've got the pouch."

"What?"

"I guess you're my antelope," said the man in buckskin. "Listen to me. Nigh on a month ago, a man galloped past your school fence, and threw a buckskin pouch over. Isn't that so?"

"That's so," assented Frank.

"I guess I was that galoot."

"Oh!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "You didn't see who it was; and I guess I was in too big a hurry to stop.

The buckskin pouch, with the gold nugget and the map it contained, was locked up in safety at the ranch. Frank had wondered whether the owner would ever reclaim it, and whether he could regard it as his if the owner did not appear. Now, it seemed, he had appeared unexpectedly.

"You've got it, I reckon," continued the long-bearded pilgrim, his sharp eyes fastened on Frank Richards' face. "I reckoned somebody would have picked it up, and when I got away from the greasers, I came back hyer to look for it. That fat little cuss told me the hull story. His pard Frank Richards had it, and I guess I've been waiting to see you. You'll hand over that pouch to me."

Frank coloured a little. The man's tone was surly and threatening, and the schoolboy did not intend to be bullied.

"If the pouch is yours, you can have it," he answered quietly. "I've no wish to keep it if it's yours. But it has been claimed before—"

The man in buckskin started.

"Who claimed it?"

"Carlos Cabrera, the Californian. I did not give it up; I knew that he was not the owner."

"Good! But I guess you'll hand it to me; I guess I'm the owner—Bronze Bill, that's me."

Frank reflected.

"You'd better come on to the

his wrist and exclaiming, Frank grasped the weapon that had fallen into the grass.

In a moment his finger was on the trigger, and the barrel was levelled at the horseman.

"Go easy!" said Frank coolly.

The man in buckskin glared down at him savagely.

"Good old Franky!" grinned Bob Lawless. "I guess you'd better draw in your horns, Mister Bronze Bill!"

The man muttered an oath.

"Put that down!" he muttered.

"Rats!" answered Frank Richards cheerfully. "You're safer with a six-shooter looking you in the eye, I think."

"I guess so!" chuckled Bob.

"I reckon—"

"If the pouch is yours, you can have it," said Frank. "I couldn't give it to you now, anyhow, as it's at home. You can come on to the ranch with me and see my uncle."

"I guess there's no time to waste." Bronze Bill cast a glance round him into the deepening dusk of the wood.

"Do you reckon Cabrera doesn't know I've hustled back here? He got out of me what I'd done with the map—"

"You told him?"

"I guess any galoot would have told him, with a rope twisted round his neck till he spoke!" growled Bronze Bill.

"Oh!" said Frank.

"I guess I've got to have that map. It's mine," said the ruffian surlily. "Keep that shooter away, you young fool! It might go off—"

"It will go off if you try to play any tricks!" answered Frank Richards coolly. "It seems to me that you're not much better than Cabrera, whether the map is yours or not."

The man started.

"You've seen the map?"

"The pouch was opened in the presence of the sheriff of Thompson," explained Frank. "I haven't looked at the map, though. I thought I hadn't a right to, unless the owner failed to claim it."

The man looked at him hard and distrustfully. Evidently he was not

there will be trouble if it isn't handed over to me." Bronze Bill glanced round at the dusky shades of the timber again uneasily. "I guess I've got to hustle, or Carlos Cabrera will be ahead of me."

"You needn't be afraid of Cabrera," said Bob. "He won't dare to come back into this section. The sheriff is looking for him."

"I guess there's little that scared demon wouldn't dare, when he's on the track of a bonanza," answered Bronze Bill. "I shouldn't be surprised if he was moseying in this timber at this very minute—maybe watching us behind one of them trees."

"I guess not!" said Bob, laughing.

"You don't know him! Look hyer, if the pouch is at the ranch, I reckon I'll come with you."

"Come on, then, and no tricks!" said Frank.

"Give me my shooter!"

"No fear!" answered Frank Richards promptly. "I'll give you that when I say good bye to you—not before."

"Look hyer—"

"Nuff said! Are you coming?"

The man nodded a surly assent. Frank Richards remounted his horse, still keeping the six-shooter in his hand. He certainly did not mean to trust that deadly weapon into the ruffian's hands again until he had finished with him.

The horses' hoofs clattered on to the trail again.

