Dick Dorrington & Co. Appear in Next Week.

# THE BOYS THENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

No. 1,028. Vol. XXI. New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending February 19th, 1921.



A MOMENTOUS MEETING!

Excitement was rife. The Boy with Fifty Millions was nearly delirious with joy at meeting his cowboy friends who had come all the way from Mexico to see him. While the two were jerking one another's right arms up and down like pump handles the other "boys!" were firing off round after round as a salute to their late master.

£10 in Prizes Every Week-See Page 82!

## A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE TALE OF JIMMY SILVER & Co.

Published

Every Wonday



## The 1st Chapter.

## A Surprise for Adolphus & Co.!

"Got the merry smokes?" asked Adolphus Smythe.

"Yes," said Tracy. "And the wicked pasteboards?" asked Adolphus. "Yes," grinned Howard.

"Then come on, dear boys!" Adolphus Smythe & Co. of the Rookwood Shell left their study and

sauntered out of the School House. It was a bright and sunny aftermoon, though cold. On Little Side Jimmy Silver & Co. were improving the shining hour at football. But Smythe & Co. weren't thinking of footer. They had their own way of enjoying a half-holiday, and it didn't resemble Jimmy Silver's way in the

quadrangle.

"Waitin' for you, old beans!" said Towny. "Bulkeley's heen lookin' at us from his study window."

"Bother Bulkeley!" drawled Adolphus. "Life's hardly worth livin' with beastly prefects eyein' a fellow about!"

"They won't eye us where we're goin'!" grinned. Topham. "Come

"You've put the lamp ready?"

"Oh, yes."

"Trot onward, then, my dear infants!" said Adolphus Smythe.

The Giddy Goats of Rookwood trotted on. They loafed round the quad and loafed round the house, and after making sure that there was no eye upon them they headed for the abbey ruins, some distance from the school buildings.

Once in the old ruins they felt safe

from observation.

Adolphus Smythe descended the well worn, old stone steps that led to the abbey vaults.

"Quite a nobby idea—what?" he remarked, as he fumbled with the padlock on the old oaken door. "Dear old Bulkeley's gettin' suspicious of us, and if we went out of gates--" "We'd be stopped, I think," said

Townsend. "I saw Bulkeley speakin'

to the porter."

"And we can't have a quiet little game in the study," complained Smythe. "Neville dropped in yesterday, and we only got the cards out of sight just in time. He was suspicious."

"Suspicious beast!" said Tracy. "But there's more ways of killin' a cat than chokin' it with cream," said Adolphus serenely. "I don't think that even Bulkeley of the Sixth | Outside there was broad daylight. | will suspect fellows of retirin' to the but in the vaults all was dark and classic shades of the abbey vaults for I chill. Somehow the nuts of Rooka little game of poker-what?"

"No fear!"

Topham. "Oh, yaas! The padlock's been broken for donkey's years," answered Smythe of the Shell. of great determination, Adolphus "There you are!"

open with rather an effort. His companions followed.

of the ancient vaults, and a musty, thrilled, as they heard an un- "What the thump were you doing damp breath of air came from within.

marked Townsend.

"But safe, dear boy."

"Yes, there's that." The five juniors entered. Topham | "Look!" panted Tracy suddenly. | "In a hurry?" grinned Lovell.

brought in by Townsend. with a crash.

Some of the juniors shivered a little. Undoubtedly the Giddy Goats of Rookwood had found a safe and

hidden quarter for their shady proceedings. But it was not a comeerie. They were safe from the daylight from without. prefects, but in other ways the abbey vaults were not an attractive or desirable place of sojourn.

in a thoughtful sort of way.

"It—it's a bit cold," said Topham. "Yaas, it is a bit parky," agreed Adolphus. "But what's a fellow to fellows as they came out into the a little game now and then, is life he was scared. worth livin'?"

Adolphus propounded that conundrum- with an air of great gravity. Tracy shuffled the cards.

Life not being worth living without a little game, there was evidently nothing for the Giddy Goats to do but to brave the cold atmosphere of the abbey vaults.

Smythe of the Shell proceeded to by two goals to one

into the darkness of the vaults beyond | if you mean it's a fluke beating you |

"Did-did you fellows hear somethin'?" he asked, in a not quite!

steady voice. The Giddy Goats looked round nervously.

"The—the wind, perhaps," said And the rivals of Rookwood parted joker, who was it?" Topham.

phus' hand. He was feeling very and cheerful. From a different

roamin' around," said Tracy, with an Jimmy Silver glanced at them rather | and Tubby Muffin rolled in. Tubby | attempt at humour.

"Oh, rot! Dry up, Tracy!" "Some fag's sneaked in here, perhaps," said Howard. "Let's rout him out. We don't want fags watchin' us."

Adolphus slipped the cards hastily into his pocket.

"That's it!" he said. "Some cheeky fag playin' a joko on us. I'm certain I heard somebody movo in the next vault. Let's look."

He rose from his camp-stool and picked up the bicycle-lamp.

The others hesitated. wood felt a strong disinclination to venture into those darksome depths. "Will the door open?" asked "Dash it all, what is there to be afraid of?" exclaimed Smythe, at last. "Come on!"

With a beating heart, but a look advanced into the second vault, He threw the heavy oaken door holding up the lamp before him.

Dark and grim looked the opening | They started, and their blood | Co. had had a scare. mistakable sound in the darkness. I in the vaults?" he asked. what?

Five camp-stools, which had been | up for an instant, and the lamp was | lamp, you know. So we came away. | far above rubies; which made the Bootles has arrived?"

placed ready in the ruins, were struck from Adolphus Smythe's hand

"Oh!"

" Ow !" "Run for it!"

wrapped the Black darkness startled and terrified nuts. With fortable quarter. It was cold and one accord they raced back to the it was gloomy and it was rather door, guided by the glimmer of

There was a jam in the narrow doorway as the terrified Goats crammed through, and then they "I-I don't think we'll stop a jolly sprawled wildly up the steps and long time here," remarked Townsend, escaped, gasping breathlessly, into the ruins above.

"Oh gad!" gasped Smythe of the Shell. "Oh-oh-oh gad!"

Tracy cast a glance of dread backdo? "Fain't safe in the study, and ward at the door of the vaults. Who Townsend and Topham of the in present circs we can't run down or what was in those dark recesses, Fourth joined the three Shell to the Bird-in-Hand. And without he did not know; but he knew that

"Let's cut!" he breathed. And Smythe & Co. promptly cut.

## The 2nd Chapter. Beloved Mr. Bootles!

"Extraordinary fluke!" remarked Tommy Dodd, of the Modern Fourth. Tommy Dodd was alluding to the So they bore it with manly forti- result of the football match. Jimmy tude, and, Tracy having shuffled, | Silver & Co. came off the field victors

He stopped suddenly and glanced ver cheerily. "Likewise, rats! But | be hidden in the abbey vault-" the radius of lamplight. by only two to one, instead of three or four-"

"Classical fathead!" said Tommy Dodd politely.

with equal politeness.

"I-I thought I heard a sound--" and mufflers, and started towards the | wouldn't! What on earth does it The cards remained idle in Adol- | house. They were looking very ruddy | matter, Jimmy?" direction Smythe & Co. were con-"I\_I hope the phantom abbot isn't | verging towards the house, and | The door of the end study opened. | | currously. There were disturbed | glanced over the tea-table, and

> Smythe stopped and stared at ing point. Jimmy Silver.

"Just!" answered the captain of Tubby. "I've come to speak to you like-" the Fourth.

"Eh! What wasn't me?" "In the vaults," said Smythe.

"What are you burbling about, fin. "He's a giddy millionaire now, Smythey?" inquired Arthur Edward you know—" Lovell. "Have you been in the vaults?"

tricks there," said Smythe sourly. Mr. Bootles was something a bit out | cared to adopt me-" "I thought it was probably you of the common," said Tubby "Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Fistical chaps, but if you've been playin' | seriously. "Sort of commanding | Four. footer --- Where's Mornington?"

"He was playing, too," said Raby. | know; that's why I always liked | Apparently he could see no reason "Was Putty Grace playing?" "Yes," grinned Newcome. "If somebody's been pulling your silly came into a fortune!" remarked cackling at?" he yelled. "That's just

leg, it wasn't Putty, for once." Jimmy Silver eyed the nuts. He could see that Adolphus Smythe &

come there to scare them? Or-or knocked the lamp over, and-and we left--"

I'd like to know who the silly ass was who played that trick on us." "Why didn't you collar him, and

"Well. we-we-we-"

"Scared!" chuckled Edward Lovell. "Scared out of your ; wits-if any " "Ha, ha, ha!"

"You thought you'd run into the giddy ghost of Rookwood, what?" asked Raby, laughing. "Poor old Smythey! No wonder you're as pale as a sheet."

