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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending July 17th, 1920.

THE GOLDEN TRAIL



By SIDNEY DREW

STRUCK DOWN!

Before Jack could interfere Noakes made a spring and a pounce. It was his own fault, and he was the assailant. Whether his sudden rush startled the horse or Davri Archelos was too watchful, it is difficult to say. The horse reared, and the airman, as Sandy clutched his leg, raised the loaded whip he was carrying and struck down at Noakes' head.

(For Opening Chapters Turn to the Next Page.)

Ransomed.

Tim Horridge screwed his long neck round, and surveyed the formidable array of weapons.

"It's lucky Sandy ain't with us, sir," he said, without turning a hair. "They're pretty things to look at, them guns, and nice to nail on a wall for curiosities, only the triggers is rotten bad. They're likely to go off before you pulls 'em, and Sandy would 'ave expected that, and groused accordingly. There's one bit of joy, every cloud having a silver lining. If one does go off, sir, it may bust, and make a 'orrible example of the chap who's got it!"

Darby shrugged his shoulders. It was all so much like a cinema effect that he half expected to hear the clicking of the cameras. Then a little brown-skinned urchin ran past them, wearing nothing but the clothes in which he was born. He had a stick in his hand, and with it he struck a bronze gong that hung from a pole outside the only tent that had remained closed. At the summons, Ran Benallah whisked off his panama hat by the crown.

"A million apologies, gentlemen!" he said. "Those fellows are pure barbarians. I do my utmost, but I fear that I shall never be able to teach them even the rudiments of good manners. It makes me furious that I was born amongst them—that I am one of them. It angers me that, having been educated in Europe, I ever returned to them. I did so with the highest motives, and this is what I receive. Major Darby, unless my information misleads me?"

"That's so," said Jack; "only that I am no longer in the British Army, so you may cut out the 'major'."

He was not in the least surprised that his name should be known, for in the desert news travels with mysterious swiftness.

"I am Ran Benallah, and, although I am several shades lighter than these rogues, I am a true-born Bedouin, and hereditary chief of the tribe. Here my word is law. I have a good mind to flog a few of them!"

Ran Benallah waved his cigar in the direction of the tent. Two men advanced to take charge of the camels.

"Your servant, I presume?" said the Bedouin chief. "Is it necessary for—"

"Stay outside, Tim," said Jack. "Look after my rifle. And be jolly wide awake," he added in a half-whisper, "for I'm not comfortable."

It was a fairly spacious tent. There was a bookshelf filled with expensively bound volumes by English and French authors. A rotary fan caused a cool and pleasant draught. Ran Benallah seated himself on a cushion, and Jack seated himself on an easy-chair. An attendant brought coffee in little silver cups, and also a bottle of champagne, glasses, and cigarettes.

"The champagne is straight from the bottom of a well, Mr. Darby, and you will find it deliciously cold," said Ran Benallah. "It is an excellent brand. My religion forbids me to taste wine or any strong drink, but hospitality compels when I have a guest. Shall I open the bottle?"

"I suppose that drinking wine with you is not the same as eating salt with you?" said Jack.

By the old Eastern custom Jack Darby was quite aware that to eat salt with a man pledged him to be that man's friend. He did not know enough about Ran Benallah to be

One of the most skillful in any way like is to catch your opponent about the neck with one hand, while seizing his upper arm with the other hand. Then you step in with your left foot behind his right heel, and force him over backwards.

mean the same thing," said Ran Benallah, discarding his panama for a fez.

He uncorked the wine, filled two foaming glasses, bowed, and placed his own glass to his lips. Jack took a sip and nodded.

"Excellent stuff," he said, "and delightfully cool. I prefer my pipe to cigarettes, if you don't mind. And also, if you don't mind, Sheik Ran Benallah, we'll get to business. I want the boy Dick Archgray. He was kidnapped from my camp last night. The tracks were camouflaged, and that means that, even if your people had no real hand in it, they knew all about it, and were helping the people who carried him off, and are trying to put us on the wrong scent. Where is the boy?"

"They are very foolish people, wooden-headed dolts," said Ran Benallah. "By the grave of my father, this is good wine!"

"As good as I've tasted," said Jack. "On that point we are agreed. Now, what about the boy, sheik?"

Ran Benallah smiled. "I will tell you the whole truth, Mr. Darby," he said. "I try to be an honest man, but I am very poor. Vaziro's effects of Siwah, has a mer, if smoking in, they become irritated. Irritated likewise to suc. an

friend who is either a Greek or Bulgarian, I cannot tell. Davri Archelos, the airman, comes on a fast camel from my young son. He brings me, also, that he thinks it best to take any- Vaziroes is an arrant rogue, and I am very poor. Now, if he is not to be brought people, I can trust him. He tells me that for circumstances Archelos he holds two pounds in English money. He says, 'Go!' 'com-

three men and one boy encircled the well of the thirty palm-asket on his can capture the leader—you are sure to receive two hundred pounds for you are sure to receive only half the sum returned with the boy. That you forbidden an attack in force, some of our bloodshed."

Jack smoked his pipe thoughtfully. Here was curious information. It was true; but was it true? "I'm not a rich man, mys-Bandy, and riches are counted these times, it quality?" said finally. "I'd sooner fight towards pay; but I'm in a corner, and I'mornington fight this time, though I gen-astily, and fight can be done, you will be Whman's gate, you rise in the open. Come, will the gate feet from, stand easy, ti

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OUR SPLENDID, COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

FROM SCHOOL
TO SHOP.

A SPLENDID, COMPLETE
STORY OF THE CHUMS
OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL,
AND
VALENTINE MORNINGTON.
By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

A Very Troublesome Youth.

"Bootles looks worried!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell. Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned. There was no doubt that Mr. Bootles, the master of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, looked worried. He was feeling worried, too.

The fact that a fellow in his Form had been expelled from the school was enough to worry Mr. Bootles, who was a very kind-hearted little gentleman. But the additional fact that the fellow in question—Valentine Mornington—had refused to go home with his guardian, and was coolly and cheerfully "hanging about" near to Rookwood, was still more worrying. How to deal with so extraordinary a situation as that was a problem beyond Mr. Bootles' powers of solving.

Mr. Bootles was on his way to the Head's study, to hand the problem over to that stately gentleman, and he was far too preoccupied to observe the smiling faces of the Fistical Four as he passed them.

He tapped at the Head's door with a nervous hand, and entered.

Dr. Chisholm glanced up. The Head was not in a good temper that Monday afternoon. The affair of Mornington had annoyed him very considerably. He had been glad to wash his hands of the troublesome youth, and it was exasperating to discover that his hands were not so completely washed of Mornington as he had supposed.

"Well, Mr. Bootles?" he said, with some acidity. "Has anything been heard of that unruly and disrespectful boy?"

"I came here to speak about him, sir," said Mr. Bootles.

"It is unheard-of!" said the Head, frowning. "Sir Rupert Stacpoole should certainly have taken his nephew home with him. He has some control over the boy, I presume. I was astounded to receive his letter this morning, stating that Mornington had quitted him on the way home, and had not been seen since. If he should have the impudence to present himself at Rookwood again, I will be very angry."

The Head paused on the verge of a emphatic remark.

"The fact is, sir—" murmured Bootles.

"You have heard something of

have seen him, sir?"

Head started.

"the boy has been here!" he

d. "Has he had the audacity

the precincts of Rookwood?"

exactly, sir. I found him at

the gates!" repeated the Head.

ing with a number of the

ing with the boys!"

sir! I interfered—"

was very right and proper.

and boys must not be allowed

any communication with an

rebel!" said the Head em-

y. "The boy seems lost to

of shame. Although he no

belongs to the school, I shall

liberty of flogging him if he

set his foot within the walls of

ood!"

did not precisely do that, sir."

. Bootles. "He was standing

public road outside the gates.

excessively impertinent to me

impertinent indeed! I was so

ed—"

need not be astonished at

ing said or done by that young

The Head made an angry gesture.

"He must be removed at once!" he exclaimed.

"I—I was thinking, sir, that he should be detained, and sent home," said Mr. Bootles. "But he had the audacity to tell me that I had no authority to touch him now that he does not belong to Rookwood. I—I suppose that statement was correct?"

Mr. Bootles blinked inquiringly at the Head over his spectacles. Dr. Chisholm gave utterance to a sound strongly resembling a snort.

"He must be taken away," he said. "I will telephone to Sir Rupert Stacpoole immediately, and request him to send for his nephew."

"Very good, sir!"

The Head turned to the telephone, and Mr. Bootles quitted the study, glad that the difficult matter was off his hands, at least.

It was a trunk call to Stacpoole Lodge, and the Head had to wait some time before he was through.

He occupied that time by pacing to and fro in his study, with a knitted and frowning brow.

But the bell rang at last, and the Head took up the receiver again. The voice that came through was that of Sir Rupert Stacpoole, uncle and guardian of the scrapegrace of Rookwood.

"What—what? Is that Dr. Chisholm?"

"Dr. Chisholm is speaking," said the Head acidly. "There is news of your nephew, Sir Rupert. He has been here."

"Bless my soul!"

"It appears that he has now taken up his quarters at Coombe, the village near the school."

"The young rascal!"

"I shall be exceedingly obliged if you will send for him, or call for him, and remove him at once, Sir Rupert."

"Hem!"

"It is quite impossible for the boy to remain in close proximity to the school after being expelled. It will have a very deteriorating effect upon the discipline of the school."

Something that sounded like a grunt came along the wires.

Possibly the baronet was not chiefly concerned about the discipline of Rookwood School.

"May I take it that you will fetch him away to-day, sir?" asked the Head.

"How can I possibly fetch him away?" demanded Sir Rupert Stacpoole. "He deliberately ran away from me. No doubt he will return home when he no longer has any money."

"What? What?"

"You say he is in the village of Coombe. What is his precise address at the present moment?"

"I do not know, naturally. Doubtless he is somewhere in the village."

"Am I to take a long and troublesome journey, sir, to search through a village for a boy who will take to his heels at the sight of me?" exclaimed the baronet testily. "You must see for yourself that it is impossible!"

"But he cannot remain there, sir!"

"As I have said, he will doubtless come home when he no longer has any money. His impudence cannot last longer than that; and I am certain that he has very little money. You will doubtless see that his friends at Rookwood do not supply him with any."

"Certainly! But—"

"The fact is, Dr. Chisholm, I am a busy man, and I cannot spend my time in a ridiculous chase of a rebellious boy!" exclaimed Sir Rupert.

"He has chosen to run away. I shall give him time to come to his senses. If he chooses to come home and apologise for his conduct, I will receive him

into my house. Otherwise, I shall wash my hands of him!"

