

ALL THE BEST HOLIDAY READING!

The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1d}/₂

TWELVE PAGES! TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

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THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending June 18th, 1921.

The Finest Boxing Story Ever Written!



IN THE NAME OF THE LAW!

Just as the infuriated American was about to deliver the blow that was to send his opponent crashing to the canvas for the full count, a hush descended upon the crowded hall, and he appeared to be absolutely transfixed. Advancing towards the ring were some uniformed constables, and it was plain that they had come to make an arrest!

A SPLendid LONG COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE BY OWEN CONQUEST.



The Upstart's Secret!

The 1st Chapter.

Something Like a Snob!

"Rot!" said Lovell. Arthur Edward Lovell always was emphatic. "My dear chap—" said Jimmy Silver. "When I say rot," said Lovell, "I mean rot!" "When you talk rot, it is rot!" assented Jimmy Silver, and there was a chortle from Raby and Newcome. Arthur Edward Lovell sniffed. The Fistical Four were in the end study in the Fourth, and Jimmy Silver was conning over a half-sheet of impot paper, with a pencil in his hand, and a thoughtful frown on his brow.

That half-sheet contained a list of names for the junior cricket eleven, a most important matter in the Lower School at Rookwood. Lovell had looked it over with grim disapproval, and finally delivered himself of the weighty opinion that it was "rot."

"Utter rot!" continued Lovell. "Montmorency—rot! Montmorency—bosh! Montmorency—piffle!" "The chap can play cricket!" observed Jimmy Silver.

"Look at the way he treats Rawson in his study!" went on Lovell. "He pals with Towny and Tophy, and cuts Rawson dead, though he's his study-mate. Just because the chap's people are poor. Isn't Rawson all right?"

"Right as rain!" said Jimmy. "I've got Rawson down to play."

"Well, then—" "There was a step in the passage outside the end study.

Lovell broke off with a grunt. Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the new junior in the Classical Fourth, stepped elegantly into the doorway.

His gold-rimmed monocle gleamed into the study. "Hallo! Trot in, kid!" said Jimmy Silver affably, hoping that Montmorency had not heard Lovell's powerful voice as he came along the passage.

Montmorency came gracefully in. Fellows who liked him least could not deny that Montmorency was handsome and graceful, and looked every inch on a par with his lofty name.

Although he had been so short a time at Rookwood, he was already the "glass of fashion and the mould of form" in the Lower School. Certainly he spent upon his clothes at least three times as much as any other fellow at Rookwood. Even Smythe of the Shell, a nut of the nuts, regarded Cecil Cuthbert with admiring envy.

Montmorency paid no heed to Lovell and his rather sulky looks. He bestowed his attention on Jimmy Silver.

"You were goin' to speak to me about the cricket?" he said. "That's it," said Jimmy, with a nod. "Squat down!"

"I'm in rather a hurry," said Montmorency calmly. "Some friends are waitin' for me. Cut in!"

There was an unintelligible sound from Arthur Edward Lovell, and Raby and Newcome exchanged a smile. The Co. wondered how Jimmy Silver liked Cecil Cuthbert's "swank" now that he was getting some of it himself. The junior cricket captain was not a person to be treated in an off-hand manner, a fact of which Montmorency was apparently in ignorance.

But Jimmy Silver did not turn a hair.

"I'm thinking of putting you into the eleven to play Bagshot on Saturday," he said. "I think you deserve it on the form you've shown."

"I'll be glad to play," said Montmorency.

"Good! Your name goes down!"

Montmorency glanced at the paper on the table

before Jimmy Silver.

"May I look at the list?" he asked. "I'd like to know what fellows I'm playin' with."

"Certainly!"

Jimmy handed over the list, and Montmorency scrutinised it with the aid of his celebrated monocle.

"You haven't got Townsend or Topham down," he remarked. "For a good reason," answered Jimmy. "They can't play cricket."

"They're friends of mine."

Jimmy gazed at him. He wondered whether Montmorency's "swank" extended to the length of thinking that fellows ought to be put in the eleven because they were friends of his. Lovell & Co. grinned.

"I see you've got Rawson's name here," went on Montmorency.

"Yes."

"I suppose you know that the fellow is a rank outsider, the kind of bouncer that oughtn't really to be admitted to Rookwood at all?" said Montmorency.

"No," said Jimmy calmly. "I don't know that. It's news to me."

"Towny says that his father is a plumber or somethin'—"

"I shouldn't wonder," assented Jimmy. "Is it wrong to be a plumber, Montmorency?"

Montmorency shrugged his graceful shoulders impatiently. "Talk sense!" he suggested.

"I'm waiting for you to do that."

"The fact is, I don't care to play in the eleven with bounders of all kinds admitted to it," said Montmorency.

"I suggest your droppin' Rawson an' puttin' in Towny or Topham."

Jimmy Silver, still with great calmness, took the paper back, laid it on the table, and drew his pencil through a name on it.

"You're crossin' out Rawson's name?" asked Montmorency.

"No. I'm crossing out yours."

"What?"

"And now," said Jimmy Silver, rising to his feet, "you'll oblige me by walking out of this study as fast as you can, Montmorency. As I asked you here I don't want to lay hands on you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Lovell. Arthur Edward seemed to be considerably tickled by this ending to the curious interview.

Montmorency stared at Jimmy Silver.

"If you mean to be cheeky—" he began.

Jimmy pointed to the door.

Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency shrugged his slim shoulders again, turned on his heel, and walked out. When the cricket list was posted on the board later it was not adorned by the aristocratic name of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency.

The 2nd Chapter.

The Letter for Huggins!

"Montmorency—"

It was Tom Rawson of the Fourth who spoke as he met Cecil Cuthbert on the stairs. Montmorency was going down, and Rawson was coming up, and the scholarship junior stopped to speak.

Montmorency went on as if he had not heard.

"Montmorency!" repeated Rawson, raising his voice a little.

At that the superb Monty paused, and glanced at Rawson. There was a calm and cold disdain in his look.

"Will you oblige me by not speakin' to me, Rawson?" he asked.

"I only wanted to say—"

"Probably you've heard somethin' from Jimmy Silver. If you're not

satisfied I'm perfectly willin' to meet you in the gym, with or without gloves," said Montmorency coolly. "But nothin' obliges me to listen to your conversation."

Townsend and Topham, who were with their lofty pal, grinned. Towny and Tophy were "down" on their study-mate Rawson, though not to the same extent as the magnificent Montmorency.

Rawson stared at the latter.

"I've heard nothing from Jimmy Silver," he said. "I don't know what you're driving at."

"Oh, I thought he might have mentioned that I declined to play in the cricket eleven unless you were dropped."

Rawson coloured.

"I don't see why you should!" he said, in a low voice.

"Probably not!" assented Montmorency. "Is that all? I think I've mentioned that I don't care for your conversation."

"I don't know whether to pitch you downstairs," said Tom Rawson meditatively. "You're not worth the trouble, I dare say, you silly snob! I stopped to speak to you to tell you something you most likely want to know. There's a letter downstairs in the rack, and—"

"No bizney of yours."

"It's rather a queer-looking letter, and the fellows are making fun of it," said Rawson. "It's in the rack downstairs. That's all. I thought you'd like to get hold of it. I think it's some sort of a joke on you."

"Oh!"

Rawson turned with that, and went upstairs.

Montmorency stared after him, and bit his lip.

There was a quiet dignity in Rawson that abashed a little the snob of Rookwood, and he realised, too, that Rawson had only wanted to do him a little service, and was not forcing acquaintance on him.

"What the thump does he mean about a queer-looking letter?" said Townsend curiously. "Let's go and see, Monty!"

"I'll go!" said Montmorency abruptly.

He hurried down the stairs.

Perhaps Towny and Tophy did not understand that Montmorency wanted to go alone to claim the letter. At all events, they followed him, and were at his heels when he arrived at the letter-rack.

A dozen fellows were gathered there, and some of them were laughing. As the dandy of Rookwood came up Tubby Muffin's squeak was heard.