At the fork in the trail Vere Beauclerc waved good-bye to his chums, and rode away to his father's cabin on the creek. Frank Richards and Bob kept on to the plain with the man in buckskin.

Bronze Bill did not utter a word during the ride to the ranch. His eyes wandered about him restlessly on the open plain after the timber was left behind.

Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, met the riders on the trail near the ranch-house. He glanced very curiously at the tough-looking stranger, and still more curiously at the revolver visible in Frank Richards' hand. The man in buckskin called to him:

"Say, have you seen any greasers on the prairie to-day?"

Billy Cook looked at him.

"I guess so!" he answered.

A deep shade of anxiety came over the man's face.

"A greaser with a scar?" he asked.

"Nope—just a greaser. He asked me if I'd seen any strangers on the trail," answered the foreman.

"One of the gang, I guess." Bronze Bill swept the darkening plain with uneasy eyes. "Let's get on. I guess I don't want to stop a bullet hyer!"

"This way!" answered Bob Lawless.

They rode on to the ranch.

Mr. Lawless met them as they dismounted outside the ranch-house. His look at the bearded stranger was rather grim.

"Who is this, Bob?" he asked.

Bob Lawless explained.

The rancher scanned the man in buckskin, and evidently was not favourably impressed with his looks.

"You can come in, my man," he said. "You may give me that revolver for the present, Frank."

"I guess I'm hyer for my property!" said the long-bearded pilgrim doggedly. "That pouch—"

"If the pouch is yours, you shall have it," answered Mr. Lawless curtly. "But none of your bulldozing tricks here, my man! You are not in the Californian sierra now."

Bronze Bill grunted, and dismounted from his horse.

He tramped into the ranch-house with Mr. Lawless and his son and nephew, and sunk sulkily into the seat that was offered him.

"Bring the pouch down here, Frank," said the rancher.

"Yes, uncle."

Frank Richards ran up the stairs to his room, and in a couple of minutes returned with the buckskin pouch in his hand. Bronze Bill's eyes glittered at the sight of it, and he stretched out his hand. But Mr. Lawless took the pouch from his nephew.

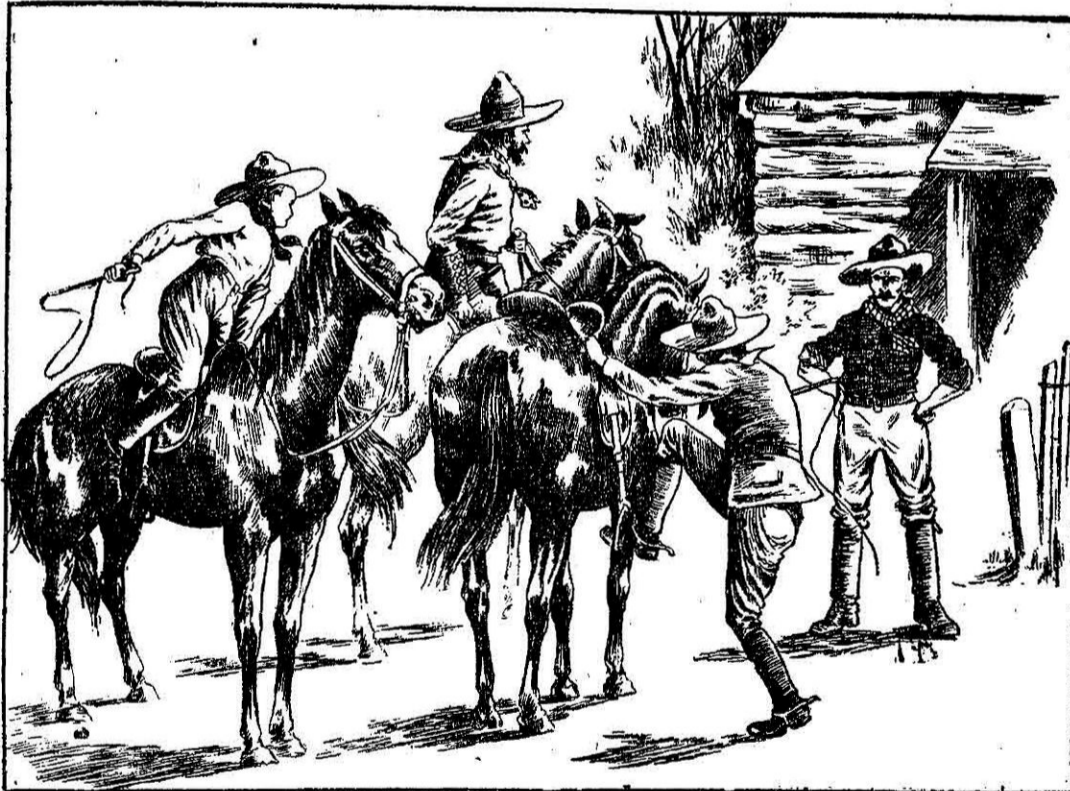
"I guess that's mine!" granted the ruffian.