"But—but—"

"If you should see him, sir, you may give him that message from me. There is nothing more to be said."

"But—but—" stammered the Head.

There was no sound along the wires. Sir Rupert Stacpoole, apparently, had rung off.

Dr. Chisholm put up the receiver.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated.

He realised that Sir Rupert was just as exasperated with Mornington as he was himself, and that it was very probable that the baronet would not be displeased if Morny went away "on his own" for good. To ask the old gentleman to undertake a long, troublesome, and difficult chase in order to take home with him a nephew who caused unending trouble in his house, was really asking a great deal.

Sir Rupert's decision to leave the boy to himself till he had "roughed" it long enough to bring him to his senses was doubtless a wise one. It was wise, at least, from Sir Rupert's point of view. From the Head of Rookwood's point of view, it was most annoying, as Mornington seemed determined to haunt Rookwood with his obnoxious presence.

Ten minutes later there was a paper on the notice-board in the Head's "fist." In the severest terms it forbade any Rookwooder to hold any communication with the outcast, and, above all, to supply him with money. The direst penalties were foreshadowed for anyone who should transgress that severe prohibition.

The Rookwood fellows gathered round that notice in crowds, and read it with a buzz of comment. Most of the fellows made up their minds to observe the Head's injunction. But there were some who were doubtful on the point, feeling that it was up to them, to a certain extent, to lend a helping hand to a fellow who was down on his luck, and among them were Morny's chum, Erroll of the Fourth, and his cousin, little Erbert of the Second Form, and Jimmy Silver & Co.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Outcast of Rookwood.

"Cricket?" asked Lovell.

Jimmy Silver looked very thoughtful.

After lessons that day, the Fistical Four sauntered into the quadrangle,

and it was to be observed that "Uncle James" seemed to be thinking.

"May as well put in some cricket, Jimmy," remarked Raby. "What are you scowling about, old chap?"

"Get it off your chest, Jimmy," said Newcome encouragingly.

"The fact is, I was thinking about Morny," said Jimmy Silver slowly. "The silly ass ought to have gone home with his uncle—"

"He ought!" agreed Lovell.

"But he hasn't—"

"He hasn't, that's a fact."

"The Head says we're to keep clear of him," went on Jimmy, still more deeply in thought.

Arthur Edward Lovell chuckled.

"You can guess that the Head's in a state about it," he said. "If we see Morny, we'd better keep it awfully dark. Do you want to see him?"

"Well, he's down on his luck," said Jimmy Silver. "He's got some potty idea in his head of defying his uncle and getting a job somewhere. Of course, it's all rot. The fact is, his uncle isn't a bad old sport; he must have found Morny rather trying at times."

"You bet!" chuckled Lovell.

"Morny ought to go home," said Jimmy Silver decidedly. "I'd like to speak to him and reason with him. I know Erroll means to see him. Suppose we drop in at Coombe, and if we meet him by chance, that won't be disobeying the Head, will it?"

"If we meet him, it must be by chance," said Lovell thoughtfully. "We don't know where he's hanging out."

"Exactly."

"But if we go to Coombe on purpose—" began Raby.

"We won't do that," said Jimmy Silver. "We'll go to Coombe to have some ginger-pop at Mrs. Wicks'. See?"

"Ha, ha! Quite! Come on!"

The Fistical Four strolled out of gates with a very careless air. A junior was in the road ahead of them, going towards the village, and Jimmy Silver hailed him.

"Hallo, Erroll!"

Kit Erroll glanced round.

He waited for the Fistical Four to come up, colouring a little.

"You fellows going to Coombe?" he asked.

"We're dropping in at Mrs. Wicks' for some ginger-pop," grinned Lovell. "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to look for Morny."

"What about orders from the Head?"

"Morny's my chum," said Erroll quietly. "I'm sticking to him. I've a right to speak to my chum if I like, I suppose?"

"The Head doesn't seem to think so," remarked Newcome.

Erroll frowned a little.

"I'm sorry for that," he said. "I think I've a right. The Head's sacked Morny from the school; his authority ends there, I think. It isn't as if Morny had done anything bad—as if he wasn't fit to speak to. He's only kicked over the traces—"

"Only!" grinned Lovell.

"I mean, he's been unruly and disrespectful, but that isn't as if he'd done wrong. If a chap was expelled for stealing, for instance, we shouldn't want to speak to him, and the Head's order wouldn't be necessary. Morny has only been a reckless ass, and that's quite different. He won't do us any harm, I suppose? I'm going."

"The fact is, we're rather thinking we may fall in with Morny," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "Trot along!"

The five juniors walked down to the village together.

They thought it very probable that they would see Mornington, for it was most likely that he would be on the look-out for his friends from Rookwood.

That expectation was realised. Valentine Mornington, late of the Classical Fourth at Rookwood, was seated on the old bench outside Mrs. Wicks' little shop when the juniors came up. There was a glass of ginger-beer on the little table at his elbow. He nodded coolly to the five juniors, who stared at him.

There had been a considerable change in Mornington's appearance.

The most elegant junior at Rookwood, Morny had been the glass of fashion and the mould of form in the Lower School. Even after his fall from fortune, he had contrived somehow to be the best-dressed fellow in the Fourth. Smythe of the Shell, who spent four times as much on his clothes, never succeeded in catching Morny's elegance. But that elegance was a thing of the past now.

Morny was dressed in a cheap suit of tweeds, with a cheap tweed cap and heavy boots. The change was remarkable.

"My hat!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. "Is that really you, Morny?"

"Little me!" smiled Mornington. "Did you fellows come along to see me?"

"Impossible—it's forbidden. This meeting is entirely by chance," said Jimmy Silver. "But we're jolly glad to see you."

"I'd ask you to have some ginger-pop," said Mornington, "but cash is short. I haven't got a job yet."

"You get a job!" grinned Lovell. "Why not?"

"Well, there are a thousand reasons why not," said Jimmy Silver. "You can't do anything that it's worth anybody's while to pay for, in the first place. You're not going to offer a farmer to do Latin verses for him, I suppose?"

"Ha, ha! No!"

"Morny, old chap, you ought to go home," said Erroll, in a low voice. "I came to find you, and to advise you—"

"Then you're wasting your breath, old top. I'm not goin' home."

"Your uncle isn't a bad sort, if you treat him properly—"

"He's quite a good sort," answered Mornington coolly. "I dare say my Stacpoole cousins are good sorts, too. Only, you see, I can't stand 'em. If I go home, I shall be rowin' and raggin' with that lot before the first day's out. When we rag, they remind me that I'm a poor relation, eatin' the merry bread of charity. I'm not proud, but there's a limit."

"Oh!" said Erroll, in great distress.

"Of course, I am a poor relation, since my money went, and I have been eatin' the bread of charity," said Morny, with bitter coolness. "It's the fact; but, somehow, a fellow doesn't like havin' it rubbed in. But that isn't all. I can't stand my dear relations, any more than they can stand me. Old Uncle Rupert means well, but he bores me to briny tears. I'm goin' out into the wide world on my own."

"But what on earth are you going to do?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Get a job in the village, to begin with."

"Rot!"

Mornington smiled. "I've been goin' the rounds already," he said. "The school grocer won't take me on. He's afraid of offendin' the Head."

"You've asked him?" exclaimed Erroll.

"Certainly."

"Look here, Morny, if you're not going home, you'll want money—"

"I shall—bad!" assented Mornington.

"Well, then—"

"Nothin' doin', old top! I'm not takin' your money, or any money that I don't earn by the giddy sweat of my brow. Besides, I've got a good chance of a job. I've applied to the other grocer, Mr. Bandy."

"And what does Mr. Bandy say?" asked Newcome, with a grin.

"As he doesn't serve Rookwood, he don't care two pins for the Head, of course. Grocers are quite independent gentlemen, you know, when they haven't your custom. I've got a good chance with the Bandy-bird. If I can take a few customers with me, I'm pretty certain of the job. That's why I've been hanging about to see you fellows."

"Oh!"

"Of course, I don't expect you to know me in these trousers," continued Mornington. "Public school chaps don't know errand-boys."

"Don't be a silly ass, Morny!" interrupted Jimmy Silver gruffly.

"But, for the sake of old times,"

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went on Mornny, unmoved, "you might remember me and give me an order. You will always find me attentive to customers, and I shall know my place—rather a distinction in a tradesman in these merry days. By constant and respectful attention, I hope to merit your further patronage."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"It isn't a laughing matter—it's business. Can I take some orders for you young gentlemen?" asked Mornny. He touched his cap, and then took out a cheap pocket-book and pencil.

The Rookwood juniors blinked at him.

In spite of his ironical manner, Valentine Mornnington was evidently in earnest.

There was a good side to Mornny's peculiar character. In his high and palmy days he had never been a snob. Now that he was down on his luck, it was evidently his intention to turn to honest work—and he had too much good sense to suppose that there was anything derogatory in any work, so long as it was honest.

He glanced at the amazed juniors with quite a business-like air.

"I won't recommend Bandy's tea," he said thoughtfully. "His tea is rather a corker. What about butter? He gets his butter from a farm, and it's good, and four-and-six a pound. Would any of you young gentlemen care to sample our four-and-six butter?"

The juniors chuckled.
"If you really mean it—" began Jimmy.

"Of course I do. I tell you, I can bag the job at Bandy's, if I can take him some customers, and a few orders as an earnest of future custom."

The juniors exchanged glances.

The whole affair appeared to them in the light of a "lark," serious as Valentine Mornnington was about it.

"Well, it's a go!" said Jimmy Silver at last. "We can whack out a pound of butter among the four of us."

"One pound of butter," said Mornnington, making a note in his order-book. "Any sardines?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, put in a tin of sardines!"

"One tin of sardines. Cocoa—coffee—spices—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Fistical Four entered into the spirit of the thing, and they made up a list of orders for Mornny. That list of orders mortgaged their allowances for the week; but they felt that it was in a good cause. When the one-time dandy of the Fourth had taken down the list, he turned to Erroll, who was looking on in grave silence.

"Anythin' for you, Master Erroll?" he asked.

"If you call me Master Erroll, you ass, I'll punch your silly head!"

"My dear chap, I know my place," said Mornnington. "I'd be very glad to serve you. I can recommend our butter and cheese—"

Erroll burst into a laugh.

"Put me down for what you like," he said. "Make it come to a pound. I wish you'd give up playing the goat, Mornny."

"This isn't playin' the goat; this is startin' in business. I may be a big shopkeeper some day—sort of Harrods or Whiteley's. Big things come from small beginnings. Rely on me to give you the best value for your quid," said Mornnington. "The goods shall be delivered to-morrow. Will that do?"

"Ha, ha! Yes."

Mornnington rose.