"Here he is! He, he, he!"

"Letter for you, Monty!" exclaimed Peele. "Charmin'-lookin' letter, by gad! From your pater, I dare say."

"The Hugginses!" chuckled Higgs.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The colour burned in Montmorency's cheek. Any mention of the name of Huggins was anathema to him.

His lofty ways had offended too many fellows for that unfortunate name to be forgotten.

Tubby Muffin, especially, was fond of referring to the fact that on Montmorency's first day at Rookwood, Sergeant Kettle had addressed him as "George Huggins," and had been much astonished to learn that his name was Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency.

The sergeant had not said a word on the subject since, though Tubby Muffin and a good many others had paid special visits to the tuckshop in the hope of gathering interesting information.

What the mystery was, no one knew; but several fellows averred that Mr. Kettle could have told them something about the magnificent Monty if he had chosen. But the sergeant did not choose; and certainly most of the fellows supposed that he had been deceived by some chance resemblance.

Montmorency's aristocratic calm could generally be disturbed by the mention of "Huggins" in his hearing; though why he should be so

exasperated on that topic it was difficult to see.

But on the present occasion he took no heed of Higgs' remark. His eyes sought the rack for his letter. He picked it out at once. The super-scription was indeed queer, and it was not surprising that it had attracted attention among the juniors. The letter was addressed, in a rough, crabbed hand:

"GEORGE HUGGINS,
Rookwood Skool."

Montmorency's hand went instinctively to the letter. But he drew it back at once.

"Is it yours, Montmorency?" asked Mornington.

Montmorency breathed hard. He gave Valentine Mornington a look of angry contempt.

"How could it be mine?" he demanded. "It's not addressed to me."

"It's his!" squeaked Tubby Muffin. "He was just going to take it! Wasn't he, you fellows?"

"He was!" said Peele.

"Take your letter, Montmorency."

"Huggins!" chortled Higgs.

"You see, it must be for you, Montmorency," said Muffin. "There isn't anybody else named Huggins at Rookwood."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Smack!

The back of Montmorency's hand smote Tubby Muffin full across his fat face, and Tubby staggered back with a howl.

"Yo-wo-woop!"

"Here, draw it mild!" exclaimed Conroy, the sturdy Australian, and he made a step in front of Tubby, as Montmorency seemed inclined to follow up the smack with another.

"Yo-ow-ow!" howled Tubby.

Montmorency cast a fierce look round. Nearly all the juniors in the group were laughing. Townsend and Topham looked at one another very queerly. It was amazing that a letter addressed to George Huggins should arrive at Rookwood, when there was no person of that name at the school. Towny and Tophy were devoted to their wealthy pal; but they could not help remembering the scene in the school tuckshop, when Sergeant Kettle had called Cecil Cuthbert by that name.

"It's not yours, then, Montmorency?" asked Peele, with a grin.

"You know it isn't!" snapped Montmorency.

"I'll take your word for it," smiled Peele. "As it's not for you, I'll take charge of it myself. There isn't any fellow at Rookwood named Huggins, so the letter hasn't any owner; oughtn't to have been put out in the rack at all. I'll look into it, and see where it comes from."

"Good idea!" said Gower.

"It ought to be handed to Mr. Dalton," said Mornington. "It's come here by mistake, and should be given back to the postman."

"It hasn't come by mistake," said Peele coolly. "It's addressed to Rookwood right enough. Whoever wrote it thinks there is a chap here named George Huggins."

"Well, Mr. Dalton ought to take it—"

"Rot! I'll send it back to the writer, if his address is inside," said Peele.

Peele was evidently curious to know what was in the letter—as were some other fellows. Peele & Co. had been snubbed by the lofty Montmorency, who had very quickly appraised the standing of the black sheep in the Form, and treated them accordingly. Peele, Lattrey, and Gower were three needy and shady young rascals for whom Montmorency had "no use." So their feelings towards him were not kind.

"Open it, Peele!" gasped Tubby Muffin. "Let's see what's inside."

"Let it alone!" exclaimed Montmorency hastily.

"What does it matter, if it's not for you?" demanded Lattrey.

"Don't bother about it, old chap!" murmured Townsend. "You'll make the fellows think—"

Montmorency did not heed.

As Peele stretched out his hand to the letter, Montmorency knocked it aside, and took the letter himself.

There was a buzz among the juniors.

It was clear enough that Cecil Cuthbert did not want them to see the contents of the letter—whether it was for him or not.

"Hand that letter over!" shouted Peele.

"You've no right to keep it, if your name ain't Huggins!" hooted Tubby Muffin. "Is your name Huggins?"

"You remember what Kettle said!" chortled Higgs. "He called him Huggins the day he came—"

"Hand over that letter, will you?" The letter crumpled in Montmorency's grip.

"This—this is a rotten joke on me," he said. "Some cad has written this letter, because of the ridiculous mistake Sergeant Kettle made about my name the other week. It's a rotten jape!"

"Likely enough," said Mornington.

"Well, let's open it and see the joke," said Peele.

"I decline to do anythin' of the sort."

Montmorency turned on his heel and walked away, his well-shaped nose high in the air. And the crowd of juniors behind him broke out into a buzz of excited comment.

The 3rd Chapter.

Montmorency Declines!

"Silver!"

"Yes, sir!"

Jimmy Silver was passing Mr. Dalton's study, when the master of the Fourth called him in. Jimmy stopped in the doorway.

"Will you go to the rack and fetch me a letter addressed to the name of Huggins, Silver?"

Jimmy started violently.

"Huggins, sir?" he ejaculated.

"Yes. It is very odd," said Mr. Dalton, with a smile. "I am new here, of course, and not acquainted yet with the names of all the boys, and so I passed over the letter in going over the postbag this afternoon. But I find that there is no boy of that name at Rookwood—at least, I think so. You would know, Silver."

"That's so, sir," stammered Jimmy.

"There isn't any Huggins in the school that—that I know of."

"Exactly! It is very odd that the letter should have been addressed here, and it must be returned to the post-office. Please fetch it for me!"

"Certainly, sir!" said Jimmy.

He hurried away, his mind almost in a whirl.

The name of Huggins seemed destined to haunt Rookwood School ever since Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency had arrived at that ancient foundation.

It was no business of Jimmy's, of course; but he could not help feeling surprised and perplexed.

He found an excited group of the Classical Fourth in front of the rack; but no letter addressed to Huggins therein.

"One of you fellows bagged a letter from here?" asked Jimmy, looking round. "Letter addressed to Huggins. Dicky Dalton handed it out by mistake, and it's got to be sent back."

"Ask Montmorency for it!" chortled Peele.

"Has he got it?"

"He took it from the rack a few minutes ago—though he said it wasn't for him."

"What the thump did he take it for, then?"

"Better ask him," chuckled Gower. "He's gone out into the quad with it."

Jimmy Silver hurried out into the quadrangle.

He sighted Montmorency, in company with Townsend and Topham. Montmorency's manner was not so cordial as usual towards his two chums. Both Towny and Tophy were perfectly well aware that Montmorency wanted to shake them off just then, in order to examine the letter he had taken from the rack. But they were intensely curious about that mysterious missive, and they declined to be shaken off.

"Let's see it, Monty!" Topham was saying, as Jimmy Silver came up. "If it's a jape, you can let your pals see."

Montmorency set his lips.

"Look here, you fellows," he said. "I'm goin' to burn the thing—it's only some cheek from some cad—Higgs or Muffin or Rawson, or somebody. I'm not goin' to open it even."

"I've got a match," said Towny. "Let's burn it now."

He took a matchbox from his pocket.

He winked at Topham as he did so. Montmorency made no movement to produce the letter, and his chums were well aware that he did not intend to burn it till he had looked into it.

"Look here," muttered Montmorency angrily. "Let a fellow alone! I'll see you chaps presently."

And without further ceremony he turned his back on his comrades, and walked away towards Little Quad.

"Dashed cheek!" muttered Topham, much offended.

