

The BOYS' FRIEND

TWELVE PAGES! TWENTY-SIXTH YEAR!

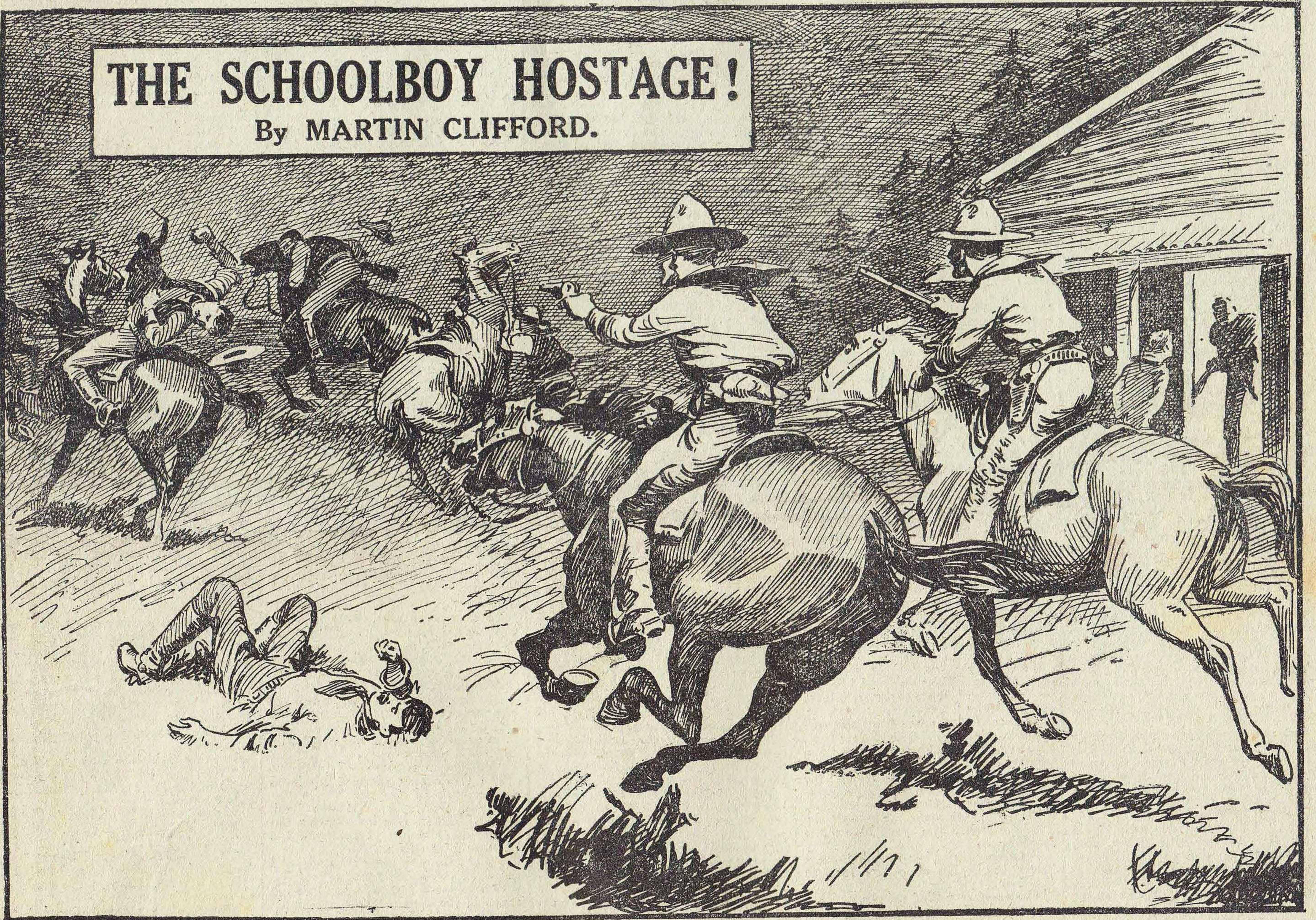
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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending October 9th, 1920.

THE SCHOOLBOY HOSTAGE!

By MARTIN CLIFFORD.



THE ROUT OF THE CATTLE-LIFTERS!

The rustlers, throwing themselves on their horses anyhow, galloped madly away into the darkness towards the South in their desperate rush for liberty!

The 1st Chapter.

The Alarm!

The beat of a horse's hoofs came through the thickening dusk of the Canadian evening. Vere Beauclerc rose to his feet and laid down the rifle he was cleaning. The remittance man's son was alone in the cabin by the creek.

He stepped to the door and threw it open. Outside the earliest stars were glimmering down upon the clearing, and the deep pine-woods beyond. The "Cherub" of Cedar Creek School looked out into the dusk.

A horseman loomed up in the shadows.

"Is it you, father?"
"I guess it's me," a panting voice answered Beauclerc, as the horseman drew rein with a jingle outside the cabin door. "Isn't your popper to home, sonny?"

"Mr. Penrose?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Correct."

"My father's gone to Thompson," said Beauclerc. "I thought it was he returning when I heard your horse. Anything wrong?"

"I guess so," Mr. Penrose, the enterprising editor of the "Thompson

Press," dismounted, and threw his reins over a post. "Sonny, give me a deep drink, or I guess the 'Thompson Press' will want a new editor!"

Vere Beauclerc smiled and stepped back into the cabin, and Mr. Penrose followed him in.

The portly gentleman sank down on a pine stool and fanned his warm brow with his Stetson hat.

"Gee-whiz!" he ejaculated breathlessly. "Nice doings in the Thompson Valley, and no mistake! Where's that juice?"

Mr. Penrose made a slight grimace as Vere placed a jug of water on the table before him. The editorial gentleman was accustomed to more powerful and stimulating liquids than that. He was, indeed, a pillar of support and a tower of strength to the Occidental Hotel at Thompson. But he was athirst, and he sipped the water. It was clear and cool and refreshing; but his sip was not deep.

Supper was laid on a corner of the pine-table, ready for the remittance man when he came in. Mr. Penrose glanced at it.

Hospitality is an unwritten law which is never disregarded in the Canadian West. Beauclerc placed knife and fork before Mr. Penrose.

"Pile in!" he said.

"I guess I will!"
"Something's happened?" asked Beauclerc. He knew that something very unusual must have happened to draw Mr. Penrose so far from the bar-room of the Occidental in the evening.

His visitor nodded.

But he was too busy to speak. He was evidently very hungry, as well as thirsty.

Beauclerc waited quietly, wondering what the news was. He supplied his visitor's wants, and for some minutes nothing was heard in the lonely log-cabin save the champing of Mr. Penrose's hungry jaws. The editorial gentleman sighed at last.

"Now I feel better," he declared.

"Good!"

"Anything in the jug?"

"Lots—of water."

"Ahem! I guess I've had enough, when I come to think of it. Popper's sworn off fire-water, eh?"

Beauclerc nodded.

"Wise man!" said Mr. Penrose, though he seemed disappointed.

"Very wise man! I guess I was expiring for a supper. Nothing since lunch. Grooogh! Tied to a tree and famishing! In the Thompson Valley of British Columbia. What do you think of that? I guess I'd

better be moving on. I've got to get to Thompson, hot-foot, and give the alarm."

"But what on earth's happened?" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"The cattle-lifters have happened, sonny."

"Oh!"

"They're up in this hyer valley," said Mr. Penrose. "A gang from over the border, of course—Western bad-men and some Mexican greasers—and in Canada, by gum! I guess they're clearing out the Lawless Ranch by this time, and maybe the sheriff will get down on them before they're through, if I warn him in time."

"The Lawless Ranch!" exclaimed Beauclerc.

"Yep."

"But—but how—"

"They were watching the trail," explained Mr. Penrose, "stopping all galoots going south from Thompson and Cedar Creek, so that the ranch couldn't be warned. They got me; they got Chu Chung, the washerman, and Dry Billy Bowers; and they got Frank Richards and Bob Lawless, on their way home from school. Tied up to trees like turkeys, to leave them a clear field for their raid on the ranch, I guess."

Beauclerc's cheek paled.

"Frank—Bob—are they hurt? They left me at the fork in the trail as usual. I never guessed—"

"They got loose, and set us loose," said Mr. Penrose. "I'm for Thompson, to give the alarm; but I guess I was pegging out with hunger, and I saw your light and dropped in for a bite or two." He rose, glanced at the jug, and shook his head. "I guess I'll travel. I'm in a hurry to get to the Occidental—I mean, to the sheriff."

"Where are Frank and Bob? If they got away from the rustlers, where are they?" asked Beauclerc.

"I guess they went on, to try and get through the rustlers and warn the ranch," said Mr. Penrose.

"Good heavens!"

"I warned them to mosey on with me to Thompson, but they were too anxious to get home. But I guess they may pull through. Young Lawless is powerful sly."

"But, if they went on, they must have gone right into the raiders, if the rascals are round the Lawless Ranch."

"I guess so."

Vere Beauclerc picked up his rifle hastily. Mr. Penrose was going out to his horse.

"What's your game, sonny?" he asked. "I guess you'd better keep clear."

"I'm going to look for my friends." "Sonny, the whole gang of rustlers is out on the plain, south, and there's no galoot to stand up agin them there," said Mr. Penrose. "Most of the Lawless Ranch cowboys are away up the range. And, mind, they're a shooting gang. I've seen some of them, and when they stuck a gun under my chin, my hands went up like clockwork, you can bet your sweet life! You keep off the grass, sonny! You can't ante in this game."

Beaulerc did not heed. He was fastening on his cartridge-pouch. Mr. Penrose mounted his horse.

"That's my advice," he said. "So-long, sonny!"

"Good-bye!"

The galloping horse disappeared in the shadows up the dusty trail. Mr. Penrose was riding hard towards Thompson to make up for lost time.

Beaulerc scribbled a hasty note for his father, and stuck it to the pine-table with a hunting-knife. Then he put out the lamp, stepped from the cabin, and closed the door.

The starlight glimmered round him. He bent his head to listen. The wind was blowing from the southwest, and on the wind came a faint, distant sound—faint, but a sound he knew. It was the sound of rifle-fire in the far distance.

His heart throbbed. Firing—at the Lawless Ranch. The raiders were at their work—the desperate gang whose sudden appearance in the peaceful valley of the Thompson River had taken the settlers by surprise. His chums were there, and his only thought was to join them in the hour of peril. A minute more and he was mounted on his black horse, riding away like the wind for the Lawless Ranch.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Defence of the Ranch!

Crack! Spatter, spatter! Bullets were raining on the thick pine-wood of the ranch-house door.

Outside, in the starlight, the ranch raiders were firing as fast as they could reload their rifles, and a hail of bullets splattered on the house, the porch, and the door.

Within, in darkness, stood Rancher Lawless, rifle in hand, his eyes gleaming under his knitted brows. Frank Richards and Bob Lawless were by his side, and the chums of Cedar Creek also grasped rifles.

