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The BOYS' FRIEND

TWELVE PAGES!

TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

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THE RANCH RAIDERS



STAMPEDING THE HORSES!

In the midst of the din a yell went up. "The horses—it's a stampede!" Like thunder came the sound of countless galloping hoofs. A flying rocket had been thrown into the corral amongst the horses—and the corral gates were wide open! The frightened animals poured through the gates in a terrified galloping mob that no man could have stopped.

The 1st Chapter. Starting News!

Chunky Todgers joined Frank Richards & Co. as they arrived at the gates of Cedar Creek School in the fine September morning.

"Heard the news?" he inquired.

"Anything new?" asked Frank Richards, with a smile.

Chunky was always the earliest with news at the backwoods school in the Thompson Valley.

Chunky grinned with satisfaction. Evidently, the Co. hadn't heard the news; and he was to have the pleasure of imparting it, and startling them with it.

"I guess so!" he said. "I guess it's exciting, too!"

"What's happened?" yawned Bob Lawless. "Price of maple sugar gone up? I reckon you would find that exciting!"

Chunky snuffed.

"It's jolly serious!" he said.

"Well, out with it!" remarked Vere Beauclerc.

"Don't keep us in suspense, Chunky!"

"There's been a raid!" said Chunky Todgers impressively.

"A what?"

"A cattle-raid—"

"Draw it mild, old chap!"

"Frozen truth!" said Chunky triumphantly.

"I know it would make you jump. A cattle-raid in the Thompson Valley! What do you think of that?"

To Chunky's surprise and exasperation, the chums burst into a laugh. Chunky stared at them.

"That's a laughing matter!" he exclaimed warmly. "The Lawrences' homestead has been raided, and cattle driven off! Anything happened at Lawless Ranch last night, Bob?"

"Ha, ha! No."

"You haven't seen anything of the cattle-lifters there?"

"Not a hide nor a hair!" said Bob Lawless chuckling. "And I guess I don't expect to see any cattle-lifters this side of the border, Chunky! Give us an easier one!"

"Why, you jay, don't you believe me!" exclaimed Chunky indignantly.

"Not quite! Did you dream it?"

"And the chums of Cedar Creek chuckled again."

"But it's true!" howled Chunky Todgers. "There was a raid on the Lawrence farm—"

"Go it!"

"A dozen steers were driven off and—"

"Pile it on!"

"And five or six horses—"

"Keep it up!"

"And a stockman knocked on the head—"

"Bravo!"

"Wasn't he killed?" asked Bob.

"Nope; just knocked on the head with the butt of a whip."

"You could improve on that," said Frank Richards, shaking his head.

"While you were about it, you could have riddled him with bullets!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You pesky jays!" roared Chunky Todgers. "Do you think I'm spinning you a yarn?"

"Well, aren't you?" asked Vere Beauclerc, laughing.

"Nope! It's the solid, frozen truth!"

"Thaw it out, and tell us how much there is in it!" suggested Bob Lawless humorously. "Boil it down, and give us the facts. Has one of the Lawrences' steers wandered away into the timber?"

"That's about it!" grinned Frank Richards.

"Oh, you're a jay, Richards!" said Chunky Todgers, testily. "You galsies never hear any news out on the ranch. I can tell you all Thompson is javing over it this morning! When I came through Main Street, on my way to school, there was a crowd round Guntent's Store, talking it over. The Lawrences have been nearly cleared out. Just like the time when that bulldozer Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was cavoring round here. I tell you there's a gang of cattle-lifters in the valley—"

"Bow-wow!"

Frank Richards & Co. walked on to the corral, leading their horses, leaving Chunky Todgers in a state of great exasperation. It was really too bad, to be full of exciting news, and to find his hearers in the same

sceptical state as doubting Thomas of old.

Frank Richards & Co. were still smiling as they put up their horses, and came across the playground towards the lumber schoolhouse.

Cattle-lifters in the Thompson Valley of British Columbia was rather too "tall" a story for easy belief. A few hundred miles away, over the border, in the States, cattle-lifters flourished; but in the orderly land of Canada they were very rare birds indeed.

But, to their surprise, as they came up to the schoolhouse, they found a crowd of excited schoolboys gathered outside the porch, discussing the news.

Tom Lawrence was in the middle of the group, and he was talking. The chums heard his words as they came up.

"It was nearly a clean sweep—steers and horses gone—"

"What's that?" howled Bob Lawless.

A dozen voices answered him.

"It's a raid—"

"Cattle-lifters—"

"Haven't you heard?" ejaculated Frank Richards. "Then, it's true!"

"True enough," said Lawless. "There was a raid on our shebang last night, and the stock was driven off. They knocked the stockman on the head, and he crawled up to the farmhouse to give the alarm, but when we all turned out, the cattle was gone, and the raiders with them."

"Great Jerusalem!" exclaimed Bob Lawless. "Cattle-lifters in this valley! It beats the Dutch!"

"But they haven't been found?" asked Frank.

Lawrence shook his head.

"No fear! My father and brother were out at dawn looking for them, and I rode into Thompson to tell the sheriff. Mr. Henderson's out with his men. He reckons it's a gang from over the line. The stockman saw five or six of the rascals, at least, and not a man he knew among them. We're sure they were all strangers in this section. He put up his rifle, and the leader gave him a sock-dogger on the head with his whip-but, and laid him out."

"Phew!"

"What did I tell you, you galoots?" howled Chunky Todgers indignantly.

"I tell you Thompson is fairly buzzing with it. There's been anything like it in the valley for a dozen years!"

"I guess I thought it was one of Chunky's yarns!" said Bob. "I rode through, the said I was some find that gang may be in the Thompson Valley! They'll be run down before night!"

"I hope so," said Lawrence. "It will be pretty serious for us if we don't get our neck under the yoke."

The school bell rang, and the Cedar Creek fellows went in to lessons. Miss Meadows had rather a difficult task with her pupils that morning.

The surprising news had startled and thrilled the school, and most of the fellows were thinking about the cattle-lifters, instead of their lessons.

At dinner-time Frank Richards & Co. mounted their horses, and galloped to Thompson, fully expecting to hear there that the raiders had been run down by the sheriff.

But there was no news.

There was a crowd at Gunten's Store, eagerly discussing the event; and, from the talk, the chums learned that the raid had been tracked across the plains for several miles, when the trail had been lost in the rocks of the foot-hills.

They returned to Cedar Creek in a serious mood.

"By rum!" said Bob Lawless. "If the scallywags get clear off with their plunder they may try the same game on again. We may see them at our ranch next. But I guess Billy Cook and the boys would give them a warm reception!"

"I suppose they've got the cattle hidden safely enough in the hills," said Frank. "If they're not found, the whole section will turn out to the job, and they'll be run down like Five-Hundred-Dollar Jones was here. But they'll be run down! This isn't Nevada or Nebraska. They can't play that game for long in Canada!"

There was much suppressed excitement at Cedar Creek school that afternoon. All the school was relieved when lessons were over at last, and the fellows were free to disperse and learn the latest news of the cattle-raiders.

The 2nd Chapter

Roped In!

cattlemen who watched the herds were sometimes absent from the ranch for days and nights together. But on the loneliest stretches of the great range a rancher had no fear for the safety of his beasts. Cattle-lifting was not an avocation in much favour on the Canadian side of the Line. There had been isolated cases, but they were few.

"Halt!"

The sudden call came from the shadows of the trail ahead, and it startled the schoolboys. The word was followed by the click of a rifle.

"Why—what——" ejaculated Frank Richards.

"Thunder!"

"Halt!" repeated the rough voice.

A buckskin loomed out of the shadows of the cedars, with a rifle to his shoulder.

The muzzle bore full upon the two schoolboys, and they drew rein at once.

They knew enough of western customs to be aware that there was no argument with a levelled rifle.

They stared at the rough-bearded man in buckskin.

"What the thump does this mean?" exclaimed Frank Richards.

"What are you stopping us for?"

"Light down!"

"Get off'n them critters—sharp!" rapped out the man in buckskin.

"Quick, now, or this trigger may go!"

He made a threatening motion with the rifle.

Frank and Bob exchanged a glance and dismounted.

The man in buckskin, keeping the rifle levelled, called out:

"Jo! Mexican Jo!"

"Si, amigo."

A dark-skinned Mexican came out of the cedars.

"What for more?" grinned the man in buckskin.

"Quick, now, or this trigger may go!"

"Si."

"What the thunder is this game?" exclaimed Bob Lawless indignantly.

"Who the dickens are you?"

"I guess they call me Buck Benson when I'm to home, drawed the man up to him, and said:

"What are you stopping us for?"

The man in buckskin grinned.

"This hyer trail is stopped," he explained. "Nobody ain't allowed to pass by this order."

"Whose orders?"

"The cap'n's!"

"The captain's!" repeated Frank Richards blankly.

"I calculate you're asking too many questions, sonny. How long are you going to be with that rope, Mexican Jo? I allow there may be more galoots along the trail arter this crowd."

"My hat!" breathed Frank Richards with a startled glance at his Canadian cousin. "It must be the cattle-lifters, Bob."

Bob Lawless nodded grimly.

He had already guessed that.

