

GREAT SUMMER BUMPER NUMBER!

The BOYS' FRIEND ^{1^{1d}}/₂

TWELVE PAGES!

TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR!

No. 1,047. Vol. XXI, New Series.]

THREE HALFPENCE.

[Week Ending July 2nd, 1921.

Fighting Jack Cresley!

by Gilbert L. Jessop.



HIS LAST MATCH!

"Good old Jack!" "Cresley for Cressingham!" The school to a boy flooded over the field and Jack made his way to the pavilion through a seething mass of admirers. The bitter thought that this would be his last appearance in the field for Cressingham flashed through his mind, but he banished it—determined to be cheerful and play the game!

A LONG COMPLETE YARN OF ROOKWOOD SCHOOL BY OWEN CONQUEST.



Living A Lie!

The 1st Chapter. The Cold Shoulder!

"What a fool—what a dashed fool I've been!"

Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, of the Fourth Form at Rookwood, muttered the words aloud as he stood at his study window, staring gloomily into the old quadrangle.

He was alone in the study.

He stood with his hands driven deep into his pockets, his eyeglasses dangling at the end of its cord, his whole attitude one of dejection.

In the quadrangle he could see Jimmy Silver & Co. in a cheerful group, chatting under the beeches. The Fistical Four looked cheerful enough that sunny afternoon. But they hadn't the gnawing trouble that weighed upon the mind of Cecil Montmorency.

"What a dashed fool!" he muttered again. "What a thumpin' fool! If I'd weighed out the truth to begin with, most of the fellows would have thought none the worse of me. What do they care whether my name's Huggins or Montmorency? But I couldn't—I couldn't! What a rotten run of luck I've had ever since I came to Rookwood!"

His brow darkened.

He caught sight of Tom Rawson, the scholarship junior, crossing the quad, with a book under his arm.

Rawson exchanged a cheery nod with Jimmy Silver. Evidently Jimmy Silver, the captain of the Fourth, was not worried by the fact that Rawson's father was a plumber, or a carpenter, or a gasfitter, or whatever he was. And Rawson was poor; the poorest fellow at Rookwood. Who cared whether he wore his clothes twice as long as any other fellow in the school? Nobody but a few duffers like Towny and Tuppy and Peele.

But Rawson played the straight game, and that Cecil Cuthbert had never done. It was not in his nature to do it, apparently.

Montmorency could not help thinking, as he stared gloomily from the window, that matters would have gone better with him, if he had taken the same line as Rawson.

But it was too late to change now, even if he wanted to change. And he was not sure that he did.

To admit that a year ago his name had been Huggins—that he had carried plates and answered bells at Goby Hall, clad in a suit adorned by rows of buttons—he shuddered at the thought.

To admit that, only twelve short months since, he had been on the same footing as Tupper, the house-pauper at Rookwood! That his uncle, who had adopted him, had had his head turned by the success of a lucky speculation on the Stock Exchange, and had changed his name from Huggins to Montmorency—absurdly, though quite legally! The handsome, elegant youth who stared gloomily from the study window was quite fitted by Nature to live up to that grandiloquent name—but his uncle! Montmorency thought of the fat, self-important little gentleman, with his rubicund face and his flaring waistcoat—and his accent and manners that had changed little since he was a sporting publican.

Uncle Huggins had been a dashed fool, as he had been a dashed fool; he realised that only too clearly now.

But his luck had been cruel for a snob. First of all, Sergeant Kettle, who had known him years ago, turned out to be school sergeant at Rookwood, and had recognised him, and blurted out his real name before a crowd of fellows. Then Horace Lurchey, who had been his fellow-

servant at Goby Hall, had turned up, and fastened on, to him.

All the Lower School at Rookwood knew, or guessed, how the matter stood, to some extent at least, and his friends had begun to look coldly upon him.

Townsend and Topham, who had chummed enthusiastically with Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, were very doubtful now whether they could continue to know him. They felt that there was something shady about Cecil Cuthbert, in spite of the fact that he had more fivers than any other fellow had half-crowns and he could telephone for his uncle's tremendous Rolls-Royce whenever he wanted to.