The three were alone to defend the ranch-house. Mrs. Lawless was in her room, and the only other occupants were the two Chinese servants, who had scuttled down into the cellar. Apparently their view was that they were paid for washing dishes, not for fighting rustlers from over the border.

But the ranch-house was strongly built, well made for defence; it had been built at a time when the wild Indian still roamed the banks of the Thompson river, and the defenders were confident of holding it against the attack of the raiders.

Frank Richards' heart was throbbing, but he was calm. And Bob Lawless was as cool as ice.

Outside, mingled with the cracking of the rifles and the buzz of savage voices, a groan could be heard at intervals. Two wounded men lay in the grass; twice the rancher's rifle had claimed a victim. The furious rifle-fire was rather the effect of rage than of any purpose; it brought little danger to the defenders.

"By gum!" whispered Bob Lawless. "By gum! This is a go, Franky!"

"Yes, rather!" breathed Frank. "You didn't tell me you had entertainments like this when I came to Canada, Bob."

Bob chuckled.

"I guess this is a new stunt in this valley," he said. "Such a thing hasn't been heard of for a dog's age. It's a gang from over the border; I reckon they've made the States too hot to hold them for a bit, and so they're trying their hand on this side of the line. Wait till the sheriff happens along with his men. I guess they'll vamoose some!"

"But how long—" muttered Frank.

"Mr. Penrose will take the news to Thompson as fast as he can go. The rascals don't know we set him loose, and they won't be prepared for help to reach us. They may be taken by surprise when the sheriff moseys along. I guess he'll lose no time. This is their second raid in the valley, and Mr. Henderson will be pesky keen to lay his hands on them."

Crack, crack, crack!

Bullets splattered every moment on the door. But few came through the thick wood—only one or two that

found the gash made in the door by the axe.

The three within kept out of the line of fire. They waited for the ranch-raiders to come to closer quarters.

"They're wasting powder," said Mr. Lawless quietly. "I guess this is intended to rattle our nerves—"

"Which it won't do, popper!" said Bob.

"I guess not!"

"But they'll try to rush us sooner or later," said Frank Richards.

"Sure!"

"We'll give them something to remember us by!" said Bob Lawless. "Hallo! They've rung off!"

The rifle-fire ceased. Silence fell upon the prairie, and in the silence came more clearly the groans of the wounded raiders.

The three listened. The cessation of fire portended some new move on the side of the ranch-raiders, they knew that.

"Let 'em come!" muttered Bob.

Knock!

The knock came suddenly on the door. It was followed by a voice—the voice of the captain of the cattle-lifters.

"Rancher Lawless!"

"I'm here!" answered the rancher's deep voice.

"Open the door—surrender the ranch, and your lives shall be spared!"

Mr. Lawless laughed contemptuously.

"You are surrounded!" went on the cattle-lifter savagely. "There is no help for you. The trails are stopped—my men are watching them. No news of this will get out till the morning, and before morning you will be dead in the ashes of your ranch! Take warning! What is your answer?"

"I shall come to Thompson to see you hanged when you are caught, my man!" was the rancher's reply.

A savage oath came through the gashed door.

"For the last time, rancher—"

"Bah!"

Footsteps were heard retreating. There was a sudden burst of rifle-fire again.

"The silly jay!" said Bob Lawless contemptuously. "He reckoned we were rattled by his shooting! I guess he knows his mistake now!"

"Remain here, you two," said the rancher. "Keep out of the line of fire at the door. Shoot if they come close to the door."

"Yes, dad!"

The rancher disappeared in the darkness. They heard him ascend the stairs, and then his footsteps in the room overhead. Then they heard the opening of a window-shutter above.

The rancher opened it only an inch or two. The muzzle of his rifle looked out of the narrow aperture, and he waited.

Flashes of fire came from the surrounding darkness. The raiders were keeping up a fusillade; but, as the rancher guessed, it was to cover the plan the captain had formed for effecting an entrance. A bullet splattered on the shutter of the window, but he did not move. Through the slit he watched the space before the ranch-house.

Four men, carrying among them a heavy log, came at a run towards the door.

The rancher smiled grimly.

The heavy log was intended for use as a battering-ram, and if it had struck the door at full force there was little doubt that it would have smashed through.

But the rancher's rifle was ready above.

The log and its bearers came on fast, and at a dozen-yards' distance the rancher fired twice with deadly aim.

Crack-ack!

The two reports of the repeating-rifle sounded almost like one, and two yells of agony were blended into one as the reports rang out.

Two of the rustlers, at the fore end of the log, staggered and fell, and the log crashed to the earth.

Crack!

The rancher fired again; but the other two were already running, and they vanished into the darkness in time. The log lay useless in the grass, with two wounded men crawling away groaning.

A yell of rage broke from the raiders, and a storm of bullets hailed on the ranch-house. The rancher closed the shutter grimly.

Crack, crack, crack!

Then silence.

Mr. Lawless rejoined his son and nephew in the hall of the ranch-house below.

"I guess they're stopped, popper!"

"For the present, yes."

"Gone, perhaps!" said Frank Richards. "I can hear horses!"

Faintly from the night came the sound of galloping. Had the ranch-raiders abandoned the attack and gone?

They wondered.

Silence, as the galloping of the hoofs died away. But, with their rifles in their hands, they remained on guard.

The 3rd Chapter.

In the Enemy's Hands!

"Halt!"

A hand clutched at Vere Beaulerc's rein in the shadows, and a rifle-barrel glimmered.

The horse was dragged to a halt, rearing.

Beaulerc had gripped his rifle; but a levelled muzzle was looking him in the face, and he did not raise the weapon.

His heart thumped.

He had ridden hard for the Lawless Ranch, in the hope of joining his chums there and helping in their defence. From the distance he could hear the crackling of rifle-fire. But he had not expected to come on the raiders till he was close to the ranch, as he could see that the attack was in progress. But he was still at a distance when the two shadowy figures started up and stopped him.

"Hands up!" growled a deep voice.

"Who are you?" exclaimed Beaulerc. "What—"

"Hands up, I tell you!"

Beaulerc put up his hands. His face was white with anger, but there was no help for it.

One of the rustlers jerked his rifle away. The other, a long-limbed ruffian in buckskin, came closer, and peered into his face.

"A pesky kid!" he growled. "What are you doing here on the prairie? You were going to the ranch?"

"Yes," muttered Beaulerc.

"You belong there?" asked Buck Benson.

"No."

The man in buckskin peered at him again.

"Friends there?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Git off that critter, and come along with me."

"I—"

"Drag him off, Mexican Jo!"

"I will dismount," said Beaulerc hastily.

"You'd better! I ain't used to wasting chinwag!" growled the rustler. "You look spy, sonny, or you'll find out what's in this hyer rifle, sharp!"

Beaulerc sprang from his horse, his lips set. He had come to help his chums, and he had fallen into the hands of their enemies. It was cruel luck, but his courage did not falter. He had not given up hope yet of joining his comrades and lending his aid in the defence of the ranch.

The firing in the distance had ceased now. Nothing could be heard on the dusky plains save the sigh of the wind in the high grass.

Buck Benson grasped the school-boy's arm, and led him on towards the ranch. The Mexican remained with the horse. Beaulerc heard him cursing in Spanish as the black horse reared and plunged. Demon was a valuable prize for the raiders, but he was not an easy animal for anyone but his master to handle.

Beaulerc did not think it likely that Mexican Jo would succeed in handling him.

"This way!" muttered Buck Benson.

A voice called from the darkness, and Buck called back. A minute more, and Beaulerc found himself in a circle of dark-bearded faces. A lantern gleamed on his face for a moment.

A man of lithe frame, dressed in deerskin riding-breeches, with Mexican leather boots and gold spurs, a velvet jacket, and Stetson sat, stood before him. He made almost a dandified figure among the roughly-clad rustlers.

His face, darkly sunburnt, was clean-shaven, save for a little black moustache. The features were handsome, the eyes bold, black, and piercing. Gold earrings glittered in his ears. The swarthy, handsome, half-Spanish face seemed strangely familiar to Beaulerc as he looked.

"Who is it, Buck?"

"A kid, cap'n. He was riding to the ranch when we stopped him," said the man in buckskin. "I reckon he may be useful."

"What do you mean?" muttered the captain.

From the savage looks and mutterings of the raiders, Beaulerc could guess that the attack on the ranch had not been, so far, a success.

"You ain't got into the ranch yet, captain—"

"Sure!"

"They're holding it agin us," muttered one of the raiders, with an oath. "I guess they had warning somehow, arter all."

The captain gritted his teeth.

"They must have had warning," he said. "I cannot tell how. All the trails were guarded. Every passer was stopped and secured. If we were seen, no word can have been carried to the ranch. Yet they were on their guard."

Beaulerc's eyes glimmered.

The captain's muttered words were enough to tell him that one or both of his chums had succeeded in getting through the raiders, and warning the rancher in time of the coming attack.

The lantern moved, and the light fell on the dark, handsome face again, and the earrings glimmered. Beaulerc started.

He knew that the face was familiar. It was long since he had seen it, but it was familiar.

The lantern came closer. The black eyes of the ranch-raider peered into his face, examining him, and Beaulerc knew that he, too, was recognised. The man with the earrings knew him.

"I guess I've seen this kid before. Who are you, boy?" exclaimed the captain abruptly.

"He was going to the ranch, Captain Alf—"

"I've seen him before in the north-west." The captain gripped Beaulerc by the shoulder. "Were you not one of a party of schoolboys in the north-west in the summer—"

"Yes."

"I reckoned so. You know me?"

"You are Alf Carson, the man they called Handsome Alf, the Californian," said Beaulerc.

He knew the man now—the earrings had given him the clue—and now he recalled the handsome, reckless face. The gold-thief of the north-west, Handsome Alf, the Californian, was the captain of the ranch-raiders. It was long since the chums of Cedar Creek had seen him, but Vere Beaulerc had not forgotten him.

And Handsome Alf had not forgotten. His dark eyes glittered at the schoolboy.

"Your name?"

"Beaulerc."

"And the other two, your comrades—"

Handsome Alf seemed to understand suddenly—"they are at the ranch?"

"I believe so."

"I remember now. One of them was named Lawless," said the Californian, with a nod. "I had forgotten. I guess he belongs to this Lawless Ranch. Strange that we should meet again. I was your enemy then. You helped to rob me of a fortune—"

"We helped to prevent you from robbing another of a fortune," said Beaulerc quietly.

"Be that as it may—"

The Californian dropped his hand upon a knife in his belt.

"Hold on, cap'n!" It was Buck Benson, and he laid his hand on the Californian's arm. "I told you the kid would be useful."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the Californian impatiently.

Benson made a gesture towards the ranch in the dark distance.

"They're holding you off, cap'n!"

"Yes, yes?"

"This kid was going there. He says he has friends there."

"I know it now I know him."

"All the better, then. They will open the door to him," said the man in buckskin. "Let them believe we're gone, and the kid knocks at the door and asks for admittance. We'll be on hand ready to rush—"

There was a murmur of approval from the circle of ruffians. Handsome Alf shut off the lantern-light.