"Dashed queer, I call it," growled Townsend. "Blessed if I don't begin to think he's some sort of a Huggins after all. Hallo, there's Silver on his giddy trail!"

Jimmy Silver ran past the two nuts in pursuit of Montmorency. He overtook that elegant youth, as he was passing through the archway into Little Quad, and dropped a hand on his shoulder.

Montmorency swung round fiercely. "Hands off, you fool!" "Hullo! Keep your wool on," said Jimmy. "You've got a letter there, and—"

"Mind your own business." "This happens to be my business, as Mr. Dalton has sent me for the letter," answered Jimmy Silver quietly. "He had it put out into the rack by mistake. You've no right to take it away, Montmorency."

"It's a caddish jape on me." "Possibly; but Mr. Dalton wants the letter." Montmorency's hand gripped the letter in his pocket hard. "Hand it over," said the captain of the Fourth.

"I won't." "Bring it to Mr. Dalton yourself then." "Leave it to me, and I'll see about it." "That won't do," said Jimmy Silver. "Mr. Dalton has sent me for the letter—he thinks it's still in the rack. Am I to tell him that you've taken it, and refuse to give it up?"

Montmorency's eyes glittered. "You can tell him anything you dashed well please!" he exclaimed. "Let me alone, and be hanged to you." "My dear chap," said Jimmy Silver quietly, "you know there's been a lot of queer talk about you on account of old Kettle calling you by the name of Huggins the day you came. What do you think the fellows will suppose if you bag a letter addressed to Huggins?"

"They can suppose what they like!" said Montmorency arrogantly. "I hope I'm above the necessity of payin' any attention to their opinions." "That sort of silly swank won't go down at Rookwood," said Jimmy. "But it's a question of Mr. Dalton now. He's sent me for the letter, and I can't go back without it. You can see that, I suppose?"

"I decline to discuss the matter with you." Montmorency swung round on his heel to walk away. Jimmy Silver's eyes gleamed, and he made a jump after Montmorency, caught him by the shoulder, and swung him back. "Hand me that letter!" he snapped.

"I refuse." "Then I shall have to take it," said Jimmy Silver grimly. "If you've any claim to it—and I don't see how you can have—you can come with me to Mr. Dalton, and explain to him. Will that suit?" "No." "Then hand me the letter." "I won't!" "You must be potty, Montmorency, to carry on like this!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, in exasperation. "You know I've got to take the letter to Mr. Dalton, as he's told me to fetch it."

"Go and eat coke!" "Will you give me that letter?" shouted Jimmy Silver, at the end of his patience. "No." "Then I shall take it—"

"Hands off, you cad!" shouted Montmorency. The next moment they were fighting.

The 4th Chapter.
Trouble for Cecil Cuthbert!
"A fight!" "It's Jimmy—" "And his Nibs!" chuckled Lovell. There was a rush of fellows into the stone archway, as the fight began. Before the "scrap" had lasted a minute a dozen juniors were on the spot. "Go it, Jimmy!" roared Arthur Edward Lovell. "Back up, Monty, old bean!" chirruped Townsend. Both the combatants were "going it" hot and hard. Jimmy Silver seldom lost his temper; but he was very angry now; and Montmorency seemed to be in a fury of passion. Jimmy was the great fighting-man of the Fourth; but Montmorency was a man worthy of his steel. Snob as he was, pretender as he possibly was, there was no doubt that he had pluck, and was a good fighting-man. The juniors stared on breathlessly. There was a sudden squeak from Tubby Muffin. "Cave! Here comes Dicky!" Mr. Dalton came on the scene, with his long strides. The juniors fell back as the frowning Form-master arrived. "Silver! Montmorency! Stop this at once." The combatants separated, breathless, and still mutually defiant. Mr. Dalton fixed a stern look on Jimmy.

"Silver! I sent you to fetch a letter from the rack; and then I saw you, from my study window, follow Montmorency here, and quarrel with him. What does this mean?" "I—I—" stammered Jimmy. "Montmorency's got the letter, sir!" squeaked Tubby Muffin.

"What?" "I—I couldn't bring it, because—because—" stammered Jimmy Silver. "Montmorency, have you the letter I sent Silver to fetch?" "Yaas."

"Why did you not give it to Silver, then? I presume he told you I had sent him for it?" No answer. "You should not have taken it from the rack, Montmorency, as it was not addressed to you," exclaimed Mr. Dalton. "Give it to me at once."

Mr. Dalton held out his hand for the letter. Montmorency hesitated, the colour coming and going in his face. "Do you hear me, Montmorency?" exclaimed the Form-master, puzzled and angry. "Give me the letter at once."

Slowly the new junior drew the letter from his pocket. There was no help for it; the Form-master's order had to be obeyed. Even the "swanking" Cecil Cuthbert did not think of retaining the letter until it was taken from him by force.

His face paled, as the Form-master received the letter. To his relief, Mr. Dalton made no movement to

Swish! Swish! "You may go." Montmorency turned to the door, and hesitated, and turned back. "Excuse me, sir—" he stammered.

"Well?" said Mr. Dalton coldly. "May I—I ask what you are going to do with that letter, sir?" Mr. Dalton raised his eyebrows. "I fail to see how it concerns you, Montmorency. And you are surely intelligent enough to know what is usually done with a letter delivered in error."

Mr. Dalton sat at his table and picked up a pen. Across the face of the envelope he wrote "Not known at Rookwood School." Montmorency drew an almost sobbing breath of relief. It was not the Form-master's intention to open the letter at all.

"I told you to go, Montmorency!" said Mr. Dalton, looking up. "Yes, sir. May I drop the letter into the post for you?" Mr. Dalton gave him a sharp look. "I will see to that myself, Montmorency."

"Very well, sir." Montmorency left the study. Five minutes later he saw Mr. Dalton cross to the school letter-box with the letter in his hand, and drop it in. It was gone past recall now. Montmorency's eyes had not seen the contents, but no other eyes at Rookwood had seen them.

But why that circumstance should afford Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency a

feeling of intense relief was a very deep mystery.

The 5th Chapter.
The Upstart's Secret!
Tom Rawson rose to his feet in Study No. 5, and moved to the door. There was a cheery buzz of talk going on in the study, but Rawson was "out of it."

Townsend and Topham were in great spirits, and Montmorency seemed to be gay, though at times he dropped into silence, and the smile upon his handsome face seemed a little forced.

Rawson had been accustomed to the "marble eye" from his two nutty study-mates before Montmorency came. He had grown used to it, and he despised the worthy Towny and Topsy too much to care about it.

But the "marble eye" had grown more frozen since the coming of Cecil Cuthbert. That haughty youth resented the presence of Rawson in the study quite openly. He was loftily offended at such a common person coming between the wind and his nobility, so to speak.

Rawson had learned to bear a good many slights with equanimity. He was at Rookwood to work and get on, and he found solace in work and progress.

But more than once he had winced upon the polished scorn of Cecil Cuthbert, and his most miserable days

at Rookwood had been passed since that superb youth had dawned on Study No. 5.

More and more Rawson had fallen into the habit of doing his work in other studies, where he was welcome, or of walking in the quad under the beeches.

He would stroll there for an hour or two sometimes in the evening memorising Latin verses, or thinking out knotty problems—a natural delicacy keeping him from inflicting himself too often in the end study, or Conroy's room, and from drawing attention to the fact, if he could help it, that his company was not liked in his own quarters.

He left Montmorency & Co. to the cheery chatter, and breathed more freely in the fresh air in the dusk under the ancient beeches. There he soon forgot the annoyances of Study No. 5, concentrating his mind on a "chunk" of Æneid he had committed to memory.

He sat down on a bench under a beech after a time as the shadows deepened round him. The Æneid passed from his mind, and he was thinking of home—the humble home from which his hard-won scholarship had brought him to a public school, and which he never forgot.

If all the Rookwooders had been like Townsend and Topham, Rawson's life would have been a hard one. Fortunately, they were in the minority, and Rawson could recognise, too, that the chief fault of Towny and Topsy was a careless

"To warn me?" Montmorency's voice was angry and contemptuous. "You've done me harm enough already with your babble. The least you can do is to hold your tongue."