"I'll cut off to Bandy's now," he said. "With an order like this, the job's mine. Bandy's as good as said so. He will be rubbin' his fat paws over the prospect of gettin' Rookwood custom. Excuse me, gentlemen. I have the honour to bid you a very humble and respectful good-after-noon."

And Mornnington touched his cap and walked away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. stared after him.

"Well!" said Jimmy, with a deep breath.

Lovell chuckled.

"What a change for Mornny! I wonder how long it will last?"

The Fistical Four were chatting outside the School House, after morning lessons, when Tubby rolled breathlessly by. The Co. regarded the fat Classical curiously as he panted.

"Well?" said Jimmy Silver inquiringly. "What's happened? Has Conroy found out it was you that bagged his cake, and is he after you with a stump?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Muffin. "I—I say, I've seen him—"

"Which him?"

"Mornny!" spluttered Tubby. Jimmy Silver held up a severe hand.

"Haven't you seen the Head's fist on the notice-board?" he demanded. "You're not allowed to see Mornny, you young rascal!"

"Well, I like that—when you went down to Coombe to see him yesterday!" exclaimed Reginald Muffin warmly. "I heard you telling Putty Grace. Besides, how could I help seeing Mornny when he's come here?"

"Here!" exclaimed the Fistical Four together.

"Yes, rather! He's here now!" gasped Muffin. "He's come to the back door with a basket—"

"A—basket!"

"Delivering groceries!" shrieked Tubby. It was out now! "What do you fellows think of that?"

"Phew!"

"Hallo! What's that about

"Goods from Mr. Bandy's, sir," said Mornnington.

"Who are you calling sir, Master Mornnington?" ejaculated the astonished Tupper.

"You, sir!"

"Oh, my eye!" said Tupper.

"Will you kindly take the goods, sir?" asked Mornnington, lifting the basket. "I have another round to make. Goods for five young gentlemen of this school, with separate bills. I think you will find them correct."

"Oh, lor!" said Tupper. He took the basket mechanically. Mornnington waited outside the door.

More and more juniors were gathering on the scene now; Tubby Muffin had spread the news far and wide. There was a chorus of chortles—though Mornny's face was quite grave. Apparently he was taking his new job with becoming seriousness.

"Here comes a merry prefect!" murmured Lovell. "I wonder what Bulkeley will say! Carthew, too."

Bulkeley and Carthew of the Sixth came up. The prefects had noticed the army of juniors streaming round the house, and they had followed to see what was "up." They expected to find a fight, or a "rag" of some kind going on, and they were astounded at the sight of Valentine Mornnington, in a white apron, waiting at the kitchen door.

grudge against Mornny had not been mollified in the least by the junior's expulsion from Rookwood.

"Get out!" he snapped. "I give you one second before I kick you out! Now, then—sharp!"

Mornnington's eyes glittered.

"May I appeal to you, Master Bulkeley?" he asked. "I have to wait for my basket, which is Mr. Bandy's property."

"Let him alone, Carthew," said Bulkeley. "If he's really delivering groceries, he must have his basket."

"Rot! It's only a cheeky excuse of the young cad's to wedge into the school!" exclaimed Carthew angrily. "You know that as well as I do, Bulkeley."

"Let him alone, I tell you!" answered the captain of Rookwood gruffly. "If you touch him, Carthew, you'll have to deal with me; I warn you. Mornnington, get out of this as quickly as you can!"

"Certainly, sir; only waiting for my basket," answered Mr. Bandy's new boy cheerfully.

Carthew gave the Rookwood captain a bitter look. He did not venture to lay hands upon Mornny after Bulkeley's warning.

"You are aiding and abetting this young rascal in his insolence," he said between his teeth. "I shall report this to the Head at once!"

Mornnington was waiting with complete calmness, but the fellows gathered round were decidedly uneasy. Carthew was certain to lose no time in bringing the Head upon the scene, and when he came—!

"Here he comes!" squeaked Tubby Muffin breathlessly.

And there was an awed silence, as Dr. Chisholm strode upon the spot, with Carthew at his heels.

The 4th Chapter.
No Orders for Mornny.

Dr. Chisholm stared at Mornnington. He seemed to find a difficulty in expressing his feeling in words.

Mr. Bandy's new boy touched his cap respectfully.

"Mornnington!" gasped the Head, at last.

"Yes, sir! Anythin' I can do for you, sir?"

"How dare you come here?"

"Excuse me, sir, I was sent to deliver groceries, for my master, Mr. Bandy, sir, of Coombe. I am also prepared to take orders. Perhaps you would like to give our bacon a trial, sir."

"Wha-at?"

"Best home-cured, sir—we keep no American stuff," said Mornnington, taking out his order-book. "We have in a fresh side, of the very best quality. If I may venture to advise you, sir, you should give an order now, as bacon is still short, and we may be sold out pretty soon. I should be very pleased to secure your custom."

The Head almost gasped for breath. The juniors were grinning again; but a glance from their headmaster caused the grins to die away on their faces. Dr. Chisholm's glance just then was not unlike that of the fabled Gorgon.

"Mornnington!" breathed the Head. "I command you to go to your home at once!"

"I'm goin' there, sir, as soon as Master Tupper hands out my basket. I live at Mr. Bandy's."

"I mean your guardian's home," exclaimed the Head. "You know perfectly well what I mean. I command you to return to Sir Rupert Stapoole!"

Mornnington shook his head.

"Sorry I can't oblige you, sir," he said. "We do everything we can to please the public, but there is a limit. May I point out, in the most respectful manner, sir, that you have no authority to command me to do anythin', as you are no longer my headmaster? Anythin' in the way of business, sir—"

"Boy!"

"If you would care to give our home-cured bacon a trial—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence!" shouted the Head; and there was instantly a silence that might have been felt. The juniors looked anywhere but at Dr. Chisholm—they did not want to meet his eye.

That eye glittered at Mr. Bandy's new boy.

"Mornnington, I am perfectly aware that this conduct is intended for insolent defiance!" said the Head, breathing hard. "It is correct that I have no authority over a boy who has left this school; but within these walls, sir, my authority is absolute. I command you to leave this place, and never set foot within these precincts again, on any pretext whatever!"

"But if my master orders me to deliver goods here, sir—"

"I will communicate with Mr. Bandy on that subject," said the Head, with a withering look. "Go!"

"Very well, sir; but I must take my basket."

Tupper, fortunately, appeared at the door with the basket, and handed it to Mornnington. The Head called to him harshly.

"Tupper, you are not to take anything in future that may be brought here by Mornnington. He is not to be admitted under any circumstances whatever. Bear that in mind."

"Yessir!" gasped Tupper.

"Now go, you insolent boy!" commanded the Head.

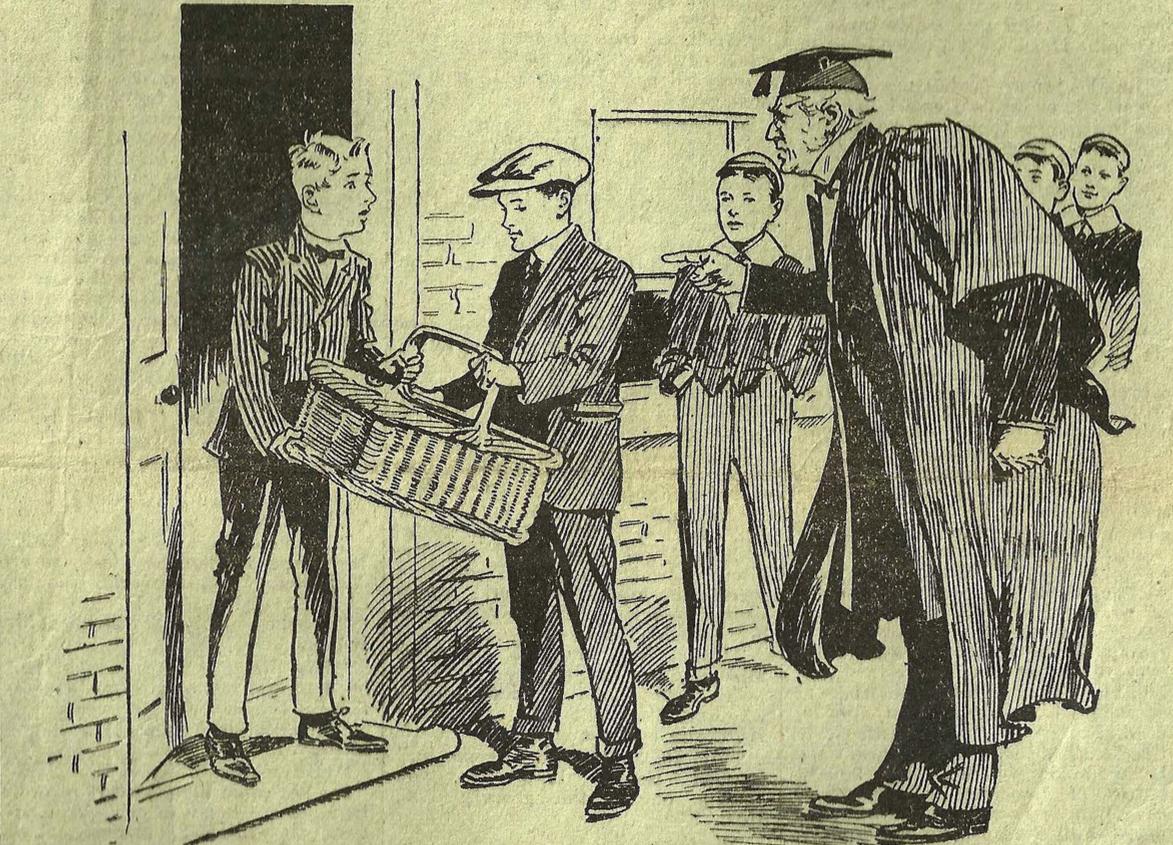
Mornnington put his basket on his arm.

"Certainly, sir! You are sure there is nothing I can do for you in the grocery line—"

"Go!"

"I may point out, sir, that you would do well to secure some of our home-cured bacon. The demand is very keen."

"Go!" gasped the Head.



MARCHING ORDERS FOR MORNNY! "Mornnington, I command you to leave this place," said the Head, breathing hard, "and never set foot within these precincts again. Go!" "Very well, sir," said Mornnington, "but I must have my basket. Are you sure there is nothing I can do for you in the grocery line—" "Go!" thundered the Head.

Mornny?" asked Tommy Dodd, the Modern junior, coming up. "Mornny still hanging about?"

"Delivering groceries at the back door!" spluttered Tubby Muffin.

"I've seen him! I say, he's wearing awful clothes. He's got a white apron on, too, tucked up, like a shopman, you know. I've just seen him come in at the tradesmen's gate."