"Good!" he said. "I guess you're right, Buck." His hand dropped on Vere Beaulerc's shoulder again.

"You understand, boy?"

Beaulerc breathed hard.

"I understand," he answered.

"You are to go to the ranch, make them believe that the coast is clear, and that we are gone. You savvy?"

"Yes."

"Then they will open to you—"

"No doubt!" said Beaulerc, with a bitter curl of the lip.

"Your life shall be spared for this service," said the man with the earrings. "You will do as I ask?"

Beaulerc drew a deep breath.

"You shall cut me in pieces first!" he answered quietly.

A growl of rage came from the ranch-raiders, and they pressed closer round the fearless boy. A bared knife glimmered in the gloom.

Handsome Alf rapped out an oath. "You will be cut to pieces, as you

say, if you refuse!" he said between his teeth. "Your life is on it!"

"Shoot, then!" said Beaulerc. "Do you think I will betray my friends into your hands, you scoundrel? Shoot!"

The muzzle of a rifle was pressed to his breast. He made a movement, and instantly his arms were pinned to his sides in the rough grasp of the ranch-raiders.

"When I give the word, pull the trigger, Buck!"

"You bet, cap'n!"

"Now, will you do as I ask?"

"No."

Beaulerc's voice was low, but it was clear, and he did not falter as the metal rim was pressed harder on his breast. The bitterness of death was in his heart, but his courage was high, and he did not trouble.

"For the last time?" muttered the Californian hoarsely.

"Never!"

Beaulerc felt a movement of the rifle as Buck Benson's finger moved on the trigger. He looked for instant death. But the Californian, his voice husky with rage, spoke again.

"He shall serve us yet! Bring him along!"

"Cap'n—"

"Bring him along! There's no time to lose. The firing must have been heard. They'll have the news at Silver Creek—ere long at Thompson. This boy shall help us take the ranch-house, or die! Bring him along! I have a plan in my mind. Get a move on, there!"

The Californian strode away in the high grass. Vere Beaulerc, in the grasp of the raiders, was dragged on towards the ranch.

The 4th Chapter.

Between Life and Death!

Silence!

Frank Richards, within the shot-spattered door of the ranch-house, strained his ears to listen.

Only the sigh of the wind came from the plain without.

Were the ranch-raiders gone? It seemed so; but the vigilance of the defenders did not relax for a moment. There was no sleep for the chums of Cedar Creek that night.

Through the hours of darkness it was necessary to keep watch and ward, until the dawn came flushing over the distant Rockies, or until help arrived from the sheriff of Thompson. They knew that Mr. Penrose must have reached Thompson Town by this time, unless some mischance had befallen him; and the rancher had hopes that the cowboy he had sent galloping for Silver Creek had got through. Help must come, probably from more than one direction. If the ranch-raiders had remained, the danger would then be theirs. But were they still lurking in the silent darkness of the prairie?

"Hark!" exclaimed Bob suddenly.

Tap!

It was a light knock at the door.

"Who knocks?" called out the deep voice of the rancher, as he thrust his rifle forward.

"It is I—Vere Beaulerc."

Frank Richards gave a cry.

"Beau! You!"

"The Cherub!" exclaimed Bob Lawless, in astonishment and delight. "It's all right, popper; the coast is clear now!"

Mr. Lawless stepped forward to remove the bars from the gashed door. If Vere Beaulerc was without, free and unthreatened, as it seemed, the danger was over. But through the axe-gash in the door came a hurried whisper.

"Be on your guard! Danger!"

"What?"

"The raiders are here!"

"Beaulerc!"

"I have but a minute to speak; be on your guard." Beaulerc's voice was quiet and calm. "I am a prisoner. I am sent forward to trick you into opening the door. They are a dozen yards back, in the grass, with their rifles ready for a volley."

"My boy!" gasped the rancher.

"Their rifles cover me," said Beaulerc quietly. "I have refused to do their bidding. But Handsome Alf—the captain—"

"Alf Carson—the man we met in the north-west!" muttered Bob.

"The same—the man with the earrings. He is reckoning that I shall save my life by betraying you! Do not open the door, on your lives. They are ready for a rush; they are ready to shoot!"

"My brave lad!" muttered Mr. Lawless huskily. "You shall be saved, if it costs us our lives! I will open the door. You shall—"

"I cannot—"

"You shall dodge in, Cherub, while we keep them off," whispered Bob.

"It's impossible! The end of a

lasso is bound round my waist, and my hands are tied down. The other end of the lasso is tied to a horse. A touch on the horse, and I am dragged away, long before you could get near me to help me."

"Good heavens!"

"Keep the door fast," said Beauclerc steadily. "Save your lives; you cannot save mine."

Mr. Lawless struck his breast with his clenched fist. He did not touch the bars of the door. He knew now that help for Beauclerc was impossible. It needed but the flick of a whip on the horse, distant in the darkness, and the boy would be dragged away rolling at the end of the taut lasso.

The rancher gritted his teeth with helpless rage.

"Oh, they shall pay for this!" he muttered. "They shall pay for this with their lives!"

"Good-bye, Frank and Bob! Keep on your guard, and do not open the door on any pretext," said Beauclerc steadily. "They believe that I shall weaken, but I came only to warn you, and to say a last word before the end, dear old fellows. Good-bye!"

"Beau!" panted Frank.

Vere Beauclerc turned from the door. There was a pull on the rope; the ranch-raiders were growing impatient.

Beauclerc's voice rang out sharp and clear.

"Handsome Alf, you may shoot now! I have warned my friends against your trickery!"

"Cherub!" groaned Bob Lawless.

There was a shout of rage from the darkness. The rancher made a spring for the door; he grasped the bars. At any cost—

But there was no time.

The rope that secured Beauclerc tautened, as Handsome Alf struck the horse. The schoolboy was plucked away from the door, and he rolled over and over helplessly as he was dragged away.

In a few seconds he was among the ranch-raiders, crouching in the dark grass at a distance. Handsome Alf grasped him savagely, and his knife slashed through the rope that held Beauclerc to the plunging horse.

"You have failed me!" he hissed, almost choking with rage. "You have warned them! You—you have dared—"

Beauclerc panted.

"Yes, scoundrel, I have warned them!" he said. "Try any tricks that you like now, and you will not find them off their guard."

"A thousand curses—"

Beauclerc staggered dazedly to his feet. His hands were bound down to his sides; he was helpless. The knife of the Californian glittered before his eyes.

"Die, then!" muttered Carson.

"Hold on, cap'n—"

"Stand back, Buck, you fool! Let him die for his obstinacy!" said Handsome Alf, hoarse with rage.

The man in buckskin gripped his arm.

"I guess he's useful yet," he said. "They're his friends yonder. I guess his life's worth suthin' to them. Tell them—"

The Californian's eyes gleamed.

"Dios! You are right!"

He made a stride towards the ranch-house. Keeping at a safe distance, however, in the shadows, he shouted:

"Rancher Lawless! The boy is in our hands! You know it!"

"I know it, you dog!" came back the rancher's voice, quivering with rage.

"Do you value his life?" shouted the Californian mockingly. "Well, I swear to you that if the ranch is not in our hands in five minutes—no more—the boy falls with a bullet in his brain!"

"Villain!"

"You have my word on it!"

shouted the Californian savagely.

"The rifle is to his breast. In five minutes—no more—if the door is not open, if you do not step out with your hands up, he falls dead at my feet! Take your choice!"

"Do not—do not—" shouted Beauclerc.

"Silence!"

Buck Benson's rough hand gripped over the schoolboy's mouth.

There was no answer from the ranch-house.

But within there was horror and dismay.

"Father!" muttered Bob.

The rancher did not speak.

His brain was in a whirl. He knew that the ranch-raider was in deadly earnest; that the defeated thief of the prairie would carry out his savage threat.

The attack on the ranch had been baffled; the raiders dared not linger. Already they knew that foes might be near; how near they did not guess, but their danger was great. Handsome Alf was playing his last card, and if he failed, Vere Beauclerc's life was the forfeit.

The rancher gave a groan.

"We cannot leave him to die in their hands! Yet, if we surrender, will they spare his life? Heaven guide us now!"

Silence from the prairie.

The ranch-raiders were waiting; the minutes were passing all too swiftly.

Vere Beauclerc, in the grasp of the man in buckskin, stood in enforced silence.

Handsome Alf, with a grin on his evil, swarthy face, lighted a cigarette.

He felt that he held the whip-hand now; that the rancher was driven, at last, to the end of his tether. But if he failed, he was savagely determined that when the ranch-raiders rode away, baffled and disappointed, Vere Beauclerc should remain behind, with a bullet in his heart, to greet his friends with lifeless, upturned face, when they issued from the ranch. The minutes passed.

Beauclerc, in the grasp of the rustler, started. In the imminence of death, his senses seemed strangely keen. Dully, from the distance, came a heavy sound, and he knew that it was galloping—the galloping of horses. His heart throbbed.

Galloping! Galloping!

Softly on the thick grass the hoofs were beating, but he heard them. A minute later the raiders heard them, too. Buck Benson stared round into the gloom in sudden alarm.

"I guess—"

The Californian spun round, gritting his teeth, and his eyes blazed into the shadows. Even in a few moments the full beat of the hoofs had grown louder, nearer.

"It's none of our gang!" muttered Buck Benson. "There's too many. They're from Thompson! By gum,

we're cut off! The horses—the horses!"

The raiders' horses were staked out at a little distance. With one accord the rustlers dashed away towards their steeds.

Beauclerc was forgotten.

Horsemen were galloping towards the ranch through the night. It was help at last for the besieged. And if the raiders were cut off from escape—The bare thought seemed to lend them wings. They raced through the thick grass, and dragged frantically at their horses on the trail-ropes. Handsome Alf ran with the rest; but he turned back, knife in hand, remembering Beauclerc.

"Come on, cap'n!" panted Buck Benson.

Beauclerc's hands were bound, but his feet were free. The moment Buck Benson's grasp was gone, he ran towards the ranch.

"Help!" he shouted. "Help is coming—help!"

Handsome Alf made a rush after him, and paused. He heard the bars falling from the ranch-house door. The thunder of hoofs had been heard there now, and Beauclerc's shout told the rest. The Californian ground his teeth with rage; he dared not waste a second. With a curse, he rushed into the darkness after his comrades.

Gallop! Gallop!

Voices shouted in the darkness. A rifle rang out; there was a flash of fire. The raiders, throwing themselves anyhow on their horses, galloped away madly in the darkness to the south, as the horsemen came sweeping down from the Thompson trail. Four wounded men, groaning in the grass, remained to fall prisoners into the hands of the sheriff of Thompson and his men; the rest were wildly fleeing into the night.

The door of the ranch-house flew open. Frank and Bob dashed towards their chum.

"Beau, old man—"

"Cherub!"

"Heaven be praised!" gasped the rancher.

In the dim starlight, the sheriff of Thompson rode up.

Mr. Lawless shouted to him, and the horsemen swept on to the south in hot pursuit of the ranch-raiders. Handsome Alf and his gang rode hard that night.