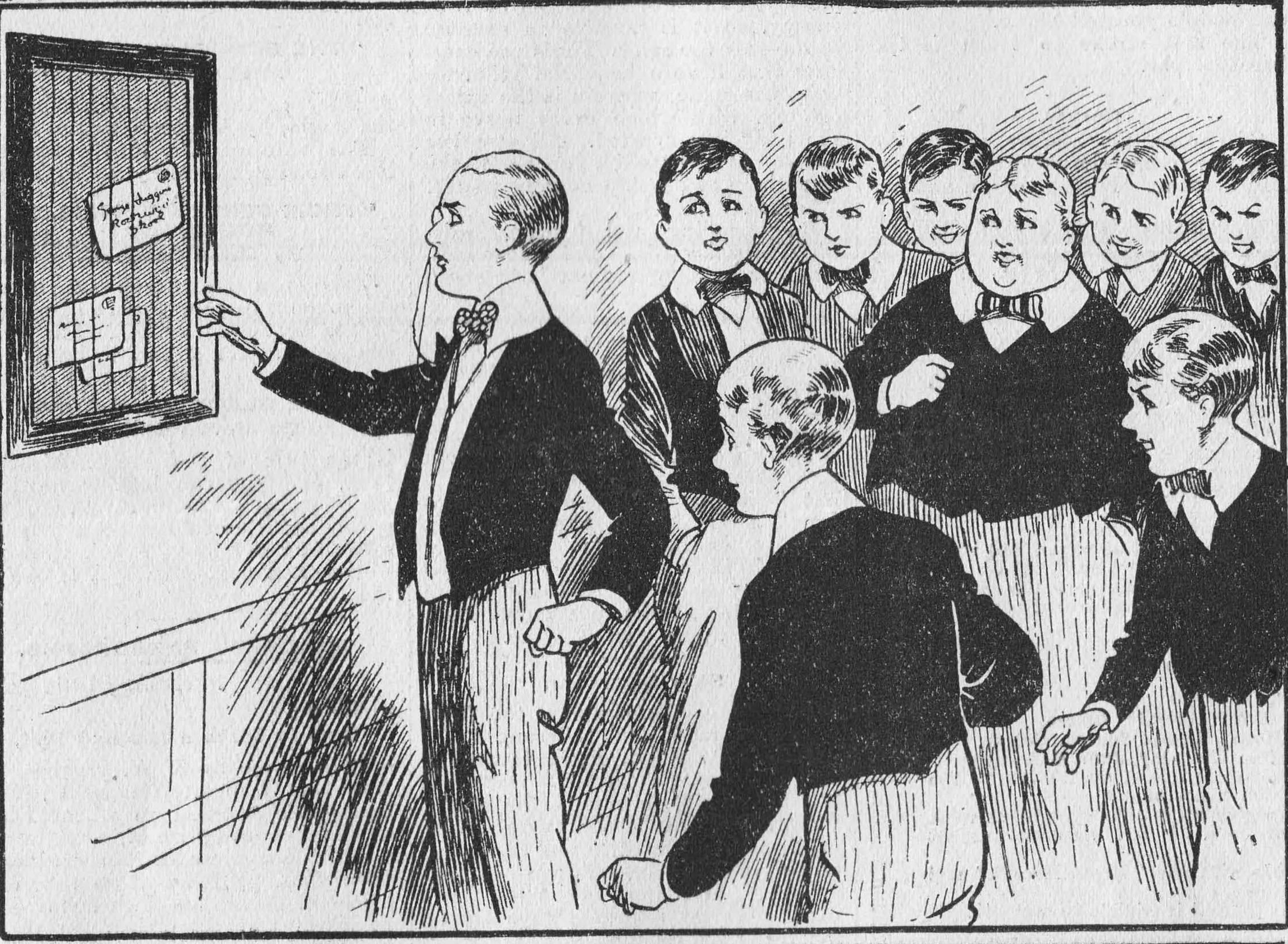
"I'm 'olding it, George," said the sergeant. "You're up in the world now, and you've changed your name owing to your rich uncle, and I ain't the man to do you any 'arm. I tell you, I've got to warn you. Young Lurchey is in Coombe."

Rawson moved uneasily. He was fully alive to his surroundings now. What he had heard had quite banished his thoughts of his own affairs. He did not want to play the eavesdropper, but he hesitated to make his presence known. He had already heard too much.

"Lurchey!" Montmorency repeated the name in startled tones. "Lurchey—in the village!" "I've seen him."

"You've told him—"

"I've told him nothing. I don't know as he knows anything. But I wanted to warn you not to let 'im see you—if he ain't seen you already. He's a bad egg is young Lurchey, and it wouldn't do you no good—"



THE LETTER FOR HUGGINS! Instinctively, it seemed, the new junior's hand went out towards the letter in the rack. It was addressed in an uneducated hand to "George Huggins, Rookwood Skool." Why should this letter have any interest to the aristocratic Montmorency? This was what puzzled the onlooking juniors!

Montmorency groaned. "It's too late. That must be whom the letter was from!"

"The letter! Wot letter?" "Lurchey—that cad, that rotten outsider—and he knows—" Montmorency muttered the words.

Rawson coughed loudly. He knew how bitter it would be to Montmorency to learn that he had heard, and he did not wish to inflict that pain on the vainglorious upstart. But it was better than to remain where he was and hear more.

"Somebody's there!" exclaimed the sergeant in startled tones. Rawson came quickly through the dusk. Montmorency peered at him, with a white face.

"Rawson, you low cad, you've been listening!" he exclaimed in a choking voice. "I couldn't help hearing you, as you spoke in my hearing," said Rawson quietly. "I did not mean to, and I've shown up so that you sha'n't say any more for me to hear. I'm sorry I heard anything."

Montmorency clenched his hands convulsively. "You rotter! You rotter!" he hissed wildly. "You've found out. But go and spin your yarn in the Common-room if you like. I'll deny it, every word, and you'll see whether the fellows will take the word of a gentleman or of a low-class outsider!"

"George!" muttered the sergeant. "Shut up, you fool! You've done harm enough already!" exclaimed Montmorency passionately. Mr. Kettle drew a deep, hard breath.

"As for you, you spying cad, go and tattle what you've heard!" said Montmorency fiercely. Rawson looked at him quietly. The taunts of the discovered upstart did not hurt him. He was feeling only compassion for the wretched pretender whose noble name was not his own, whose lofty swank was only the cloak of a humble origin.

"You're mistaken, Montmorency!" he said quietly. "I haven't any intention of repeating a word I've heard."