"I'm not!" hooted Adolphus. "I was startled. As for bein' frightened, that's absurd. It waswas just a trick! If it wasn't you fellows---"

"It might have been if we'd known you were smoking in the vaults," said Jimmy Silver, "and if we hadn't been busy. But as a matter of fact it wasn't little us. Come on, you fellows."

The Fistical Four walked on, leaving Adolphus frowning. Adolphus glanced at his comrades.

"The rotter may be still there!" he said. "Suppose-suppose we take | "But seeing that he's no end of a another lamp an' go back an' hunt him out-"

"I'm fed-up!" said Tracy at

"I'm goin' in," said Townsend.

Townsend and Topham went into the house Howard and Tracy followed them, and then Adolphus followed. Annoyed as he was, the great Adolphus did not feel inclined to revisit the darksome vaults "on his lonely own."

Jimmy Silver had rather a thoughtful expression on his face, when the Fistical Four went up to the end chuckled over Adolphus & Co.'s adventure in the abbey vaults; but Uncle James of Rookwood was giving the matter some reflection.

"It's rather a queer thing," he remarked, when the Classical four

were starting on tea in the study. "I don't see it," answered Arthur Edward Lovell. "The Moderns never do have a look in against little us."

"Only sometimes," agreed Raby. Silver. "Who's talking about Bootles is a single man, and he's too Moderns."

the football match?"

"No, ass, I was speaking about | Smythe-" "Oh, bless Smythe," said Lovell, losing all his interest at once. "Never

mind that goat. Pass the marger." "It's queer, though," said Jimmy. "Bow-wow!" rejoined Jimmy Sil- | "Jolly queer that somebody should

"Any fellow might go there and scare those silly asses for a lark, I suppose," answered Lovell. "Serve 'em right! They went there to smoke, of course."

"Modern ass!" said Jimmy Silver, | "Oh, serve 'em right, all serene. But it's odd. If it was a practical

with that exchange of compliments. "Smythe & Co. didn't wait to see," In fact, my heart bleeds for him. "There's no wind here." The Fistical Four put on their coats remarked Newcome. "They And it's come to my mind—you know

> "Well, I was thinking-" Jimmy Silver was interrupted.

Rookwood, and they seemed breath- | and marger did not tempt him; and the kippers were already at vanish-"Too late!" grinned Lovell. "Just finished footer?" he asked. | "Oh, I haven't come to tea," said

"Then it wasn't you?" "What about Mr. Bootles?" "You know he's coming back to Rookwood to-day," said Tubby Muf-

chaps about Bootles."

"Knew it before you did," grunted Lovell. "You were late for once." "Ya-as. Somebody's been playin' | "Well, I always had an idea that | sure my people wouldn't! If Bootles

> and admired him." "And never found it out till he | "You silly asses! What are you Lovell. "How very odd!"

Tubby Muffin sniffed: tion of Mr. Bootles had not trans- | Silver & Co. pired until after the amazing news | "Look here--" Someone was there, that was certain. | "Oh, we-we just went there to-to | master had inherited a fortune from | Tubby Muffin's idea of getting him-"Not so jolly invitin', is it?" re- Was it some fag who had learned explore, you know, with a bike-lamp," his uncle in South Africa. But then self adopted by the millionaire Formof their plan for the afternoon and said Smythe, evasively. "Some beast | Tubby Muffin had at once made up | master was too much for them. Bootles, listening to words that them in great indignation. lighted a bicycle-lamp, and the rays A dark shadow moved. "We-we came away," said Smythe. dropped from his lips as though they "Hallo! Some toppin' joke on?"

Classical Fourth grin, because there was not the remotest chance of Tubby ever getting a fat finger into any of Mr. Bootles' money. But wealth was wealth, whether Tubby could touch it or not-it was something to breathe the same atmosphere with a millionaire.

"To come to the point," said Tubby gruffly, "Mr. Bootles is coming back this afternoon. I've just heard Mr. Greely speaking to Mr. Wiggins. I happened to be near the corner of the passage, and Greely had a letter. It's all gone all right at the lawyer's office in London. You remember that lawyerjohnny, Tulkerton, who came down here to see Bootles--"

"Not likely to forget in a week or so" grunted Lovell. "What are you driving at, anyhow? You can admire Bootles till you burst, but you won't see the colour of any of his

"I hope I'm not the fellow to think of such things as that, Lovell," said Muffin, with dignity.

"Oh, my hat!" splendid character, and-and that we all admire him so-in fact, worship the ground he treads on, and all that-oughtn't we to get up a bit of a celebration?" asked Tubby. The lamp was set on a ledge, to show light for the "little game." The lamp smashed on the stone show light for the "little game." The lamp smashed on the stone show light for the "little game." The lamp smashed on the stone stone stone show light for the "little game." The lamp smashed on the stone lionaire, is it? Sort of occasion to be marked with a white stone, you know. What about a sort of triumphal procession to bring him from the station---"

"Ha, ha, ha!" "Or an arch of triumph at the

gates---" "Fathead!"

"I should be prepared to take the study to tea. His chums had only lead, and manage the reception," said Tubby. "I-I want to catch Bootles' eye--

"You may catch his eye, but you won't catch his quids," said Lovell. "So don't worry."

"I despise such insinuations, Lovell. Only-only I've been thinking, andand I'd like to hear you fellows' opinion. I've always regarded Bootles as a sort of-of fatherly chap. I've respected him as if he were a-"The Moderns!" repeated Jimmy a-a parent, you know. Now, old to get married. I suppose no girl "Weren't you speaking about would ever look at Bootles, would she, unless she were out of her 1 mind----

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. "You'd better mention that to Bootles. It will make him as fond of you as you are of him."

"Well, to be serious, that's how the matter stands," said Tubby. "But just think, you fellows, what an awful prospect for poor old Bootles."

"Being a millionaire?" "Nunno! Lonely old age, without -without all those things that old age ought to have-handsome, stalwart son to stand by him, and all that. I feel for Bootles; I've been thinking a lot about it," said Tubby. how I think of things-that what Bootles really ought to do is to adopt

a chap." "Eh?"

"What?" "Some really nice boy, who loves him and admires him for his splendid looks among the Giddy Goats of seemed rather disappointed. Bread qualities," said Muffin. "That would see him through, wouldn't it? Now. what do you fellows think? What effect would it have on Bootles if it were suggested to him to adopt a really first-class, decent chap like-

"Like me?" asked Lovell.

Tubby sniffed. "I said a first-class, decent chap," he answered.

"Why, you cheeky lump of bear's grease-"Like me, to be candid!" said

Tubby. "I shouldn't object, and I'm

presence, and-and a noble air, you Tubby stared at them.

for this uproarious mirth. how Putty cackled when I asked his

opinion." It was true that his great admira- "Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jimmy

had come out that the Fourth Form- | The Fistical Four simply howled.

for lost time. Immediately he be- The end study rang with their came a fervent admirer of Mr. | merriment. Tubby Muffin blinked at

glimmered round on old stone walls The next moment there was a rush of footsteps, something dark loomed couldn't go on exploring without a glance from him as though it were way. "You fellows know that

once. "We'd have met him at the station | if we'd known his train," said Lovell.

"He might have adopted us-" "Ha. ha. ha!" "He's come by car!" said Morning-

ton. "Spankin' big Rolls-Royce car. His own. Fairly rollin' in it! He's | "Ass! About that affair in the got a new silk hat and a diamond !

Jimmy Silver. "Let's go down and | "I can tell you, Jimmy, I'm fed up | Bootles to Cape Town-and he will | see his new silk hat and his diamond | with Smythe & Co., and I don't care | know that Bootles has to go there. |

And the Fistical Four hurried down- leg and scared them!" car, a new silk hat, and a diamond don't see how a fag could have