"Another of Mornny's weird larks," grinned Tommy Dodd. "I'm going to see him!"

Tommy Dodd started off at a run, quite eager to see Mornnington in his remarkable new character. Five or six fellows who had heard Tubby's startling announcement followed.

Quite a little army of Rookwood juniors came round the buildings, and gathered round the handsome youth who was standing at the kitchen door.

It was Mornnington—and he was as Muffin described him. A white and spotless apron was tied round him, and tucked up on one side, in the proper professional style. He had put down a large basket stacked with groceries, and rung the kitchen-bell.

He glanced at the crowd of excited juniors as they arrived, and touched his cap with ironic respect.

The kitchen door opened, and Tupper, the page, looked out. Tupper almost fell down at the sight of Mornnington, with groceries.

"Hallo! Wot's this game?" asked Tupper. He stared at Mornnington, and he stared at the grinning juniors, and he stared at Mornnington again. Evidently Tupper supposed that it was a "lark."

"Mornnington!" exclaimed Bulkeley. "You again! What are you doing here, you young sweep?"

Mornny touched his cap.

"Business, sir," he answered.

"What?"

"I'm Mr. Bandy's new boy, sir," explained Mornnington. "I'm delivering the goods to the school."

"Great Scott!"

The Rookwood captain could only blink at him. Carthew struck in:

"The Head's forbidden you to enter Rookwood, Mornnington. Clear out at once!"

"I'm waiting for my basket, sir!"

"Don't be a young fool! Clear off!" said the bully of the Sixth. "I'll help you with my boot if you don't go!"

Mornnington did not stir.

"I'm afraid I couldn't go without my basket, sir," he answered. "There are other goods in it for my round."

"Do you want to make out that you're really a grocer's boy?" exclaimed Bulkeley.

"You will please yourself about that," answered Bulkeley, with a shrug of the shoulders.

Carthew strode savagely away. It was evidently his intention to bring the Head upon the scene, and the juniors began to look anxious. What would happen if the Head arrived and found Mornnington there, in his remarkable new character of grocer's-boy, they could not imagine.

"I say, better hurry Tupper up a bit!" murmured Lovell. "Mornny, call out to Tupper to buck up!"

Mornnington shook his head.

"I hope I know my place too well, sir," he answered. "Master Tupper must take his own time. I remember he always did take plenty of time about everything."

"But the Head's coming!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "Carthew's gone to fetch him!"

"I've no objection to seeing the Head, Master Silver."

"Eh?"

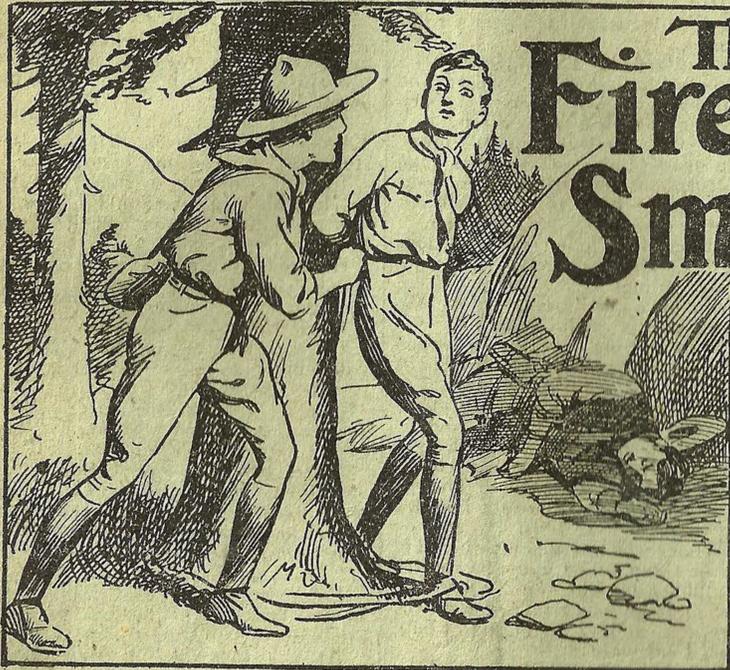
"Perhaps he will give me an order."

"Oh, you ass!" gasped Jimmy.

Tupper, within, was certainly taking his time in unloading the grocery-basket. Tupper was not a hustling youth at the best of times, and just now he was in a state of astonishment and breathless excitement. Cook and housemaid had to be told of the astounding reappearance of Mornnington before the basket was unpacked.

Two or three surprised and astonished faces were peering from the kitchen windows at Mr. Bandy's new boy. Mornnington touched his hat respectfully to the cook as he caught her glance. Cook gasped and disappeared.

A GRAND COMPLETE STORY OF THE BACKWOODS SCHOOL.



The 1st Chapter.
The Whisky Trail.

"There's the Cherub!"

Bob Lawless pointed with his riding-whip.

It was Saturday morning, and Frank Richards and his Canadian cousin had ridden away from the Lawless Ranch after a very early breakfast. There was no school that day at Cedar Creek, and the chums had planned a ride to White Pine to fill up the morning. Frank and Bob were to meet Vere Beauclerc on the prairie after breakfast half-way, but they were a good distance from the ranch when they sighted their chum at last.

"Lazybones!" said Frank. "He's taking a rest, instead of coming on towards the ranch to meet us!"

Bob Lawless shaded his eyes from the eastern sun and looked ahead curiously.

Vere Beauclerc had dismounted; his black horse was standing quietly in the grass beside him.

Beauclerc was on his knees, evidently examining something in the grass, which was hidden as yet from the eyes of his chums.

"He's found something, I guess," said Bob. "Seems to be mighty interested in it, too. He hasn't seen us."

The two schoolboys rode on towards Beauclerc, who did not look up till they were close at hand.

Then, as the sound of their horses' hoofs in the grass came to him, he glanced up, and jumped to his feet, waving his hand.

"This way, you fellows!" he called out.

"What the thump have you found?" asked Frank Richards, as he rode up. "A gold nugget?"

"No fear! Look at that!" said Beauclerc, pointing to the object in the grass. "I'm blessed if I know how it got here, or what it means! I saw it in the grass as I rode by."

"My hat!"

Frank Richards looked at the peculiar object in astonishment.

It was a big stone jar, with a flat, thick cork, which was wired over the top.

How it had come there, in the midst of the prairie, miles from any human habitation, was a mystery.

"I suppose it belongs to somebody," said Beauclerc. "It must be spirits inside it, I think."

"Whisky!" said Bob laconically.

"How the thump could a gallon jar of whisky land itself here?" asked Frank Richards in amazement.

Bob Lawless did not reply. His keen eyes were scanning the surrounding grass, in which there were signs of the passage of several riders.

The trampled grass showed that a number of horsemen had passed by the spot where the whisky-jar lay very recently—during the previous night, in all probability.

"It must have been dropped by somebody," said Beauclerc at length. "Ought we to take charge of it, and inquire after the owner? I suppose it's worth something."

"What do you think, Bob?" called out Frank Richards.

Bob Lawless had gone a dozen yards along the trampled trail, examining the "sign."

He came back to his chums, with a grave expression on his sunburnt face. "I guess that jar don't matter to us," he said. "But I think we'll look for the owner, all the same. Leave it there, and come along!"

The Fire-water Smugglers

By
MARTIN CLIFFORD.

when the chums of Cedar Creek had covered nearly half a mile.

"Stop!"

He jumped from his horse, and rolled from the grass close at hand a big stone jar, exactly similar to the one they had left behind.

"My hat, another!" exclaimed Frank Richards. "They were jolly well supplied with whisky, whoever they were!"

"And jolly careless with it!" remarked Beauclerc.

"I guess the pack had come loose," said Bob. "I reckon these jars came from a mule that was stacked with them."

"Stacked with whisky-jars!" said Frank.

"Sure!"

"I don't quite see," remarked Frank Richards. "This trail doesn't lead anywhere. The liquor supplies from Thompson Town come up in the post-wagon; they're never carried by pack-mule. And they wouldn't come

"But we're going to White Pine for the morning," said Frank.

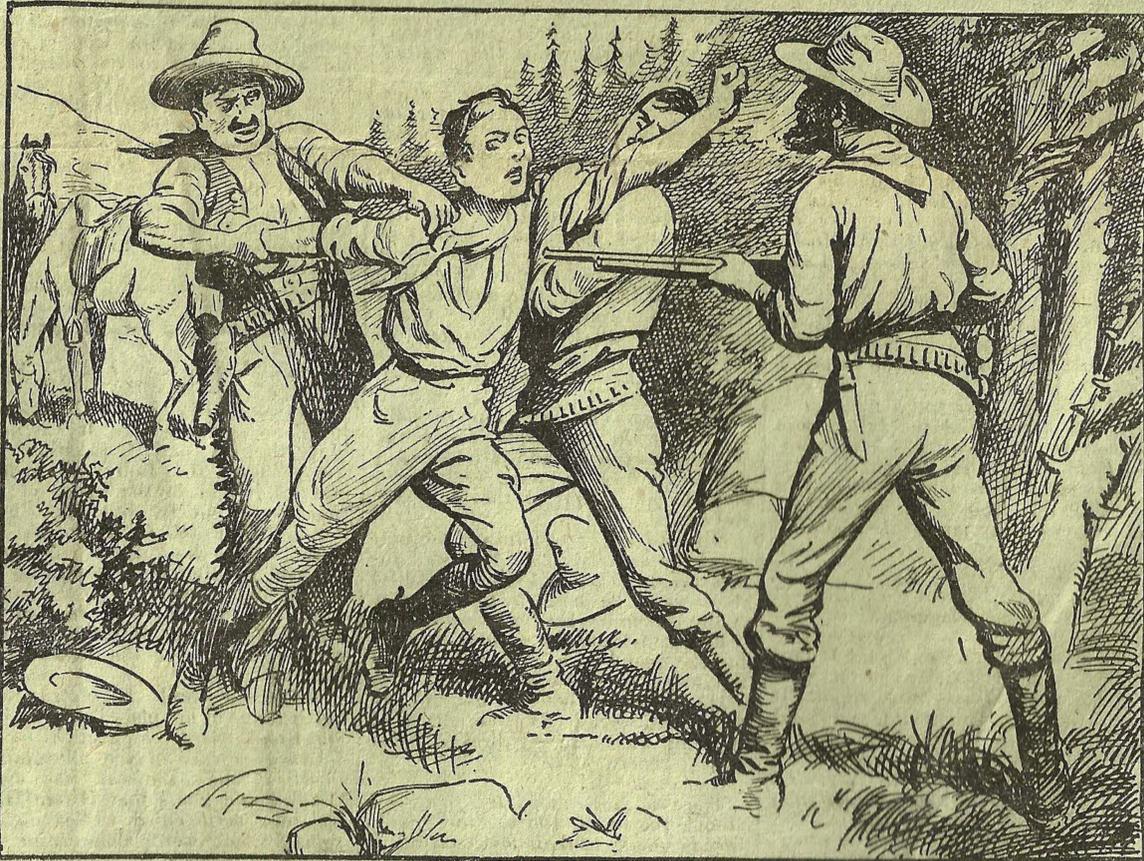
"Never mind White Pine now," answered Bob Lawless. "Let's go for a bit of a paseo in the direction they took last night—"

"They? Who?"