"And they're stopping all travellers going towards the ranch, Frank," he muttered. "That means——"

"It means that there's a raid on the ranch."

"I guess so."

Frank's heart thumped.

The levelled edge of the trail could mean nothing else. It could only mean that while Buck Benson and the Mexican held off all comers, their associates were at work farther south on the Lawless Ranch, or were preparing for the raid.

Bob set his teeth.

But there was no help for it; the levelled rifle was enough. Mexican Jo, with a grin on his swarthy face, raised a rope round the wrists of the two schoolboys, and knotted it. With the end of the riza in his dusky hand he plunged into the wood again.

Buck Benson waved the schoolboys a mocking farewell as they disappeared into the trees after the Mexican.

Frank and Bob followed the dark-skinned ruffian in silence.

He led them a couple of hundred yards into the timber, where they halted for a shadowy glade.

The glade was not untenanted.

Two horses were tethered there, and three men could be seen, dimly, in the gloom.

Frank peered at them in the gloom, and recognized them.

One was Mr. Penrose, the editor and publisher of the "Thompson Press"; another was Chu Chung, the Chinese laundryman, and the third was Billy Bowers, the best customer of the Red Dog saloon in Thompson Town.

"Hallo! We've got company!" remarked Bob Lawless grimly.

"You kids here?" exclaimed Mr. Penrose. "I was reckoning you'd be

moseying along the trail about this time. They've got you."

"They've got us," agreed Frank.

"I guess this ain't a cinch!" said the editorial gentleman dimly. "There's mischief afoot farther south, and they've stopped the trail, to keep off interference. I guess there's going to be a cattle-raid on your popper's ranch, young Lawless."

"I guess so," said Bob.

The Mexican ran the riza round the tree to which Mr. Penrose was tied, and knotted it again.

Frank and Bob were now pinned to the tree as well as the editor of the Thompson Press.

Leaving them there, the Mexican plunged away through the trees again, towards the trail, after tethering his schoolboys.

"How long have you been here, Mr. Penrose?" asked Frank.

"Over an hour," said Mr. Penrose gloomily.

"I was riding over to Silver Creek when you roped me in. I guess I was surprised some. But, after all, there's good business in this." The editorial gentleman brightened a little. "This will make something lively for the next number of the school press."

"The next what?"

"The next number of the 'Thompson Press,'" said Mr. Penrose.

"Editor roped in by outlaws! Tied to a tree while cattle-raid takes place, and schoolboys are captured!"

He was thinking of his home, and wondering whether the cattle-lifters were already at work there.

He knew that Billy Cook, the foreman of the ranch, was absent up the range with most of the cattlemen; and, unless the alarm was given, those raiders were not likely to meet with much difficulty at the ranch.

He gritted his teeth as he thought of it, and tugged hard at the rope that held his wrists. But the rope was strong, and he chafed his wrists in vain.

The glooms settled down deeper and deeper on the timber, and the five prisoners could scarcely see one another's faces.

The 3rd Chapter

In Direct Peril!

"Frank!"

Bob Lawless' whisper came softly through the silence of the dusky glade.

"Yes, Bob?"

"We've got to get out of 'his, somehow,'" whispered Bob. "You know why they've held up the trail—there's some devil's work going on farther south, and we don't know we belong to the Lawless Ranch; so they don't know we've guessed their little game. They haven't started in yet at the ranch——"

"How do you know that, Bob?"

"I guess there still be shooting; popper ain't the man to let those rustlers run off his steers without pulling a trigger," said Bob. "If there was shooting, I guess we should hear it from here; the wind's in this direction."

"That's so."

"Besides, they're bound to wait till after dark, I reckon, and it's barely dark here; quite light on the plains yet," said Bob. "It would be too risky for the galoots till after that the wind'll blow down. If we could get loose, Frank, there's still time to put popper on his guard."

Frank gave a wrench at his bonds. But the rawhide rope held him fast.

He breathed hard.

"It's no go, Bob."

"We've got to get out somehow!" muttered Bob resolutely.

"Go easy," came from Mr. Penrose. "I guess that galoot on the trail would give a trigger fast enough. You don't want to be turned into coyote's meat, sonny."

"I'll risk that," said Bob.

"Besides, I shouldn't go by the trail. I reckon I could worm through the timber, if only those rustlers being any the wiser. Can you get your hands loose, Mr. Penrose?"

"None."

"What about you, Chu Chung?"

"The Chinaman gave a hamper."

"The Chilly toghy tie," he replied.

"No can loosen. Me velly pool ole Chinese; velly bad Mexican man treat pool ole Chinese like this!"

"Br-r-r! How are you fixed, Bowers?"

Dry Billy grunted.

"I guess I'm fixed till the cows

come home," he answered. "Them galoots ain't taking any chances. I calculate it's hard on me, I reckon. They say that dog don't eat dog, yet them galoots has gone for me. I can tell you, young Lawless, I'm as thirsty as a fish. I'd give all the gold on the Yukon for a long strong drink!"

"Oh, rats!" growled Bob.

It was evident that the chums of Cedar Creek had to depend only on themselves, if they were to get free and give warning at the ranch of the intended raid.

But they struggled with the rawhide cord in vain.

Mexican Jo had done his work too well.

Bob Lawless tried his teeth on the rawhide, but it defied them; he made several impressions on it by the time his jaws were aching.

"There's a knife in my pocket, Frank," he muttered, at last. "If we could get it out——"

"How?" said Frank hopelessly.

"Look here, we're not going to knuckle under. Try your teeth on the lining, old chap."

"I'll try."

It was not easy for Frank Richards to get his teeth on the lining of the jacket, but he made several impressions on it at the spot at last. He nuzzled into the jacket a good deal like a dog, and felt the bulge of the clasp-knife that lay in the pocket. At last he succeeded in crumpling the lining in his teeth, and he managed to pull it out.

But the jacket was strongly lined; he tore at it till his teeth ached, but he was almost in despair of success, when the lining tore at last. He scoured a fresh grip on the torn edge and tore it far enough to get his hand in the pocket from the inside of the jacket, and the clasp-knife fell through and dropped.

"It's out, anyhow!" gasped Frank.

Bob Lawless dropped on his knees, groping about in the grass for the fallen knife, and he felt it under his knee. By stooping painfully he was able to pick it up in his teeth.

The knife still had to be opened. But Bob could get his hands bound as they were, to his mouth, and he took the knife in his fingers and opened the blade with his teeth.

Then he gripped the handle of the knife in his teeth, and sawed his bonds to and fro along the opened blade.

It was a fatiguing task, but it was successful. The rawhide parted at last over the keen edge.

Bob breathed hard as the rope fell apart.

"Free!" he whispered.

He grasped the knife now, and in a minute more had cut Frank Richards loose.

They stepped away from the tree, their hearts beating. No sound came from the trail, two hundred yards away, where Buck Benson and the Mexican were still watching for passers.

"You young galoots loos?" murmured Mr. Penrose. "I guess you can cut me loose now."

"Me, too!" murmured Chu Chung.

"And me, I calculate," said Dry Billy Bowers. "I guess I ain't going to lose any time in getting a drink arter this."

"I'll set you free; but if those rustlers hear a sound, I reckon they'll shoot. They won't let you carry the news to Thompson! if they can help it."

Dry Billy chuckled.

"I guess I know that, young Lawless. I ain't making any fool, but just you set a galoot free, so that he can go an' look for a long strong drink."

Bob Lawless cut the three prisoners loose.

Dry Billy plunged away at once through the timber, and he was followed by Chu Chung. Mr. Penrose paused a minute. The Chinaman was leaning his horse after him; Dry Billy was on foot. Mr. Penrose undressed his horse.

"You're going to try for the ranch, Lawless?" he asked.

"Sure!"

"I guess you'd better strike for Thompson with me. There'll be more of that gang around, on the edge of the timber, and if they spot you it's a Canadian dollar, to a Mexican peso that they shoot."

"Yes, rather!" said Frank Richards.

"Well, I guess it's your own funeral," said Mr. Penrose. "If you get through, tell your popper that and there'll be help as fast as horse-flesh can bring it."

"Good!" said Bob.

Mr. Penrose led his horse away in the direction opposite from the trail. Bob Lawless listened.

"There was no sound from the rustlers."

Evidently the two ruffians had no suspicion that their prisoners were loose again.

"What about the horses, Bob?" asked Frank. "We're pretty certain to see if we ride——"

"We're not going to ride," said Bob. "The horses will have to be left. I'll loose them, and they'll find their way home later, or we're not leaving them for the rustlers."

"Right!"

Bob cast the horses loose, and gave them a start into the wood. There was no doubt that sooner or later the animals would find their way home to the ranch.

"Keep with me, Frank; you'd never find your way in the timber on your own," whispered Bob.

"You bet!" answered Frank.

"Come on!"

Bob Lawless led the way through the cedars and firs and larches, Frank keeping close behind.

Frank Richards had, by now, a good deal of experience of the Canadian West; but he was not yet equal to finding his way through the forest by night, far from the regular track. But his Canadian cousin pressed on with hardly a halt.

In a short time the glade where they had been prisoners was left far behind.

The trees thinned, and the larches grew more patchy as they neared the plain.