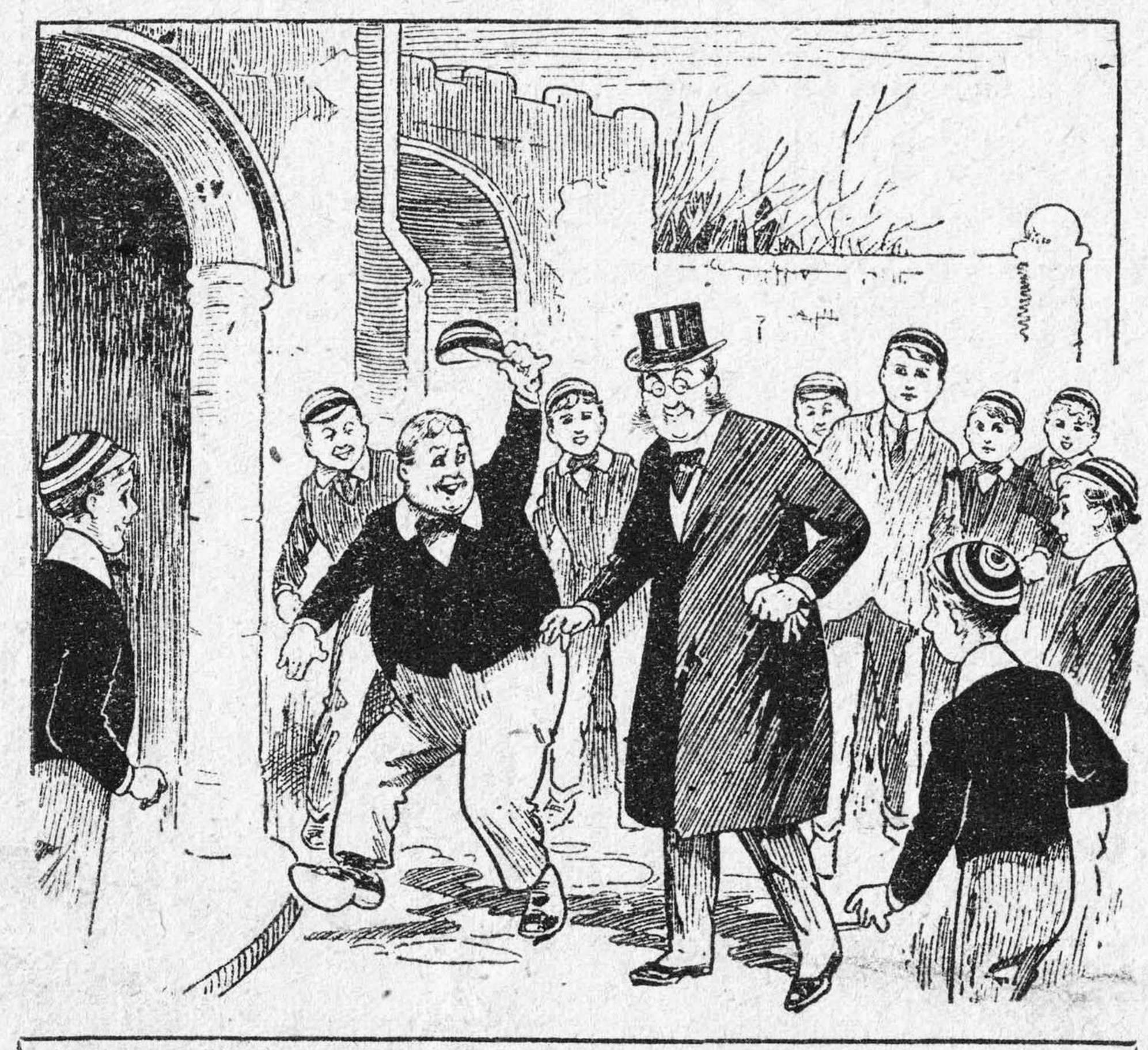
I'm glad to have him back. It's rotten being taken by a prefect. But I was saying when that idiot Muffin butted in—"

"You were saying something?" yawned Lovell. "I believe you-you generally are."

vaults---'

"My only hat! Haven't you for-

stairs, followed by Tubby Muffin, who | "I've been thinking," said Jimmy was eager to be first to greet his be- quietly. "I don't believe it was a loved Bootles. With a Rolls-Royce | fag pulled their leg in the vaults. I



Mr. Bootles was now a THE HERD OF THE HOUR! gentleman of almost unlimited financial resources. As he passed through the smiling crowd of juniors he nodded to Jimmy Silver & Co., but he did not observe Tubby!

pin, Mr. Bootles was more lovable, known they were going there. They'd than ever, and Tubby Muffin felt quite | keep it dark, as they were going to towards him as towards an adopted | dodge the prefects." father. From Tubby's tender feelings, indeed, nobody could have | ghost?" asked Lovell, with a grin. guessed that for whole terms he had spoken of his Form-master as "that beast Bootles." Mr. Bootles was a millionaire now, and no longer a beast.

### The 3rd Chapter. Uncle James is Suspicious!

Mr. Bootles was the centre of quite a crowd as he came in.

Outside, a handsome, big car, with an impressive chauffeur, was being admired by another crowd.

Little plump Mr Bootles was much the same as ever, personally. evidently he had paid visits to expensive tailors while away in London.

And now he had come back. Millionaire as he was, he was going to take the Fourth Form as usual for a week or two, until another Formmaster was engaged to take his place.

Mr. Greely, the master of the Fifth. shook him by the hand with touching cordiality. Masters and boys seemed to vie

with one another to do Mr. Bootles honour.

From the doorway to the Head's study Mr. Bootles' progress was a kind of triumphal march. And in the Head's study Dr. Chisholm greeted him with great cordiality Even the Head was not unimpressed by the fact that Mr. Bootles was now a gentleman of almost unlimited financial resources. As he passed smiling through the crowd, however, Mr. Bootles gave a smile and a nod to Jimmy Silver & Co. He had not forgotten that those cheery juniors hadrescued him from the kidnappers.

But he did not observe Tubby Muffin.

Mussin was eveing him with tender affection, and Mr. Bootles never even noticed it.

Plainly, the thought had not l occurred to him of adopting Mussin as a comfort for his declining years! So | chaps and search the vaults-" far, Tubby's yearning affection was in vain, like the flower mentioned by the poet which is born to blush unseen.

"Nice little man!" said Arthur Edward Lovell, as the Fistical Four come in his place."

"Oh, we'll educate the next man in leasily." until he's as nice as Bootles," said Jimmy Silver, laughing. "Anyway,

"You think it was the Rookwood

"I think it was somebody hiding in the vaults," answered Jimmy.

"You haven't forgotten that Mr. Bootles was twice nearly kidnapped by that scarred villain, who it's pretty clear is his cousin, Mortimer Stacey," said Jimmy. "His confederate was lagged, and is now in chokey at Latcham. But Stacey got clear, and hasn't been heard of since, though Inspector Sharpe is after him. Well, it's clear why he was trying to kidnap Bootles. He would have inherited the millions if Bootles had disappeared. That was in the old man's will."

"But-" said Lovell, startled. "He couldn't get at Mr. Bootles in London," said Jimmy. "He was going to put himself under police protection, and it would have been too

risky for Stacey. But he would know, of course, that Mr. Bootles would come back to Rookwood some time or another, if only to say good-bye before he went to Africa. I've thought all the time that Stacey may have been lurking in the neighbourhood, watching for a chance."

"But the bobbies are looking for

"They haven't thought of looking in the Rookwood ruins--" "Jimmy!"

The Co. stared at their leader. It was a startling thought to them. "I don't say it is so," said Jimmy

quietly. "But I think it's jolly likely. The villain had to disappear, and yet | Form-master had retired to his room hang about here. He could take rugs and things and a supply of grub into of the just. In all Rookwood, only the abbey vaults, and simply vanish from the earth." "My hat!"

"I confess I shouldn't have thought of it. But Smythe & Co., finding somebody there this afternoon-"

"It does look a bit suspicious," said Lovell. "Let's take a crowd of

Jimmy Silver shook his head. "If he's been there for days, he's learned the ins and outs of the vaults by this time," he said. "There's no end of passages leading goodness returned to their study for the knows where. Smythe & Co. took remnants of tea. "I'm sorry we're him by surprise; he never expected going to lose him. As Shakespeare | anybody to come into the vaults. But remarks, I fear there will be a worse he wouldn't be caught napping a second time. He would dodge us

"Well, then-"

likely. He'll be spying round after | fully brought with them.

"Then Bootles is in danger here!" exclaimed Raby.

Jimmy nodded. "I believe so! You see, the man's getting desperate. I don't suppose he's got much money and he can't keep up the game for long-probably "Dear old Bootles!" grinned gotten that yet?" exclaimed Lovell. he couldn't pay his fare to follow twopence who it was pulled their silly It's now or never with him and after Bootles' narrow escape out of gates, he won't go out alone again. If he doesn't get him in Rookwood, he's got to drop the whole thing and I don't believe he will. He tried to use a revolver when he was stopped kidnapping Bootles, that shows the kind of ruffian he is. I can't help feeling uneasy about old Bootles."

"Hum!" said Lovell thoughtfully. "We've looked after Bootles beforebut-but we came a cropper once and-"

"What about going to the Head?" asked Newcome.

Jimmy wrinkled his brows. "And—and we can't give Smythey | ment. away, anyhow. The Head would Through a gap in the masonry they there. The vaults are out of bounds."

"Yes, but-" "There's an easier way," said Jimmy quietly. "We don't want a search, and the rotter scared off, to try again when we're off our guard. We're going to keep watch-"

" Eh?" "That's the game," said Jimmy Silver determinedly. "If that villain is hiding in the vaults, to come out and go for Bootles after lights out, he can come out, and drop into our hands!"

"Phew!"

"I know it's risky-" "Oh, blow the risk!" said Lovell. "We'll take the risk for poor old much as Muffin does. But-but getting out of dorm at night, Jimmy,

sleep?" said Raby.