"Very likely! And in that case you may have it," returned the rancher quietly. "But some proof is needed. The pouch has been claimed before. Neither of you boys, I think, saw the man who tossed it over the school wall?"

"No, uncle," answered Frank.

"But Chunky saw him pass, and he told us the man had a long beard."

"So far, so good," he said. "Probably this is the man; but we cannot part lightly with property that may belong to someone else. You



**THE CLAIMANT!** Mr. Lawless met Frank Richards and Bob as they dismounted outside the ranch-house. His look at the bearded stranger was rather grim. "You can come in, my man!" he said. "I guess I'm hyer for my property," said the bearded pilgrim doggedly. "That pouch—" "If the pouch is yours, you shall have it," answered Mr. Lawless curtly.

Carlos Cabrera and his greasers were arter me. They shot my horse on the trail and roped me in, but they didn't find the map. That was slung over the school wall, and they never knew it. They got me!" The man in buckskin set his teeth, and the look that came over his stubby face was not pleasant to see. "They roped me in, and I was taken away on Carlos Cabrera's loss—a prisoner! I've had a bad time since, with the greasers trying to get out of me where the mine was. But they didn't get much. They'll never lay their hands on my bonanza!"

Frank Richards looked at the long-bearded man with interest, as did his chums.

It was several weeks since the buckskin pouch had been tossed over the school fence by the unseen fugitive who had fled with the gang of greasers on his track. But the chums of Cedar Creek had not forgotten.

ranch and see my uncle, Mr. Lawless," he said. "I'll leave it to him to decide."

A very ugly look came over the bearded man's face, and he shook his head.

"I guess not!" he exclaimed. "You'll hand over that pouch at once, and if not—"

His hand flew to his belt.

But the chums of Cedar Creek were on their guard. As Bronze Bill's hand came up, with a revolver in it, Bob Lawless lashed out with his riding-whip. The man in buckskin uttered a sharp cry as he caught the lash upon his wrist, and the revolver went spinning into the trail.

## The 2nd Chapter.

## The Claimant.

Frank Richards sprang from his horse.

While the ruffian was still clutching

accustomed to dealing with "galoots" who possessed a fine sense of honour.

"You take your oath on that?" he asked.

Frank's lips curled.

"Certainly not! I give you my word, if you like."

"I guess it's all one. If you've seen it, you've seen it!" said the man in buckskin savagely. "But I reckon it wouldn't mean much to you—a schoolboy. I guess you don't as much as know where Mount Shasta is!"

"Blessed if I do!" said Frank, with a smile. "It's not in Canada, or we should have had it in our school geography."

"It's in California," said Vere Beauclerc.

"Is that where you come from, Mister Bronze Bill?" inquired Bob Lawless.

"Sure! And that's the map of my bonanza in Coffin Canyon, and I guess

know what is in this pouch, Bronze Bill, if it is yours?"

"A map and a nugget," said the ruffian. "A six-ounce nugget, and a map drawn on buckskin."

"That is true." The rancher paused. "I guess this is the right man, Frank. Are you willing to hand over the pouch?"

"Certainly, uncle, if you think I should."

"I think so."

"Let him have it, then!"

The rancher threw the pouch upon the table. Bronze Bill made an eager clutch at it, as if scarcely believing in his good luck, and eager to secure the prize before the rancher could change his mind.

He jammed it into an inside pocket of his buckskin shirt, and rose to his feet.