Vere Beauclerc remained that night at the ranch, a message being sent to his father at the cabin on the creek. On the morrow there was no school for Frank Richards & Co., for the whole section was aroused now, and the chums of Cedar Creek were riding with the cattlemen in the hunt for the ranch-raiders.

THE END.

(Do not fail to read the long complete story of Frank Richards & Co., entitled "CORNERED BY CATTLE-LIFTERS!" By Martin Clifford, in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)



A WARNING FROM THE SCHOOLBOY HOSTAGE! Mr. Lawless stepped towards the battered door to admit Beauclerc. Through the axe-gash, however, came the voice of the Cherub. "Be on your guard! Danger! Keep the door shut!"

Some Useful Tips.

Darkness is a very treacherous form of cover. I have known nights when looking straight before me I have gazed into a pitch-black wall of darkness, but turning face about I have been able to distinguish objects over fifty yards away.

The scout who looks into the darkness is very apt to get a quite wrong impression of security, because probably someone, standing invisible before him not fifteen yards away, can watch his every movement.

Even on the lightest of nights it is possible to stand at full height on an open stretch of country and yet, through perfect stillness, not be detected. Objects are very deceptive in the half-light, and a still figure will take up the shape of a tree-trunk, and the sharpest pair of eyes will be confident that it is only twisted wood before him. It is not so much that men look like trees in the dark, but that trees make up fantastic human shapes in the darkness, and the scout soon realises the futility of stalking every tree-trunk he passes.

Another point to remember, especially at night, is to move very slowly and very quietly. The thump of an ordinary man's heel can be heard a long distance off, but a scout or hunter always walks lightly on the ball of his feet, not on his heels. The only way to obtain this art is to always practise; you cannot suddenly decide to walk quietly with absolute confidence that you will not make a single error, and one single error may ruin everything.

Remember, too, that a wild animal or a good scout has trained nostrils. Never try to track them before you have assured which way the wind is blowing, and then work up against it. Judging distance is, of course, an

important requirement of the trained scout. Like all other things, it needs practice, and lots of it. Remember that on a clear day objects appear nearer than they really are, and also when looking uphill or down, or across water or snow. Objects appear farther off on a dull day, when in the shade, across a valley, when the background is of a similar colour, when there is a mist over the ground, or when the observer is lying down or kneeling.

Distance can be estimated by sound. Take the instance of a gun fired at a distance. If you count the number of seconds between the flash and the sound of the explosion reaching you, you will be able to tell how far the gun is from you.

Sound travels 365 yards in a second. The following will prove valuable guides to the scout learning the art of distance-judging:

At 50 yards the mouth and eyes can be clearly seen.

At 100 yards eyes appear as dots.

At 200 yards small details of the clothes can be clearly seen.

At 400 yards the movements of the arms and legs can be clearly seen.

At 500 yards the colour of the clothes can be seen.

At an examination for the marksman badge one of the candidates put a star after each of these. Very curiously I glanced at the bottom of the page to see what note he wanted to bring before me. This is what I saw:

"Always providing there is no larger object in the sight of vision!"

When you have learnt to keep your eyes open, and not only keep them open, but to notice every small sign, take a stroll into the nearest woods to you, or out as far into the country as you can. You will be surprised at the

number of little things you notice which had hitherto escaped your eyes.

The woods abound with interesting stories for the true scout and stalker. Here a scattered array of fur or strewn, broken feathers calling for sympathy and spelling unknown tortures. Here a dead rabbit, minus head, here another with no outward sign of the cause of what has evidently been an unexpected death. Here a broken, derelict nest, with five young sparrows strewn pathetically upon the ground.

The creatures of the woods have no very enviable life. There are very few wild creatures who can afford to walk openly and carelessly abroad day or night, with sure knowledge that no danger may be hidden in the nearest bush. Death is always hanging over the wild creatures of the wood. It is a hard school; a school in which only the fit and ready survive. Their motto, like the scouts', must be "Be prepared!"

The woods have no use for invalids, no use for weaklings, no use for cripples; directly a bird or an animal falls sick or suffers an accident its number is up. Even old age is an unforgivable crime, and the offender must pay the penalty.

Yet, in most cases, though death is always at hand, when it comes it is usually mercifully sudden and painless; and though we may sadly pick up the body of a headless rabbit or a battered bird, we may be sure that the end was mercifully swift.

Yet, in spite of these numerous deaths of the woods, it is only the fully-trained stalker whom Nature allows to witness the tragedies; and very rarely, too, to the casual travellers in the woods are there any signs left of the grim tragedy that may quite recently have happened

upon the very spot on which he is walking.

The hunter who runs his prey to earth, either devours it, or effectively hides it from the casual glance. You may go about the woods and fields day after day, and yet see no sign of death. Yet in every bush, in every nook, in every piece of loose earth, at some time or other, some murdered victim has been hidden, or some defeated animal—or, sometimes even the victor or perhaps both—have suffered mortal wounds and have crept away to hide from their own friends to die in peace.

I mention the word "friends," yet in doing so I am strictly wrong. In this hard school only the strong have friends by right of might, and when the strong are dashed from their pedestal, formed of fear, they can look in vain—not a single friend will they find.

Only eyes that have been taught to see; only the trained stalker and scout, who notices every stray feather and broken twig, can hope to pierce the veil of the hidden tragedies of the wood. To him, vivid stories, more enthralling than any books, and far more interesting, are revealed—stories of exciting chases, of unmatched fights to the last, and stories of massacres, endurance, and pluck that only the reader of Nature's book can dream of.

Each hunter of the woods has its own peculiar method of killing, each prey its own ways of death. Very few animals or birds will kill for killing's sake. Most of the killing is done in search of food. Many hunters after the dog race will kill and feed, and bury his prey to preserve it for a rainy day, when food may be scarce.

(Another splendid Scout article next Monday.)

THE SCOUTS' POW-WOW CORNER.

By "Scoutmaster."

Animal Study.

Nature has given the hare speed as practically its only means of self-defence. But it takes a good hunter to catch a hare. Bats are given wings to protect themselves by day, and eyes to find their food at night. Moles are given a wonderful burrowing power, and with it they make a wonderful maze of runs under the ground, with scores of means of escape.

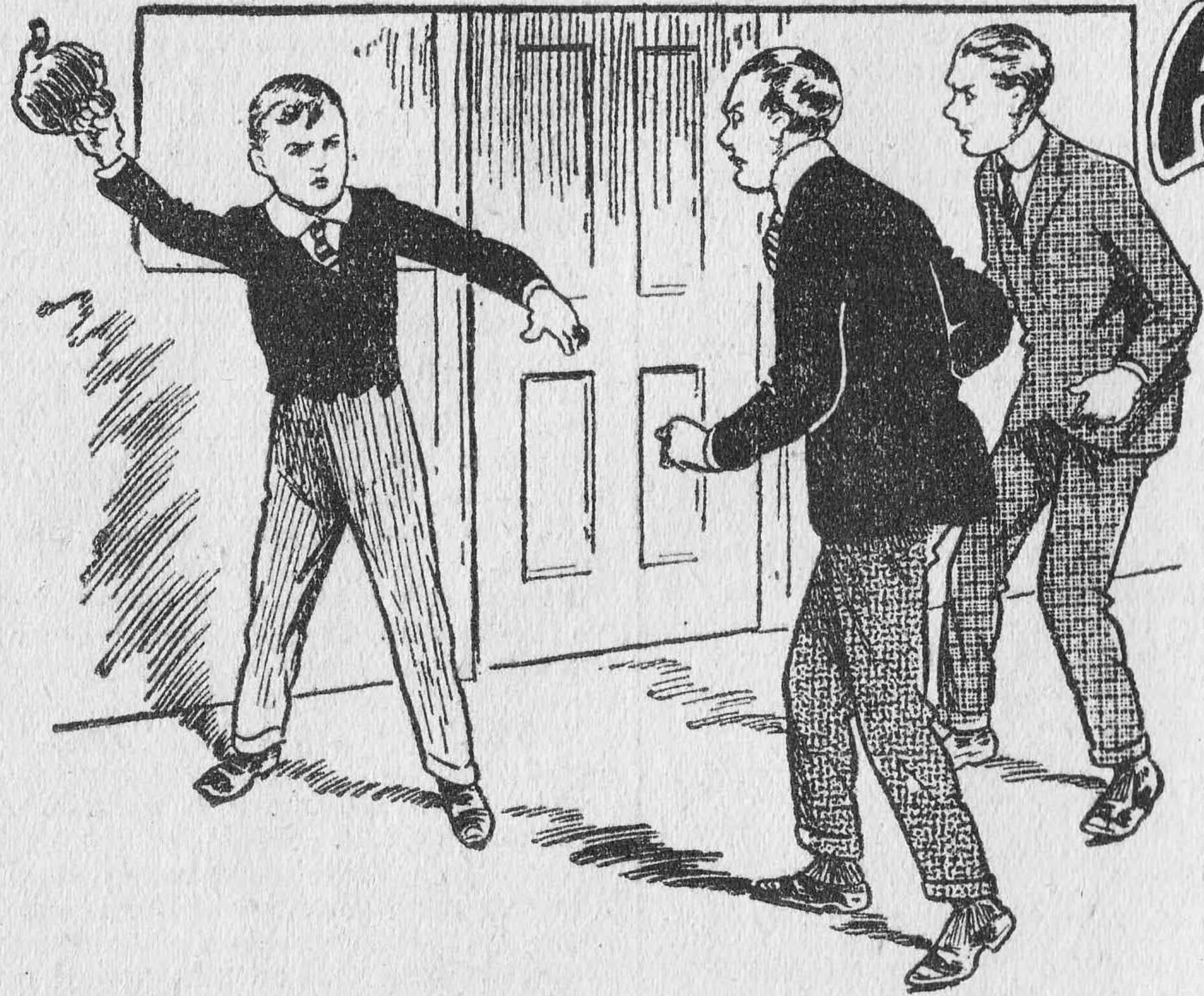
Animals, as they are tamed, lose a lot of their natural instinct and precautions, yet many incidents come to the surface amongst tame animals which have been handed down for perhaps years, that hail from the days of their forefathers, who were free to hunt and be hunted in the wilds.

The tame rabbit, if startled, will tap a wooden hutch with his hind legs, as rabbits will do to warn its mates underground in their burrowed homes that danger is approaching.

The dog will still carry its bones away in solitude, and bury them for a rainy day, when food is scarce.

It is their natural instinct—it is the proof that although animals may be tamed, there is still some of the wilds left within them—their natural precaution. Study these tame animals for yourself, then journey in the woods and study wild animals, and you will see for yourself how Nature has left its trade-mark of the wild life upon the tamed animals of to-day.

A LONG COMPLETE STORY OF JIMMY SILVER & Co.!



At Grips With the Sixth!

A SPLENDID TALE
OF THE
CHUMS OF ROOKWOOD.
By
OWEN CONQUEST.

The 1st Chapter. Rank Rebellion!