"And perhaps there's nothing in it," remarked Newcome. "It may only be Jimmy's rot, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!" Jimmy Silver gave a grunt.

"I'm going to keep watch," he said. "If you fellows don't want to back me up, I'll ask Morny and Conroy and---"

"Fathead!" said Lovell politely. "We're game! I think you're very likely talking out of the back of your neck, but we'll give you a chanceand if we keep watch for nothing. we'll jolly well bump you!"

"Hear, hear!" said Raby and New-

And so it was arranged.

## The 4th Chapter. The Heroes of the Hour!

Night lay upon the ancient pile of Rookwood School. A keen wind blew from the sea; and four juniors who souttled round the shadowy School House shivered, and pulled up the collars of their coats.

Rookwood was sleeping. In the dormitory of the Classical Fourth four dummies were arranged in four beds, and Jimmy Silver & Co. had quietly departed by way of the lower boxroom. In the box-room they had donned coats and caps, placed there in readiness. As they scudded round the dark, silent buildings, they kept their eyes well about them. The last light had disappeared from the window-it was half-past eleven.

In the masters'-room there had been a happy party that evening-Mr. the Bootles being lionized admiring staff. But the millionaire now the staff were sleeping the sleep the Fistical Four were awake-and they were sleepy!

But it was no use being sleepy! They had work to do! They trod cautiously into the abbey ruins, glimmering in the starlight.

Silent and ghostly were the ruins. the silence only broken by the faint moan of the wind.

Jimmy Silver led the way with light steps, and his chums followed him. with rather mingled feelings.

But the Co. realised that they were in for it, and they did not grouse. With silent steps, they approached the "Whether he will find cut that close by the stair, the Fistical Four | bottom.

Jimmy Silver & Co. jumped up at | he'll be here for a week or two, and | Bootles is home again to-day, I don't | stopped and took cover, and grasped | The struggle went on savagely. But know," said Jimmy. "But it's most | the cricket-stumps they had thought- | the man was over-matched, and his

dark, if it's as I suppose." In the circumstances, it was bit and scratched and tore at the judicious not to speak, which was all juniors till Jimmy Silver jammed his to the good. For, as their feet got head hard on the flagstones, and then colder, the Co. would have been he lay still He was not stunned, strongly tempted to grumble but for however, and the juniors hurried to the necessity of keeping silence.

> An hour passed. waited for "one" to toll out from the | hands together, and drew a whipcord clock-tower.

But it came at last. Boom!

"One o'clock!" breathed Lovell. "Oh, my hat! Jimmy--"

"Shurrup!" Silence again.

"It's all rot!" whispered Raby. "There isn't anybody in the vaults; | Silver. "It's the scarred man, right and that beast Stacey is most likely a hundred miles: away, and-"

"Hush!" Raby's whisper stopped suddenly. Head won't grouse at us for being For from the sunken staircase there came the unmistakable sound of a heavy, creaky door opening.

The juniors thrilled to the very marrow of their bones.

"Well, he would most likely think | There was somebody in the vaultson Smythey in the vaults," he said. | their breath, trembling with excite-

want to know what he was doing | could see the steps, and they watched, throbbing, for the figure of the unknown to appear in view from below.

Footsteps: Cautious, almost silent footsteps, that crept up the stone stair. Against the dim starlight a dark figure loomed.

At the top of the steps the unknown stood, watching and listening. The four juniors, scarce a dozen feet from him, hardly breathed.

The man was wrapped in an old coat, and had a soft hat pulled down over his brows. But in the starlight they saw the hard, brutal face-and the scar! It was the scarred ruffian who had twice attempted to kidnap Mr. Bootles!

He remained for some moments, Bootles-though we don't love him so | still listening, and then turned from the steps to creep through the ruins. Jimmy Silver gave his chums a

"And what about losing our beauty The moment had come, and the awake now, and Jimmy Silver & Co. Fistical Four prepared to act, with beating hearts, but with steady nerves. | before they were allowed to turn in. As the scarred ruffian moved away Till a very late hour there was a buzz from the steps Jimmy Silver made a spring towards him, and before the rascal could make a movement to

furious resistance grew fainter. He secure him before he recovered. They were gasping breathlessly from the Midnight had struck, and they struggle. Jimmy dragged the ruffian's from his pocket; and they breathed It seemed an age before it came. I more freely when his wrists were bound tightly together.

"Our win!" gasped Lovell, rubbing his nose, which was streaming red. "Ow! The beast! I got his elbow!"

"Never mind-"

"Ow!" "We've got him!" said Jimmy enough! Stick him on his feet! I say, there'll be a bit of a sensation when we march him in! Even the out of dorm, I think, this time."

The scarred man was struggling with his bonds now, and pouring out savage curses. Heedless of his rage, the juniors dragged him to his feet, and marched him out of the ruins. it was a practical joker playing tricks and he was emerging. They stifled To an accompaniment of savage oaths, the ruffian was marched to the door of the School House, where Jimmy Silver rang a mighty peal on the bell.

> Mornington sat up in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory. The light had been switched on suddenly, and four juniors strolled cheerfully in.

> "What the thump-" ejaculated Mornington.

"It's you for a flogging in the morning, then!" remarked Oswald. "I think not!" chuckled Jimmy Silver. "On the contrary-"

"The dear old Head has told us we're nice, good boys, only we're not to do it again!" chortled Raby.

"And Bootles blessed us, with tears in his eyes!" said Newcome. "We're no end great men."

"But what on earth have you been doing, then?" demanded Mornington, in amazement.

The whole dormitory was wide had to tell the story with full details of excited voices in the Classical Fourth dormitory.

The next morning Jimmy Silver & escape, a cricket-stump crashed on his | Co. were feeling rather sleepy-but triumphant. With great satisfaction There was a sharp, savage cry in I they watched Mortimer Stacey being



Through a gap in the masonry the juniors AN AMBUSCADE! could see the unknown man at the top of the steps leading down to the old abbey vaults. It was the scarred man who had attempted to kidnap their Form-master, Mr. Bootles!

man reeled under the blow. "Quick!" panted Jimmy.

He flung himself recklessly on the ruffian as he recled, and they came to the ground with a crash together. Lovell and Raby and Newcome were

upon him the next moment. The ruffian struggled furiously. But for the fact that they had taken him by surprise, there might have been a fearful tragedy in the abbey ruins under the stars. Even as he stone stair that led down to the struggled in the grasp of the four vaults. The stair was quite in the sturdy juniors he succeeded in dragopen—the mossy walls were all that | ging a revolver from his hip-pocket. remained of the great building that | But Lovell kicked it out of his hand had covered the spot in ancient times. | instantly, and it rolled down the Amid the rugged masses of masonry, steps, and exploded harmlessly at the

the silence of the abbey ruins as the taken away, with handcuffs on his wrists, by Inspector Sharpe, of Rookham. From that day the scarred ruffian was to be taken exceedingly good care of, and Mr. Bootles' danger was over.

And the Fistical Four were the heroes of the hour. In the Formroom that morning the millionaire Form-master was all graciousness to the happy four. And Tubby Muffin realised dismally that if Mr. Bootles adopted anybody, there were at least four fellows with better chances than his fat and fatuous self.