They stood at last on the edge of the timber, with the rolling plain before them, a half-mile or so from the spot where the regular trail ran from the timber to the plain.

The sun was quite gone now, and stars were sparkling in the sky.

Bob Lawless started up anxiously in the direction of the ranch, far away out of sight across the rolling prairie.

There was no sound in the soft evening breeze; but he was not yet in the branches around them.

But in the dimness a horseman might have been within twenty yards of them without being observed.

"I guess the rustlers are not far away," Frank said Bob, in a whisper. "We might run into any of them any minute. We've got to keep up in the grass. Savvy?"

"You bet!"

"Come on, then!"

Bob led the way again, and the schoolboys started at a run across the plain, bending their heads to keep them as much as possible on a level with the high grass.

This grass had reason to be glad of their caution.

Bob suddenly grasped Frank by the arm, and dragged him down on hands and knees in the grass.

"What——" began Frank, in a stammering whisper.

Bob's hand groped over his mouth and silenced him.

The 4th Chapter

The Attack On The Ranch!

Frank Richards lay silent, his heart beating painfully.

He had seen the soft tramp of a horse's hoofs in the high grass; they even caught a glimpse of a cowboy belonging to the ranch.

The hoof-beats came closer—closer—and stopped. They could hear the breathing of the horse only a few feet away in the high grass; they even caught a glimpse of a Stoison hat above. The horseman had halted only a few feet from them.

They crouched close, hardly speaking.

Hoof-beats again! They approached from the direction of the timber trail. A voice called:

"That you, cap'n?"

It was the rough voice of Buck Benson.

"Yes, Buck." The voice that replied was clearer, more cultivated, and evidently that of the chief of the gang of cattle-lifters. "All O.K."

"Sure! Five galoots on the timber trail, but they're roped up in the timber now, cap'n. Live left Mexican Jo watching the trail, but I reckon there'll be no more arter dark."

"Good! Bance stopped three coming up from Silver Creek," said the captain. "The coast is clear enough now. I guess it's time to close in."

"No alarm at the ranch, cap'n?"

"None. Nobody's got through. Our crowd hasn't been seen yet, except by one cowboy, who came riding from the ranch, going to Thompson. And he lies in the grass with a rope up and tagged. Rancher Lawless won't get word of us till there's a gun looking him in the face."

"How many at the ranch do you reckon, cap'n?"

"Not more than four or five, at most, I reckon. They're away with the foreman up the range. There's a crowd of horses in the corral ready for us, and about thirty head of cows or the home range. But that's all. The ranch itself is our game. This isn't a poor homestead like the Lawrences' shobag. Rancher Lawless will have enough in his desk to pay us for our trouble, without his steers."

Buck Benson chuckled.

"There's a cinch, cap'n."

"Ride round and give the word to the boys to close in."

"Sure!"

Buck Benson rode off, and the hoofbeats died away in the grass. Frank and Bob did not stir.

The captain of the cattle-lifters, motionless on his halted horse, was still within a few feet of them, so close that they had heard two words of the colloquy between the two rascals.

A match scratched, and a scent of tobacco reached them. The captain had lighted a cigarette.

He lit his horse silently as he smoked it.

Bob clenched his hands hard. He could not move without betraying himself to the raider, but every moment was precious. The ranch-riders were about to make their swoop, for which such careful and elaborate preparations had been made. Doubtless, Mr. Lawless had heard of the last night's raid on the Lawrence homestead; but it was very unlikely that he was prepared for this sudden swoop upon his own ranch.

It seemed like hours to the two boys before the horseman stirred at last. The stump of the smoked cigarette was thrown away. It fell within an inch of Frank Richards' hands, as he crouched in the grass.

The captain passed on, within a few feet of the schoolboys, out the grass and the darkness hid them.

They breathed deeply, pantingly, as the soft beats of the hoofs in the grass died away.

"That was a narrow shave, Frank," whispered Bob, his voice shaking.

"Come on! Run for it!"

"I'm ready!" panted Frank.

Still keeping their heads low, they ran through the grass. In the thick, high grass, running was not easy; but they pressed on, without a stop, but their breath coming in laboured gasps.

In spite of themselves, their pace slackened down; but they still ran on as fast as they could, and the ranch-house loomed up before them at last.

As they had expected, everything presented its usual aspect. There was no alarm so far, no suspicion that a circle of desperate riders was closing in under cover of the night.

The great pinewood door of the ranch-house was wide open, and light gleamed from within.

In the doorway stood Rancher Lawless, cigar in mouth, looking out into the starlight. Probably he was wondering what kept his son and nephew so late at school.

He uttered a sharp exclamation as the comrades came panting up.

"Bob! Frank!" His voice was stern. "Why are you so late? I was getting alarmed about you—"

"Popper—" panted Bob.

"Where are your horses? What has happened?"

"The raiders!"

"What?"

"They're coming, uncle!" gasped Frank.

Mr. Lawless gave the two schoolboys a quick, searching look. Then he said quietly:

"Tell me—sharp!"

Bob panted out a hurried explanation. The rancher listened, without a muscle quivering on his steady, bronzed face.

"How far away did you leave him—the captain, as you call him?"

"About a mile."

"And you heard them say they were closing in?"

"Yes."

The rancher knitted his brows.

"Very well! Go and warn your

mother, Bob, and tell her not to be alarmed. Get the shutters barred over all the windows, and the doors closed and barred. Sharp!"

"Yes, dad."

"Then get your rifles."

The chums ran into the ranch-house, their hearts thumping with excitement. They heard the rancher's voice calling as they went. It did not take Frank and Bob long to carry out the rancher's instructions. Mrs. Lawless received the news quietly, though her face became a little pale. Frank and Bob did not lose a moment; and when their work was done they came back to the big doorway.

Outside lay the velvety dimness of a fine September night, with stars in myriad twinkling in the sky overhead. From the deep distance came muffled sounds, the sounds of horses in the thick grass. Bob Lawless peered out into the shadows.

"They're coming!" he breathed.

Frank Richards' grip was hard on his rifle. He wondered, breathlessly, what the next few minutes were to bring. It was evidently his uncle's intention to defend the ranch if they were attacked, and from the talk between the "captain" and Buck Benson, the chums knew that it was not only the cattle that the raiders were after. The house itself was to be raided, starting, almost incredibly as such an attack seemed, in favouring Canada. The sturdy figure of Rancher Lawless loomed up before them.

"If Billy Cook and the boys

weren't up the range," he muttered, biting his lip. "But the rascals knew that, of course. They may drive the steers, but they won't rope in my herd of horses, I reckon. But we shall see!"

"That, that!"

"Get my rifle, Bob!"

"Here it is, father!"

"Good!"

The rancher examined the rifle quickly, and dropped the butt of it to the wooden step of the doorway, and stood waiting. Behind him the chums of Cedar Creek stood, breathless. A bunch of horsemen loomed up in the gloom.

"Halt!"

It was the rancher's voice that rang out sharply.

He raised his rifle to his shoulder.

"Halt! Who are you, and what do you want?"

A laugh came echoing back.

"I guess we're visitors for you, Rancher Lawless. Friends to see you from over the border." It was the captain's voice. "If any man raises a hand, that man dies! My word on it!"

"Halt, or I shall shoot!"

"I guess it will be the last thing you'll do on this earth, if you pull trigger, rancher!"

The horsemen came on.

Crack!

With a steady hand the rancher fired into the thick of them, and a loud, terrible cry answered the shot.

The next instant the rancher

stepped back quickly, and the great door slammed.

It was only in time.

There was a spattering of revolver-shots, and the lead whizzed and rang on the door.

With a steady hand the rancher jammed the thick wooden bars into place, securing the door.

Outside, there was a trampling of hoofs, and a fierce shouting of savage voices. Loud and heavy blows rained on the door.

The rancher coolly re-loaded his rifle. Mingled with the savage uproar without came the sound of deep groans. The man who had fallen was evidently hard hit.

"They knew what to expect now," said the rancher grimly. "Steady, my boys! We can hold the ranch till help comes."

"The men, father—"

"There were only two of the men with me. I've sent one riding to Silver Creek. He may get through. The other's in the horse corral. The critters are to be stampeded. It's the only way to save them."

"Oh, good!" muttered Bob.

Crash, crash!

Whipstocks were beating on the door and the shutters, and as the angry raiders rode savagely round the building, but the stout pinewood was impervious to such attacks. In the midst of the angry beating there came sudden silence.

"The horses! It's a stampede!"

Like thunder came the sound of countless galloping hoofs. From the ranch-house it could not be seen, but a rocket was flaring amongst the startled horses in the corral, and the corral gates were wide open. From each gate poured the frightened horses in a terrified, galloping mob that no man could have stopped. The voice of the captain was heard, shouting curses, as he saw his prey escaping him.

The rancher smiled grimly.

To round up the horses on the plains after a stampede was a long and difficult task for the cowboys. But it was easier than leading a valuable herd full into the hands of the raiders. The nature of the case gave the rancher no chance of stopping the wild stampede. The almost frantic horses, with wildly-tossing manes, fled in all directions in the night, the cattle-lifters crowding out of their path, to avoid being carried away in the mob of scared animals.

Crash, crash!

A voice shouted outside, the voice of the captain:

"Rancher Lawless, I'll hang you over your own door for this!"