"Oh!"
"Ah!"
"Wow!"
Those remarks were made together, in a sort of dismal chorus.
Jimmy Silver & Co. of the Classical Fourth had turned into the archway that led from Big Quad to Little Quad, when the dismal chorus fell upon their ears.
The Fistical Four were sauntering and chatting cheerily after lessons. They stopped as they heard the chorus.

Three youths were gathered in the dusky archway—three members of the Modern Fourth. They were Tommy Dodd, Cook, and Doyle. They were wringing their hands and wriggling, what time they made such remarks as "Ow! Wow! Yow! Oh!"
Evidently the three Tommies of the Modern side of Rookwood had been going through it.

Jimmy Silver & Co. regarded them inquiringly and sympathetically. Though the Classical chums were "up against" the Moderns as a matter of course, they could be sympathetic at a moment like this. This was a kind of misfortune that might happen to any chap, Classical or Modern. The Fistical Four had, so to speak, "been there" themselves.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy Silver quite cordially. "Been through it—what?" Tommy Dodd blinked at him.
"Ow!" was the reply. "Wow!"
"Licked?" asked Arthur Edward Lovell.

Really, it was a superfluous question. It was clear enough to any ordinary intelligence that the three Moderns had been licked—and licked severely.

"Mr Manders at it again?" asked Raby.

"Wow!"
"Or that rotter Knowles?" inquired Newcome.

"Ow! Ow!"
"Feeling bad?" pursued Lovell.
"Fathead!" jerked out Tommy Dodd.

"What?"
"Ass!"
"Look here, you Modern worm, if—"

"Do you think I'm doing a new thing in gymnastics and exercising my vocal cords?" asked Tommy Dodd with savage sarcasm. "Of course, I'm feeling bad, you dummy! If you'd had six on each hand you'd feel bad, wouldn't you? Ow!"

"Six on each hand!" said Jimmy Silver. "That's rather severe. I suppose it was old Manders."

"Knowles!" groaned Tommy Dodd. "That awful cad Knowles of the Sixth! Ow! I'm going to make him sit up somehow! Ow!"

"Ragging your prefect—what?" asked Lovell. "Jolly risky game, you know. You ought to have expected trouble."

"Shush!" murmured Jimmy Silver.
"Well, I'm only consoling the chap," said Lovell.

Tommy Dodd glared at him. Lovell's methods of consolation were, as a matter of fact, rather like those of the comforters of Job.

"It was for nothing!" said Tommy Cook, with a groan.

"Nothing!" said Newcome. "Six on each hand is rather a lot for nothing."

"Really nothing," said Tommy Dodd. "Nothing at all! I just remarked to Cook that Knowles ought

to have taken that goal in the senior match on Saturday—ow!"

"And the baste was standin' near, and heard it," mumbled Tommy Doyle.

"And he gave Tommy a whack with his ashplant," said Cook, "and—"

"And, without stopping to think, we just bunged him against a beech," said Tommy Dodd. "I—I—I wish we'd stopped to think now."

"Ow! Wow! Sure, so do I!"

"Yow-ow-ow-woop!"
"Well, you mustn't bung a prefect against a beech, even a cad like Knowles," said Jimmy Silver judicially. "He ought to be scalped, of course. But prefects mustn't be scalped."

"And what happened next?" asked Raby.

Groan!
"Manders happened next!" mumbled Tommy Dodd "Of course, he was bound to come by just as we were bunging Knowles. And he marched us into his study and gave us six on each hand—yow-ow-ow!"

"Hence these groans!" said Jimmy Silver. "It's too bad."

"Rotten!" said Lovell. "These Modern prefects are a beastly crowd. I don't think any of the Modern Sixth ought to be prefects."

"Silly ass!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "Fathead!" said Cook.
"Howlin' idiot!" said Doyle.

The three Tommies had been licked, but they were patriotic Moderns all the same. Arthur Edward Lovell was not famous for tact, and undoubtedly he did not shine in the role of comforter.

"Look here, you Modern worms—" he began wrathfully "I've a jolly good mind to give you a licking myself—"

"Rats!"
"You couldn't!"
"Bosh!"

"I'll jolly well—" roared Lovell, quite forgetting that he had started out to comfort the sufferers.

"Cheese it, old chap!" said Jimmy Silver soothingly. "I say, we're really sorry, you chaps. Knowles wants scalping, and so does Manders. I wish we could help you scalp them."

"Ow, ow! Wow!"
"If we had a prefect like that on the Classical side, we'd scalp him fast enough," said Lovell.

"You wouldn't!" snorted Tommy Dodd. "You'd stand it just as we do, because you couldn't help yourself, you Classical chump!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, rats!"
"I tell you that if there was a cad like Knowles on the Classical side—"

roared Lovell.

"What's that?"
A sharp, angry voice broke in.

The figure of Cecil Knowles of the Modern Sixth loomed up in the archway from Big Quad.
Lovell stopped short suddenly.
Carthew of the Classical Sixth was with Knowles. He gave Lovell a grim look.

"What's that, Lovell?" he said, repeating Knowles' question.

"N-u-nothing!" mumbled Lovell. "You were calling Knowles names!"

Lovell was silent.
Carthew had his ashplant tucked under his arm. He let it slip into his hand.

"Hold out your hand, Lovell!" he said.

The three Tommies grinned. In spite of their own pains and sufferings, they were tickled by this situation. Mark Carthew was, as a matter

of fact, very like Knowles in his methods; the two were chums, though they were on different sides at Rookwood. After Lovell's loud words, it was up to him to display a spirit of lofty independence towards Carthew of the Sixth.

He felt it. But the awkward fact remained that Carthew was a prefect, and was invested with the power of the cane.

In point of fact, Arthur Edward Lovell had spoken hastily, and now his hasty words had come home to roost, as it were—as hasty words often do.

"I'm waiting, Lovell!" said Carthew significantly.

Knowles looked on with a bitter grin. Lovell would have refused to be caned by him, that being within his rights as a Classical fellow. But Carthew was a Classical prefect, and Knowles could depend on him to make the rash junior smart for his thoughtless words.

"Do you hear me, Lovell?" snapped Carthew.

"Ye-es!"

"Hold out your hand, then!"

Lovell stood irresolute.
His face was red. The grins of the three Tommies put him on his mettle. He simply couldn't submit to be caned by Carthew, after what he had said only a minute ago.

"I won't!" he said at last.

"What?" roared Carthew.

"I won't!"

"You refuse to hold out your hand?"

"Yes!" growled Lovell.

Carthew stared at him, and then made a stride forward, and seized the junior by the collar.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Lovell, as the ashplant whacked across his shoulders. "Oh, ow-wow! Leggo, you bully! Ow!"

Whack, whack, whack!

"Give it him!" grinned Knowles.

"Yow-ow! Rescue!" howled Lovell.

Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome looked on grimly. Resistance to the authority of a Sixth Form prefect was a serious matter. But they were not proof against that appeal from their chum.

"Come on!" muttered Jimmy.

With a rush the three hurled themselves on Carthew.

He was dragged away from his victim, spun round, and sent whirling into Little Quad, where he landed sprawling.

"Woo-hooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Tommy Dodd.

Lovell stood panting. Jimmy Silver caught him by the arm.

"Hook it!" he said briefly.

And the Fistical Four "hooked" it, without waiting for any further dealings with Carthew of the Sixth.

The 2nd Chapter. Fag Wanted!

"Ass!"
Jimmy Silver and Raby and Newcome hurled that complimentary epithet at Lovell together in the end study on the Classical side. They had retreated to their study, not in a happy mood. It was only too certain that Mark Carthew would not take his handling "lying down." There was trouble to follow—serious trouble.

It was tea-time; but the Fistical Four were not thinking of tea. They were thinking of Carthew, and Mr. Bootles, and the Head, and the canings, and a possible flogging—all sorts of unpleasant things, in fact.

And three of them agreed that it was all Arthur Edward Lovell's fault.

"Look here—" protested Arthur Edward.

"What the thump did you want to brag to those silly Moderns for?" growled Raby.

"I wasn't bragging—"

"You ought to have put out your paw when Carthew told you—"

"I'm not going to be bullied!"

"Well, you called Knowles a cad! Any prefect would have caned you for calling another prefect names. Bulkeley or Neville would have done it, same as Carthew."

Lovell grunted.

He had an uneasy feeling that he had placed himself in the wrong; but he was not inclined to admit it.

"Now we're all landed!" said Raby morosely. "Carthew will go straight to Mr. Bootles or the Head."

"Blow Carthew!"

"We can't say he was bullying this time; he wasn't!" said Jimmy Silver. "Disobedience and assaulting a prefect—that means a good dose for the lot of us. Oh dear!"

"Rats!" growled Lovell.

Tubby Muffin looked in, with a grin on his fat face.

"You fellows are wanted in Bootles' study," he said. "Bootles sent me to tell you. Carthew's there."

"Now for it!" groaned Newcome.

"I say, Bootles looks waxy!" said Muffin confidentially. "He's got a cane on the table!"

"Oh, frow up!" growled Lovell.

"You fellows are in for it!" said Tubby. "I heard Bootles say 'shocking!' Carthew had been telling him something. I say, I believe you're going to have an awful licking!"

"Shut up!" roared Lovell.

"But you are, you know!" persisted Tubby Muffin. "Keep a stiff upper lip, Lovell, old chap! Grin and bear it, you know! I don't make much fuss about a licking. Making a fuss doesn't help you!"

"Ass!"

"Face it, you know!" said Tubby, who was evidently regarding the affair with the detached calmness of a fellow who wasn't booked for the licking.

"It's not so very bad, if you bear it like a man, you know! I've been through it! Just smile, you know! I'm tough—manly, you know. You fellows buck up, and screw up your courage to the sticking-point! Be firm and manly! Like me, you know! Yaroooooop!"

Tubby Muffin's remarks came to a sudden stop as the exasperated Lovell seized him by the collar and shook him.

"Yaroooh! Leggo, you beast! Ow!"

Bump!

The fat Classical sat down on the carpet, with a bump that shook the study.

He was still sitting there, roaring, as the Fistical Four went dimly down the passage on their way to Mr. Bootles.

It was not a happy quartette that arrived in Mr. Bootles' study. The master of the Fourth glanced at them with a stern brow. The cane was in evidence, lying ready on the table. Carthew of the Sixth was there, looking rather dusty and extremely savage.

"What is this I hear? What—what?" boomed Mr. Bootles. "You four juniors have—hem!—laid hands—ah!—upon a prefect of the Sixth Form—hem! What does this mean? What—what?"

"Yes, sir!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"It was my fault, sir," said Lovell. "I called to them to help me."

"You refused to be caned by Carthew?"

"Ye-es, sir."

"You have applied a disrespectful epithet to Knowles of the Modern Sixth Form—"

"I—I only called him a cad, sir," mumbled Lovell.

"What—what?"

"A—a cad, sir."

"You—you called a Sixth Form prefect a—a—a cad?" boomed Mr. Bootles. "Carthew was very right to cane you for such a thing, Lovell! You must be perfectly well aware of that!"

Mr. Bootles picked up his cane.