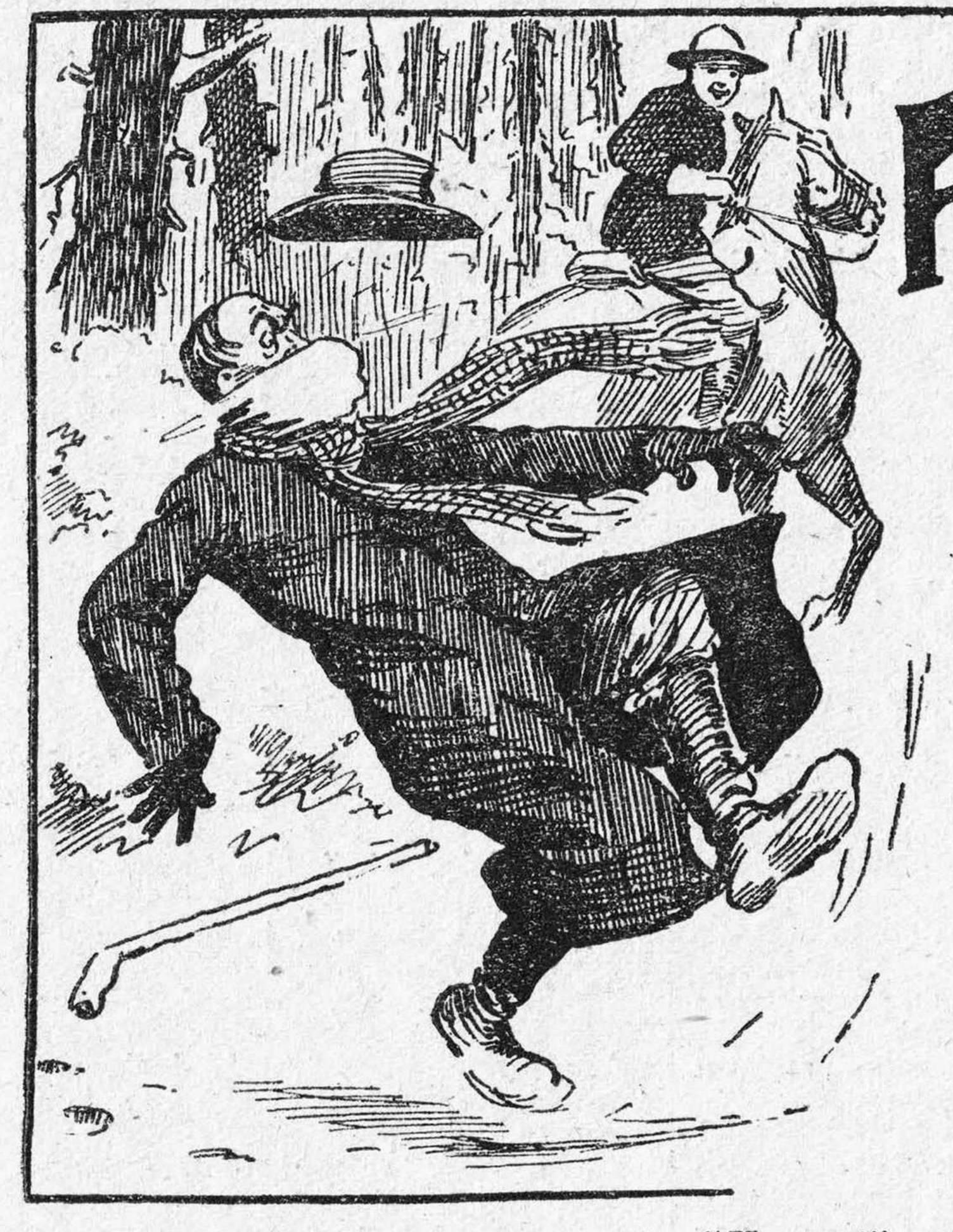
- THE END.

(Keep a look-out for "Tubby Wants Adopting!" A grand, long complete Rookwood yarn in next Monday's Boys' FRIEND.)

A Splendid Long Complete Yarn of Frank Richards & Co.!

Published

Every Wonday



# A Grand Tale of the Chums of the Backwoods.

# By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

The 1st Chapte.

# Mr. Peckover Misunderstands!

"My hat!" Frank Richards reined in his pony. He was riding from the town of Thompson on the trail to Cedar Creek School, at a leisurely pace, for the

trail was thick with snow. The flakes were no longer falling; but the snow lay thick on the ground, and it was piled in drifts against the trees along the trail.

At the corner, where the Hillcrest path jutted from the Thompson trail, Frank Richards caught sight of a tall, angular figure, muffled up in coat and scarf against the wind.

Muffled up as it was, he recognised Mr. Peckover, the headmaster of Hillcrest School.

path from the hill, apparently about in a sadly rumpled and dishevelled to turn into the main trail for state. The unknown who had hurled Thompson.

And as he turned, a snowball flew from the cover of the frozen thickets and smote Mr Peckover full upon his asked Frank politely.

long, red nose. It was a large snowball, it was a hard one, and it was hurled with un-

erring aim. It crashed on Mr. Peckover's nose,

taking that gentleman completely by "Ooooooooooh!" surprise.

The Hillcrest master staggered, his foot slipped in the snow, and he came

to the ground with a crash. dozen yards away, looked on, and

Smiled. Cedar Creek fellows and the head schoolboy. over's disaster earned him no sym- this!" he bellowed. pathy from Frank Richards. Indeed, "For helping you?" exclaimed this afternoon! So-long!"

from the point of view of an onlooker, there was something quite comic in Mr. Peckover's sudden downfall. The comicality was, naturally, lost upon Mr. Peckover himself.

He rolled in the snow, spluttering. He was on rather a steep slope when he fell, and as he rolled, he came down the slope, and pitched into the drift beside the trail.

The next moment nothing was seen of Mr. Peckover, but thrashing arms and legs, and a cloud of powdered snow.

Frank Richards chuckled.

But he remembered that Mr. Peckover was a middle-aged gentleman, and the respect and assistance due to age, and he jumped off his pony, and ran to the rescue.

Whoever had hurled the snowball had not shown up, but a momentary swaying in the frozen larches hinted that the marksman was beating a rapid—and judicious—retreat.

Whether it was a Cedar Creek fellow, or one of Mr. Peckover's own boys, Frank Richards could not guess -the latter was very possible, for the headmaster's snappy severity made him far from popular in his school. "Ooooooch!"

Mr. Peckover struggled and Frank Richards. plunged in the drift. His hat had come off, and his scanty locks flowed in the wind. His clumsy plunges only landed him deeper in the drift, and he was badly in need of assistance. Fortunately, Frank Richards was I don't know who did."

there to render it. the collar.

"Yoooop!" spluttered Mr. Peckover. "You young ruffian--"

Frank. "Grooogh!"

man with both hands, Frank exerted his pony to the gallop, and Mr. Peckall his strength, and dragged him out over made a hasty jump out of the into the trail.

There Mr. Peckover sat in the snow, and gasped for breath.

breath came and went in wild, splut- | and it just missed the pony's flank. tering gasps.

Woooooop!"

Mr. Peckover was coming down the a kind heart, and Mr. Peckover was not hear. the snowball had probably not expected the result to be quite so severe. "Can I do anything more for you?"

"Groogh! You young rascal!"

"What?" "You-groogh!-young scoundrel!"

panted Mr. Peckover.

Frank Richards flushed angrily. He was well aware that Mr. Peck- | crest. over did not like him-neither did he like Mr. Peckover. But he had naturally expected a word of thanks, at least, for rendering first aid, as he | bowl old Peckover down like that, of |

had done. Frank Richards, who was not a The Hillcrest master staggered to

his feet. He turned a face crimson with rage | He didn't see me, did he?" There was no love lost between the upon the astonished Cedar Creek

Frank.

"You young rascal! You hurled a his mind, disappeared into the wood, snowball at me, and knocked me over | and Frank Richards rode on, smiling. into the drift!" shouted Mr. Peck- to Cedar Creek. over. .

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank. He understood the Hillcrest master's

wrath now.

The unknown who had hurled the missile had long vanished. Frank Richards was the only fellow to be seen on the trail, and Mr. Peckover had jumped hastily to a wrong conclusion.

He made a fierce stride towards Frank, and the Cedar Creek school-

boy jumped back. "Hold on!" he exclaimed. "You're mistaken, Mr. Peckover! I did not

throw the snowball!" "Don't tell me falsehoods!" roared

Mr. Peckover. "I was on my pony, riding, when I

saw it thrown—" "Lies!" "I jumped down to help you!" exclaimed Frank indignantly. "If this is your thanks, you can help yourself

next time!" "You young rascal! I will-will thrash you!"

Mr. Peckover groped for his stick in the snow, and started towards

Frank dodged away towards his waiting pony. "You jolly well won't!" he ex- Frank Richards' earliest writings had | claimed. "Hands off, you ass! I tell appeared.

He plunged actively through the believe you, and that I am going to story I used to do for Penrose on the poned till---" "Rats!" retorted Frank.

He jumped on his pony.

Mr. Peckover was between him and "Eh! I'm helping you!" exclaimed | Cedar Creek, and his escape was cut off if the Hillcrest master had the nerve to stop a running horse. But Grasping the thin, angular gentle- | Frank knew that he hadn't! He put

"You-you--" he panted. He made a swipe with the stick as He seemed quite winded, and his the rider passed, but Frank swerved,

The Cedar Creek schoolboy laughed, "Grocogh! Oh! Occoch! Ow! and waved his hand in farewell, as he swept on down the trail. Mr. Peck-Frank Richards paused to pick up over brandished the stick furiously Mr. Peckover's hat, and return it to after him, pouring out a stream of him. He had no time to waste, as he | ejaculations that were quite unfit for had to be back at Cedar Creek in time | utterance by a schoolmaster, and for afternoon classes. But Frank had | which it was fortunate his pupils did |

round a bend in the trail, and Mr. | he was far from giving other fellows Peckover, gasping, took his way up | the credit of doing so. Frank Richards the hilly path to Hillcrest, not feeling | comforted himself with the reflection disposed to his walk to Thompson just | that Miss Meadows knew him better.

"Hallo. Richards!"

called from the wood, and a rather scared, boyish face looked out at him. | in hand; and the recollection of Mr. It was the face of Dicky Bird, of Hill- | Peckover was soon driven out of

Frank nodded and smiled. "Was it you?" he asked.

"Yep! I-I say, I didn't mean to course," said Dicky Bird. "I meant just to give him a dot on the boko, for caning me this morning for nothing.