The rancher shrugged his shoulders.

"Axes here!" shouted the captain.

Crash, crash, crash! A quivering axe-head came through the wood, and left a gap as it was thrust in.

The rancher jammed the muzzle of his rifle to the slit, and fired. There was a fearful cry without, and the sound of a falling body.

Then there was a wild trampling of retreating feet. And then came crash on crash of rifle-fire, and the bullets splattered like hail on the door.

THE END.

(Another splendid tale of Frank Richards & Co., entitled: "The Schoolboy Hostage," in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



A HOLD-UP! Mexican Jo, with a grin on his swarthy face, looped a rope round the wrists of the two schoolboys. There could be no resistance against a levelled rifle in the hands of Buck Benson!

THE SCOUTS' POW-WOW CORNER.

By "Scoutmaster."

The trained scout who wishes to scan a certain piece of open country from behind a cluster of rocks will make it very slow progress. He will then lie full length on the grass and very slowly raise his head a fraction of an inch at a time till he can see the view. It may take him a quarter of an hour or longer before he has raised his head sufficiently above the rock to see the view he is after, but a scout soon learns that patience is not only a virtue, but is a weapon without which no scout can take the field.

Having gained the position he requires to study the open country, the scout remains perfectly still, and should be so an enemy before him, he will not move until he is assured that his head has been mistaken for a part of the rock. That is where the scout's training is essential. The tenderfoot, on seeing the presence of danger, would quickly withdraw his head from view. The

trained scout knows full well that any sudden movement would very likely attract attention, even at a considerable distance. Thus he appreciates the value of being able to keep rigidly still.

I attach great importance to the art of finding cover, and there is no better way of learning this than by studying Nature's scouts—the beasts of the field and the birds of the air.

I have impressed upon you how essential it is to keep "down wind" of any beast you wish to stalk, but there are many other essential points to note, the chief being that you must gain a fairly accurate knowledge about animals and their habits.

To all who would learn the true scouting art there is no better practice possible than stalking animals and birds, and as you improve at this you will be able to study the animals, you will get to like them, and the more you see of them the more you will realise the wonderful work and weapons of self-defence God has given them for self-protection. By this I do not necessarily mean their teeth or claws or horns. I mean, rather, their fully-developed sense of smell, sight, instinct, and quickness of bearing.

Remember in your stalking you are out to learn, and not to kill. There is no enjoyment in killing for killing's sake. The Chief Scout considers

hunting, or going after big game, is one of the finest things in scouting. Does not Frank's particular stress that he does not refer to the "kill" in the adventurous life in the jungle, but to the other advantageous and equally exciting part of the hunt. The actual shooting of the animal in big game hunting is the very smallest part of the fun. The fun lies in the chances of the animal hunting you instead of you hunting the animal, the interest in tracking him up, stalking him, watching all he does and learning his habits.

No scout should ever kill an animal unless there is some very justifiable cause, and then he should do it quickly and effectively, so as to give it as little pain as possible.

Much greater fun can be obtained by going out fully-armed, your weapon being your camera. The scout's badge is one of the best you can gain. It supplies undeniable proof of what efficiency you have gained.

Moreover, it is not the average scout's opportunity to journey out into the wide of Africa to practice his stalking; and perhaps it is just as well, until a little proficiency has been obtained. But practically as much practice can be done by studying wild animals and tame animals at home.

How many scouts about their own native home cannot tell when a horse is laming, or when cattle require

water, or even how a wild rabbit builds its nest and obtains food for its family?

Just as much satisfaction can be obtained by practising your stalking on the home fields and woods as in the wildest parts of Africa.

It is just as difficult to stalk a rabbit or weasel or stoat as it is to stalk a lion. By careful study you can learn much about tame animals, and the habits of wild animals at home are much the same as the habits of the wild animals of the jungle.

There is no more attractive pastime than to get away from everybody and into the animal world. There is a tremendous amount to learn and wisdom. Wild animals' life has its full share of pathos, tragedy, humour, and valour. A mother protecting her young will fight for hours on end against heavy odds, and fight with her last drop of blood, outside the entrance to her nest, refusing escape up trees or away in the thicket, because she knows that by so doing she leaves her youngsters at the mercy of her enemy.

A stoat will get upon the scent of a rabbit, and though the chamo may last for hours, whilst there is an atom of strength in his body he will not give up the chase. The rabbit will dash onward, knowing full well that escape lies only in the strength and endurance of its limbs. The survival of the fittest is the law of the wilds.

Here is another striking lesson to the scout, another point he must attend to to gain proficiency as a scout. A boy can be chased by another, and it matters little if he is caught. A hunted animal must be able to go "all out" all the time. He knows full well that once his captor is upon him no possible chance of escape awaits him.

There is no wild animal that need fear a foe. Their unwritten motto is "Be prepared." Nature has provided them with various means of self-preservation. The hedgehog is a difficult problem when he rolls himself into a ball. Nature has provided him with practically no means of attack, but with a sure defence as any man-made fortress. Hedgehog meat is very palatable to most animals, but when Mr. Hedgehog scents danger, and objects to providing a free meal, he rolls himself into a ball, his enemy will generally sniff and retire hungry and baffled.

Hedgehogs are natural enemies of all reptiles, and particularly the viper. Cases have been reported of how a hedgehog, finding a viper asleep in the sun, has seized its tail between its teeth and rolled into a ball. The viper cannot escape, and eventually the hedgehog breaks his fast, and again rolls himself up, to sleep the sleep of the overfed.

(Another splendid Scout article next Monday.)

A LONG COMPLETE TALE OF THE CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD!



Putty Grace to the Rescue!

A Splendid Story of JIMMY SILVER & CO. By OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter.

A Licking for Thro!

Putty of the Fourth put his head into the end study...

'You fellows are wanted!' he said. Jimmy Silver grunted. Raby and Newcome looked worried.

'Now for it!' murmured Raby, rubbing his hands in dismal anticipation. 'It was bound to come.'

'Jimmy's stunts generally lead to something of the kind!' remarked Newcome morosely.

'Rats!' was Jimmy Silver's rejoinder to that. 'You saw the Head, Putty?' asked Raby.

'Yes. He called to me and sent me away.'

'Did he look waxy?' Putty grinned.

'A trifle!' he answered. 'Anybody with him?'

'Yes, Mr. Lasker, the tenant of the Head Bungalow.'

'I know it!' growled Raby. 'The Beak will lay it on this time! Well, let's go and get it over!'

'I suppose you fellows have been ragging that bouncer at the bungalow again?' asked Putty curiously.

'Yes, in a way.'

'What a pity you didn't ask me to manage it for you!' remarked Putty reflectively.

'Then this wouldn't have happened.'

'Pathetic!' was Jimmy Silver's ungrateful reply. 'Come on, you fellows! We've got to go through it.'

Jimmy Silver led the way from the end study, and his chums followed him with lugubrious faces.

Their steps were slow and reluctant as they repaired to Dr. Chisholm's study. It was an apartment the juniors never cared for visiting.

And the present occasion was likely to be a very painful one.

Outside the Head's door the three juniors paused.

'I—I suppose it's no good explaining to the Head,' murmured Raby, 'about—about Lasker, and what we suspect.'

'Fat lot of good!' grunted Newcome. 'Do you think the Head would listen to such a yarn for a minute?'

'But it's true, you know.'

asked the Head of Rookwood, in a cold, formal manner.

'They are the boys!' answered the tenant of the bungalow.

'Very good! Silver, Raby, Newcome,' said the Head, bending a stern glance upon the hapless trio, 'Mr. Lasker informs me that yesterday afternoon you visited his bungalow on Coombe Heath.'

'Yes, sir!' murmured Jimmy Silver meekly.

'That part of the heath has been placed out of bounds, owing to the trouble that has already occurred between Mr. Lasker and Rookwood boys,' said the Head sternly.

'You have been guilty of disobedience, Mr. personally in going there at all.'

The juniors were silent. There was no denying the fact, and it was impossible to explain to the Head by what mental processes of their own they justified their action to themselves.

'Mr. Lasker states that you seized him at his own gate, threw him down, and thrust a wet sponge into his face!' said the Head.

No answer.

'The juniors looked, as they felt, dismal. Stated thus by the Head, their escapade did seem, even to themselves, a dreadfully serious affair.'

'Are you aware,' continued the Head, 'that Mr. Lasker could, if he chose, prosecute you for assault and battery?'

'C-could he, sir?' stammered Raby.

'Oh, sir!' murmured Newcome. 'I hardly know how to deal with such a case of flagrant delinquency.'

'I need not say that your punishment will be severe. You must realise that.'

The juniors' looks showed that they did.

'I shall cane you with the utmost severity.'

'Oh!'

'In Mr. Lasker's presence. And I shall give my word to Mr. Lasker that, in the event of any repetition of your conduct, a public flogging shall be administered in the presence of the whole school.'

'Oh, sir!'

'Does that satisfy you, Mr. Lasker?' asked the Head, turning to the gentleman in black with cold, formal courtesy.

'Quite!' he answered.

'Very good! I shall now cane you in Mr. Lasker's presence. You first, Silver.'

Jimmy Silver stepped forward.