"I shall punish you most severely!" he said.

"Oh dear!"

"Discipline must be maintained!" said Mr. Bootles. "Subordination must be—ah!—preserved! You have acted—hem!—very wrongly! I am surprised at you—indeed, shocked! What—what! Hold out your hand, Lovell!"

The scene that followed was painful.

Carthew looked as if he found it an agreeable sight; but he had the enjoyment all to himself.

The Fistical Four did not enjoy it the least bit. They went through it with all the fortitude they could

muster; and all their fortitude was called upon. Mr. Bootles thought that it was an occasion when his duty required him to be severe, and he did his duty conscientiously.

When it was over Jimmy Silver & Co. fairly limped from their Form-master's study.

Their faces were quite pale as they crawled back to the end study in the Fourth Form passage.

Even at that moment of anguish they did not blame Mr. Bootles. Bootles was, as they would have expressed it, a good little ass, and he had only done his duty. But their feelings towards Carthew and Knowles were quite Hunnish.

They had been in the study about ten minutes when Mornington looked in. He smiled slightly at the dismal looks of the four.

"Carthew's askin' for you," said Mornington.

"Hang Carthew!"

"He wants a fag," said Mornington. "He seems to have a special want for you, Silver."

"Bother him!"

"Well, he says you're to go."

"Tell him to go and eat coke!"

Mornington laughed, and strolled away. He was not likely to deliver that message to Carthew of the Sixth.

"The awful cad!" said Jimmy. He was referring to Mark Carthew.

"Now he's got us into Bootles' black books, he thinks he's got a free hand. He's going to rub it in while he's got a chance. He's going to get me to fag in his study, and make me sit up. I'm not going!"

"I say—" began Raby dubiously. Jimmy Silver snorted.

"I'm not fagging for anybody, with my blessed paws aching as if they'd been through a mangle!" he said. "Carthew can go and eat coke! Bother Carthew!"

"But—"

"Ow, ow, ow!"

And Jimmy Silver did not go. He wasn't inclined for further bullying and ragging from Carthew just then. A few minutes later Tubby Muffin projected his bullet head and fat face into the study.

"Jimmy Silver—"

"Scat!"

"Carthew wants you to fag—"

"Rats!"

"Feeling pretty bad—what?" asked Tubby sympathetically. "I'll tell you what, Jimmy—you stand me a bob and I'll go instead of you!"

"Good wheeze!" said Lovell.

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Done, Tubby!" he said.

And Tubby Muffin rolled away, and the Fistical Four were left to groan and groan to their heart's content.

The 3rd Chapter. Fagging for Carthew!

Carthew of the Sixth was in his study, with a cheery smile on his face. He had guests in the study—three of them. There were Knowles, Catesby, and Frampton, of the Modern Sixth. They had come to tea, and Carthew needed the services of a fag. He had chosen Jimmy Silver, for the sake, as Jimmy had expressed it, of "rubbing it in."

There was an old quarrel between Mark Carthew and the end study; and Carthew had learned that it was judicious to let the Fistical Four alone. Now he was "trying it on" again, as it were. He calculated that the licking from Mr. Bootles would have reduced the captain of the Fourth to a subdued mood; and moreover, the incident in the Little Quad archway would tell against Jimmy Silver in the event of any complaint to the Form-master. Carthew thought the moment a good one for "showing off" before his Modern friends. He was going to make Jimmy Silver prepare the tea, and he was going to make him wait at table like a waiter. This was quite outside a fag's duties; but Carthew was going to make him do it. He was ambitious to show Knowles & Co. how he could manage rebellious fags.

He looked up with a grin as a junior appeared in the doorway. But it was not Jimmy Silver; it was Reginald Muffin who appeared there. Carthew scowled at him.

"What do you want?" he snapped. "Where's Silver?"

"In his study, Carthew—"

"Haven't you told him?"

"I've come instead," explained Tubby. "I'm going to fag for you instead of Jimmy. You don't mind?"

Carthew paused.

It was quite common for one fag to take on another's duties, if occasion demanded; and the fag-master was not supposed to raise any objection. There was, of course, no reasonable objection to be made. But the Sixth Form bully did not intend to allow his victim to escape so easily as this.

It was only necessary for him to think of a pretext, in case the matter

came before Mr. Bootles; and Carthew was not likely to be at a loss for a pretext.

"As it happens, I do mind, Muffin," he said smoothly. "I'm afraid that Silver has forced you to do this, and I can't encourage bullying in the lower Forms!"

"He hasn't—"
Carthew picked up his cane.
"What's that?" he demanded.
Tubby Muffin backed hastily to the doorway.

"I—I mean—" he stammered.
"Your hands are dirty, Muffin!" said Carthew. "What do you mean by coming into my study with dirty hands? Do you never wash yourself?"

"Oh dear!" gasped Tubby Muffin. It was a fact that Reginald Muffin's hands were not over-clean; they never were. Tubby was a great economist so far as soap and water were concerned. But Tubby, obtuse as he was, realised that the bully of the Sixth would have found some other fault if his hands had been as spotless as newly-driven snow.

"I've had my eye on you for some time, Muffin," said Carthew. "You're a dirty little wretch!"

"Oh, I—I say, Carthew—"
"Hold out your hand!"
"Oh crikey!"

Swish!
"Now go away and wash yourself," said Carthew, "and tell Jimmy Silver to come here at once to fag!"

"Yow-ow-ow!"
Tubby Muffin scuttled off, quite "fed" with the idea of fagging for Carthew. Not for quite a large number of "bobs" would he have ventured into that study again if he could have helped it.

Carthew grinned at his friends.
"That's my way with them!" he remarked.

"A jolly good way, too!" said Knowles. "I believe in keeping a fag in his place."

"You bet!" agreed Frampton.
The tea-party waited. They had no doubt that Jimmy Silver would appear now, and Carthew smiled as there was a footstep in the passage. But it was Oswald of the Fourth who appeared; and Carthew's smile became an angry scowl.

"I've come instead of Jimmy Silver, Carthew," said Oswald.

Knowles & Co. smiled. Carthew did not. He stared at the Fourth-Former savagely.

"Did Silver make you come?" he asked.

"No; I offered."
"I'm afraid that coercion was used," said Carthew, taking up his cane. "Tell me the truth, Oswald!"

"I offered to come!"
"I'm glad to see you, as it happens," said Carthew, with a glare. "You were sliding down the banisters this morning, Oswald!"

"I wasn't—"
"You know that your Form-master has forbidden it—"

"But I wasn't—"
"Don't argue with me, Oswald! Hold out your hand!"

"Look here, Carthew—"
"Hold out your hand at once!"

Swish!
"You can go now," said Carthew. "Tell Jimmy Silver that if he does not come here at once I shall come for him!"

"But I've come to fag instead—"
"You deny sliding down the banisters?"

"Certainly I do!"
"I shall have to cane you for telling falsehoods, then!" said Carthew calmly. "Hold out your hand!"

Instead of holding out his hand, Dick Oswald backed into the passage. He understood clearly now how matters stood.

"I'll tell Jimmy!" he said. And he vanished.

Carthew laid the cane on the table and waited. He was quite willing to keep this game up so long as Jimmy Silver's friends kept it up. By the time he had caned a few more, the list of volunteers was likely to be exhausted. As a matter of fact, it was exhausted already. The next junior who appeared in the doorway was Jimmy Silver himself.

Jimmy's face was a little pale, and there was a glitter in his eyes. He had come to fag for Carthew, after all, but he had not come in an amicable mood.

"Oh, so you've come!" grinned Carthew.

"I've come!" said Jimmy Silver shortly.

"Don't answer me like that!"
Jimmy was silent.

"Make the toast first," said Carthew cheerily. "I'm going to keep an eye on you. If you burn it I'm sorry for you!"

Knowles & Co. laughed. They were quite enjoying this—having had their own little troubles with Jimmy Silver. Jimmy began to slice a loaf for toast.

His manner was very subdued, and Carthew was quite deceived by it. He flattered himself that he had brought this rebellious junior properly to heel at last.

The toast was made, and the eggs were poached in quite an irreproachable style.

It was done to an accompaniment of sneering remarks from Carthew, to which Jimmy was apparently deaf.

Carthew was annoyed.
Even he did not feel that he could cuff the junior without some sort of an excuse, and he wanted very much to cuff him.

"Make the tea, you sulky young sweep!" he snapped.

Jimmy made the tea.
"Finished with me now?" he asked meekly.

"No. I want you to wait at table."

"Oh!"
"Don't scowl at me!"

"I'm not scowling, Carthew!"
"Don't argue with me!"

No answer.
"Now, pour out the tea!" snapped Carthew, feeling rather baffled.

Really, there was no fault to be found with this exemplary fag.

But Carthew's desire to find fault was soon gratified. Jimmy Silver took up the teapot to pour the tea. He did not pour it into the teacups. He seemed about to do so, and then he suddenly changed the direction of the spout, and it was over Carthew's surprised legs that the tea

movement towards the door. He had finished fagging for Carthew.

"Stop him!" yelled Carthew.

Knowles put his back to the door quickly.

"Stop!" he snapped.
"Let me pass, you bully!"

"Get back!"
"Collar him!" yelled Carthew. "I'll skin him for this! Ow, ow! I'll skin him! Seize him, can't you? Collar him, you fools!"

Jimmy Silver backed into a corner, the teapot still in his grasp. He looked rather dangerous there, and the three Modern seniors hesitated to carry out Carthew's request.

"Hands off!" said Jimmy, between his closed lips. "Somebody will get hurt if you come any nearer."

"Put that teapot down!" roared Carthew.

"Rats!"

The prefect grasped his ashplant, and made a stride towards him. But he paused.

"Will you put that teapot down, Silver?" he gasped.

"Not till I'm outside the study."
"Knowles, step along to Mr. Bootles' study, and ask him to come here, will you?"

"Certainly," said Knowles.

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

He was already in his Form-master's black books, and if Mr. Bootles came there, and found him holding a prefect at bay with a brandished teapot—a prefect whose trousers were drenched with steaming

Bump! Crash!

The study table went over in the rush, with a terrific crash of crockery. For a few moments Carthew's study was like pandemonium.

Then the invaders retreated, with the rescued junior in their midst, into the corridor.

They left a scene of wild confusion behind them. Carthew was sprawling on the floor, yelling; Knowles was in the fender, with the overturned table on him; Frampton and Catesby were strewn about the study, gasping and quite dizzy. As the panting juniors swept out into the corridor, Bulkeley of the Sixth came along. The captain of Rookwood had heard the terrific uproar—it would have been difficult not to hear it—and he was coming to inquire.

"What—" he began.
Then Bulkeley was shoved aside, as the juniors rushed past. He staggered against the wall, breathless and amazed.

"What, Silver, Lovell, Conroy—what—"

The juniors fled for the staircase. Mr. Bootles came out of his study and called to them. They did not heed. They went helter-skelter up the stairs, and did not stop till they were in the Fourth Form passage.

A roar of voices greeted them there.

"What's up?"
"What the thump?"