"No; he thinks it was I--" "Oh, that's all right, then!" said master of Hillcrest; and Mr. Peck- "You-you-you shall suffer for Dicky Bird. "If he guessed it was I, quickly into his place again.

over's disaster earned him no sym- this!" he bellowed.

there would be tantrums at Hillcrest Frank gave him an inquiring there would be tantrums at Hillcrest

And Dicky Bird, much relieved in

## The 2nd Chapter. Falso Witness!

"Just in time!" called out Bob Lawless cheerily.

"You're nearly late, Frank," remarked Vere Beauclerc, as Frank Richards jumped from his pony at Mr. Peckover's accusation, matters the gates of Cedar Creek.

The school-bell was ringing for afternoon lessons when Frank Richards arrived at the backwoods "All serene," he answered cheerily, ]

"I was delayed on the trail."

Frank hastily put up his pony in | hidden in the timber was evident. the corral, and the three chums joined the crowd of fellows heading for the lumber schoolhouse.

"Did you see Isaacs in Thompson?" asked Bob. " Yes."

"And it's O.K.?"

"Right as rain," said Frank, with

into Thompson after morning lessons to the office of the "Thompson Press." There he had to interview Mr. Isaacs, the new proprietor of that journal, which had been through so many vicissitudes, and in which

Beauclerc.

I glad enough to accept. Isaacs will 'madam!' rapped out Mr. Peckover. doubt in his mind, certainly he would

pay cash, which is more than Penrose always did. Quite a successful interview. What worries me is what happened on the trail coming back."

"What was that?" asked Bob Lawless. "I guess I noticed you looked a bit flustered!"

Frank Richards explained the happening on the trail, and his rather unfortunate attempt to play the good Samaritan to Mr. Peckover. Bob Lawless chuckled.

"Serve Peckover right!" he remarked. "If I belonged to Hillcrest, I should feel more like lynching him than snowballing him. Ungrateful brute!"

"He thinks it was I that snowballed him!" said Frank. "Of course,

he didn't see the other chap!" "Let him think so, and be blowed to him!" said Bob.

"He was in an awful wax!" "Let him rip!"

"What I mean is that, thinking I did it, he's pretty certain to come over here and complain to our schoolmistress."

"Let him!" said Beauclerc. "Miss Meadows will take your word!" "I guess so!" said Bob.

Frank Richards nodded. "I suppose so," he assented. "Of on the Thompson trail to-day?" course, the silly ass can't say he saw me snowball him, as I never did. He son to see Mr. Isaacs," answered can only say he thinks so!"

"And that won't cut any ice with Miss Meadows!" said Bob Lawless

confidently. The chums of Cedar Creek passed into the school-room. Chunky Todgers had heard their talk, as he came in with them, and Chunky gave Frank Richards a fat wink as he dropped into his seat.

"Do you think it will wash, Franky, old sport?" inquired Chunky. "What do you mean, fathead?" "About snowballing old Peckover,

you know If you ask my advice," said Chunky, with quite a paternal air, "I'd own up!"

"You silly owl, I didn't do it-it was a chap in the timber-"

Chunky winked again. "I guess I hope you'll be able to slide out on that yarn," he said charitably. "But do you reckon it will wash?"

Frank Richards gave him a glare, but made no other reply. Chunky did not always stick to the straight and Frank Richards swept out of sight | narrow path of veracity himself, and

Miss Meadows came in to take her class, and the afternoon's lessons Frank drew in his pony, as a voice commenced. In Miss Meadows' class attention had to be fixed on the work Frank Richards' mind.

But he was to be reminded of the existence of that gentleman before

the day was over. The second lesson was just finishing, then there was the sound of hoofs and wheels in the playground outside.

Miss Meadows' back being turned on the form, and took a quick glance out of the window. He dropped Mr. Peckover-"

glance.

"It's old Peckover in his buggy," whispered Bob.

Frank Richards compressed his lips. He had expected that Mr. Peckover would drive over; and now he had come. In spite of his knowledge of his own innocence, Frank could not help feeling a little uneasy. Miss Meadows was well aware of her boys' Richards was to escape punishment, dislike for the Hillcrest master, and she was very severe upon any public demonstration of it. If she believed were likely to go hard with Frank Richards. Knocking Mr. Peckover into a drift was rather a serious matter. But, after all, Mr. Peckover could only say that he believed Frank Richards was the delinquent—and the possibility that a snowballer had been

There was a loud knock on the school-room door, and it opened. Miss Meadows glanced round in surprise as the Hillcrest master strode

Mr. Peckover's brow was knitted, and his thin lips were set in a tight line. All eyes were upon him at once. It was clear, at a glance, that Mr. The schoolboy author had ridden | Ephraim Peckover had come to Cedar Creek for vengeance.

Miss Meadows frowned slightly. She did not like interruptions of

"Mr. Peckover-" she began. "Madam-I have called--" began Mr. Peckover, in a rasping voice.

"As you see, I am busy with my you I did not throw the snowball, and | "What does Isaacs say?" asked | pupils," said Miss Meadows coldly. | Richards was the guilty party, and "If you have any business with me, his statment was only intended to "And I tell you that I do not | "I'm asked to keep on the weekly | Mr. Peckover, surely it can be post- | make that certainty equally clear to

"It is necessary for it to be gone into before the young rascal leaves for

"Whom are you alluding to?"

"To Frank Richards." Miss Meadows made an impatient

"If you have any accusation to make against Richards, I will hear it," she said. "I must ask you to be as brief as possible."

There was a breathless hush in the school-room. Mr. Shepherd's and Mr. Slimmey's classes, as well as Miss Meadows', were all looking at the Hillcrest master. Lessons had stopped all through the school-room. Mr. Peckover pointed an accusing

and bony finger at Frank Richards' flushed face. "That is the boy!" he exclaimed.

"He assaulted me on the Thompson trail a little more than an hour ago

"I was not aware that Richards had been out of school bounds during the dinner interval," said Miss Meadows. "Is it the case, Richards?"

"Madam; if my statement is not accepted-"I must question the boy, Mr. Peckover. Richards, have you been

"Yes, ma'am! I rode into Thomp-Frank. "I met Mr. Peckover on the way back."

"And assaulted me!" thundered Mr. Peckover.

"Nothing of the kind!" "In what way did Richards assault you, sir?" exclaimed Miss Meadows testily. Whether the charge was correct or not, it was evident that the angry master was using very exag-

gerated language. "By hurling a snowball at me!"

"He snowballed you-" "I was knocked flying!" panted Mr. Peckover. "I was hurled down a dangerous slope into a snowdrift. and I have caught a cold as well as sustaining several severe bruises. If you do not regard that as serious.

Miss Meadows--" "On the contrary, sir, I regard it as very serious indeed!" interrupted the Cedar Creek schoolmistress.

"I am glad to hear you say so!" snorted Mr. Peckover. "Richards, stand out here!"

Frank Richards came out before the class. "Richards! You are well aware

of the seriousness---' "I did not do it, Miss Meadows!" "You do not deny Mr. Peckover's statement?" exclaimed Miss Meadows.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Richards!" "Let me explain, Miss Meadows." exclaimed Frank hastily. "I was riding along the trail home when I saw Mr. Peckover knocked over by a snowball. I jumped down to help him out of the drift. The chap who had thrown the snowball did not show up, and Mr. Peckover thought it was I, as he could see nobody else on the trail. I was only helping him."

Miss Meadows' brow cleared. for a moment, Bob Lawless stood up "Ah! It is a mistake!" she said. "You hear Richards' explanation,

"He is speaking falsely!" "I know Richards to be a truthful boy," said Miss Meadows coldly,

"and the mistake was a very easy one to make---" Mr. Peckover seemed on the verge of a fit. To do him justice, he fully believed that Frank Richards was the delinquent, and the Cedar Creek schoolboy was lying himself out of a scrape. The thought that Frank

after all, infuriated the angry man. "There was no mistake!" he thun-

"Richards says--" "He is lying! I saw him hurl the snowball!" shouted Mr. Peckover.

> The 3rd Chapter. Falsely Condemned!

Frank Richards jumped. He stared blankly at Mr. Peck-

That Mr. Peckover had seen anything of the kind was, of course, impossible, since Frank had not thrown the snowball. But for a schoolmaster to utter a falsehood in an accusation against a schoolboy seemed equally impossible.

Miss Meadows' face hardened like steel. Even Bob Lawless and Beauclerc looked in dismay at their chum now. Could anyone believe that the headmaster of Hillcrest was uttering a falsehood?

Mr. Peckover, as a matter of fact, hardly realised that he was doing so. He was absolutely certain that Frank

snow, and grasped Mr. Peckover by thrash you!" roared Mr. Peckover. | same terms," said Frank. "I was | "My business cannot be postponed, | If there had been a shadow of

mind-not the slightest.