"There was a party by here last night, between midnight and dawn," said Bob. "Six or seven riders, at least—horses and mules. One of them dropped that jar—it came off a pack-mule, I reckon."

"I should think the rider would notice it."

"He might have been in too big



TRAPPED! "Hallo, is that you, Bob?" Frank Richards sprang to his feet. As he did so he was seized by two pairs of hands, and he found himself struggling in the hands of a couple of savage half-breeds, with a rifle barrel only a few inches away from his chest.

a hurry to notice it," answered Bob. "I guess they had to get out of sight before dawn."

Frank stared at his Canadian cousin.

"How on earth can you guess anything of the kind, Bob?" he demanded.

"Well, I'm not sure yet; but I guess it looks like it," said Bob. "Come along the trail and see."

He jumped on his horse again, and rode on the trail. It was trampled deeply enough to be followed with ease.

Frank Richards and Vere Beauclerc followed the rancher's son, leaving the whisky-jar where the Cherub had found it.

Bob did not speak as he led the way. His eyes were keenly scanning the trail and the waving grass on either side, and occasionally sweeping the wide plain ahead.

Of the party that had passed and left the trail nothing was to be seen. Judging by the direction of their track, they had ridden on into a range of low hills to the north-west.

Bob uttered a sudden exclamation

in this direction, anyway, right away from the town."

"You don't catch on," said Bob.

"There was a mounted party, travelling fast by night, with pack-mules loaded with whisky-jars. Have you ever heard of boot-legging?"

"Eh?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Liquor smugglers!"

Bob Lawless nodded.

"I guess so," he said. "Those whisky-jars have given them away. I guess we've happened on a trail of a gang of boot-leggers!"

The 2nd Chapter. Following the Trail.

Frank Richards looked puzzled.

Frank had been a good while in Canada now, but there were still some of the manners and customs of the West that were outside his knowledge and experience.

"You don't know what a boot-legger is?" asked Bob, grinning at his perplexity.

"That word hasn't cropped up in class at Cedar Creek," replied Frank

Richards, laughing. "Suppose you explain what a boot-legger is."

"I guess you know it's forbidden to sell intoxicating liquor to the Redskins?" said Bob.

"Yes, I know."

"Well, the Redskins—like lots of other folk—don't know what's good for them, and they like to get hold of what does them harm—"

"Like a good many white men," remarked Frank.

"Sure! But the rotten stuff does more harm to a red man than to a white. Some of the Redskins will give almost anything for a jar of whisky. And there are low-down rascals who make a trade of supplying them; they get skins, or gold-dust, and all sorts of stuff in return for whisky of the cheapest kind—fiery stuff that would burn a hole in a chunk of quartz. These low-down rotters are called boot-leggers—see? You can bet the Mounted Police are very keen after them; there's the penitentiary waiting for them if they're roped in."

"Oh," said Frank, "then this gang is—"

"They've got two or three pack-mules loaded with fire-water," said Bob. "The mule-tracks are pretty deep, showing that they're well-loaded. They were travelling by night, because they'd have been asked questions by day. And I guess they were in a hurry, from their not having noticed that one of their mule-packs had come loose." Bob waved his hand towards the distant range of low hills that bounded the plain to the north-west. "There's an Injun village yonder, and I guess the rogues were heading for it. Once in the hills, they wouldn't mind showing themselves. Nary a white man rides up there, unless it's some trapper at times. I guess we're not going on to White Pine to-day."

"We ought to do something about

"You come on with the sheriff, Cherub," added Bob. "You'll meet us somewhere on the trail, and I guess we shall have information for Mr. Henderson. If you don't see us, the sheriff will decide what to do."

"Don't run into danger," said Beauclerc.

Bob laughed.

"I guess we'll keep our eyes peeled," he answered.

Beauclerc waved his hand to his chums, and galloped off towards the Thompson river.

Bob and Frank Richards continued on the trail.

The trail wound a good deal among the grassy hillocks, and they followed it faithfully, drawing nearer and nearer to the blue hills in the distance.

Again they sighted a whisky jar in the grass, but they did not stop to examine it.

A good many miles glided under their horses' hoofs as they pushed on to the north-west. The sun rose higher and higher, and summer heat streamed down upon the prairie.

Bob Lawless fanned himself with his Stetson hat.

"I guess I shall be glad to get into the hills," he remarked. "We shall get some shade there."

It was high noon when the chums of Cedar Creek rode at last into the hills, following the trail into a hollow among the acclivities, where the herbage grew thin and scant.

The track of the cavalcade was still to be discerned, and they rode on, though more slowly.

From the hollow the trail wound on over a rocky ridge, where huge loose boulders baked in the heat of the sun.

Here the trail was very indistinct, and more than once Bob Lawless had to dismount and examine the ground carefully, to make sure that he was still on the right trail.

"I guess it's the Injun village they're heading for," he said, at last. "So far as I know, it's another ten or twelve miles, and pretty rough riding. But we'll keep on till we get a sight of the scallywags."

"Yes, rather!" assented Frank.

"Halt!"

It was a sudden call, and the chums of Cedar Creek drew rein, looking about them quickly.

For a moment they could not see the man who had called to them.

"Stop right thar!" went on the voice.

Then the two schoolboys perceived a ragged Stetson hat showing above a fringe of sassafras on a heap of boulders ahead of them.

In front of the Stetson hat was a levelled rifle, half-hidden by the sassafras. But the muzzle bore full upon the two riders.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Bob.

The Stetson hat rose a little higher into view, and under it was revealed a face, sunburnt almost to the hue of an Indian's.

It was not a pleasant face, nor a clean one.

It had a nose like a beak, shaggy brows, and sharp ferret eyes, and a large mouth with two or three teeth missing.

Frank's heart beat faster.

He had no doubt that this was one of the boot-leg gang, and evidently in a suspicious mood.

The man eyed them sourly and suspiciously.

"I guess I've seen you before," he said. "You're young Lawless, I reckon?"

"I guess so," answered Bob, "and I've seen you before, hanging round the saloons at Silver Creek," Hiram Hook.

"What might you be doin' here?" asked Hook.

"We don't go to school on Saturday," explained Bob. "We're riding."

"I guess it's no catch riding in these hills," said Hiram Hook. "You'd better keep to the plain."

Bob shook his head.

"We're paying a visit to the Kootenay village," he said coolly.

"I guess you youngsters had better keep clear of the reds," said Hiram Hook. "You turn right back!"

"That's our business."

"Not quite," said the ruffian. "I ain't letting you go among the reds; it ain't safe for schoolboys. You turn right round and levant! You hear me yaup?"

He made a threatening motion with the rifle.

Bob Lawless eyed him coolly.

"I guess you'd better take care that shooter doesn't go off, Mr. Hook," he said. "You're not down in Oregon now, you know. In this country there's a rope ready for a galoot who handles a gun too freely!"

The ruffian gave him a lowering look.

this," said Beauclerc. "What the rascals are doing is against the law."

"And a rotten thing in itself, besides that," said Frank Richards.

Bob Lawless nodded.

"I guess we're taking a hand," he said.

"But what's the game?" asked Frank.

"Are we going over to Thompson to see the sheriff about it?"

"I guess one of us ought to take the information to the sheriff," said Bob. "But I want to get an eye on the pesky scallywags, and see how they are fixed. I guess they will camp in the hills. It's a good step on to the Kootenay village. They're bound to be armed, and they'll put up a fight unless there's a good force to deal with them. Suppose you ride over to Thompson, Cherub—"

"Right!"

"And we'll keep on the trail," said Bob. "There won't be much trail left after they strike the hills, and I guess the sooner it's tackled the more likely they are to be run down."

Beauclerc mounted his horse.

"You ain't come hyer into the sierra for a ride, I reckon," he said. "You're spying."

"Spying on what?" asked Bob blandly. "I guess you saw our trail on the prairie, and followed it," said Hook. "We're prospecting in these hills, and we don't want anybody else around."

"Have you bought up this part of Canada?" asked Bob. Hook scowled. "I don't want any chinwag!" he said. "You're turning right round, and you're levanting, or it will mean trouble for you!"

"I guess not!" Crack! A bullet whizzed past Bob Lawless' head, tearing away his hat, and sending it spinning on the rocks a dozen yards away.

"That's a warning," said Hiram Hook, with a grin, as Bob clapped his hand to his head. "Aire you going?" There was a sound of hurrying footsteps, following the crack of the rifle, and two or three dark-skinned half-breeds came in sight behind the white man.

One of them drew a knife from his belt at the sight of the two schoolboys, but Hook waved them back.

"Aire you going?" he called out. "I tell you we're prospecting for gold hyer, and we don't want strangers around. I give you one minute!"

Bob made a sign to his chum. "I guess we don't care for your company," he retorted. "Come on, Frank; we'll get out of this!"

He picked up his hat, and the chums rode back the way they had come, with a clattering of hoofs on the rocks.

Hiram Hook watched them out of sight, with a sour grin on his bearded face.

In a few minutes the chums of Cedar Creek had disappeared from his view.

The 3rd Chapter. Caught Napping!

Bob Lawless rode on for half a mile without a stop, Frank following him in silence. The rancher's son was the leader, and Frank followed his lead without question.

Bob drew in his horse at last, in the hollow they had first entered from the plain.

"Stop here, Frank," he said.

"Right-ho." Bob turned and looked back. Rugged boulders and stunted trees completely hid them from the spot where they had encountered Hiram Hook.

"We're not clearing off?" asked Frank.

Bob compressed his lips.

"No fear," he answered.

"You were only pulling his leg, then?"

"Sure." Bob dismounted, and led his horse into a clump of trees, Frank following his example.

"They're boot-leggers right enough and we rode nearly on to their camp," he said.

"You don't think there's anything in his yarn about prospecting for gold in the hills?" said Frank.