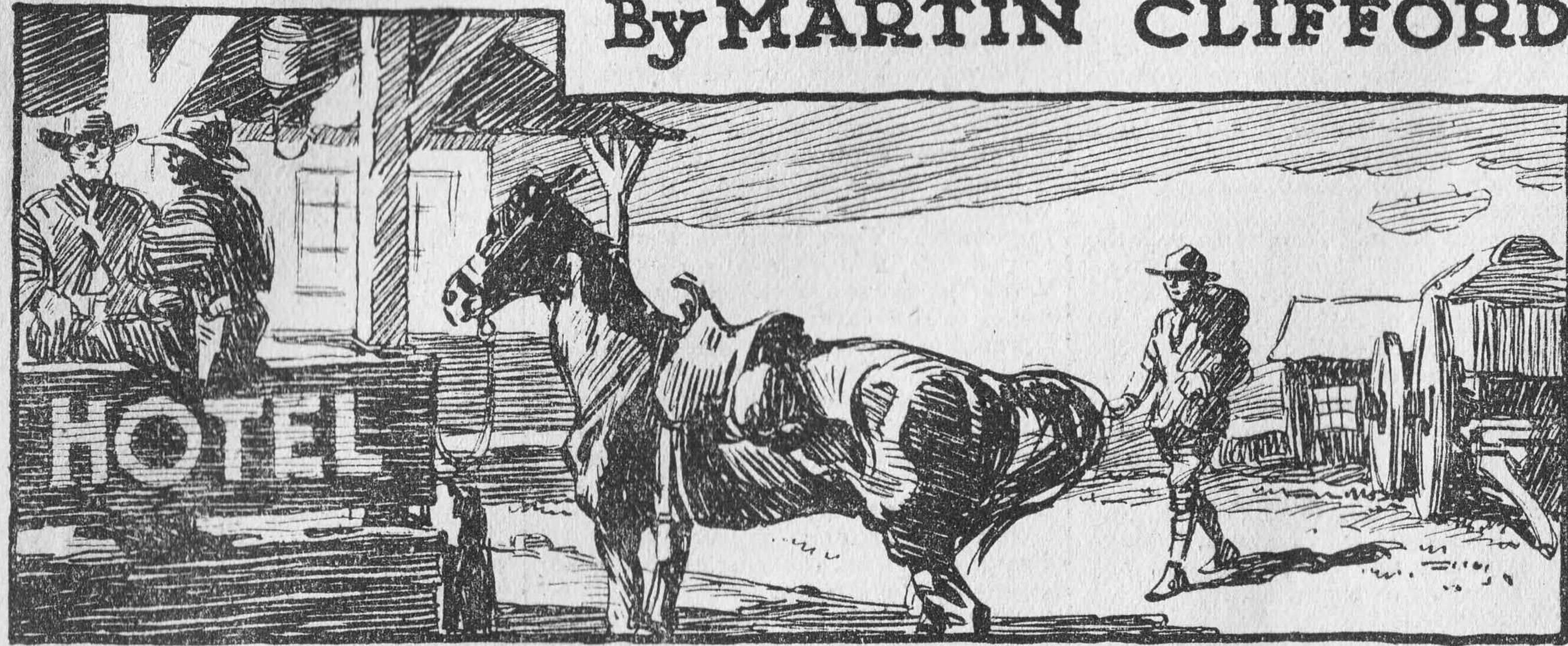
"You lie!" hissed Montmorency savagely. "I shall not say a word. I shall forget it all as soon as I can," said Rawson steadily. "You may rely on that. I am a fellow of my word."

And with that, Tom Rawson turned and walked away to the School House. Montmorency stood as if rooted to the ground. In spite of himself, he knew the ring of truth and sincerity in Rawson's voice. He knew that his secret was safe with the boy he had taunted and scorned. He drew a sobbing breath. Safe—for the present at least—safe to carry on his childish imposture, only with hatred in his heart for the fellow who knew his secret.

"Hang him!" he muttered. "A gentleman to be at the mercy of a cad like that!" The sergeant grunted. "Between you and Master Rawson, George, it ain't 'ard to say which is the gentleman!" he said slowly. And then the sergeant tramped away, leaving Montmorency alone under the beeches—still Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency so long as Tom Rawson kept his secret.

THE END.
("Servants' Hall to Rookwood" is the title of the long complete Rook-Boys' FRIEND. Order your copy wood School tale in next Monday's NOW! Don't forget that a long Rookwood yarn also appears each week in the "Popular"—out on Friday.)

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE TALE OF FRANK RICHARDS.

TRACKED BY RUSTLERS!By **MARTIN CLIFFORD****The 1st Chapter.****The Peril of the Trail!**

"How far from Cinnamon now?"
"Mebbe five miles."
"We sha'n't be in by dark, at this rate."

"Mebbe not."
"Can't you get a hustle on?"
"Mebbe."

The driver of the one-horse waggon cracked his whip lazily, and the horse quickened pace a little. But in a few minutes it dropped into a walk again.

Frank Richards, as he sat on a pile of sacks in the waggon, was growing impatient, and a little suspicious.

The waggon had quitted Hard Pan in the morning, and Frank Richards had fully expected to arrive at Cinnamon Camp, lower down in the foothills of the Cascade Range, by noon. But it was sunset now, and his destination was still far away.

Ginger, the driver, had started at a good speed. But a few miles out of Hard Pan he began to lose time. A horse's shoe had wanted attention, and then at noon he claimed that his horse required a lengthy rest. And in the sunny afternoon Ginger had dawdled along the mountain trails as though time was of the least possible value. Twice he had taken the wrong trail, and had had to retrace his way. Now the sun was sinking behind the Cascade peaks to the far Pacific.

Frank Richards was in no hurry, if it came to that. He wanted to take it easy, after his hard days in the mountains, with five hundred dollars in banknotes fastened up in his belt. He could afford to take a rest after his luck at the diggings.

So at first he had been quite patient, and, in fact, enjoyed the sunny day on the mountains. But as night came near he grew at first impatient, and then suspicious.

He knew nothing of Ginger, excepting that he belonged to the camp of Hard Pan. Frank had inquired at the lumber hotel for any vehicle going south, and Ginger had found him out, and offered him a seat in his waggon to Cinnamon for the sum of five dollars, which Frank was quite willing to pay. At Cinnamon Camp he intended to buy a horse, a luxury he could afford now. But he was beginning to wonder whether he would have the five hundred dollars in his belt by the time he reached the lower camp.

Ginger was evidently losing time on the road intentionally, and he was not doing that without a motive.

More than once Frank scanned the lonely hillsides with an anxious eye as the waggon creaked and rumbled on.

Ginger, in all probability, had heard in Hard Pan of his luck, and knew that he had the proceeds about him. And nothing would have been easier than to send word ahead along the trail—

Frank set his teeth at the thought. He was in a wild and unsettled region, far beyond the borders of the regular settlements, where a man who could not take care of his "dust" with his own hands was not likely to retain possession of it long.

And as soon as he grew suspicious of his companion, Frank had taken his revolver from his pocket, and examined it rather ostentatiously, in order to let Ginger see that he was "heeled."

Ginger had looked at him and at the revolver, and shrugged his shoulders and driven on slowly.

Frank sat on the sacks in the waggon now, with the revolver resting on his knee, and a grim determination

in his breast to use it if any attempt was made upon his "dust." Weeks of hard work in the hills had earned his five hundred dollars, and he did not mean to lose the money easily.

The horse had dropped into a walk, and the walk became a crawl as the waggon turned into a wide, rocky canyon, the last lap on the way down to Cinnamon.

The shadows were lengthening in the canyon, and Frank's glance dwelt anxiously on the patches of pinewood and fir and larch among the rugged rocks.

There were scores of places where rustlers might have lain in wait, and Frank's suspicions of his driver deepened.

Ginger gave a jump as something cold and hard was pressed to the back of his disdainful head.

"Gee whiz!" he roared. "Take that thing away, you greenhorn! It might go off!"

"Drive faster!" said Frank.

"Nix!"

"Listen to me!" said Frank savagely. "I tell you I know your game, and your pards may start up any minute on the trail. You know I've got my dust about me, and you've sent word ahead for the waggon to be watched for!"

"I—I guess—"
"That's why you've hung out the journey. Now you're going to gallop all the rest of the way to Cinnamon, and I'm going to see that you do it!"

"I guess not. I—"

"I can't shoot you from behind, though I believe you're a thief," said Frank. "But if you don't get top speed out of that horse I'm going to pitch you off the waggon, and if you raise a finger to stop me I'll shoot! I swear that!"

Ginger drew a deep breath. There was a ring of deadly determination in Frank Richards' voice, and the rascal knew that his life hung on a thread.

"Go easy, greenhorn!" he said. "Durned if you are sich a greenhorn as I took you for, by gum! I'm drivin'."

He cracked his whip and lashed, and the horse broke into a trot.

"Faster!" said Frank.

"I guess—"

"Faster, I tell you, and don't jaw!"

Ginger gritted his teeth and lashed again, and the trot became a gallop. Bumping heavily on the rocky, uneven trail, the waggon raced down the canyon bottom. And suddenly, from a clump of timber a hundred yards from the trail, three horsemen burst, and rode fiercely to intercept the waggon.