"I guess I'm obliged!" he said, as if feeling that some acknowledgment was called for, in spite of his surliness.

"There is nothing to thank us for," said the rancher. "The property is yours, and it is handed over to you. Whether you came by it honestly in the first place, I do not know—I think it doubtful. But that is not my affair. Here is your pouch, and here is your pistol."

Bronze Bill started a little, but the rancher's words seemed to reassure him. He strode towards the door.

"You seem to have ridden long and hard," said Mr. Lawless. "You are welcome to stay for food and drink before you go."

"I guess I'll git!" was Bronze Bill's reply.

"As you choose."

Bronze Bill strode out of the ranch-house, to where his horse stood waiting.

He swung himself into the saddle; and Frank Richards and Bob stood in the doorway, watching him as he rode away into the gloom. Night had quite fallen now, and the stars were coming out in the sky.

The dusk swallowed up the man in buckskin.

"There goes the merry map," said Frank, "and we haven't even had a look at it, after all! I wonder—"

He was suddenly interrupted.

Crack!

Sharp and clear throught the quiet evening rang the report of a pistol.

### The 3rd Chapter.

#### A Tragedy of the Night.

Crack!

Crack-ack-ack!

Shot followed shot in quick succession.

"Good heavens!" panted Frank. "The greasers!" muttered Bob Lawless. "Carlos Cabrera was on his trail, after all!"

Crack, crack!

Mr. Lawless came striding out of the house.

"What—"

Crack, crack!

From the distant darkness there was a thunder of hoofs.

The little group in the ranch-house doorway strained their eyes into the gloom; but they could see nothing.

"My horse, Billy Cook!" shouted the rancher. "Bob, bring me my rifle—sharp!"

"Yes, dad."

Bob darted into the ranch-house.

Crack!

It was the last shot from the night. Thud, thud, thud!

The thunder of horses' hoofs was drawing nearer, Bob ran out with the rifle, and Mr. Lawless grasped it. Billy Cook, in the porch, drew a big Navy revolver from his hip-pocket. What was happening out there in the darkness they hardly dared to think; but it was evident that the quiet stars had looked down on a tragedy. Bronze Bill, once more in possession of the map of the "bonanza," had ridden away from the Lawless ranch into the jaws of danger. On the darkened prairie the greasers had been waiting and watching.

Thud, thud, thud!

"He's coming back!"

Into the starlight loomed up a thundering horseman. It was Bronze Bill, leaning forward in his saddle and clutching the mane of his horse. His stubby face was deadly white, and there was a splash of crimson across one rough cheek. His revolver was grasped in a nerveless hand that swung feebly at his side.

Thud, thud, thud!

The frightened horse dashed right up to the ranch-house door, the rider swaying in the saddle.

Frank Richards and Bob sprang to his aid, just as he rolled helplessly from the horse's back.

They caught the falling form, and lowered it gently to the ground, the frightened horse backing away and whinnying.

Thud, thud, thud!

Hoofbeats rang from the darkened

prairie, and Mr. Lawless lifted his rifle, with a grim look on his bronzed face. Two horsemen came galloping up, and they reined in their steeds within six feet of the rancher.

"Cabrera!" exclaimed Frank Richards, as he caught a glimpse of a swarthy, scarred face.

"Halt!" rang out the rancher's voice sharply.

The two Californians, revolver in hand, stared down at him from their panting horses.

"Carambo! He is here! We want that—"

"Hands up!" said the rancher sternly.

Carlos Cabrera laughed savagely, and his revolver came up to a level with the rancher's head.

Crack!

The rifle spoke first, and the Californian's arm dropped to his side, a loud cry breaking from Cabrera's lips.

His companion wheeled his horse, and dashed away into the darkness, as Billy Cook's revolver began to ring.

In an instant he had disappeared. Cabrera's horse was rearing wildly, and the scarred man's right arm hung useless. He gripped the reins with his left, and wheeled round the startled animal.

In a second more he had dashed away after his comrade, and the night had swallowed him up.

"Billy Cook!" rapped out the rancher.

"Hyer, boss!"

"Call out the cattlemen, and search the prairie for those scoundrels. Shoot if they resist!"

"You bet, boss!" answered Billy Cook tersely.