"What's the row, Jimmy Silver?" yelled Putty of the Fourth.



RAGGING A PREFECT! Without stopping to think of the consequences, the three Tommies, much exasperated, jammed Knowles against a beech!

was poured in a hot and almost scalding stream.

There was a terrific yell in the study, and Carthew sprang to his feet, dancing with anguish.

"Oh, oh, oh! Oh! Yow! Yoooooop!"

The 4th Chapter. Trouble!

Jimmy Silver stood, teapot in hand, looking on. Knowles & Co. backed out of range of the teapot hastily. They had come there for tea, but they did not want it in that fashion.

Carthew was doing a solo dance for a full minute, yelling with anguish.

Hot tea swamped his trousers, which were a very inadequate protection against that beverage.

"Ow, ow, ow! You young villain! Wow! You did that on purpose! Woooooop! Woooooop!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Knowles. Carthew made a spring at Jimmy Silver, who swung up the teapot. The remains of the tea, with the leaves, spattered over Carthew, and he jumped back again.

"Do you want this teapot cracked on your head, Carthew?" inquired Jimmy Silver, with deadly calmness. "If so, you'd better come on!"

"Ow, ow! You young scoundrel! Oh! Ah! Ow!"

Jimmy Silver made a strategic

tea—Jimmy felt that he was caught.

"Don't trouble, Knowles," he said. "I'll put it down."

He put it down, with a crash, on the floor. The teapot was strewn over the study carpet in a hundred fragments.

"Now collar him!" hissed Carthew. "I'll make him squirm for this!"

The seniors closed in on Jimmy Silver, and he was promptly collared.

"Shove him across a chair."

"Rescue!" yelled Jimmy Silver.

He was aware that Lovell and Raby and Newcome were lurking in the Sixth Form passage—they had followed him nearly as far as Carthew's study.

He was plumped on a chair, and Knowles & Co. held him there, face down, while Carthew started with the ashplant.

Whack!
Carthew had time for only one whack.

Then the door of the study was hurled open, and Lovell and Raby and Newcome rushed in, with Conroy and Pons and Mornington after them. There was plenty of help for the captain of the Fourth.

The sudden invasion took the seniors by surprise.

"Go for 'em!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell, hurling himself recklessly upon Carthew.

"Get out, you young villains! Oh, my hat!"

Jimmy gasped.

"Only some trouble with the prefects," he stuttered. "You fellows had better keep clear. Oh, my hat!"

"Bulkeley's coming up!" howled Tubby Muffin from the head of the stairs.

"Hook it!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. scudded along to the end study. They crowded in, and Jimmy slammed the door and locked it. "Handling" Bulkeley, the popular captain of Rookwood, was not to be thought of. But Bulkeley, as head prefect, was certain to support the other prefects. A locked door seemed most advisable in the peculiar circumstances.

In the end study, the juniors gasped for breath, and stared at one another. There were seven fellows in the study, all breathless, and all a little dismayed. Mornington seemed the coolest. He burst into a laugh as he surveyed his companions.

"This is a go!" he remarked.

"No end of a go!" gasped Conroy.

"What's going to happen now?"

"Trouble!" said Pons.

"We had to get Jimmy out of that brute's hands," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Oh, yes, rather!"

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"Here comes Bulkeley!" he said. The door-handle was turned, and then there was a heavy knock on the panels outside.

"Let me in at once, Silver!"

"Is—is that you, Bulkeley?"

"You know it is, you young sweep. Open the door!"

"Wha-at do you want?"

"I want you to do as you're told at once," answered Bulkeley through the door grimly.

Jimmy Silver looked at his comrades.

"Don't let him in!" whispered Pons.

"Hem! Captain of the school, you know—"

"Keep the door shut," said Mornington. "We're not goin' to be licked for stopping a bully. I say, Bulkeley!"

"Well, Mornington?"

"Can't let you in just at present."

"What?"

"Sorry, but we're not entertainin' company just now. Another time we'll be pleased."

Some of the juniors chuckled breathlessly. Morny's nerve seemed to be equal to anything—equal even to checking that important personage the Head of the Sixth!

"You cheeky young rascal, Mornington!" said Bulkeley. "Open this door at once, some of you!"

No answer.

Bulkeley remained waiting a minute or so; and then, without speaking again, he was heard tramping away down the passage.

"He's gone!" said Raby.

"And we're in for it!" said Conroy. No one gainsaid the Australian junior's remark. It was indisputable. Jimmy Silver & Co. certainly were "in for it."

The 5th Chapter. Holding the Fort!

"I say, Jimmy!"

There had been silence in the end study for some time. The excitement had died down a little, and the heroes of the Fourth were feeling rather uneasy. They felt their consciences clear certainly. Carthew of the Sixth had been bullying Jimmy Silver, and his comrades had rescued him. But, justifiable as that action was from the point of view of the Fourth Form, they knew that masters and prefects would not look upon it in the same light.

Something was going to happen. What, they didn't know yet. But they had a strange suspicion that it would be something decidedly unpleasant.

The fat whisper of Tubby Muffin came through the keyhole and broke the silence.

"Hallo!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"I say, the prefects are holding a meeting in Bulkeley's study," went on Tubby through the keyhole. "Carthew's called on the other prefects to back him up, and restore order."

"The rotter!"

"They're going to send for you," said Tubby. "I heard Neville say so. You lot are going to Bulkeley's study—"

"We're not!"

"Then Bulkeley is going to see you put through it. I heard him say so." "You seem to have been jolly busy at Bulkeley's keyhole, you fat bouncer!" growled Lovell.

"Here comes a giddy messenger," said Tubby, unheeding, and he scuttled away from the door.

Knock!

"You there, Jimmy Silver?" called out the voice of Neville of the Sixth.

"Yes, Neville!"

"All of you come down to Bulkeley's study at once!"

"What for?"

"You'll find out when you get there."

"That's not good enough, Neville," said Mornington.

"What?" roared the prefect.

"Give Bulkeley our kind regards, and tell him we'll come to tea another time."

"You cheeky young rascal!"

"Same to you, old top, and many of them!" said Valentine Mornington coolly.

"Shut up, Morny!" whispered Jimmy Silver. "Nothing to cheek Neville for; he's all right!"

"May as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," said Morny. "It's goin' to be a row now, anyhow!"

Neville's steps were heard receding towards the stairs. A few minutes later Van Ryn's voice was heard.

"Let me in, you chaps! All the giddy prefects are coming upstairs—Classical and Modern together. I'm standing by you!"

"You cut off!" said Conroy. "There's enough of us landed in this thundering row. Keep out of it."

"Rats! I'm helping!"
"You're not!" said Pons. "Cut off!"

"Let me in, you asses; it'll be too late in a minute!" breathed the South African junior through the keyhole.

But the door remained locked. Two members of the Colonial Co. were in the study—and in the trouble—and they agreed that their comrade was better out of it, so did the other fellows. Van Ryn breathed expostulations and dire threats through the keyhole, while footsteps approached.

"Cut off!" It was Bulkeley's deep voice. And Van Ryn had to go. The captain of Rookwood knocked at the door.

"Silver!"

"Yes, Bulkeley?" said Jimmy meekly.

"Carthew has laid his complaint against you before the prefects, and you have not chosen to show up. I conclude that you have nothing to say for yourself."

"Lots!"

"Open the door and say it, then!"

"I'll say it with the door shut, if you don't mind, Bulkeley. First of all, Carthew is a beastly bully! Secondly, he is a rotten cad! Thirdly, he is a sneaking worm!"

"This kind of thing won't do you any good, Silver."

"It is doing me good, Bulkeley—it relieves the feelings, you know. Fourthly, Carthew is a crawling toad and—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fifthly, he is a measly sneak—"

"Hold your tongue, Silver! Will you open this door at once, and take your punishment for rioting in the Sixth Form passage?" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily.

"It was really Carthew who was rioting. We were like—like nice little innocent lambs, Bulkeley."

"Let me in immediately!"

"It was a case of the wolf and the lamb, Bulkeley. Carthew was the wolf!"

"For the last time, Silver—"

"You see—"

"Will you open this door?" roared Bulkeley wrathfully. "Do you think the captain of the school is going to stand outside a study door bandying words with a cheeky fag?"

"We're not askin' you to, old top," said Mornington. "In fact, we can dispense with your conversation without missin' it. Run away and play!"

"Shurrup!" murmured Lovell.

"The door will be forced, Silver!" said Bulkeley grimly. "Then you will get an extra licking for giving us the trouble!"

"Let's get on!" said the voice of Knowles, in impatient tones.

"Hallo! Is that Modern cad there?" exclaimed Mornington. "What's that Modern cad doin' on this side?"

"Go home, Knowles!" roared the Classical juniors.

"I say, Bulkeley!" howled Lovell. "It's up to you to kick those Modern cads out!"

"Are we goin' to stand this sort of thing from fags?" hissed Knowles.

"No!" said Bulkeley quietly. "Get something to smash in the lock, some of you! I'll see that those young rascals pay for the damage afterwards!"

"Phew!" murmured Lovell.

There was a pause, and then came a crash on the lock of the door.

Bang, bang, bang!

The juniors exchanged startled glances.

"I—I say, this is getting thick!" murmured Baby. "We—we can't put up a fight if they get in. Not against the blessed prefects!"

"Wouldn't be much good if all the giddy prefects are there!" grinned Mornington. "We can't scrap with the Sixth. But we can keep the rotters out. Shove the table against the door!"

"Good!"

Many hands were laid on the study table, and it was jammed against the door. The chairs were piled against it, and any other article that came to hand. As the door opened inwards it was a pretty effectual barricade, especially with the juniors shoving against it.

Bang!

The lock burst open, and the door yielded about an inch. Then it jammed on the table and refused to move farther.

"They've got it blocked up!" said Frampton.

"Shove!" said Bulkeley briefly.

The prefects lined up against the door and shoved. Inside, the juniors shoved back. It was a tug-of-war; but, though the seniors were more powerful, the juniors had the advantage of position. The table jammed in the angle between the wall and the door, and the efforts of the juniors kept it there, and the door refused to open more than two or three inches.

There was a scuffling and shoving and panting outside. Then the pressure slackened.

Knowles' hand came through the opening, groping for the table to drag it aside. Mornington jerked a pin from his jacket, leaned over, and

cheerfully jabbed the pin into the back of Knowles' hand.

"Yarooooop!"

Knowles gave a fiendish yell, as his hand whisked away out of sight.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Try again!" yelled Mornington.

Knowles did not try again. Once more the Sixth-Formers braced themselves against the door and shoved.

But they shoved in vain.

Down the passage was a mob of juniors, most of them laughing. The Classical Fourth were enjoying this unprecedented entertainment in their passage.

"Shove away!" called out Putty of the Fourth. "Put your beef into it, Knowles! You're slacking, Catesby! I say, Bulkeley, those Modern cads are slacking!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clear off, you young rascals!" exclaimed Bulkeley angrily.

Shove, shove, shove! The prefects exerted themselves manfully. But the defence was too good, and the door did not yield.