What followed was very painful. Mr. Lasker looked on as if he enjoyed the scene, as probably he did.

The 2nd Chapter.

Lovell Wants to Know!

'Get out!' Jimmy Silver spoke in quite a feeble tone as Tubby Muffin put his fat face into view in the doorway.

'I say, Jimmy—' 'Don't worry now, Tubby.' 'But I've come to tell you—'

'Go away!' growled Raby. 'Oh, all right!' said Tubby Muffin indignantly. 'Nice way to treat a fellow who's doing you a favour, I must say. If you don't want to answer the telephone, Jimmy—'

'The telephone?' repeated Jimmy Silver.

'Lovell's rung you up on Mr. Bootles's telephone. Bootles sent me to tell you.'

'Oh, I see!' 'And if you can't even thank a chap for coming upstairs to bring you a message,' said Tubby warmly.

'Scat!'

Jimmy Silver rose painfully. It was half an hour since the licking in the Head's study, but the pain was far from wearing off yet.

Still, Jimmy was feeling a little better; and, certainly, if his absent chum was on the telephone, Jimmy wanted to speak to him.

'He went downstairs to Mr. Bootles's study.'

The Fourth Form master greeted him with a kind smile. Mr. Bootles was well aware how Arthur Edward Lovell was missed by his old chums, and he had more than once shown his sympathy in a kind, quiet way.

'Lovell has rung me up, and asked permission to speak to you, Silver,' he said. 'It is—ahem!—rather unusual; but you may speak to your trunk call, you had better lose no time.'

'Thank you, sir!' said Jimmy gratefully.

Mr. Bootles waved his hand towards the telephone, and left the study. Jimmy picked up the receiver.

'Hello! Is that you, Jimmy?'

It was the well-known voice of Arthur Edward Lovell, formerly of the Rookwood Fourth, that came over the wires—faint in the distance, but easily recognisable.

'I'm jolly glad to get a word with you!'

'It's rather a cheek, ringing you up on Bootles's phone,' said Lovell; 'but I thought he'd let us have a jaw. He's a good old rort. It's rather important, too. You asked me to send you a photograph of Pilkingham, the lawyer who bolted with the pater's money. I had to ask father for it, and he's jolly interested. The police believe now that Pilkingham is still in England, and the pater thinks you may have seen something of him, from your asking for the photograph. Is there any news, Jimmy?'

'I—I hope so, Lovell.'

'You haven't seen him?'

'I've got a suspicion.'

'My hat!'

'I've been on the job since the photograph came,' continued Jimmy Silver. 'A chap can't be certain, but I believe there's something in it. I'm going to make sure. I'm glad you called me up, Lovell. I was going to write to you, and this will save time. We've not said anything about your affairs here, of course. Nobody knows why you left. But I think Putty might be able to help us in this business—Grace of the Fourth, you know. Would you mind if we told him?'

Lovell's voice came through again at last. 'You there, Jimmy?'

'Yes.' 'You can tell Putty, if you like—not to go any further in the course. The pater is anxious that my young brother shouldn't be worried by knowing how we stand. You catch on?'

'I understand, old fellow!'

'How is my minor going on now?'

'Right as rain.' 'But do you really think, Jimmy, that you've seen some chap who may be that rascal Pilkingham, and that there's a chance of spotting him?'

'I really think there's a chance. Lovell, and if I find anything out for certain I'll send you a wire.'

'Good for you! We're awfully anxious, of course. If that villain was found, and the money recovered, I could come back to Rookwood. Wouldn't that be prime?'

'What-ho, old fellow!'

'Hallo, time's up! Good-bye, Jimmy!'

Jimmy Silver put up the receiver and left. Mr. Bootles's study.

Raby and Newcome looked at him as he came back into the end study in the Fourth, with languid interest.

'Anything fresh from Lovell?'

asked Raby.

'No, jolly he's rather excited about our idea that we've seen that absconding solicitor chap. And we can tell Putty—'

'What do you want to tell him for?'

'I think he may be able to help us out. He's awfully keen, you know. And—I'm blessed if I know exactly how to nail that villain Lasker down, even if he is Pilkingham, confessed Jimmy Silver and see what he thinks. Not just yet though. We'll wait for this to wear off. Jimmy rubbed his hands. 'It's getting a bit better now, but—'

'Ow ow.'

'If we were able to get old Lovell back to Rookwood, we shan't mind this licking much,' said Jimmy.

'Not when it's worn off! Ow!'

was nearly cleared out. It was supposed that Pilkingham had got out of the country with his loot; but the police have traced some bonds he got rid of, and that's taken as proof that he's still in England.'

'In hiding somewhere, you know,' said Newcome.

'And we think Lasker, at the bungalow, is the man!' added Raby.

Putty jumped.

'Pho! Just say, aren't you romancing a bit?'

'Letting your merry fancy run away with you, you know?'

'We're afraid the police might think so, if we went to them,' said Jimmy Silver ruefully. 'But we're not going to them till we've got proof. Of course, we've got some evidence to go on.'

Putty looked keenly interested now. 'Let's hear the evidence,' he said. 'I'll be umpire.'

'Lasker was here one day when Mr. Lovell called and it struck us that he was dodging Mr. Lovell seeing him.'

'Pilkingham is a little, grey-headed, grey-bearded man—and Lasker has his hair and whiskers dyed. A dozen fellows have spotted that kind of people dye their whiskers.'

'I know. But Pilkingham is a pale-looking blighter, and Lasker has a dark, foreign-looking complexion. You've seen him, jolly unlike—'

'Well, that's jolly unlike—'

'It's a disguise. He's got his skin stained dark,' explained Jimmy Silver.

'How do you know?'

'Let's see it!'

'That's what the Head caned us for. We jumped on Lasker at his place to dab his chivvy with a wet sponge, to see whether his complexion was real. And some of it came off on the sponge!'

'My hat!'

'So, you see—'

'You're sure about that?'

The 3rd Chapter.

The Prty Agree!

'Grace!'

'Adsum, dear boy,' said Putty, with a smile.

'Come along to Little Quad,' said Jimmy Silver. 'I want you to lend us your chin in a pow-wow.'

'Delighted, old chap! If you're thinking of going for that cad Lasker again, count me in,' said Putty Grace at once in his own manly way.

'Morning lessons were over, and Jimmy had hailed Grace as the Fourth came out of their Form-room. The Co. walked across the quad with Putty, and they went through the archway into the Quad, where they were in quiet seclusion on one of the old oaken benches under a beech-tree. Jimmy was very particular that the pow-wow should not be overheard. Lovell's fall from fortune was not general news at Rookwood. Mr. Lovell had desired that nothing should be said about it, chiefly on account of Lovell's minor of the Third Form, who was still at Rookwood.'

'Go ahead, my son,' said Putty, looking rather curiously at the three grave faces. 'You're jolly serious about it!'

'Nothing like a thumpin' licking to make a fellow serious, remarked Raby. 'The pater's promised us a thrashing in the Hall if we go for that rorter, Lasker, again.'

Putty Grace whistled.

'Then I'd let him alone,' he said. 'Leave him to me. I'll take the matter off your hands.'

'It's about Lovell.'

'Lovell! What's Lovell got to do with Lasker?'

'Quite sure.'

'That's it,' said Raby. 'We got a thumping licking for doing it, but we did it.'

'There's some more evidence,' said Jimmy Silver. 'You know Smythe of the Shell trespassing in the bungalow on a smoking night. Thinking it was unattended, I had it from Smythe that he saw whole bundles of War Bonds on the table there.'

'Bhev!'

'There were no end of bonds among the securities Pilkingham bolted with,' added Raby. 'We had that from Lovell.'

'Then there's Lasker's secluded life, as we've seen, and a continued Jimmy Silver. 'With all those bonds, he must be rich, but he lives in a lonely little bungalow, without keeping any kind of servant. I can see a foul, and never has a letter. I've learned that from the postman. Then he cuts up rough like a giddy lunatic if a fellow goes near his show; that's to make everybody keep clear, of course. And the law's full of holding their old chums, as if it's unattended. Hardly anybody knows that a man lives there at all. Everything points to the man being in hiding. Taking it all together, Putty, what do you think?'

Putty knitted his brows.

'The chums of the Fourth watched him rather anxiously.'

'They had discussed the matter among themselves endlessly, and they had made out what seemed to them an almost certain case, since suspicion had first dawned upon their minds. But they were aware that the wish was probably father to the thought; that the hope of holding their old chums had doubtless coloured their reasonings on the subject.'

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome had, indeed, quite settled to their own satisfaction that the mysterious tenant of the bungalow was, in fact, the absconding Mr. Pilkingham, in disguise and in hiding. They hadn't a doubt on the point.

But they realised that what to themselves looked like convincing evidence, might appear to a disinterested party as trifles light as air. Putty was a clever fellow, as all Rookwood knew, and they were glad to have his unbiased judgment on the case. Only they hoped that his sense of humour would be in accordance with their own opinion. If it wasn't, it was quite probable that they would not attach very much importance to it.

Putty of the Fourth was silent for some time, evidently thinking the matter out very carefully. The chums waited for him to speak.

'You've told me all you know?' he asked at last.

"There's the photograph," said Jimmy Silver took a photograph from his pocket.