"Nix; there's no gold here. It was just a yarn to put us off the scent," answered Bob. "Hook knows by this time that the mule-pack slipped, and that some whisky jars were left behind in the grass. He reckons we saw them and followed on the trail out of curiosity. He was on the watch, when he started up and covered us with his gun. I guess he would have shot us if he'd had the nerve to take the risk; but of course, he wouldn't run his neck into a rope if he could help it. He hopes we don't tumble to his little game; but he suspects that we do—see?"

"I see," assented Frank.

"If they're boot-leggers, as I believe, they'll break camp at once and push on to their destination, before we can give any information about them," said Bob. "But we've got to make sure. We'll leave the horses here—you'd better stay with them, Frank, while I go on a scout."

"I'd better come with you," answered Frank. "The horses will be all right without me."

"You'll be safer here—"

"Rats!"

"But only one need go," said Bob, "and I'm a better scout than you are, old chap. It will be safer for me alone."

Frank Richards hesitated. But there was a good deal in Bob's view, and Frank had to admit it. His company was not likely to make the Canadian schoolboy's task easier or safer.

"But if you fall in with Hook again—" he said.

"I shall be careful not to."

"If there's a fight—"

"We're unarmed, Frank, so it wouldn't make any difference. You stay here till I come back, and I'll spy out the lie of the land. I want to be able to tell the sheriff how they are fixed; and for sure that they're boot-leggers. We haven't any proof yet."

"Well, all right." Frank Richards remained in the thicket with the tethered horses, and Bob Lawless left him at once.

He watched Bob for a few minutes; but the rancher's son was very quickly out of sight.

He was keeping in cover of the rocks and thickets, as he made his way over the ridge, making a wide detour to avoid the spot where he had been "held up" by Hiram Hook.

Frank threw himself on the ground to rest, and to eat corn cake and cold beef from his wallet, while he waited.

How long Bob would be gone he could not guess. As for Beauclerc, it was certain to be many hours before he could arrive with the sheriff of Thompson, even if Mr. Henderson took up the matter at once.

Frank Richards finished his meal, and dropped into a doze, lulled by the heat of the Canadian summer's day, and the buzz of the insects in the thicket.

He was awakened by heavy footsteps, and started up with an exclamation.

"Hallo! Is that you, Bob?"

A low chuckle was the response.

Frank Richards sprang to his feet.

As he did so, he was seized by two pairs of hands, and he found himself struggling in the grasp of a couple of savage-looking half-breeds. Hiram Hook stood before him, with a rifle in his hands. The muzzle tapped on Frank Richards' chest.

"Go easy!" drawled Hiram Hook.

"I guess you'd better take it quietly, sonny, unless you want daylight let through you."

Frank ceased to struggle at once.

There was no arguing with a rifle-muzzle against his chest.

"Rope him up," said Hook, tersely.

The two half-breeds obeyed at once. Frank's eyes glittered at the ruffians, but it was not in his power to resist. In a couple of minutes his hands were bound together with a raw hide thong.

"And now," said Hiram Hook, menacingly, "Where's your Lawless?"

Frank did not answer.

He felt a throb of relief as Hook asked the question, for it showed that Bob, at least, was not in the hands of the boot-leggers.

"I guess I asked you a question," said Hook, jutting the rifle-muzzle harder on the schoolboy's breast.

"Find out!" said Frank.

"He hasn't gone home and left you hyer," said Hook, "I guess you found the whisky jars we left behind, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you reckoned you dropped on a case of boot-legging?"

Frank was silent.

"I allowed it was so," said Hiram Hook, "and I followed arter you, and I found you hyer, my pippin. If you'd rode off on the plain, you could have gone with a whole skin. I gave you the chance, and you can't say I didn't. But you chose to stay, and now, by gosh, you'll stay longer than you reckoned. Savvy?"

"You've got the upper hand now," said Frank, as calmly as he could, "You'd better be careful what you do, though; there's law in this country."

"I guess the law won't touch me," grinned Hiram Hook, "I've kept clear of it for a good many years now, and I reckon I ain't getting nailed through a couple of schoolboys. Where's your pard?"

"Find out."

"Has he gone to give the news at Thompson?"

No answer.

"You won't tell, eh?" asked Hiram Hook, "Well, I guess I'll find a way of making you open your mouth, my pippin. That young scallywag is going along with you, and you're going along with me, see? Now, where is he?"

Silence.

"You won't let on?"

"No."

"I give you one minute, afore I pull this hyer trigger," said the boot-legger grimly.

He waited.

Frank Richards felt a sickness at his heart.

He could scarcely believe that the boot-legger would dare to carry out his threat; but the contact of the rifle-muzzle sent a chill through him. But even if the ruffian was in deadly earnest, Frank Richards was not

likely to utter a word to add to his comrade's peril.

"That minute's up," said Hook, "Now tell me which way young Lawless went, and what he went for."

Frank did not speak.

He shuddered, as the hammer of the rifle rose a little. But his lips were still sealed.

For the moment, it looked as if Hiram Hook would fire. But the trigger was not pulled.

He lowered the rifle, and Frank Richards felt almost giddy with the sudden relief.

"I guess I'm not going to be strung up for you, if luck goes agin me," said the boot-legger savagely. "Tote him along to the camp, and fix him there, Black Henri."

One of the half-breeds seized Frank Richards roughly by the shoulder, and led him away; the other followed with the two horses. Frank cast an eager glance round, fearing to see Bob Lawless returning, to fall into the hands of the enemy.

But there was no sign of Bob, and Frank could only hope that his chum was in safety, as he was led away, stumbling over the rough rocks, to the camp of the boot-leggers.

The 4th Chapter. In the Hands of the Enemy!

The camp of the liquor smugglers was pitched in a rocky gully, on the ridge, close by the spot where the Cedar Creek chums had first encountered Hiram Hook.

Half a dozen horses and a couple of mules were staked out, cropping the scanty herbage by a rill of clear water. A half-breed started up, bride in hand, as Frank Richards came up with his two guards and the captured horses. The three half-breeds and their leader Hook were apparently the whole party.

Frank Richards was shoved roughly against a stunted pine, and a rope secured him to the trunk.

The half-breeds took no further notice of him.

They lounged about the camp, smoking cheroots, while they waited for their leader to return.

Evidently the smugglers, after travelling all night, under cover of darkness, had camped in the lonely hills, to rest during the heat of the day, doubtless intending to push on when the afternoon grew cool.

Probably they would not have lingered if they could have known of Vere Beauclerc's mission to the sheriff of Thompson; but of that, of course, they knew nothing. Hiram Hook had no suspicion that the Cedar Creek party had originally consisted of three.

Frank Richards waited in deep anxiety.

Bob Lawless had left him to scout and ascertain the facts about the whisky-smugglers, and Frank wondered whether he was, even then, close by the camp of the desperate ruffians.

Hiram Hook was hunting for him amid the rocks, and, as Bob was unarmed, save for his hunting-knife, there was little doubt as to the result of the encounter between them.

Frank listened in painful anxiety for the sound of a rifle-shot, fearing the worst for his chum.

He had been about an hour in the smugglers' camp, when the silence of the hill was suddenly broken by a distant report.

Crack-ack!

The rifle-shot echoed and re-echoed among the rocks, and the three half-breeds sprang to their feet, staring in the direction of the sound. Frank Richards twisted round to look, his heart throbbing violently. He knew that the report must be that of Hiram Hook's rifle, and he could guess what the target had been.

Crack!

The rifle rang out again.

"Oh, the villain!" groaned Frank Richards, struggling with the rope that held him to the pine.

But he struggled in vain; the rope was far beyond his strength. The half-breeds did not even look at him. They were staring intently towards a curl of white smoke that rose above the boulders in the distance.

Had Bob Lawless fallen?

The thought was torture to the schoolboy, bound helplessly to the tree, waiting and watching with throbbing heart.

The figure of Hiram Hook came in sight at last.

The leader of the boot-leggers was striding towards the camp, his rifle in the hollow of his arm, and a savage scowl on his face. Frank Richards observed that there was a cut on his forehead, from which a thin crimson trickle ran down his bearded face.

He came alone, and Frank Richards' heart was like lead within his breast. In his mind's eye he could see his brave, true-hearted Canadian cousin stretched on the rocks.

"Have you killed him?" He cried out the words almost before Hiram Hook was within hearing.

The boot-legger did not hear, or did not heed.

He muttered to Black Henri, who bound up his forehead, where the ruffian had evidently received a sharp blow from a rock used as a missile.

With the bandage on his brow, which made him look more savage and truculent than before, the boot-legger strode over to where Frank Richards stood bound to the tree.

"I guess I've found your precious pard!" he said savagely.

Frank panted.

"You have—you have—"

Hook gave a savage laugh. "He caught me hyer!" He tapped his bandaged forehead. "He caught me with a rock. I'll make him suffer for it! I guess I was shooting at his legs when he wouldn't stop, and he heaved the rock at me. But I'll have him yet. I guess the young coyote isn't going to mosey back to Thompson with news that there's a boot-leg gang in these hyer hills. I came on him yonder when he was looking right into the camp, and I guess he spotted the mule-packs and knew what they were. But he won't talk of it in the Thompson valley, and you won't, either, I calculate!"

Frank Richards could have cried out in his relief.

It was evident that Bob Lawless had escaped, so far; indeed, the ruffian had not ventured to "shoot to kill."

Hiram grinned savagely, as he read the schoolboy's thoughts in his face.

"I guess you'd have known it if I'd drilled him," he said. "If one goes the other goes, and no tales told! If I have to put a bullet through his head, you'll know, for I'll hustle right back hyer and put a bullet through yours to keep your tongue quiet! Chew on that, you young scallywag, while I'm hunting up your pard!"

"I daresay you're brute enough for that, or anything else," said Frank Richards.

It was on his tongue to tell the ruffian that news of the boot-leg gang had already gone to the sheriff of Thompson.

But prudence restrained him.

It was quite possible that such information would have led the ruffian into a display of brutality; even if it had not cost the prisoner his life.

Hiram Hook turned away, and quitted the camp, taking two of the half-breeds with him, to hunt for the elusive Bob.

Black Henri remained on guard in the camp, with a rifle across his knees, seated on a rock close by the prisoner.

Frank Richards waited in tense anxiety.

He wondered whether Bob knew that he was a prisoner. It was most likely that he knew by this time. It was not likely that Bob would escape, and leave him in the hands of the smugglers; but it would have been a relief to Frank to know that his chum was seeking safety in flight. He could only wait, tormented by doubts and fears.

Black Henri sat and smoked for some time, but presently he rose, and crossed to one of the packs taken from the mules.

From the pack he extracted a bottle, which he placed to his lips, and Frank heard the gurgle of liquor.

It was a case of the mice taking liberties while the cat was away. Frank could guess that Hiram Hook was not accustomed to leaving his ruffianly followers alone with the smuggled fire-water. Black Henri had taken advantage of his leader's absence to make a raid upon the stores of vile liquor intended for the hapless Redskins.