The rancher turned into the porch, where Frank and Bob were supporting the fallen man. Bronze Bill had not spoken. Only a deep groan escaped him from time to time.

It was evident that the long-bearded man was hard hit.

The rancher looked down upon him with a grave face, and then knelt by his side.

Frank and Bob watched him anxiously, almost breathless.

"Thrice wounded!" muttered the rancher. "He has not ten minutes to live!"

"Good heavens!" muttered Frank. Ruffian the man was, there was no doubt of that; probably no better than the swarthy ruffians who had shot him down. But the hearts of the schoolboys were heavy as they looked at him.

"Carry him in," added Mr. Lawless.

The rancher and the two schoolboys between them carried the bulky form into the house, and it was laid upon a couch.

Frank and Bob stood silent, while Mr. Lawless did what he could for the wounded man. But there was little he could do.

Bronze Bill's eyes were closed; but they opened at last in the lamplight, and he cast a wild glance round him.

He made an effort to rise, but it was in vain. As by some invisible leaden hand, he was pinned to the couch upon which he lay. And he understood.

"I guess I'm a gone coon!" he muttered, in a whisper that they had to bend their heads to hear.

"I fear so, my poor fellow," said Mr. Lawless quietly. "Is there anything we can do for you?"

"Give me drink!"

Frank Richards brought a glass of water. The long-bearded man drank, and lay quiet for some minutes. Mrs. Lawless appeared in the doorway, but the rancher waved her away. It was no sight for her eyes.

Only the tick of the clock broke the stillness in the room. Out on the prairie there was a faint, distant echo of hoofbeats.

The wounded man spoke again at last in a whisper.

"They got me. I reckoned that they was on the trail. Carlos Cabrera wouldn't let up, I guess. They got me. I guess it's what I've earned. And now I'm goin'."

Silence.

Bronze Bill made a feeble movement with his hand. The rancher bent over him.

"What is it you want?" he asked softly.

"The pouch—the pouch!"

Mr. Lawless felt in the buckskin shirt, and drew the pouch from the inner pocket. There was blood on it as he drew it forth, and he shuddered a little.

"Open it!" whispered Bronze Bill. The rancher opened the buckskin pouch.

"The map!"

Mr. Lawless took out the map, and placed it in the dying man's hand. And then for some minutes there was silence, till the voice of the Californian miner broke it.

### The 4th Chapter.

#### The Greed of Gold!

"They got me!" Bronze Bill was muttering feverishly. "They got me! But they haven't got the map, and without the map, Carlos Cabrera won't find the bonanza on Cinnamon River."

His wild, staring eyes wandered round the room again. He made a sign of the head, feebly, in the direction of Frank Richards. The school-boy stepped quietly forward.

"You want me?" he asked gently.

"I guess so. Take it."

"The map?"

"Sure! I guess I give it to you."

Frank Richards took the buckskin map from the feeble hand.

"You want me to have it?" he asked.

"I reckon."

"I will keep it then," said Frank. "Keep it—keep it from Carlos Cabrera," muttered Bronze Bill in a voice barely audible. "I tell you there's piles of gold—heaps of it—in the arroyo on the Cinnamon River. That's what the greasers were after—the bonanza. You've seen the nugget—you've seen it—"

"Yes, yes!"

"That was a specimen—jest a specimen. I tell you there's heaps of it, and Jose Juarez' skeleton atop of it, in the arroyo. I guess—"

The voice trailed off.

"You'll keep it from Carlos Cabrera?"

"Yes, yes," muttered Frank. "He's no right to it—no more right than I had," muttered Bronze Bill.

"He was after Juarez and his bonanza, same as I was. I found him—found him in the arroyo, digging gold—found him there, and shot him down. Cabrera was miles away then."

Frank shuddered.

It was a confession of crime that was falling in muttered accents from the lips of the long-bearded ruffian.

What terrible tragedy had been enacted in the gloomy recesses of the Californian sierra—what dark episode in the long, dark tale of greed for gold?

Bronze Bill's sunken eyes were fixed on the schoolboy's face, but he seemed scarcely to see him.