The 2nd Chapter.**Run Down by the Rustlers!**

"Halt!"
It was a shout from the distance as the three horsemen spurred on towards the trail.

Frank Richards took a grip on Ginger's collar with his left hand, and with the right kept the revolver pressed to the back of his head.

There was a gasp of pain from the driver, as the steel muzzle ground upon his head hard.

"Let up!" he gasped.

"Drive on, you scoundrel! If you draw in your horse I pull trigger the same instant!"

"Oh Jerusalem!"

The horse galloped on.

"Halt!"

"Ginger, you fool!"

Crack, crack!

The pistol-shots rang out from the horsemen as they raced on, and the bullets splintered on the rocky trail.

Frank, still keeping his grip on the driver, glanced towards the trio.

They had evidently been posted in the timber to intercept the waggon, and had the vehicle been crawling, as before, one rush of their horses would have been enough.

But as it was the waggon was past them before they were half-way from their cover to the trail.

They spurred on furiously, waving to the driver.

"Stop, you galoot!"

"Halt!"

"Pull in your hoss, Ginger!"

Gladly enough Ginger would have pulled in his horse, but he dared not with the revolver muzzle grinding on the back of his head.

"Oh gum!" he gasped. "You young galoot! Oh Jerusalem! Let up, you fools! Don't shoot—don't shoot!"

The horsemen were spurring on again, firing as they rode. Ginger gasped.

"I guess the hearse will go over if we keep this up!" he spluttered. "There's a big slope ahead—"

"Chance it!"

"I guess I ain't—"

"Faster, or I'll pitch you off the waggon!"

Ginger turned his head with a ferocious snarl.

"I guess it's our necks that'll go, you young fool!"

"Faster!" said Frank grimly. "That's the last time I shall tell you!"

With a curse the driver lashed the horse. The waggon was rocking like a boat at sea now as the horse rushed down the steep slope of the canyon-bottom towards Cinnamon Camp. Through the deepening dusk lights were winking ahead from the camp.

Ginger could not have stopped the horse now if he had tried. The waggon was speeding down the steep slope of its own weight, and the horse could not have stopped without being overwhelmed by it. On the rough trail one wheel, and sometimes two, left the ground as the waggon rushed and rocked onward.

It was a fearful risk to take, but there was worse behind, for Frank Richards at least, and Frank set his teeth to go through it.

Half a mile ahead the lights of Cinnamon Camp winked and glimmered through the falling night.

Behind, the three horsemen were still riding in pursuit, but they were not firing now, and their pace was slower. It was a dangerous path for galloping, and the three rustlers were paying some attention to the safety of their necks.

"Oh gum, we're done for. I reckon!" groaned Ginger. "We'll both get our necks broke afore we hit the camp, you durned tenderfoot. You don't know this hyer trail."

"Keep on!"

"I tell you—"

"Use your whip again, or you go over the side!"

squeal from the horse, a frightful crash of the waggon, and Frank Richards felt himself whirling and spinning. What happened in those stunning seconds he hardly knew, but he found himself sprawling in a thicket, scratched and torn and breathless, but still whole. He lay for several minutes, gasping for breath, trying to gather his whirling senses. Clatter, clatter! came the pursuing hoof-beats as he lay, and there was a trampling and jingling as the horsemen drew rein close by the wrecked waggon.

Frank pulled himself together. He was dazed and scratched and bruised, but the thicket had saved his bones. He wondered dazedly what had happened to Ginger. But he could see nothing. The darkness was complete now. The last glimmer of the sun was gone, and he had lost sight of the lights of Cinnamon.

As he struggled up in the thicket, the revolver still gripped in his hand, a hoarse voice came through the darkness.

"Ginger! Where are you, Ginger, you fool! Where's the tenderfoot?"

There was a deep groan.

"That you, Jake?"

"Yep. Where's the tenderfoot?"

"Durned if I know! My leg's broke!" groaned Ginger.

"Serve you right for being a fool! Why didn't you stop?" snarled the rustler, with a curse.

"How could I stop with a gun at my cabeza?" snarled Ginger, in return. "The tenderfoot was wide to the game, durn him! My leg's broke, and the hoss is killed; and I reckon his dust won't pay for the damages, nohow." And the hapless rascal groaned again. "Hang you, Jake—hang you!"

"Oh, ring off, you groaning fool!" Every word came to Frank's ears as he groped in the thicket. He was not six yards away from the gang. Jake's savage voice rang out again. "Hustle round, boyees! He can't be far off. Ten to one he's broken a limb, same as that mumbering jay! He's got five hundred dollars in his

**THE RUSTLERS!**

Frank Richards crept cautiously forward and peered out. His gaze fell upon two horsemen who had evidently been riding hard, and in a second he recognised in them two of the men who had attacked him the previous night!

Crack, crack, crack!

The horsemen were riding behind the waggon now, clattering on the rocky trail, and loosing off their revolvers. But the bullets did not come very near. The leaping of the horses on the rough trail disordered the aim. The three rustlers had perceived Ginger's unenviable position now, and understood why he did not halt. And evidently they had little regard for their confederate's skin, for a bullet could scarcely have struck Frank Richards without equal danger to the driver.

Frank looked back with glinting eyes.

He swung the revolver away from Ginger's head for a moment to loose off a bullet to the rear. It was a hasty shot, but it went near enough to cause the horsemen to pull in, cursing loudly. The next moment the smoking muzzle was clapped to Ginger's head again.

"Faster!" hissed Frank.

"Oh Jerusalem!"

Lash, lash!

Ginger was helpless with the revolver muzzle grinding on his skull, and well he was aware that his intended victim was desperate. The waggon leaped and rocked, and every moment it seemed a miracle that it did not overturn. Ginger was putting all his skill into the driving, for the sake of his own neck, and again and again he narrowly avoided a collision with a jutting rock or a boulder in the rugged trail.

Clatter, clatter, clatter!

Bump, bump! Crash!

In spite of the fearful peril Frank felt a strange sense of exhilaration as the waggon rushed down the slope, and the wind sang in his ears.

Cinnamon Camp was close at hand when the disaster suddenly came.

A wheel caught and crashed on a sharp rock, and in the twinkling of an eye the waggon spun round, and crashed over. There was a terrified

clothes, durn him! Shoot him on sight!"

"You bet, Jake!"

The rustlers had dismounted now, hitching their horses to the wreck of the waggon.

Frank Richards breathed hard as they began to search among the boulders and patches of scrub by the trail.

There was a howl from the unfortunate Ginger.

"Jake! Jake Scuttler!"

"Seen him?" shouted back the ruffian.

"Him! No. Durn him! Come and lend me a hand. My leg's broke."

"Durn your leg!" yelled back Jake Scuttler. "We'll tote you into Cinnamon when we've got the dust. Shut your yaup-trap till then, Ginger!"

Tramping footsteps came closer to the patch of thicket where Frank Richards stood, his heart thumping. One of the rustlers was close to him,

(Continued overleaf.)

cursing the darkness as he groped for a sign of the tenderfoot.

He was coming right on Frank, and discovery was inevitable in a few moments more.

Frank set his teeth hard, and fired through the thicket at the advancing ruffian.

There was a yell and a heavy fall.

Frank had fired low, and he could guess that the bullet was in the leg of his unseen enemy.

"Thunder!" It was Jake Scuttler's voice from a dozen yards distance.

"Is that you, Hank?"

"He's got me! I'm laid out!" yelled Hank. "He's here—close at hand—in the scrub—"

A groan finished the sentence. Frank Richards was already backing away through the thicket. Loud trampling warned him that the other two rustlers were hurrying to the spot. A revolver rang out, and the bullet tore away twigs within a yard of his head. He came out of the thicket, and trampled on the rough rock beyond. Darkness was around him—he felt rather than saw the rugged boulders round him. Crack, crack! came through the thicket again, and the rustlers plunged savagely in search of him.

Frank was tempted to return the fire, but he did not. He slipped the revolver into his pocket, and dropped on his hands and knees, crawling silently away among the rocks.