And so the untruth had leaped to | Miss Meadows." his lips without his quite realising | "I know he will!" said Frank that it was an untruth. He had, as | gloomily. he supposed, seen Frank a momental after he had thrown the missile, and it was only a slight exaggeration to say that he had seen him at the actual moment. ...

That was how Mr. Peckover looked at it, so far as he was cool enough to

look at it at all.

19/2/21

Peckover open-mouthed.

Lawless.

glint as they turned on Frank asked, in his hearty way.

Richards. The hapless schoolboy Bob handed him Miss Meadows' you can't believe me." could see that he was already con- note by way of reply. demned by the schoolmistress of Cedar Creek.

voice of ice.

Frank gasped.
"Yes, I—I—I—" snapped Miss statement now?" Meadows.

Frank's face flushed with anger. "Yes!" he shouted. "He is

lying!" "Richards!"

careless of his words now. "He never saw me, as I didn't do it. And I'm sorry I helped him. I dare say he thinks I did it, but he knows he didn't see who threw the snowball!" "Silence!"

"That is the truth,

Meadows." "Silence, I say!"

Mr. Peckover choked with rage. "1-I-" he spluttered. "Miss Meadows, this-this boy, he-he dares to-to-to-"

He choked helplessly. "Calm yourself, Mr. Peckover!" said Miss Meadows quietly. "Richards will be severely punished for his wanton attack upon you, and still more severely for venturing to east doubt upon your word!"

"Miss Meadows-" began Frank. "You need say no more, Richards. was prepared to accept your explanation, not being aware that Mr. Peckover actually saw you-" "He did not! He--"

"Silence! I cannot cane you for this, Richards; a caning is not sufficient punishment. I shall send a note to your uncle requesting him to come here and administer a flogging to you in the presence of the school. That is the only way of dealing with your offence. - Mr. Peckover, I shall be glad if you will be present when Richards' punishment is dealt out."

"I assure you that I intend to be present, Miss Meadows!" said the Hillcrest master venomously.

Frank Richards breathed hard. "Miss Meadows," he faltered, "I-assure you--"

"That is enough! Go back to your

Frank Richards returned to his seat, feeling quite dazed. Mr. Peckover gave him a bitter look.

The Hillcrest master exchanged a few words with Miss Meadows in a low voice before he drove away in his buggy.

Lessons were resumed at Cedar Creek.

But the whole school was in a state of suppressed excitement.

Frank Richards, when he looked round at his schoolfellows, could see that nobody believed his statement against the assertion of the Hillcrest master.

He was intensely glad when school was dismissed at last, though his return home that evening was not likely to be a pleasant one. Miss Meadows called to Bob Lawless, and gave him a note to carry to his father.

The three chums came out dismally

into the playground.

They fetched out their horses and rode away on the homeward trail. They rode at first in dead silence. When Frank Richars spoke at last, he turned almost a haggard face on his chums.

"I-I suppose you fellows believe ! me?" he said.

"Yes," said Beauclere quietly.

Bob flushed.

"I guess it's awfully queer!" he said. "How-how could Peckover think he saw you if he never saw you, Frank?"

Frank bit his lip.

"He doesn't think so," he answered. "He thinks I threw the snowball, and I suppose he thinks he's justified in saying he saw me do it. But it's false."

"But-but-but you can't blame Miss | boy, of course."

not have made the statement. But | Meadows for not believing you, orthere wasn't a shadow of doubt in his or anybody else. I-I'm afraid popper will take the same view as

They rode on in dismal silence after

Beauclerc left his chums at the fork in the trail, as usual, and Frank and I you always seemed to be as open and I Bob rode on to the Lawless Ranch in | honest as the daylight. Miss the gathering dusk.

on a visit to a relation at Kamloops, | ment into my hands in her presence. | scrupulous audacity in accusing this | Mr. Peckover's face was a study. But Frank Richards was taken and Frank was glad of that now. I cannot refuse." gentleman of falsehood. Mr. Peck- it wasn't Richards; it was me," utterly aback. He stared at Mr. | But he had his uncle to face. The | "It's not that I mind," muttered over will witness your punishment, rancher noted at once the glum looks | Frank, his voice breaking. "I-I'm | as well as your schoolfellows. I am "Oh Jerusalem!" murmured Bob of his son and nephew when they not afraid of a licking But-but to very much disappointed in you,

puzzled, opened it, and his bearded | Lawless Ranch that day. "Richards, have you anything more | face grew grim as he read the conto say?" asked Miss Meadows, in a | tents. The genial expression was quite gone, and Frank's heart sank as he noted it. The rancher fixed his eyes at last upon his nephew, with "Do you deny Mr. Peckover's a knited brow.

said quietly. "You ought not to When Vere Beauclerc joined his have snowballed a schoolmaster; but | chums on the trail, he found the that's nothing compared with the rancher with them. The four rode "It is a lie!" exclaimed Frank, Mr. Peckover of lying. Were you arrived, and the playground was not fear that withheld him. Unjust out of your senses?"

Frank's lip trembled.

"I supposed so. I can't give him

Mr. Lawless made an impatient gesture.

"You had better say no more, Frank," he said. "You are making matters worse instead of better. I can't imagine what's come over you; Meadows has asked me to ride over Mrs. Lawless was away just then, I to the school, and take your punish-

came in, and he eyed them curiously. | be set down as a liar-' He turned | Richards. I can only hope that this Miss Meadows' eyes seemed to "What's the trouble, boys?" he his face away. "And I've told the punishment, and the pain you have truth-only the truth, though I know | caused your uncle, will be a severe

He left the room with an unsteady | "I hope so, too!" said Mr. Peck-Mr. Lawless, looking a little step. It was a dismal evening at the

### The 4th Chapter. Dicky Bird Chips In!

Mr. Lawless' horse was saddled, when it was time for Frank and Bob "I'm surprised at this, Frank!" he | to start for school the next morning. Frank a look of sympathy, and came I gratitude for much kindness. The

him, and Mr. Lawless was only doing what appeared to him his bounden

Miss Meadows broke the painful silence.

"Richards!" "Yes, Miss Meadows?" faltered Frank.

ging-not for having attacked Mr. I was fairly knocked over when Peckover, or even for having Todgers told me Mr. Peckover said spoken falsely when accused but for your reckless and unlesson to you."

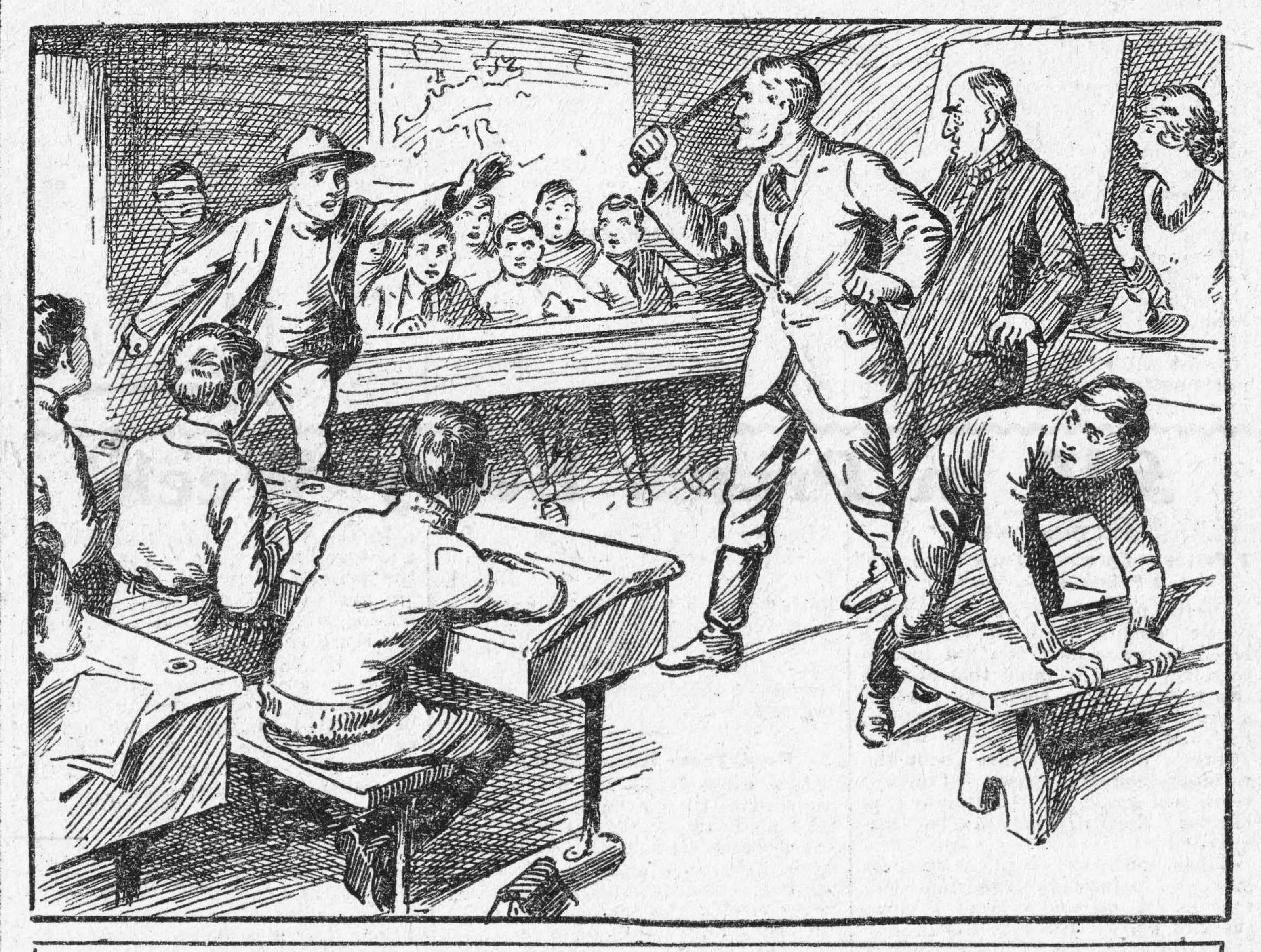
over, his eyes glinting at Frank. "I trust, sir, that you will not exercise an undue leniency."