"I shot him down, at the mine," he muttered. "Cabrera would have done it—but I was first. I guess you'll find Juarez' skeleton on top of the bonanza. Then I drew the map, for I dared not stay. I reckoned that the greasers was near, and they'd have heard the shot. I reckoned I'd have to light out instanter. I took jest one nugget, for a specimen, and hustled. I reckon I got clear; but arterwards—"

His voice failed again.

Frank Richards did not speak. He was listening with a creepy sensation of horror. Bob Lawless and his father stood grimly silent.

"Arterwards, I met them at Cinnamon Bar," the fainting voice went on. "I had the map—they knowed I had the map—but I couldn't stake out the claim, 'cause why, I'd have had to account for Juarez being killed there. Cabrera reckoned he would have it from me, but I lit out. I reckoned I'd come up North and get clear of them, and find some old pardners I knowed in the Thompson valley—I reckoned I'd find them. I'd knowed them of old days in the Red Dog saloon at Thompson. But the greasers followed me, and hyer in the Thompson valley they got me agin. And now—"

His voice failed.

Frank watched the white face as the eyes closed heavily, and stepped back. It seemed that the end had come.

But the wild, staring eyes opened once more.

"You keep it away from Carlos Cabrera," muttered Bronze Bill. "That greaser won't stick at much. You lock it up, and later on—years to come—when it's safe for you, you go to the arroyo and find the bonanza. I guess it'll make you rich for life. There ain't no owner—Juarez being killed, and me a gone coon. You keep it—you keep it—so long as Carlos Cabrera don't lay his hands on it."

And that was the last word of Bronze Bill. His eyes closed, never to open again.

### The 5th Chapter.

#### A Glorious Prospect.

"Franky!"

It was a week later, and the chums of Cedar Creek were riding home from school in the golden glow of the sunset:

Frank Richards' face was very grave.

The tragedy at the ranch had left a deep impression upon the chums of Cedar Creek, and it had not faded yet.

Of Carlos Cabrera and his companion nothing had been seen.

The sheriff's men had hunted for them far and wide, and all the way down to the American border they had been searched for by the Canadian Mounted Police. But they had made good their escape—though without the map of the bonanza for which they had stained their hands with blood.

They had been tracked at last as far as the border, and there all trace of them was lost.

Carlos Cabrera had vanished, and Frank Richards and his friends did not expect ever to see the scarred Californian again.

The buckskin map remained in Frank's hands—his own property now.

The dying "bulldozer" had given it to him, doubtless, chiefly with the desire to keep it from his rival in the quest of gold. But for some days Frank hardly cared to look at it.

But it had at length been examined by the chums, and by Mr. Lawless; and it was interesting enough. If the map told true, there was a valuable bonanza lying unclaimed, unknown, in the depths of the sierra, under the shadow of mighty Mount Shasta, in Northern California—a bonanza for which two men had already died.

"Franky," Bob Lawless was speaking quietly, as the three school-boys trotted under the sunset, "I guess I've been thinking—"

"So have I, Bob," said Frank, with a faint smile.

"And I," said Beauclerc.

"On the same subject, I guess," said Bob Lawless.

"About the bonanza?" asked Frank.

"Sure."

"And you think—"

"I guess that bonanza will be found and staked out sooner or later," said Bob Lawless. "And if it's going to be found, Franky, why shouldn't it be found by us?"

Frank Richards nodded.

"Just what I've been thinking," he said.

"And I," smiled Beauclerc.

"Bronze Bill gave you the map," continued Bob. "I guess he hadn't much claim to the bonanza, but the map was his, and he gave it. The man who found it is dead. There's no owner, and if we find it—"

"It's ours!"

"Well, yours, as the map is yours," said Bob.

"No fear! If we find it, we share alike," said Frank Richards. "All three of us or none."

"Well, that's fair play," agreed Bob. "Look here, why shouldn't we go? You won't be in Canada always—and now's the time. If we can get the popper to consent to our taking a holiday—"

"Over the border?" said Frank.

"Why not?"

"It's a good idea, but—"

"The school holidays are coming on soon," said Bob argumentatively.

"We were reckoning to make an excursion somewhere. We were talking about a run up into the Rockies for the holidays. But I calculate I'd rather have a run down into California—now."

"But will uncle agree—and your father, Cherub?"