Jake Scuttler and his companion came trampling breathlessly out into the open, cursing loudly.

Frank was a dozen yards away by that time, and he remained still, pressed close to a rugged boulder, hidden by the darkness as by a blanket.

He almost ceased to breathe.

"See him, Jake?"

"Durn you, how can a man see anything in this dark?" hooted Scuttler. "Listen for him!"

Frank tried to still the thumping of his heart, lest it should betray him to the listening rustlers.

There was a minute of silence, and then Jake Scuttler's raucous voice broke out again.

"I guess he's creeping clear! If he gets away to Cinnamon, the jig's up. S'arch for him, Pete!"

"Durn him!" growled Pete.

The heavy cowhide boots trampled the rocks again.

Frank Richards did not move, relying on the darkness, and his silence, to save him. His revolver was gripped in his hand again now, ready for use if he was run down. But the darkness baffled the rascals. Once Jake Scuttler's heavy trampling went by within six feet of Frank; but after that, the footsteps and savage voices receded. The rustlers returned to the trail, by the wrecked waggon, and Frank heard their voices in fierce consultation.

But he did not stay to hear.

He moved slowly, cautiously, silently, creeping away foot by foot, till he felt himself at a safe distance to rise and run. Far down the canyon the lights of Cinnamon camp beckoned him to safety. A few minutes more, and he was running—and he arrived breathless and gasping in the rugged street of Cinnamon, while Jake Scuttler and his gang were still cursing their luck on the shadowy canyon trail.

The 3rd Chapter. Buying a Horse!

The flaring naphtha lights in a row outside the Cinnamon Hotel were a welcome sight to Frank Richards. He was glad to get a rough-and-ready supper at a crowded pinewood table, and retire to a room where there was a plank bed, and where he could lock himself in to rest. He slept soundly enough that night, though in his dreams he went through, more than once, the wild scene on the canyon trail. The morning sun, glimmering in through the barred square that answered the purpose of a window, awakened him early, and he turned out.

He went down to breakfast in the lumber hotel, in a cheery temper. But he kept his eyes well about him, wondering whether he would see anything more of Jake Scuttler and his gang. In the darkness in the canyon he had seen them but dimly, and he was not sure that he would know them again by sight.

He wisely resolved to quit Cinnamon as early as he could, and place a safe distance between himself and his late foes. It was very probable that Jake Scuttler and Co. still had designs upon the five hundred dollars he had brought away from Hard Pan.

The landlord of the Cinnamon Hotel received with an expansive smile Frank's request for information

with regard to buying a horse. Big George, the landlord, was standing in his shirt-sleeves in the doorway, smoking a pipe, and cheerfully cursing a Chinaman who was rubbing down a horse in the yard, when Frank addressed him. He turned all his attention to Frank at once, with a great geniality.

"Looking for a hoss?" he said. "You've come to the right galoot, I guess, young man! As it happens, I've got a horse to sell."

And he beamed on Frank Richards.

"A good horse!" hinted Frank.

"There ain't a critter between the Cascades and the Rockies to beat that hoss!" said Big George, impressively. "He won't carry my weight, or I wouldn't part with him for a stack of greenbacks as high as your hat. But seeing as you're a stranger, I'll let you have him—and cheap! I reckon it's giving him away, at fifty dollars, but you shall have him."

"Let's see him!" suggested Frank. "Sartin!"

Big George called to the Chinaman, and the man went round to the shed and led out the wonderful horse that Big George was willing to part with at so low a figure.

Frank Richards smiled. The horse had not only seen his best days, but seen the last of them years before—he dragged one leg, and blinked wearily out of aged eyes.

Frank Richards was getting used, by this time, to being "on his own," and looking after himself. But he realised that he must still look "considerable" of a tenderfoot for Big George to attempt to sell him that horse.

Big George turned to him impressively.

"Look at him!" he said, with enthusiasm. "Jevver see a critter like that going for fifty dollars, stranger?"

"Never!" said Frank.

"I orter said sixty," said the landlord regretfully; "but I'm a man of my word, and you're going to have him for fifty. Choo Chow, hand the hoss over to the young gent."

"Hold on," said Frank coolly; "I'm not buying that horse."

"Eh?"

"I've never seen a horse like that go for fifty dollars," said Frank. "I should have said that fifty cents was nearer the mark."

"Wha-a-t?"

Big George stared at the schoolboy of Cedar Creek.

"If you've got a horse," continued Frank, "I'm ready to buy it at a fair price—if not, tell me where I can buy one, like a good chap."

"What's the matter with that hoss?" roared Big George.

"Life's too short for the full list," answered Frank. "He wouldn't suit me. You see, I'm not hefty enough to carry him—and he would have to be carried."

Big George seemed to be struggling with his emotions for some moments. Finally he grinned.

"You know something about hosses?" he asked.

"A little," said Frank, with a smile; "I've lived on a ranch in the Thompson Valley, and my uncle bred hosses."

Big George gave a grunt.

"Why couldn't you tell me that sooner?" he said. "It would have saved time. Take that critter back, Choo Chow—and mind he don't fall down. I tell you, stranger, if I don't sell that hoss soon, he'll be a dead loss to me—I'm expecting him to pass in his chips every day. I'm wasting good feed on him till a real greenhorn comes along, but I reckon I don't have any luck."

Big George shook his head sadly. "I've got two other critters, and you can take your ch'ice of them."

Frank Richards followed him to the sheds. A tall, loose-jointed, big-bearded man looked into the yard from the street, and his eyes fixed on Frank Richards. Frank glanced at him, and turned quickly to Big George.

"You know that man?"

The landlord glanced round.

"I reckon! It's Scuttler—Jake Scuttler, from Dakota."

"I thought I knew him," muttered Frank.

Scuttler passed on along the street, and was lost to view.

"That man stopped me on the trail last night and tried to rob me, with a gang of others," said Frank.

"I shouldn't be s'prised," assented Big George calmly; "I've heard yarns about Jake afore. Better not let him hear you say so, though—he's a hard man from Dakota, and it ain't safe. This camp is a bit out of the range of the Mounted Police, and Jake always carries a gun—better thank your stars you got off, and keep wide of him."

Half an hour later he had reason

to be glad that he had taken these precautions.

There was a clinking of hoofs on the rocky trail, and Frank jumped to his feet at once. He peered out of the timber without showing himself, and his heart beat faster at the sight of two horsemen coming at a canter towards the stream. One of them was Jake Scuttler, and the other, he had no doubt, was one of his comrades of the previous night.

Both the riders looked weary and dispirited. Judging by appearances, they had done harder riding than Frank that sunny morning.

Frank Richards hoped that they would ride by; but he was disappointed. They headed directly for the stream, and stopped on the bank, while the horses stretched down their necks to the water.

Frank glanced rather uneasily at his own horse. The animal was nibbling the herbage among the trees quietly enough. A whinny would have betrayed him to the foes who were evidently seeking him. But the horse, fortunately, was quiet.

Frank Richards mentally decided that the landlord's advice was good.

"Hyer's the hosses," continued Big George. "Take your ch'ice, and put down your hundred dollars. If you've fell foul of Jake Scuttler, what you want is a good mount between your knees, and a clear trail afore you. And my advice to you is to saddle up and git!"

"I mean to," said Frank.

He looked at the horses, and selected one. He had learned enough on the Lawless Ranch to be able to pick out a good horse. Big George gave him a nod of approval.

"You've been there, I guess," he remarked.

Although he had sought to swindle the "tenderfoot" with a worthless crock, Big George bore no malice. Like many men in the West, he did not apply the rules of morality to the selling of horses. But probably he had had many disappointments over the aged crock Frank had rejected, and had come to take them philosophically.

"Shell out a hundred dollars, and that critter's yours," he said. "Make it a hundred and one, and you can have the old gee thrown in."

Frank laughed.

"Thanks; I don't want the relic! And I'll give you fifty dollars for this one."

"You mean ninety-five?" queried Big George.

"I mean fifty."