Bulkeley & Co. eased off at last. George Bulkeley's face was crimson with exertion and vexation. He felt that the position was beginning to be ridiculous, and that was not at all agreeable to the head prefect and captain of Rookwood.

"You refuse to let us in, Silver?" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"Ahem!"

"Then the Head will deal with the matter."

Bulkeley strode away, followed by his flock. They had to run the gauntlet of the Classical Fourth's laughter as they retreated from the passage. In the end study there was victory—and consternation.

"The Head!" said Lovell. "Oh, my hat!"

They waited.

The 6th Chapter.

The Head Comes Down Heavy!

Jimmy Silver & Co. were not long left in suspense. A tread they knew well was heard advancing along the Fourth Form passage towards the end study. Some of the juniors were already dragging the barricade away from the door.

"Stick it out!" said Mornington recklessly. "We can keep the Head out!"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Conroy. "We can't cheek the Head! Even if we could, it's bad form. The game's up. We've beaten the prefects, anyhow."

The stately tread stopped outside the end study. There was a tap.

"Open this door at once!"

It was Dr. Chisholm's voice.

"Yes, sir!" said Jimmy Silver.

Mornington, perhaps, might have been prepared for a reckless resistance, regardless of consequences. But nobody else was prepared to envisage the possibility of being "sacked" from Rookwood. Within the ancient walls of that establishment the Head was monarch of all he surveyed, and his word was law.

The Head waited, in evident expectation of being obeyed. And he was obeyed. There was no help for that.

The table was dragged away, and Jimmy Silver opened the door wide.

The majestic figure of Dr. Chisholm loomed in the doorway. His eyes glinted over his glasses at the abashed Fourth-Formers.

"What does this mean?" asked the Head coldly.

"Ahem!"

"Have you any excuse to offer for your extraordinary conduct?" demanded Dr. Chisholm.

"Ahem!"

"Follow me to my study, all of you!" said the Head, with a commanding gesture.

"Ye-e-es, sir!"

Dr. Chisholm turned and rustled away. The hapless seven followed him, with downcast faces.

In the lower passage they passed some of the prefects, who gave them grim looks. Mr. Bootles glanced at them from his study doorway, and shook his head sorrowfully.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had a great deal of the feeling of lambs going to the slaughter.

They trod softly into the Head's study after that majestic old gentleman.

The Head turned, and regarded them with a grim glance.

"You appear to have assaulted Carthew in his study, Silver—"

"I—I spilt some tea over him, sir, that's all!" murmured the captain of the Fourth.

"Do you state that it was an accident?"

"N-n-no, sir."

"When Carthew was punishing you, your friends rushed into the study and

assaulted him also—and some other prefects—"

"Carthew was bullying Jimmy, sir—"

"began Lovell.

The Head stopped him, with a gesture.

"Then you refused to obey Bulkeley's orders, and locked yourselves in a study. You do not accuse Bulkeley of bullying, I presume?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said all the juniors at once.

"You know that he had authority over you, as head prefect?"

"Ye-es, sir!"

"Then you are perfectly well aware that you have acted in a way subversive of all discipline and order?"

The juniors were silent. It was not much use trying to argue the matter out with the Head. They felt that Carthew was to blame for the whole business—Carthew and his friends of the Modern Sixth. But it was no use telling the Head so. They were technically, at least, in the wrong; and they had had their "rag" and the hour of reckoning had come. That was all there was about it.

The Head waited a moment or two, and then picked up his cane.

"It is my duty to make an example of you!" he said coldly. "I trust the lesson will not be lost upon you. If it should prove to be so, I shall take more drastic measures on the next occasion. You will be punished first, Silver. You appear to have been the ringleader."

Some of the Fourth had followed as far as the corner of the passage, and they listened for sounds from the Head's study. They soon heard some. For five minutes, at least, there was a steady sound of swishing, to an accompaniment of gasps and breathless ejaculations.

Then the Head's door opened, and Jimmy Silver & Co. came out.

They passed the crowd of sympathetic spectators at the corner of the passage in anguished silence. Their feelings were too deep—much too deep—for words.

At the foot of the staircase they passed Carthew of the Sixth. He was waiting to see them—to enjoy the spectacle. He smiled pleasantly.

"You'll know better next time, I think," remarked Carthew agreeably.

The juniors did not answer. They were too crushed, just then, to answer Carthew. They crawled on, leaving the prefect grinning.

It was quite two hours later when Jimmy Silver, finding himself sufficiently recovered to consider the situation, spoke.

"We're not standing this!" he said.

"Wow!" was the reply he received from his chums.

"The Head doesn't know any better, of course!"

"Yow!"

"Bulkeley's all right, too. He can't help being a bit of an ass—"

"Ow!"

"But Carthew and Knowles and Frampton and Catesby—"

Jimmy Silver's eyes glinted. "They're going to sit up for this!"

"Ow! Wow-wow!" mumbled Lovell. "I'm sitting up at present. Don't spring any of your stunts on us just now, Jimmy! This is bad enough! Wow!"

And Jimmy Silver forbore. But a scheme was already hatching in the active brain of "Uncle James," of Rookwood—an astounding scheme which was to bring comfort to the afflicted. But that is another story.

THE END.

(Don't fail to read the next Rookwood School story in next Monday's issue of the Boys' FRIEND.)

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Japanese Physical Training.

We now come to a far more difficult feat, one that is going to tax even the toughened muscles of the pupil who has faithfully practised these Japanese exercises as and in the order described. It is a feat out of which the second party gets very little exertion.

He lies flat on his back on the floor, arms by the sides. He makes no resistance—simply lies limp, a dead weight. The attacker takes up position at either side of his companion, stoops over, and takes a firm hand-grip, the hands being under the defender's shoulders. With this hold he then begins to lift his chum, stepping gradually farther backward as he raises the other higher. When he has lifted the defender to an erect position the feat is completed.

There is a big strain in the performance of this feat, most of the work falling upon the back muscles; and the attacker will be glad of several long breaths when he has finished. This over, he should lie down and allow his companion to try to raise him in an exactly similar manner.

One such lift at a time for each pupil is quite sufficient.

We are still with the exercises for the development of strong back muscles, and the following is calculated to do much to that end. The one chosen as attacker goes down on his right knee, holding out his right arm—not bent—in a slanting position. The hand is as high as it will go, slanting upward and forward. The defender takes up position somewhat in front of him, back turned, hands on hips. The attacker being ready, the other chap bends slowly backwards until the space between his shoulder-blades is resting upon the open palm of the other's hand. Comfortably settled, he goes on bending yet farther backward until he reaches the point beyond which the other could not support him safely. Then the chap behind slowly shoves his companion back to the upright position.

It is not imperative that the chap behind should be on his right knee; indeed, having pushed his chum upright, he should proceed to change knees, but this time putting out his left hand and arm. The reason for using left arm with right knee down, and right arm with left knee down, is simply for the preservation of balance.

Having completed the feat with both arms, and a few seconds spent in deep breathing, the attacker becomes the defender, who then goes through the two complete movements.

Two such movements for each of the pupils are enough for one bout.

Errors in Running.

A while ago I put in a diagram of a sprinter in action, and invited readers of these notes to write pointing out to me what, in their opinion, were the faults displayed by the chap in the drawing. Many readers have responded to this invitation, and I am greatly gratified to discover how accurate these critics have been in noting where the runner in the picture was wrong. Each of them has detected that the fellow's head is far too high—thrown back too far, and that the body is upright instead of being inclined forward slightly, as it should be. It is impossible to run well if one be star-gazing, and such an upright carriage as in the picture is a great hindrance against speed. For one thing, the free swing of the arms from shoulder to wrist is prevented. Again, breathing when in such a position cannot be so free as when the body is slightly inclined forward—which doesn't mean, however, that the body is to be doubled up. Instead of the hands rising as high as the head, they should be lifted little more than shoulder high.

Percival Short, Walsall, points out that the right leg should slope more forward, and the left knee is too far back. D. P. Carney, Chiswick, also points out the bad position of the left leg. Well, the right leg is wrong. The stride has just been completed, and the leg ought to be almost straight from hip to ankle.

To complete the stride with a bent knee is fatal. Speed is enormously hindered, by reason of the stride being seriously shortened. The left leg, too, is wrong, partly by reason of the upright carriage of the body; the limb is really dropping back, "lagging behind," as P. Short quite correctly points out. Now, in running, the whole impulse of the entire body must be forward. The left heel is thrown far too high also; this means waste of effort.

But there is one serious fault which, quite unaccountably, appears to have been overlooked. The runner is running perfectly flat-footed. He should be, of course, on the forepart of the foot. True, there have been runners, good runners, who have travelled practically flat-footedly, but such are merely exceptions to the well-recognised rule that greater speed is possible, by reason of the extra spring obtainable, when, in athletic language, a man runs on his toes. These exceptions were good runners in spite of the fault they owned.

By watching good runners at work on the track the novice can pick up many useful hints. But it is well for him to be watched by a friend who knows what is right, for it is quite possible to have faults without being aware of the fact.

To Reduce Weight.

Long years ago, when a boxer or runner found it necessary to take off some of his superfluous weight he went through anything but a happy time. First of all, he had to be put through a drastic course of purging, generally with Epsom Salts. Then he used to have to turn out in thick flannel clothing, with two or three sweaters and mufflers, and run or walk until he felt the sweat pouring down him. Then he was taken home, rolled in blankets, and left, and not infrequently a feather bed would be left on top of him.

Well, we know better nowadays; taking off weight isn't such a painful performance, but we haven't discovered—nor are we likely to discover—any exercise better adapted for the removal of superfluous tissue than running. It simply melts away the excess of fat. Not only so, but it develops lung-power, gets rid of the inside fat, promotes endurance, and toughens the muscles. There is only one danger; it is that of taking cold after a sweating run. But this can be prevented by not loafing about when hot, but taking a hard rub-down. Even then it is best to keep moving about until the temperature of the body has fallen.

Skipping is a good weight-reducer; but so is every exercise which promotes perspiration. The ground exercises I have described in an earlier number, combined with such movements as lying on the back and bringing the straight legs over the body as far as possible, down again and repeat, are excellent for reducing the extra fat which causes a prominent "tummy."

Where fat has to be removed, dieting should be combined with exercise. All fatty foods, milk, butter, suet-puddings, fat meat, milk-puddings, potatoes, bread, and arrowroot ought to be severely reduced. The consumption of all liquids should be cut down. Cocoa should be given up, and hot water taken freely. Certainly it ought to be taken night and morning—real hot, so that it has to be sipped, a pint or half-pint at a time. If the juice of a half-lemon be squeezed into it, the drink will taste a good deal better, and be still more effective.

Turkish baths, of course, are great for the purpose of taking off weight, but they are apt to be weakening, and there is the danger of taking cold upon them. Moreover, weight lost in a Turkish bath is very readily picked up again.

All attempts at fat reduction must be carried through regularly, until the system becomes almost a habit.

(Another splendid Health and Exercise article in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. If you want FREE ADVICE on any health subject, don't forget to write to our Health Editor.)