"That's Pilkingham," he said. "I've indeed the whistler, black, and that makes it look just like Lasker." Putty studied the photograph carefully.

Excepting for the pale complexion, it was exactly as given by Mr. Lasker of the bungalow, now that the hirest adornments were blackened.

"Anything more?" asked Putty. Jimmy Silver & Co. ran the matter over in their minds, adding every detail they could think of.

Putty listened with the gravity and attention of a judge.

"It looks highly likely," he said at last. "It may be all moonshine—very likely it is—but any friend of Lovell is bound to look into it and see if there's anything in it."

"You think there is?" asked Jimmy. "I do."

"Oh, good!" said the three together. And their respect for Teddy Grace's sagacity was increased on the spot.

Evidently Putty of the Fourth was a fellow whose opinion was worth asking.

"But I don't think it would be much good going to the police-station with this yarn," added Putty. "It sounds—if you don't mind my saying so—a bit moonshine. All the evidence hangs together, but it will be necessary to get something a bit more tangible. Every separate bit of the evidence might be explained away."

"But, taken all together, it's—what I'd call it—cumulative!" said Jimmy Silver.

"That's so. But you want something clearer—something solid enough for a court of law, before you worry the bobbies on the subject," said Putty.

"In fact, you've got to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the man is Pilkingham. But that can be done."

"We're going to do it, somehow," said Raby. "Why, if the man's Pilkingham, he's got Lovell's party's money there in the bungalow, and it could be found, and old Lovell could come back to Rookwood."

Putty nodded. "We've got to know the facts," he said. "I'm going into it with you fellows, of course. I'd give a term's pocket-money to see old Lovell set right again, though I've had some rows with him. Have you fellows got an idea for showing the man up?"

"Not beyond what we've done already," confessed Jimmy Silver. "We've got proof enough to satisfy ourselves—but satisfying the police and making them arrest him is another matter. And if anything was done without actually collaring him, of course, he would bolt, and we should be discharged. It won't do at all unless the police till it's a case of handcuffs for the rotter, so that he can't mizzle."

"We've got to establish his identity," said Putty thoughtfully. "We've got to make him own up."

"How?"

"I've got a sort of a germ of an idea at the back of my head. I'll think it out, and we'll have a jaw after dinner. If you're not thoughtful of anything by then, I'll expound."

"All right, old chap!"

The Fourth-Formers went in to dinner, all the four in a very reflective frame of mind.

In a matter of absolute fact, Jimmy Silver & Co. hadn't very much faith in Putty's powers of dealing with the tenant of the bungalow; they felt that the end study would tell itself for that. They had wanted his judicial opinion on the evidence; and that satisfied them. But they felt that it was up to them to give Putty a polite hearing when he propounded his scheme, which they admitted they admitted the possibility that it might be a good one.

And when, after dinner, Putty of the Fourth whispered that he wanted to speak to them in their study, Jimmy Silver & Co. repaired to the end study to wait for him.

The 4th Chapter.

Putty's Idea!

Jimmy Silver & Co. had waited ten minutes when Putty of the Fourth came into the end study at last. Perhaps they were getting a little restless.

Putty had a bag in his hand when he came in, and he closed the door after him carefully. The three chums looked at Putty and at his bag with curiosity, not unmingled with impatience.

"What have you got there?" asked Raby. "Theatrical props," answered Putty.

"My dear man, we're not thinking of private theatricals now," said Newcome.

"I am," answered Putty.

"Then you're an ass!"

Jimmy Silver gave an impatient shrug. Putty's devotion to theatricals was his ruling passion, and Jimmy Silver very readily admitted that Grace of the Fourth was the best amateur actor he had ever seen; but he wasn't interested now in Putty's histrionic abilities. Even football,

which was beginning now at Rookwood, occupied a very small share of Jimmy's thoughts. His attention was all given to the affair of Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I didn't know it was dashed theatricals you wanted to speak about, Grace," said Jimmy, rising.

"Another time, old chap!"

"Hold on! Look at this!"

Putty Grace opened the big bag, and, to the astonishment of the three juniors, turned out a policeman's tunic and trousers.

"What on earth's that?" asked Raby.

"Bobby dlobber, for our next comedy," explained Putty. "You remember we're going to have a comic policeman, on the lines of Mr. Boggs of Coombe."

"I remember, but I don't care a rap," said Raby. "Can't bother about rot of that kind now."

"And we don't want to!" snapped Newcome. "For goodness sake give us a rest! Blow your silly theatricals!"

"I haven't got the helmet yet," said Putty calmly. "But, as it's a

law and order in the room there with them."

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Newcome, testily.

Putty tapped himself on the breast. "Little me!" he said.

"You!" mumbled Raby dazedly.

"Police-constable Putty!" said Grace, with a grin. "Do you catch on now? With a thundering big pair of boots, and elevators in them, I shall be a good bit taller, and the helmet will add to the effect. In these clothes, well padded, I shall be nearly as fat as Boggs himself. As for my face, you know I can make it up with a new complexion and whiskers, so that the Head himself wouldn't know me. What?"

"You!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver. Putty's astounding scheme almost took his breath away.

"You couldn't do it!" gasped Raby.

Putty sniffed. "I could do it on my head!" he said contemptuously. "There isn't the slightest doubt that Lasker will take me for a real policeman. I clap him on the shoulder, and arrest him as Pilkingham. Well, if he is Pilkingham, what will he do?"

"Try to bolt, I suppose."

"Exactly. And then we shall have the proof we want."

"Yes. But if he isn't Pilkingham, after all—"

"If he isn't, he'll have nothing to fear, and he'll tell me I've made a mistake, and report me at the police station for bothering him," said Putty, with a grin. "That won't hurt me. Police-constable Putty will



ARRESTING THE MAN IN BLACK! "You're my prisoner, Mr. Pilkingham!" said "Police-constable" Putty Grace gruffly. "I think as 'ow I'll clap the darbies on!" Click! A groan escaped the rasal as the handcuffs closed around his wrists.

half-holiday to-day. I can bike over to Rookham. I know where to get a secondhand one cheap. You fellows can stand part of the expense, and we'll put it down to the dramatic club, of course."

"Rats!" "Don't open the door, Newcome. I haven't explained yet."

"I'll tell you we're not hithering about idiotic theatricals now!" howled Newcome. "Talk about Nero fiddling while Rome's burning! I think you're the outside edge of the limit in fatheads!"

"Let me explain, all the same. We've got to make Lasker own up that he's Pilkingham—if he is Pilkingham—"

"Oh, if you're going to talk sense—" said Newcome, dropping his hand from the door-handle.

"I know it's not usual for chaps to talk sense in this study," said Putty sweetly. "But I'm going to chance it, and if I can't get it in words of one syllable, you fellows may catch on."

"Look here, you ass—"

"Come to the point, old fellow!" said Jimmy Silver.

"Suppose a policeman walked into the bungalow," said Putty quietly.

"He dabs his hand on Lasker's shoulder, and says—"

never show up at the station to be ragged by the inspector?"

Jimmy Silver laughed. "Jimmy Silver, what a good stunt!" he said.

"But—but—"

"Never mind 'but's," said Putty. "It's against the law to put on a policeman's dlobber, and make out to be a pecker," said Raby.

"But we're going to do it to help the law, fathead, and that makes all the difference!"

"Yes, if the man is Pilkingham. But he isn't," remarked Putty. "If he isn't, we shall know for certain; and Police-constable Putty will vanish on the spot, and disappear out of existence, and no harm done."

"We've that's so," agreed Raby, thoughtfully.

Jimmy Silver nodded. "Blessed if we don't try it," he said. "It's risky; but we're ready to run risks for old Lovell's sake. We're game!"

Oh, we're game, if it comes to that," said Raby, rubbing his hand reminiscently. "But—"

"You're like a Billy-goat, with your 'but's!" remarked Putty. "Let's get to business, and leave butting till afterwards."

There was a long and a deep discussion, and the chums of the Fourth missed the end study. Putty carrying his bag. Mornington of the Fourth stopped Jimmy Silver in the lower passage.

"About the football practice this afternoon—" he began.

"Bother the football!" said Jimmy. "Eh?"

"I mean, we shall have to cut it, Mornny. You look after it for this afternoon, will you?"

"Certainly! Something on?" asked Mornny.

"Yes; something rather important. Ta-ta!"

And Jimmy Silver & Co. quitted Rookwood with high hopes, with which were mingled deep misgivings.

The 5th Chapter.

In the Name of the Law!

"Ripping!"

It was a hearty exclamation of admiration from Jimmy Silver & Co. It was ripping, there was no doubt about that!

Three hours had passed since the Fourth-Formers had left the school, and in those hours much had happened.

Jimmy and Raby and Newcome had taken charge of Putty's bag of "props," in the depths of Coombe Wood, while the scapegrace of Rookwood had cycled over to Rookham, to secure the secondhand helmet at a bargain. Putty came back with a bundle on his bicycle. He wheeled the machine into the wood, and joined the trio, who were a little tired of waiting for him.

"Not far from the lonely building there was a fringe of willows by the footpath, and in cover of these trees Jimmy Silver & Co. stopped. It was as near as they could go without

risking being observed. Putty dismounted, and stepped steadily on to the garden gate.