"Good-morning!" said the landlord. And he strolled away towards the lumber building.

In the doorway he turned round, and called out:

"Did I hear you say ninety dollars?"

"Not unless your ears are playing tricks on you," answered Frank Richards. "But I'll make it sixty."

"I gave seventy-five for him, to a man from Saskatchewan," remarked Big George casually.

"They must be very sharp in Saskatchewan," remarked Frank Richards. "They know how to sell hosses, at that rate. How did you come to be done like that?"

Big George stared at him, and burst into a chuckle.

"I don't know where you was raised, young 'un," he said. "But you learned to talk early, I guess. Now, I'll do the fair thing by you. Eighty dollars for that critter; take it or leave it. Hosses ain't so plentiful up here in the mountains; you ain't on the plains now, you know."

"If you said seventy, it might be a trade."

"Seventy-five, and be blowed to you!"

"Done!" said Frank.

Having gone through the time-honoured formulas, Frank became the possessor of the horse. It was necessary to bargain with Big George for every item of the outfit, but he was fitted out at last, and he felt considerable pleasure when he mounted his steed and rode out into the rugged street of Cinnamon. The horse under him reminded him of old and happy days on the Lawless Ranch.

Big George called to him as he was starting to leave.

"I guess you're heading for Dusty Bar, if you're making for the plains. Take the lower trail, and if any galoot comes asking arter you, I guess I'll tell him you went by the upper trail. Savvy?"

"Thanks!" said Frank.

And he rode out of Cinnamon Camp in the sunny morning, taking the lower trail for the next camp.

The 4th Chapter. Sharp Shot!

Frank Richards halted at noon, where the trail ran by a mountain stream, and camped to feed and rest. He had kept his eyes well about him during the morning's ride, but he had seen nothing of Jake Scuttler. He wondered whether the ruffian had taken the trouble to follow him. It was probable that if he sought to do so, he would ask questions at the Cinnamon Hotel; and, in that case, probably Big George had sent him on the wrong track. Frank was relieved to feel that he was clear of the gang now. There were still four hundred dollars in his belt, and he was ready to fight in their defence, but he would have given a good many of the dollars to be saved from the necessity.

Although there was no sign of danger, he did not forget his caution when he camped to rest in the heat of noon. After giving his horse drink at the stream, he staked him out in a clump of trees, where he was hidden from sight of anyone passing along the trail. And after eating his lunch from his wallet, he lay in the trees to rest in cover.

Half an hour later he had reason

to be glad that he had taken these precautions.

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Jake Scuttler's voice came to Frank's ears, as the rustlers sat their steeds by the stream.

"I reckon it's up, Pete! He never went by the upper trail, or we'd have sighted him. Big George was lying."

"Then I reckon, he went by this trail," answered Pete. "If he was going down the mountain, he had to take one or the other."

"Durn him! I never reckoned that galoot George was fooling me," said Jake, with an oath. "Not till we'd done the upper trail, and drawn it blank. He's on this trail right enough, but he's ahead of us. We'll never run him down this side of Dusty."

"Unless he's stopped to camp. I reckon I'm going to ride right on to Dusty afore I give up."

"Durn that galoot George! I reckon he knew we was arter the tenderfoot!" growled Scuttler. "I reckon I'd look for him with a gun when we git back to Cinnamon, only the camp's been growing too hot for us as it is. There'd be a howl for Judge Lynch. And durn that tenderfoot—"

"Hold on!" broke out Pete suddenly. "I reckon the galoot passed this. Look at them tracks."

He pointed with his riding-whip to the soft soil by the water, where Frank Richards' horse had trodden.

Jake Scuttler uttered an exclamation.

He jumped from the saddle, and bent over the hoof-prints, examining them with eager attention.

Frank Richards drew a quick breath.

He knew that discovery was certain now. It would not be long before the two rustlers learned that Frank's horse had been led into the timber. There was "sign" enough to tell them that, on a keen scrutiny.

Frank jerked the revolver from his pocket.

In a few minutes, probably, the two rustlers would know that he was in the timber-clump, and then there would be a rush—and he knew what he had to expect. Jake Scuttler and his comrade would not leave him alive to tell of their deeds as gold-robbers and horse-thieves. His life was in his own hands to save or to lose by his own courage and strength.

He knew it, and he knew what he must do. The enemy were two to one, and it was no time for hesitation.

Jake Scuttler was half-hidden from him by the horses. Pete had dismounted, and was holding the horses, following Jake's movements with his eyes. He stood within full sight and easy range of the timber, unaware of his danger for the moment.

Frank's face was pale and tense, but it did not flinch, as he levelled his revolver, resting the barrel on a low bough.

He aimed at the ruffian's legs; though his own life was at stake, he could not bring himself to shoot to kill.

Crack!

Scuttler was still on his knees, examining the "sign," when the sudden pistol-shot barked out from the timber.

A wild yell awoke the echoes of the trail.

Pete collapsed as if his legs had suddenly been plucked from under him, and rolled, yelling by the water's edge. His right knee had been shattered by the bullet. The startled horses reared and squealed, and backed away wildly. Jake Scuttler leaped to his feet with a startled oath.

His hand was on the revolver in the leather holster swung to his belt. He stared for a second at the wounded ruffian, and then his glaring eyes sought the timber, whence the shot had come.

His revolver came out in a twinkling, and he fired at random at the trees. Pete lay groaning at his feet.

The bullets from the ruffian's revolver tore through the trees round Frank Richards—one of them glanced from a thick trunk, and whizzed by an inch from his ear.

Crack, crack, crack!

The rustler was pumping out bullets as fast as the trigger would go. Frank dropped on his knees behind a trunk, and waited.

Crack, crack, crack!

The six-shooter was empty. Jake Scuttler was fumbling with fresh cartridges as Frank ran from behind the trunk, with his revolver up.

"Hands up!" shouted Frank.

With a curse the ruffian hurled the empty revolver at him. Then his hand dropped on the knife in his belt.

Frank easily eluded the whizzing weapon; and his right hand did not falter. As Jake Scuttler rushed on him, the knife half-drawn, Frank pulled the trigger.

For a moment he thought, with sickening heart, that his shot had failed, as the ruffian came rushing on. But Scuttler was hit, and he did not quite reach Frank. Within a yard of him he fell heavily, crashing on the ground on his face.

Frank Richards gave almost a sob of relief.

He stepped forward, jerked the ruffian's knife away, and tossed it into the stream. Scuttler turned on his side, and gave the schoolboy of Cedar Creek a black look of hatred.

Frank hurried towards Pete, his revolver ready. The wounded ruffian was seeking feebly to loosen a six-shooter from his belt. Frank stooped over him, tore the weapon away, and flung it into the stream, and his knife after it.

Then he ran to his horse, and led it out of the timber.

The two ruffians watched him with malevolent eyes, as he mounted. Jake Scuttler made an effort to rise, but sank back again with a groan. Frank looked at him grimly.

"Durn you!" muttered the rustler hoarsely. "Durn you! Busted by a tenderfoot schoolboy, by thunder! Durn you!"

"You deserve a bullet through the head, you scoundrel!" said Frank contemptuously. "You can hang on your horse somehow and get back to Cinnamon, and it's more than you deserve."

He turned his back on the two groaning rascals, and rode away down the canyon. Looking back from a distance, he could see the two ruffians crawl to their horses, and raise themselves slowly and painfully on the animals' backs. They had sought his life, but Frank was glad to know that he would not have their lives on his hands.

He rode away at a good pace, and when he looked back again the intervening cliff hid them from his sight. He lost no time on the trail after that. Before sunset he was riding into the rugged street of Dusty Bar, where he was safe from all possible pursuit.

But he did not linger there. Frank Richards had had enough—more than enough—of the wild foot-hills; and after a hasty meal and a short rest, he saddled up again, and took the southern trail out of Dusty Bar, riding away cheerily in bright moonlight.

THE END.

("The Black Sack Gang!" is the title of the thrilling Frank Richards complete story appearing in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND.)

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