And fellows whom he had mercilessly snubbed, in his snobbish loftiness, gleefully welcomed the opportunity of "getting their own back" now—they even addressed him personally as George Huggins!

Who he was, and what he was, nobody knew exactly, but everybody knew or suspected that he was not what he pretended to be.

And the falsehoods he had told had to be bolstered up by more falsehoods, and these again by more, until the hapless upstart hardly knew how many lies he had told.

The door of the study opened, and Montmorency swung round from the window.

In an instant the dejection had dropped from him—he was on his guard again, playing the part that custom had made second nature to him. He screwed his monocle into his eye, and glanced at Townsend and Topham as they came in.

Towny and Tuppy stopped when they saw him.

The cheery greeting they would have given him a few days before was conspicuous by its absence now. Both of them coloured and looked uncomfortable; evidently not having expected to find him in the study just then.

"Trot in, old beans!" said Montmorency, with his aristocratic drawl, taking no notice of their very peculiar manner. "I was just comin' out to look for you!"

"Oh!" said Topham.

"I—I thought you were out!" stammered Townsend.

"I'm thinkin' of 'phonin' for the car, and takin' a little run this afternoon," yawned Montmorency. "Care to come?"

In spite of his careless manner, he was watching the two nutty juniors very keenly.

Only a few days before Towny and Tuppy would have jumped at that invitation; there were plenty of fellows in the Fourth who would have jumped at it now. But Towny and Tuppy were rather more particular than some fellows! They prided themselves on the fact that they were rather particular!

"Hem!" muttered Topham, with a glance at his chum.

"Thanks!" said Townsend. "But we're not thinkin' of goin' out this afternoon, Montmorency."

Before the appearance of Horace Lurchey at Rookwood, Montmorency had been "Monty" to his two nutty pals.

Evidently he was Monty no longer!

A hard glitter came into his eyes.

"Doin' anythin' special this afternoon?" he asked.

"Just roamin' round, said Townsend carelessly. "Come on, Tuppy; I don't think we'll stay in."

The Nuts of the Fourth turned out of the study again. Montmorency followed them into the passage.

His heart was heavy within him; he realised that this was the "cold shoulder" with a vengeance. But his manner was quite as usual—he was determined not to see what was plain enough for the blindest to see. He wedged between Townsend and Topham, and walked down the passage with them to the stairs.

Towny and Tuppy exchanged an unhappy glance across him.

The dear pal they had chummed with was apparently not to be dropped so easily as he had been taken up!

The three juniors came out into the quadrangle together.

"Hallo, there's Talboys of the Fifth!" exclaimed Topham suddenly. "I've got to speak to Talboys!"

And he fairly bolted.

Montmorency's lips came hard together.

"Comin' out for a stroll, Towny?" he asked.

Townsend drew a deep breath.

He jerked his arm away.

"Excuse me!" he said curtly. "I've got somethin' to do, somethin' I'd forgotten."

And fairly turning his back on Montmorency, Townsend walked quickly away.

The 2nd Chapter.

Lattrey's Luck.

"Here comes cheery old Huggins!" "Shurrup!" whispered Jimmy Silver.

Arthur Edward Lovell shrugged his shoulders.

Prep was over that evening, and most of the Classical Fourth had gathered in the Common-room.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were talking cricket, the most interesting subject to them just then, when Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency appeared in the doorway.

There were at least a dozen smiles in the junior Common-room as he appeared.

Townsend and Topham, who were leaning elegantly on the mantelpiece and discussing the first-class places they had visited last vac, shifted their position a little, so that they should not meet Montmorency's eye. Higgs winked at Flynn, who grinned. Tubby Muffin, whose desperate efforts to get on a friendly footing with Montmorency had all failed, indulged in a fat chuckle. Lattrey and Peele and Gower, who were talking "horses" in a little group by themselves, smiled satirically. They had been treated to the lofty contempt of Cecil Cuthbert, and they quite enjoyed the Huggins story.

Such a reception might have made any fellow feel downhearted, coming into a crowded room. But Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency undoubtedly had a nerve of iron.