Jimmy Silver felt his heart beating faster.

The identity of the mysterious tenant of the bungalow was to be put to the test now. If he was Pilkingham, the absconding solicitor, the truth could hardly fail to be discovered. But a new thought came into Jimmy's mind now. If the man was a criminal, in fear of arrest, what was he likely to do when a policeman's hand dropped on his shoulder? What if he were armed? What if he swooped in his hand? It was a grim possibility, though it had never occurred to the juniors before.

"We've got to get nearer, in case we're wanted," he muttered to his chums. "The police won't get hurt, if he's the man. Come on! Leave the bike here, and crawl on your hands and knees. We shan't be seen then."

"Right-ho!"

On all fours, the juniors crept out to the willows, their experience as Boy Scouts standing them in good stead now.

The ragged shrubberies in the bungalow garden effectually screened them from the house while they kept low.

They crept on till they were close up to the dilapidated fence within which the shrubberies grew. They were only four or five yards now from Putty, as he crouped at the door of the bungalow. They remained on their knees out of sight, waiting, but listening intently. The fear was in Jimmy's heart that Putty might come to some harm, carrying out some extraordinary stunt, but it was too late to change the programme now. Putty was already knocking at the door.

A window opened. Through a narrow opening in the shrubbery the juniors could see the front of the house. They saw the swarthy face of the man in black looking from the window beside the door. He was only four or five yards distant from them, and they could have started to look in his face, though he was evidently trying to keep it under control. The knock and the sight of the official uniform had startled the mysterious tenant, but he was extremely calm, and he was rather disconcerted.

"What do you want?" They heard clearly the rasping tones of the man in black.

Putty's reply did not sound as if it were in Putty's voice. He spoke in deep, gruff tones:

"This 'ere's Heath Bungalow, ain't it, sir?"

"Yes."

"That's all right, then. I'm the policeman, and you're the criminal. You've got to come with me, or else I'll have to take you by force. Now, which is it?"

"I'll go with you, sir, but I'll have to see you first."

"Well, that's all right. You'll have to see me first. Now, which is it?"

"I'll go with you, sir, but I'll have to see you first."

"You're Mr. Lasker?"
 "That is my name."
 "Well, I've got to see you, sir, if you'll be kind enough to open this door."
 The man did not move from the window.
 "That is wanted?" he asked.
 "If you'll let me in, sir, I'll explain. It's 'ot standin' 'ere, sir, arter a long walk."
 "I am a very busy man, officer. Kindly explain your business to me at once," snapped Mr. Lasker.
 Putty mopped his forehead with his handkerchief, as if perspiring. It was quite a natural action, and it helped to screen his face from the keen eyes of the man who was well wadded.
 "Can't you let me into the 'ouse, sir?"
 "I have already refused to do so, unless you explain your business with me," said Mr. Lasker, shortly.
 "I'm afraid, sir, I must insist upon entering. I'm ready to show you my authority."
 "What do you mean?" panted Mr. Lasker. "How dare you—"
 "Nuff said! Will you open this 'ere door?"
 "Certainly not!"
 "You may as well open the door," said the pseudo constable, more gruffly than ever. "The game's up, Mr. Pilkington, and you may as well take it quietly. It's my dooty to warrant that anything you say may be taken down to be used in evidence agin you."
 The man in black clutched at the window-frame with his gruff hands; it seemed, for a moment, that he was about to fall back into the room.
 His eyes almost started from his head as they were fixed wildly upon the figure at the door.
 Really? said Mr. Lasker.
 "He's the man!" he whispered.
 It was plain enough now. The terror in the face of the bungalow tenant was not to be mistaken.
 "What—what—what did you call me?" he panted.
 "Pilkington!"
 "My name is Lasker—"
 "If you can prove that, sir, all the better for you," said the gruff rejoinder. "I've got my dooty to do. Are you going to open this door? I arrest you—"
 "Slam!"

The window closed suddenly, and the blind dropped over it.
 Putty drew a deep breath.
 It was clear enough now that Jimmy Silver's suspicion was well-founded—that the tenant of the bungalow was the missing solicitor. Was he going to open the door and surrender himself? It was pretty certain that he was hastily bundling together some of the more valuable plunder hidden in the bungalow to take to flight. Certainly, if he had an innocent man he would have opened the front door.
 Police-constable Putty struck a heavy blow on the door, which resounded through the flimsy building.
 Knock, knock, knock!
 Hasty movements were heard within, but no footsteps approached the door. Jimmy Silver signed to his comrades, and they skirted round the fence to reach the rear of the building. Quite regardless now of the question of "bonds," the three boys squeaked through the broken fence into the back garden of the bungalow. They had no doubt whatever that the tenant was intending flight from the back while the policeman was knocking at the front door.
 Putty continued to hammer at the door, the knocking echoing through the silent house. Crouching in cover of the ragged bushes in the back garden, Jimmy Silver & Co. waited breathlessly.
 The kitchen door at the back of the bungalow opened softly, and a scared face peered pryingly out.
 The juniors did not stir.
 It was the face of Mr. Lasker, and his eyes were like those of a hunted animal.
 He had a coat on now, and a soft hat crushed on his head, and a black bag gripped in his hand.
 His hurried glance having shown that there were no police at the back of the house, the wretched man came quickly out, leaving the back door open behind him.
 Knock, knock, knock!
 Putty hammered on. He had seen Jimmy Silver's manoeuvre, and his object was to frighten the rascal out of the back of the house into the hands of the juniors.
 In that he succeeded perfectly. The man in black came running across the back garden like a rabbit, panting, evidently with the desperate intention of making a break for the open Heath.
 He passed within a yard of the three breathless juniors, and they

leaped on him instantly, and bore him to the ground.
 The bag flew from his hand as he crashed down on the weedy path, and a yell of terror left his lips.
 "Got him!" yelled Baby.
 "Putty catching round the house, his truncheon in his hand now. The man in black was struggling wildly.
 "You!" he panted, as he recognised Jimmy Silver among his assailants.
 "Here he is, officer!" shouted Jimmy.
 Putty arrived on the scene, and flourished his truncheon over the scared face of the rascal.
 "You're my prisoner, Mr. Pilkington!" he said gruffly. "Give me his 'ands, young gent, and I'll clap the dabbies on!"
 Click!
 There was a groan of despair from the rascal as the handcuffs fastened on his wrists.

The 6th Chapter. Righted at Last!
 Jimmy Silver & Co. released the man in black, and rose breathlessly to their feet. He sat up dazedly on the weedy path, panting. Police-constable Putty looked down at him grimly.
 There was no further doubt now as to his identity. But although his actions had been unmistakable he had as yet admitted nothing. Police-constable Putty's role was not finished yet. The last shadow of a doubt had to be cleared before the man was taken into custody.
 "Pick up that there bag, Master Silver," said the pseudo constable, in his gruff tones. "There'll be evidence in that. Some of the plunder, I deasy. Git up, Mr. Pilkington!"
 The man in black groaned.
 "Send these 'ere bags, officer!" he said faintly. "I want to speak to you privately."
 "Stand back yonder, young gents." Jimmy Silver & Co. retired out of hearing. The rascal was secure in his second hiding place. "Darbies" and there was no danger of his making his escape.
 "Well, what 'ave you to say, Mr. Pilkington? I've warned you that anything you says may be taken down in me."
 "Let me go!" said the man in black in a shrill whisper. "Officer, listen to me—"
 "I've got to do my dooty."
 "I'll make you rich for a hundred pounds, a thousand pounds—"
 breathed the man in black.
 "Gammer!"
 "I have it in the bungalow. You shall see it, take it in your 'ands. My dear old notes for a thousand pounds for my freedom!" panted the man in black. "I ask you an hour's start. You can easily explain the delay to your inspector, and you will be rich. A thousand pounds in banknotes for my freedom."
 Putty smiled.
 "I 'opose there's plenty of evidence in that there bag to convict you, Mr. Pilkington!" he remarked.
 "Yes, yes. What is the use of denial now?" groaned the wretched swindler. "There are a hundred to recognise me as soon as I am in custody. A thousand pounds for my freedom—"
 "Dabby is dooty!"
 "Five thousand pounds!" hissed Pilkington. "I'll place the money in your hands. Lead me back into the bungalow."
 "My dear old top," said Putty, in quite a different voice, "although not a member of His Majesty's Police Force, I am bound to uphold the honour of the Force as a temporary member. I'm afraid I can't accept your generous offer of somebody else's money. Jimmy, old chap, you can come along. The rater wants to bribe me. Me, you know, Police-constable Putty of the Fourth Form."
 "Ha, ha, ha!"
 "Pilkington stared wildly at the officer."
 What might have dawned upon him before but for his terror, dawned upon him now, and he began to understand that he had been tricked, and was out of a profit. Putty, who found himself very warm in the uniform and padding, stripped them off now that they were needed no longer, and revealed himself in his Brown leather coat contrasting strangely with his made-up, whiskered face. The swindler watched him with staring eyes.
 "Put that stuff in the bag on the bike, Jimmy," said Putty cheerily. "I'm going to take a walk in the house. I've got to be Putty of the Fourth again before I'm seen in public. You chaps keep hold of that rascal, so that he can't dodge us."
 "Yes, rather!" grinned Baby.