The half-breed consumed a good proportion of the contents of the bottle, and then sat down, with his back against a rock, in the shade.

Frank Richards watched him, and saw his head fall upon his breast.

The half-breed was sleeping.

Frank tugged at his bonds again. If only he could get loose escape was easy; but his efforts made no impression on the stout rope.

He desisted at last, exhausted and perspiring.

Black Henri slid over, and lay on the ground, in the shade of the rock, breathing stertorously.

Frank Richards gave a sudden start.

The rope he had so vainly endeavoured to loosen fell from him, and lay round his feet.

At the same moment a voice behind the pine breathed softly:

"Frank!"

The 5th Chapter. Too Late!

Frank Richards spun round.

It was his chum.

Knife in hand, Bob Lawless

stepped from behind the tree, his eyes not on Frank, but on the sleeping half-breed.

"Bob!" muttered Frank. He could hardly believe for a moment that he was free, and that it was his chum who was standing beside him.

"He's safe, Bob!" whispered Frank. "He's been drinking the stuff yonder. Cut my hands loose."

"Good!" muttered Bob. "If he touched his gun I reckon I'd have to use my knife. Better not if I can help it."

He drew the sharp knife across the thong that bound Frank's wrists, severing it in a moment.

Black Henri did not move. He was fast asleep, too stupefied with liquor to be awakened by the sounds close at hand.

"Let's get out of this, Bob, sharp!" muttered Frank. "The others may be back any minute!"

"You bet!" answered Bob. "I saw them go, and only waited till they were clear before I started in to get here and help you out. We've got to have the horses, though."

"Come on!"

Bob ran towards the hobbled horses, Frank at his heels.

There was no time to waste. At any moment the boot-leggers might have come into sight among the boulders.

Bob slashed through the trail-ropes with his knife and dragged the horses loose.

As the chums were about to clamber on the animals, without waiting to replace the saddles, there was a shout in the distance.

"Stop!"

Hiram Hook came speeding towards the camp, brandishing his rifle as he ran and shouting.

The two half-breeds were behind him.

"Hands up!" roared Hook. "You hear me? Hands up, or I'll drop you in your tracks!"

Bob Lawless gritted his teeth.

The boot-leggers had returned at an unlucky moment for the chums of Cedar Creek.

To mount and ride under the fire of three rifles was impossible.

"Keep in cover, Frank!" panted Bob.

He rushed towards Black Henri. The rifle-shot had startled the half-breed out of his drunken slumber, and he was scrambling up dizzily.

Bob Lawless hurled him aside, and the half-stupefied ruffian went sprawling on the ground. The next instant the Canadian schoolboy had snatched his rifle.

With Black Henri's rifle in his hand he turned on the boot-leggers.

"Hands up!" yelled Hook again. He was close at hand now.

Bob Lawless raised the rifle to his shoulder.

"Stop!" was his answer. Hook came on savagely, and Bob Lawless pulled the trigger.

A click was the only result. The rifle was unloaded!

Hiram Hook and his two followers came panting up, and the schoolboys were covered by their rifles.

"I guess it's hands up," said Hook, with a disagreeable grin.

Bob Lawless let the empty rifle fall to the ground. It was useless, and the game was up.

He put his hands above his head, under cover of Hiram Hook's muzzle, and Frank Richards followed his example.

"I guess this is a cinch," grinned Hook. "I reckoned you had dodged me, sure, young Lawless. Never reckoned as you'd been paying me a visit. Henri, you boozy, pesky nigger, you was letting them go! You've been asleep, I reckon. At the fire-water, eh? Tie these galoots up hyer!"

The schoolboys were bound. When they were secure Hiram Hook turned upon Black Henri, with a torrent of language, chiefly consisting of adjectives. He emphasised his remarks by kicking the half-breed with his heavy boots, till the hapless wretch howled for mercy.

"I guess we'll mosey on now," said Hook, when he had finished "booting" Black Henri. "You two cusses will come along with us, and I guess you won't see home again in a hurry. Stick them on the hosses, and tie their feet underneath."

Five minutes later the boot-leggers had broken camp, and were pushing on through the hills, with their contraband cargo, and the two prisoners tied to their horses. Frank and Bob exchanged a look, but they did not speak. They had one hope now, and it centred in Vere Beauclerc, but as they pushed on into the trackless hills they realised that the hope was faint.

FROM SCHOOL TO SHOP!



(Continued from the previous page.)

swung snut behind him, and Mr. Bandy's new boy was gone.

The Head strode away, and there was silence until he had disappeared; but then a buzz of voices and a chorus of chortles broke forth. Mornington's "latest" delighted the Rookwood juniors beyond all bounds.

"Isn't he a corker?" gasped Lovell. "Isn't he a real gilt-edged corker? I thought the Head would burst a boiler when Morny was recommending his home-cured bacon!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "He won't be able to come here any more, now," remarked Raby. "We can't give him any more grocery orders."

"Never mind; he's got his job now, at any rate," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "We may as well go in and field our groceries."

The Fistical Four returned to the School House. But there a rather disagreeable surprise awaited them. Bulkeley called to them in the passage.

"Silver, Erroll, Raby, Newcome, Lovell—"

"Hallo! What's wanted, Bulkeley?"

"You are!" answered the Rookwood captain grimly. "You're to go into the Head's study at once."

"Oh!" Five dismayed juniors made their way to that dreaded apartment. They wondered whether the Head had learned of their meeting with Morny in Coombe the day before. If he had, they knew that there was trouble to come.

Dr. Chisholm's expression hinted of trouble as they came into his study. He sat at his desk, with five grocery-bills before him. His eyes almost glittered at the five juniors.

"The goods brought to the school by Mornington appear to belong to you," he said. "Your names are here."

"Ye-e-es, sir!" stammered Jimmy Silver.

"You ordered these goods at Bandy's shop?"

"No harm in that, sir, is there?" asked Jimmy Silver, with his most innocent expression. "The house-keeper would see them, sir, before they were given up to us, as usual."

"No doubt; but I have a strong suspicion that you ordered these goods at Bandy's shop, because that insolent boy Mornington is there."

"Oh, sir!" murmured Jimmy.

"For that reason," said the Head grimly, "these goods will be confiscated, and will not be handed over to you. You will, however, take these bills, and pay Mr. Bandy the sums due."

"Oh!"

"Any further goods delivered here by Mornington will be confiscated in the same way," added the Head. "Mr. Bandy's shop will be placed out of bounds for all Rookwood; I am placing a notice on the board to that effect. Anyone transgressing this order will be dealt with severely. You may go."

The juniors turned to the door; but Jimmy Silver turned back, with a very demure look.

"Are we to pay these bills, sir?" "I have said so!" snapped the Head.

"But if Mr. Bandy's shop is out of bounds, sir, how can we go there to pay the bills?"

The Head breathed hard. He sometimes spoke very hastily; but he did not like being "caught out" by a junior. Certainly Jimmy's manner was not impertinent, but there was a glimmer in his eye that the Head did not like, and which he did not approve of.

"I will send Tupper to pay the bills, Silver," he said, after a short pause. "You may place them on my desk, with the requisite money."

"We haven't the money till

Saturday, sir," said Jimmy Silver meekly.

The Head breathed harder. "Then I will pay the bills, and deduct the amount from your allowances," he said. "You, Silver, I think to have been chiefly to blame in this matter. You will take five hundred lines."

"Oh!" gasped Jimmy. "Now you may go, unless you have any further remarks to make!" added the Head, with a touch of grim irony.

But the juniors hadn't any further remarks to make. Remarks at five hundred lines a time were a little too expensive. They quitted the Head's study in a hurry, without making any further remarks.

The 5th Chapter.
Floored!

The next day was Wednesday—a half-holiday at Rookwood. On that half-holiday there would have been a regular procession to Mr. Bandy's grocery-shop in Coombe, to see Mornington in his new "job." But the Head had foreseen that. There was a notice on the board placing Mr. Bandy's establishment out of bounds, and, furthermore, forbidding all Rookwood to have any dealings with Mr. Bandy at all. The new custom which Mornington had brought to his employer was, therefore, brief. Mr. Bandy's new boy was not to have another opportunity of visiting Rookwood School with a basket of groceries on his arm.

Some of the Rookwood fellows felt very restive at the Head's new prohibition. They remarked that he was exceeding his rights; as perhaps, indeed, he was. Lovell argued, in the Common-room, that it wasn't the Head's bizney where a fellow bought a tin of tomatoes or a pound of cheese, and Lovell's remarks were heard with applause by the juniors. Unluckily, they were also heard by Carthew of the Sixth, who was prowling round the doorway; and Carthew marched Lovell off to the Head, there to repeat his arguments if he liked. Lovell came out of the Head's study rubbing his hands hard, and was observed to be in anything but an argumentative mood afterwards. Whether the Head was exceeding his rights or not, it was pretty clear that he was going to have his way.

The procession to Mr. Bandy's shop, therefore, did not come off. Peele remarked, in his slangy way, that as the Head was so shirty about it, it would be wiser to give Mr. Bandy a miss in baulk. And as Carthew walked down to Coombe on Wednesday afternoon, probably in the hope of catching offenders, and carrying favour with the Head by reporting them, most of the juniors decided to give the Bandy establishment a wide berth.

Not so the Fistical Four, however. Lovell, no longer loudly argumentative on the subject of the rights of the master, was angry and obstinate, and he told his chums that he was going to Bandy's. He told them, in a subdued voice in a quiet corner, rubbing his hands the while. The Head appeared to have given his cane some considerable exercise for Lovell's behoof, and Arthur Edward was smarting.

"Risky!" said Newcome.

Snort from Lovell.

"You sheer off, then, if you're funky!" he said.

"If the Head hadn't given you enough, old top, I'd dot you in the eye," said Newcome placidly. "Let's go."

"Let's!" assented Jimmy Silver.

And the Fistical Four sauntered out of gates, and started to walk in the opposite direction from Coombe. That was a cautionary measure, in case eyes were upon them. At a suit-

able distance they left the road, cut through the wood, and emerged into the lane again near Coombe village. They walked down the little old High Street, and stopped opposite Bandy's shop, and scanned it across the road.

"No beaks in sight," said Lovell. "That cad Carthew is somewhere about! But the coast looks clear."

"Careful, though," said Jimmy Silver. "If we were spotted, and reported to the Head, there would be wigs on the green. The Head isn't sweet-tempered about Morny."

"Safe enough; come on!" After a further cautious survey of the village High Street, the Fistical Four crossed quickly, and plunged into Mr. Bandy's shop. It was a little dusky shop, two steps down from the street, and redolent of bacon and soap and other things in the grocery line.