"Why shouldn't they?" said Bob. "We'll put it to them, anyhow."

"No harm in that," agreed Frank. "But—they may think there is danger from Cabrera—"

"I guess that greaser has vanished for good," said Bob. "He's not got the map, and he don't know where to look for the mine. I reckon we can count him out. Besides, if he's still on the game, we run more risk from him here. This is where he will come to look for the map, if he is keeping on the trail of Bronze Bill's bonanza."

"That's so, too."

"If he does come back, he won't find us at home," grinned Bob. "And once we've found the bonanza, and staked it out regularly, and registered it as ours, he can't do anything."

"We'll put it like that to your father, Cherub. And you put it to yours, Cherub."

"Agreed!" said Beauclerc.

The following day Frank Richards and Bob Lawless tackled the rancher on the subject. Mr. Lawless' first reply was a decided negative.

"But it's a rich bonanza!" urged Bob.

"Possibly," said Mr. Lawless drily. "But there's too much risk attached to it. You can't go."

"But if the greaser is still after the map, he will come back here when the affair's blown over, dad. And it will be safer for us to be somewhere else in that case," said Bob cunningly.

Mr. Lawless smiled.

"There may be something in that," he admitted. "But, in any case, you could not go alone."

"You come with us, dad," said Bob promptly. "That would be tip-top."

"I guess I would if I could leave the ranch," said Mr. Lawless. "But that's impossible. I will think it over. If I think that there is little danger from the greasers, I might let you go, with Billy Cook perhaps to take care of you."

"Oh, good!" said Bob hopefully. "There won't be any danger from the greasers. The news that they're wanted has been sent to Shasta County in California, and they won't dare to show up there again, any more than here. It's all right about them."

The rancher nodded.

"Well, I guess I will think it over," he said. "Anyhow, you can't go before the holidays."

"We might get off a week or two early, if you put it nicely to Miss Meadows," hinted Bob.

"Well—we will see," said the rancher, with a smile.

Mr. Lawless did not seem to be in a hurry to make up his mind, and Frank and Bob waited hopefully. Mr. Beauclerc had decided that, if the rancher gave his permission, Vere Beauclerc could go with his chums—so it all depended on Mr. Lawless.

And a few days later the rancher announced his decision, which brought delight and satisfaction to the chums of Cedar Creek.

"I've talked it over with Billy Cook, and he reckons he can keep you out of mischief," said Mr. Lawless. "Mind, you'll be in Cook's charge, and you're to keep under his eye. So, if you like, you can take your holiday over the border."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob and Frank in chorus.

And they ran for their horses, to ride over to the Beauclercs' cabin with the good news. And from that day till Cedar Creek school broke up for the holidays Frank Richards & Co. were busy making their preparations for seeking Bronze Bill's Bonanza.

(There is another long complete story of Frank Richards & Co. in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND, entitled: "THE RIVAL GOLD-SEEKERS!")

## GOOD STORIES!

Mr. Brown: "I never pay old debts."

Mr. White: "How about your new ones?"

Mr. Brown: "Oh, I let them get old!"

Mrs. Goodsole (feeding tramp): "You seem to have a good appetite."

Hungry Higgins: "Ah, mum, dat's all I have left in de world dat I kin rightly call me own!"

Schoolmaster: "What is the meaning of the word 'tantalsing'?"

Bright Youth: "Please, sir, a circus procession passing the school, and the boys not allowed to look out."

"An author can sympathise with a criminal."

"In what way?"

"Both have to work out their sentences."

Caller: "Snip & Co. have employed me to collect the bill you owe them."

Owens: "You are to be congratulated, sir, on securing a permanent position."

He: "Our hostess was the most beautiful woman present."

She (not invited): "I dare say. She took good care to provide for that when she sent out the invitations!"

"There is a lot of fun made of straphangers, isn't there?"

"Yes; they are a standing joke in the community."

"I say, Jack, why so sad?"

"Asked the governor for ten pounds to pay my tailor, and to-day I received the receipted account."

Small Boy (who can't think what he has been sent for) to Chemist: "Three-penn'orth of what this bottle smells of, please!"

Alice: "My face is my fortune!"

Ethel: "Then you'll have no income tax to pay, dear."