A torrent of savage curses broke from the man in black. He knew now how he had been fooled, but it was too late. The Rookwood juniors had no authority to arrest him, but held hold of him till he could be handed over to the police, now that his identity was known beyond the shadow of a doubt.
 The juniors did not heed his fury.
 Putty's disguise was stuck in the bag which was on the bike, and Putty soon resumed his usual aspect, with the assistance of a wash in Mr. Lasker's bungalow. Then he stepped away to Combe on the bicycle, to give proper information to Mr. Boggs at the police-station, of the prize that awaited him at Heath Bungalow. Jimmy Silver & Co. remained in charge of the prisoner. They were not likely to lose sight of him.

The wretched man was taken back into the house and allowed to sit down, while he waited for the police to arrive. He alternated between thanks and prayers, and the watch dogs, to all of which the chums of Rookwood turned deaf ears.
 They were glad when the portly form of Police-constable Boggs—the reigning article of the time—came tramp up the path to the house. Baby let him in, and Mr. Boggs trumped into the room, breathing hard. There was a half-credulous expression on his face, as if he did not wholly believe what he was told him. But Jimmy Silver had opened the black bag, disclosing a stack of bonds, and a bundle of banknotes to the value of many thousands dressed in gold, and Mr. Boggs' lingering doubts. And, although Mr. Boggs was doubtless above the temptations of bribery, Jimmy Silver & Co. walked with him and his prisoner to the station, and he walked safely until that building before they left.

And then Jimmy fairly flew to the post-office, to send a telegram to Lovell.
 "Pilkington captured. Now in custody. Lots of loot recovered. Cheerio, old bean.—JIMMY SILVER, BABY, NEWCOMB."

That was the rather remarkable telegram despatched by the chums of the Fourth. It made the young lady at the telegraph counter open her eyes, and it made Arthur Edward Lovell open his when it was delivered. And Jimmy Silver & Co. walked home to Rookwood in high feather.

Rookwood School rang with the story.
 True, the successful juniors had been favoured by chance and luck, but the Rookwooders did not care about that. They had done it, and that was the chief thing. And certainly there was no doubt that they had done it. For late in the day the Head fairly gasped when he heard of it. But, strict disciplinarian as he was, he did not think of punishing Jimmy Silver & Co. for having gone "out of bounds" that evening. And when he saw the black hands with their when he dismissed them, and they departed, feeling very pleased with themselves and with the Head.

And Lovell, of course, came back. Almost the whole of Mr. Lovell's fortune was recovered among the booty hidden in the lonely bungalow, as well as property belonging to others. Pilkington, before his flight, had made a clean sweep. Fortunately, although his capture, the police were so well to make a fairly clean sweep. And that change in the fortunes of the Lovell family naturally brought and Arthur Edward back to his old school, and to the end to which he had longed.
 Which was generally rejoiced in, only Tubby Munfin shaking his head rather sorrowfully, as he gave up his last hope of planting himself in that famous study in the place of Arthur Edward.

But Tubby forgave Arthur Edward for coming back, and carried his forgiveness so far as to appear at the celebration which was given in the end study in honour of Arthur Edward Lovell, which all the school attended. For Mr. Munfin agreed was an occasion to be marked with a white stone! And in the crowded study there were loud cheers, and the ginger-beer foamed freely when Arthur Edward was so well proposed the health of Police-constable Putty.
 THE END.

(Be sure you read next Monday's Rookwood story, entitled, 'At Grips with the Stick!')

HEALTH & EXERCISE

Conducted by PERCY LONGHURST.

(If you are in need of any advice concerning health and general fitness write to 'The Health Editor,' THE BOYS' FRIEND, The Fiselway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. All queries will be answered personally during first-rate information and advice FREE.)

The Need for Sleep.

Working the muscles not only uses their up, but if the work is hard and continued, it leaves behind in the muscles certain products which stay there. Some are removed by the blood, but not all. These products are more or less solid; they are also poisons; and it is because they do stay behind in the muscles that the muscles become fatigued. Fatigue, you see, is a poisoning of the muscles. To get rid of some of these poisons it's quite a long time—many hours; anything from half a dozen to eighteen. Ultimately they are dissolved, and are carried away in the urine.

This is the process which goes on while we sleep, and you can easily see why a decent allowance of sleep is a real necessity.

The more active and vigorous a life you lead, the more healthy you'll be, because vigorous movements is required to develop the muscles and keep the organs in proper working order. On the other hand, this full exercise causes the production of much poison in the system, and more sleep is necessary in order to get that stuff out of the system.

Exercise at Night.

Always, and to everybody, do I recommend the making of a habit of doing a bit of light exercise just before going to bed. There are several good reasons for this, and the most important of them is that the practice helps to secure sound, comfortable sleep.

In the summer-time and hot weather ten minutes' exercise just when half-dressed, helps to cool the body. Makes you hotter, you say. Yes, at the moment, so it does, but the body gets cooler after, and you're more likely to fall asleep comfortably in winter, and you feel chilly? Ten minutes' exercise will warm you up nicely; you'll get into bed glowing, and again sleep will come promptly. Do you suffer from cold feet? The exercise will make them warm, and is ever so much better than piling on bedclothes. Get warm, stay warm.

Try the following series. It's the one I make use of myself every night, and it doesn't take more than fifteen minutes:

Ten deep breaths, either lying flat on the back or erect, allowing stomach to come forward when inhaling, and squeezing stomach when exhaling.

Twenty movements body bending forward, touching toes with fingers or as near to them as you can.

Ten movements lying on back and bringing straight legs above body, lowering till heels almost touch the floor.

Five to ten movements, sitting up and bending forward from on-the-back position. If you can't keep your feet on the floor, get as near to doing so as possible.

Ten to twenty movements bending body at waist first to right then to left, one arm up in air, other alongside leg.

Five movements to right, five movements to left, the body above the hips only turning, arms sideways stretched and level with shoulders.

Ten brisk chest-expanding movements.

To "dipping" movements, body sinking until seat touches heels, body erect all the time.

Finish with twenty-five to fifty movements rising on toes as high as possible and sitting back until heels lightly touch floor.

Two deep breaths between each set of movements.

The blood will be drawn from the head, quickened up about the stomach, the liver stirred up, and you ought to sleep like a top.

Boxers' Muscle.

It isn't necessary for me to waste space in telling you about the value of exercising from the health and boxing point of view. If you take up the game you know all about that; if you've no fancy for it, then it isn't to be shoved into you by my insisting that one of the best recreations going for developing your body and keeping you in good health.


For the moment I'm more concerned with lending a helping hand to those who are fond of a turn with your gloves, and make themselves more efficient in the ring. I want to tell

them where muscle is of the most use to them, and how to get it there. Of course, a boxer ought to be pretty well developed all over, since there isn't a bit of him that doesn't do its share of the work required; but he particularly needs good muscle and plenty of it in a few special parts of his anatomy. The chief of these parts are about the back of the shoulders and across the stomach. The first I'll be glad to have when an opponent treats him to a succession of hefty body-blows.

The boxer doesn't need to worry about the development of his biceps. That is a pulling muscle, the muscles used in hitting a line of the extension, the thrusting kind, those that straighten the arms forcibly and give quickness to the operation.

Showing a heavy dumbbell above the head will develop the triceps muscles—those back of the upper arms—but it's not the ideal exercise for developing the right kind of muscle. The boxer wants long,

A Wrestling Problem.



elastic muscle, not the variety that curls up into hard knots. He will get the right kind of muscle with free exercises, rapid punching at a sack, ball, or bag, and resistance exercises. A good exercise for the boxer is the arm extension movement I described some weeks ago for developing the shoulders and extending the reach. So is the exercise of standing with the hands on jambs of the doorway, letting the body come forward, and then pushing back to straighten arms. Sideways bending of the body, thrusting an arm down as far as possible towards the ground as the body is bent over. The tip-toe exercise for the big muscle running from the armpit to the ribs.

This last also develops waist-muscle, so useful to the boxer; whilst the ground exercises I have already described will develop the muscles protecting the stomach.

A Wrestling Problem.

Above is a drawing which contains a problem for those of my readers who are interested in Catch-as-Catch-can wrestling. The method the right has taken a good hold of his opponent, a first-class hold which goes by the name of a Head Hold with a Bar.

For the benefit of non-wrestling readers, I may note, out that the arms of the attacker passed beneath the defender's left arm and thence upon his back constitutes the Bar. It is a most effective hold, one supplying a very powerful leverage upon the victim.

Now, my wrestling friends, buck up. Take a thorough good look over the positions, and try to come to a conclusion as to whether any useful counter is open to the defender, and, if so, what it is, and how he should set to work to apply it. I have found the setting of such problems as the above of very great utility in developing interest in the sport. Working out such problems helps a wrestler to do a lot of thinking for himself. Put into a given position the moves proper to the contestants would at once be clear to him; but studying them on paper, he is able to see more clearly what he does so more clearly. Having worked out such a problem, proved it by actual trial, the next time he has a bout he is likely to try to get the position again, well knowing what the results should be.

(Another splendid 'Health and Exercise' article next Monday.)