Mr. Bandy, a stout gentleman with a bald head and red whiskers, was behind his little counter and he grinned welcome to the Rookwooders. Mr. Bandy was highly satisfied with his new boy and the prospect of custom from the big school. He was not the chief grocer of Coombe, and he did not serve Rookwood; in fact, his business was not a very prosperous one, and all was grist that came to his mill.

"Afternoon, young gentleman," he said, affably. "What can I do for you this afternoon?"

"Well, we really dropped in to see your new boy, Mr. Bandy," said Jimmy Silver. "He's an old friend of ours, you know."

Mr. Bandy smiled. "Very kind of you, sir, to take notice of him now he's come down in the world," he said.

"Oh! Ah! Hem! Yes! Can we see him?"

Mr. Bandy jerked a fat thumb towards the little parlour behind the shop.

"He's in the parlour, 'aving his tea," he explained. "You're very welcome to step in. Make yourselves at 'ome, gentlemen."

"Thank you very much."

"Not at all," said Mr. Bandy politely.

Jimmy Silver & Co. entered the little parlour. Mornington was seated at the tea-table, with a plate of thick bread and butter before him, and a big cup of tea. He was eating with a good appetite. From the kitchen, which adjoined, came a sound of clinking crockery, which seemed to hint that Mrs Bandy was at her household duties there.

"Hallo, you chaps!" exclaimed Mornington, looking up. "Fancy seein' you here! I don't know whether I'm allowed to receive visitors in business hours—"

"Mr. Bandy told us to come in," grinned Raby. "How are you getting on in the grocery line, Morny?"

"First rate."

"Like the business?"

"Toppin'! Squat down somewhere. You don't mind if I go on with my tea?" asked Mr. Bandy's new boy. "I've got to mind the shop when my master goes out."

"Mind the shop!" murmured Newcome. "Oh my hat!"

"I've been rather expecting an influx of Rookwood customers this afternoon," said Mornington. "Ain't I goin' to get your custom?"

"Head's put the shop out of bounds."

Mornington whistled.

"Well, I suppose he would!" he assented. "That's rather a facer, though. I shan't bring Mr. Bandy much custom at that rate."

"We'll do what we can," said Jimmy Silver. "But the Head's very waxy; he's caned Lovell for talking too much. We'd buy some stuff now if we had any money; but we're cleared out at present."

"My dear man, big businesses are built on credit. I'll get you tick."

"Right-ho," said Jimmy laughing. "You can assure Mr. Bandy that we will settle."

"Like a bird. You'll have to take the goods away—I can't deliver at Rookwood any more."

"Ha, ha! No."

The chums of the Fourth remained chatting with Mornington while he finished his tea. It did not take him long. So far, at all events, Morny was keen on attending to his duties. Mr. Bandy, in fact, had quite a jewel of a shop-boy—so far.

Morny returned into the shop and the Fistical Fourth followed him. They made their purchases and pocketed the articles, and Morny made entries in a big book, under Mr. Bandy's eye. Morny was apparently taking over the book-keeping of the establishment; his abilities in that line were probably quite equal to Mr. Bandy's.

"Better scout before we step out," murmured Lovell, and he put his head cautiously out of the shop doorway, under cover of a stack of brooms and brushes exposed for sale.

He drew it back as suddenly as if he had unwittingly put it into a lion's jaws. His face was quite pale.

"The Head!" he stuttered.

"What?"

"He's just coming."

"Oh crikey!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. did not stop to think. They bolted back into the parlour, like rabbits into a burrow at the sight of a terrier.

Barely had the glass door closed, when there was a stately tread in the shop doorway. They had just escaped!

"He's coming in!" breathed Lovell, faintly. "Oh dear! Might have run into him! Oh!"

"Shush!"

The upper part of the parlour door was of glass, covered by a thin muslin curtain. Through the muslin, the juniors were able to look into the shop without being seen. They watched breathlessly, feeling almost giddy from their narrow escape.

Dr. Chisholm's stately form loomed in the shop doorway; and he uttered an exclamation as he stumbled over the steps down from the pavement.

"Mind the step, sir!" called out Mornington, who was with Mr. Bandy behind the counter.

"Bless my soul!"

The Head recovered his balance, and sailed into the dusky little shop. He was breathing hard. He gave Mornington one steely look and then turned all his attention to Mr. Bandy.

That gentleman blinked at him dubiously. He knew nothing of the circumstances in which Mornington had left Rookwood; but as he did not serve the school—officially at least—the Head's wrath was not alarming to him. Indeed, Mr. Bandy, like so many unsuccessful men, was a bit of a Socialist, and quite prepared to give as good as he got—as he would have expressed it—in dealing with even so august a personage as the Head of Rookwood.

"I have called, Mr. Bandy, in reference to that boy!" said the Head, in a deep voice.

"Yes sir, good afternoon, sir," said Mr. Bandy. "Anything I can send you, sir?"

"I am not here to give an order, Mr. Bandy. That boy, as you are doubtless aware, formerly belonged to Rookwood."

"I believe so, sir," assented Mr. Bandy.

"His presence in the neighbourhood of the school is extremely distasteful to me."

"Indeed, sir," said Mr. Bandy, blandly.

"Extremely so," said the Head. "He has come here, I fear, in order to cause me annoyance. I hope, sir, that you will send him away, at my request."

"I've found 'im a very good lad, so far, sir," said Mr. Bandy.

"He is the most insolent boy it has ever been my misfortune to deal with," said Dr. Chisholm, raising his voice a little.

"Can't say I've found 'im so, sir," said Mr. Bandy. "Very nice, respectful lad, to my mind. You can wrap up that there cheese, lad."

"Certainly, sir," said Mornington, very respectfully.

"Very bright lad, and seems cut out for the grocery, sir," said Mr. Bandy, confidentially.

"It is not a proper state of affairs, Mr. Bandy, for a boy expelled from my school, to take a position as grocer's lad in the adjoining village."

"Think not, sir?" asked Mr. Bandy, calmly. "The pore lad 'as to earn 'is bread, I s'pose."

"His guardian is willing to allow him to return home. In fact he is very anxious for him to return, at least—I presume so."

"Well, sir, if his guardian calls 'ere about 'im, I'll 'ave a talk to him," said Mr. Bandy. "Course, I wouldn't think of keeping a boy whose guardian wanted him at 'ome. That would be agin the law, too. You mention to his guardian, sir, that I'll be pleased to see 'im if he cares to call, and give 'im a cup of tea, sir, and 'ave a talk."

There was a faint sound of a chuckle from the back parlour.

The idea of Sir Rupert Staepoole taking a cup of tea with Mr. Bandy was almost too much for Jimmy Silver & Co.

The Head of Rookwood flushed a little. He was a peremptory old gentleman, and accustomed to having his way. It was a little difficult for him to remember that, outside the walls of Rookwood, his lordly will and pleasure was of no especial consequence to anyone but himself.

"I hardly think that it is likely that Sir Rupert Staepoole will call upon you in reference to the matter, Mr. Bandy," he said, haughtily.

"Then in that case, sir, there don't seem anything to be done, do there?" said Mr. Bandy, with unruffled calmness.

"I have called, Mr. Bandy—"

"And very glad I am to see you, sir. Won't you take a seat? Boy, place a chair for the gentleman."

"Certainly, sir," said Mornington.

He brought out a stool for the Head. That gentleman ignored it. He remained standing, his eyes fixed on Mr. Bandy's fat, smiling face. Mr. Bandy was beginning to enjoy the interview. He was making mental notes of it, with a view to telling the tale, with great effect, at the social circle which met of an evening at the Red Cow.

"I have called, sir," said the Head, in a deep voice, "to request you, most urgently, to send that boy away."

"Hem!"

"His presence, sir, in this village, is most annoying to me personally," said Dr. Chisholm, in his most stately manner.

"And who, sir?" said Mr. Bandy, with silky politeness. "Who, sir, may I ask, are you, sir?"

The Head started.

"What, what?"

"I arsk, sir," said Mr. Bandy, swelling a little. "As one man to another, sir, I arsk, who are you, sir?"

"Mr. Bandy!"

"If you come 'ere, sir, to order goods, well and good," said Mr. Bandy. "I'm hopen to serve you, sir, and which I 'ope that my goods always give satisfaction, being of the best quality, and prices reasonable. But if you come 'ere, sir, to teach me how to manage this 'ere establishment, sir, and to dictate to me about the 'ands, sir, that I employ in this establishment, I can only say, sir, with the greatest politeness, sir, there's the door, sir."

And Mr. Bandy emphasised his observation, by pointing a very plump and buttery forefinger at the shop door.

The Head blinked at him. He seemed deprived of the power of speech for some moments.

As Mr. Bandy afterwards described it, with great enjoyment, to the social circle at the Red Cow. "Fair took the wind out of 'im, you believe me! Fair knocked 'im!"

In the parlour, four juniors waited breathlessly. They had never heard their headmaster talked to like that before. Neither had the Head ever had such an experience. But it was the first time he had come into personal contact with a grocer of socialistic proclivities.

"Sir!" gasped the Head, at last.

"Impudence!" said Mr. Bandy, emphatically. "I don't come up to Rookwood, interfering with you, sir. I s'pose? When I does so, you tell me to mind my hown business, and I'll mind it. And until then, sir, you leave me to manage my shop my own way. I can manage my shop, sir, without assistance, which I don't require. With all possible respect, sir," continued Mr. Bandy, warming up with the effect of his own eloquence, "you're an interfering old codger, sir."

"Wha-a-at!"

"Interfering old codger!" repeated Mr. Bandy, with enjoyment.

Dr. Chisholm wondered, for a dizzy moment, whether he was dreaming this. But it was no dream—it was real! Mr. Bandy's red face was real, his podgy forefinger pointing to the door was real, and Dr. Chisholm had really been called an interfering old codger! Not a word further escaped the hapless old gentleman. He backed to the shop door, stumbled over the steps, and faded away.

Jimmy Silver & Co. escaped by the back door, and fled for their lives. Not for the wealth of Golconda would they have allowed the Head to suspect that they had been witnesses of that remarkable interview. They arrived breathlessly at Rookwood. Prudence counselled silence; it was evidently a case in which silence was golden. But the story was too good to keep; and that evening all the Classical Fourth was chortling over it. The Head, as he pondered in amazement and horror over the occurrence, was fervently glad that Mr. Bandy's shop being out of bounds, no Rookwood boy had been present at his discomfiture. It was fortunate that he could not hear the joyful talk that was going on in the Fourth Form studies.

THE END.

(Another grand story next week, entitled: "Mr. Bandy's New Boy!" by Owen Conquest. Don't miss it!)