Peckover," said the rancher brusquely.

He gripped the riding-whip.

"I'm sorry for this, Frank, as you know," he said. "But I have my duty to do. You will bend over this form."

Frank Richards quivered. The ever doubted you. Only on Mr. rest. Miss Meadows says that you on to Cedar Creek in grim silence. I thought of resistance came into his Peckover's explicit assertion would I lied about it, and that you accused The first bell was ringing when they mind-of flight-of defiance. It was have done so, and it proves that his crowded with the Cedar Creek boys as his punishment was, he owed Frank made his faltering explana- and girls. Molly Lawrence gave respect to his uncle; he owed him



"Stop!" yelled Dicky Bird as he rushed into the school-room. Rancher Lawless was just about to commence his unpleasant duty, but he stopped and looked round in astonishment at the Hillcrest junior.

"You are asking me to believe that schoolmaster bore false witness against you, Frank!" he said. "Do you expect me to believe such a thing?"

"I-I suppose it's not easy to believe--- ' faltered Frank.

"I guess it's impossible to believe. You must see that for yourself!" exclaimed the rancher impatiently.

Frank did see it. "I-I know how you must look at it, uncle," he said miserably. "But I've told only the truth. I even know who it was that threw the snowball at Mr. Peckover. I met him as I came back afterwards."

"Who was it?" "Name?" rapped out the rancher

sharply. Bob Lawless looked anxiously at l his chum. Frank Richards had told him and Beauclerc. In the extreme circumstances, would Frank feel himself justified in giving Dicky Bird

away? Bob hardly knew what his chum ought to do; he could only look at Frank anxiously and wretchedly. "If I give you the name, uncle, what will you do?" asked Frank at

The rancher listened quietly till he pup to him impulsively, as the rancher I thought came into his mind-but it had finished, and then he shook his strode into the house to see Miss Meadows. "I believe you, Frank," she said.

"It's a shame—a shame!" "Thank you, Molly!" said Frank, his voice faltering.

"Here comes old Peckover!" called out Chunky Todgers.

Mr. Peckover drove in in his buggy. He hitched his horse, and went into the schoolhouse, without a glance at Frank Richards. Nearly all Cedar Creek gathered round the three chums.

Cedar Creek marched into the school-room. Miss Meadows and Mr. Peckover and the rancher were already there, as well as Mr. Slimmey and Mr. Shepherd. The school took their places in a grim silence.

"A Hillcrest fellow." Frank Richards went to his place with the rest, but Miss Meadows beckoned to him to come out before the class.

Frank came out quietly, his heart

beating. Mr. Lawless' bronzed face was cold and grim. He had a riding-whip in his hand, which was evidently to be the instrument of punishment. Frank glanced at it, and felt a choking sensation in his throat. Hitherto, he had received only kindness at the hands of his Canadian

passed away, and he obeyed.

Clatter, clatter!

There was a thunder of horse's hoofs in the playground. Then came a rapid crash of running feet in the porch and the passage.

All eyes turned on the doorway. Dicky Bird, of Hillcrest, flushed and panting, stood there, his face crimson, his breath coming thick and fast. At a glance he took in the

"Stop!" he shouted. He dashed up the big school-room. Frank Richards straightened up again, in sheer amazement. Hope flushed into his pale, strained face.

All eyes fixed on Dicky Bird in amazement. Mr. Peckover raised his hand with an angry gesture.

"Bird, how dare you come here! How dare you-"

"I had to!" he gasped. heard from Todgers last night what was going to happen."

"Go!" thundered Mr. Peckover. The Hillcrest schoolboy stood his ground.

"I've come to own up!" he gasped. Mr. Lawless made a sudden movement. He remembered what his nephew had told him at the ranch the previous day. He made a stride towards Dicky Bird.

happen. Everything was against I "I threw the snowball!" said | copy to-day!)

Dicky Bird, panting, but his voice was very clear. "I-I wanted to keep it dark. I told Richards, but I knew he wouldn't give me away---' "Bless my soul!" muttered Miss

Meadows. "I-I knew Mr. Peckover hadn't seen me," faltered Dicky Bird. "I-"You are about to receive a flog- I thought it wouldn't come out. I-

he'd seen Richards throw the snow-

said Dicky ungrammatically, but very earnestly. "I-I couldn't let Richards be flogged for it, when it was me all the time. So-so I rode over. I-I'm jolly glad I got here in time-"

He broke off, panting. There was a deep silence.

"So that is it!" Mr. Lawless' voice was like the growl of thunder. "My nephew told me last night that it was "You can leave that to me, Mr. | a Hillcrest boy, but he would not betray him. I did not believe him, for I thought it impossible that you, Mr. Peckover, could have made a false statement."

"Richards," said Miss Meadows, "go to your place. You are completely exonerated. I am sorry I

assertion was false." . "Thank you, ma'am!" faltered

Frank. The rancher strode towards the Hillcrest master, the riding-whip grasped in his hand, and the look in his eyes made Ephraim Peckover shrink back. For a moment he thought the angry rancher was about to lay the whip on his shoulders, as indeed Mr. Lawless was inclined to

"Mr. Peckover-" began the rancher in his deep voice.

"Keep your distance, sir!" gasped Mr. Peckover. "I-I-the-the

The rancher laughed contemptu-"You have lied, sir," he thundered, "and you have nearly caused me to punish my innocent nephew by your falsehood. This boy, Bird, has saved him, by owning up in the nick of time-a manly action, which he certainly did not learn from his headmaster. You deserve, sir, that I

should lay this whip about you!" "Keep your distance!" shrieked the hapless Hillcrest master. "If-

if you dare-" "You will pardon Bird for what he has done, and you will not punish him at Hillcrest,' said Mr. Lawless. Mr. Peckover's eyes blazed.

"I will punish him! I-I will -- " He choked with rage. "He deserves to be pardoned for his courage in coming here to prevent an injustice. You will assure him, in my presence, that no punishment shall fall upon him, or I will

thrash you, sir, within an inch of

your life!" roared the rancher. And

the whip half-rose. Mr. Peckover gulped. "In the-the circumstances, I-I shall ce-certainly pardon Bird!" he stuttered. "I-I am, in-in fact, very much obliged to you, B-b-bird

"Thank you, sir!" said Dicky demurely.

"Bird," said Mr. Lawless, "if you should be punished, in spite of Mr. Peckover's words, let me know! I do not trust this man. Peckover, if you lay a finger on this courageous lad, I shall come to your house, sir, and I shall bring a stock-whip, and I will thrash you, sir, before your school till you howl for mercy!"

And with that the rancher strode out of the school-room. Dicky Bird slipped away, smiling, and mounted his horse. He felt quite secure now. As for the hapless Mr. Peckover, he seemed rooted to the floor for some moments. He detached himself at last, however, and limped away to the door, followed by a loud and prolonged hiss from all Cedar Creek. The buggy was heard to drive away a few minutes later, and Mr. Peckover was gone, without even the consolation in prospect of flogging Dicky Bird. The thought of the rancher and his stockwhip effectually prevented that.

Frank Richards' face was very bright that morning, and so were the faces of his chums, all the more so when they reflected upon the probable feelings just then of the discomfited False Witness.

## THE END.

("The Coming of Mrs. Peckaver!" is a grand, long tale of Frank Richards & Co. at the school in the Bob drew a deep breath.

"Call upon Mr. Peckover, and uncle. And yet he could not blame "To own up?" he repeated. "Then backwoods. It appears in next demand that he shall question the the rancher for what was about to then."

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