He sauntered gracefully into the room, his eyeglass glimmering in his eye, his manner careless, at ease.

He took no notice whatever of Towny or Tuppy, but moved across to where Valentine Mornington sat on a sofa. Mornington picked up a book and became immediately engrossed in its contents, though not a great reader as a rule.

If it had been Montmorency's intention to speak to him, he changed it instantly, and without a sign.

He sauntered past the sofa, and dropped into a vacant armchair, and crossed one elegant leg over the other with every appearance of easy comfort and satisfaction.

There was another chair beside him, in which Putty Grace was seated. Grace rose after a moment or two, and strolled away.

If Montmorency had been touched with the plague his proximity could not have been more carefully avoided.

Yet his face still gave no sign.

He was among twenty or thirty fellows, but as severely solitary as if he had been in the middle of Coombe Heath.

But after a time Lattrey left his friends, and dropped into the vacant chair beside him.

Montmorency did not glance at him.

He had no desire to fall from the "best set" in the Fourth into the company of the black sheep. He was determined, somehow, to regain the position he had lost, and he could not do that by associating with such fellows as Lattrey & Co.

But Lattrey had come there to speak, and he spoke. He turned a grinning satirical face upon Montmorency.

"Feeling a bit down?" he asked.

Montmorency condescended to turn his eyeglass upon the junior by his side with a lofty stare.

"I don't understand you," he said icily.

"I think you do!" grinned Lattrey. "Your friends seem to be givin' you the go-by. Towny and Tuppy figure it out that they've been taken in."

"I think I've mentioned before that I don't care for your company, Lattrey," said Montmorency, with deliberate calmness. "Would you mind addressin' your remarks to somebody else?"

"There isn't a fellow in the

Fourth," said Lattrey, "who doesn't believe that your name's Huggins, and that you've borrowed Montmorency since your people made money. Old Kettle knew it, and that shady bouncer Lurchey knows it, and I know jolly well that you've squared Lurchey not to turn up at Rookwood again, though he's still hanging on at the Bird-in-Hand at Coombe. Dash it all, old fellow, it's no good swankin' any longer! Can't you see it's a chicken that won't fight?"

Montmorency did not reply.

He gazed across at a picture on the wall, as if deeply interested in it, and deaf to the voice at his side.

Lattrey set his lips a little.

Whether he was a pretender or not, Montmorency was certainly master of a supercilious manner that could be very cutting.

"I don't want to slang you," said Lattrey, after a pause. "I'm only pointin' out that it's no good carryin' your nose in the air any longer. Towny and Topper have done with you, and Morny won't speak to you, and you know it. You've put half the fellows' backs up by bein' insultin', and they're jolly glad to see you bowled out."

Montmorency seemed still deaf.

His calm, impassive face gave no sign that every word uttered by the cad of the Fourth was gall and worm-wood to him.

He understood what Mark Lattrey meant now. He was really offering to receive him into his own shady circle, now that the nuts of the Fourth would have nothing to do with him. But Montmorency's pride was as high as ever, whether it was the pride of a Montmorency or the insolence of the servants' hall. Only a slight curl of his lip betrayed that he was aware of Lattrey's presence.

"Still swankin', what?" said Lattrey, with a sneer, and his eyes glittered. "By gad, this is really rich! I've heard that fellow Lurchey talkin'. You and he were servants at a place called Goby Hall, and now you're turnin' up your nose at Rookwood! Blessed if I ever heard of such a nerve. By right you should be blackin' our boots for us here. That's what you were used to before the Hugginses made money, I fancy."

Smack! Still quite calm, Montmorency swept out his hand, and the palm came with a smack on Lattrey's face. The concussion sounded across the room like a pistol-shot, and it made a dozen fellows look round.

"Hallo! Lattrey's been asking for it!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"And getting it!" grinned Raby.

Lattrey sprang to his feet, his face crimson. Montmorency rose calmly, facing him, evidently ready for trouble.

"You cheeky cad!" roared Lattrey.

"Do you want some more?" asked Montmorency, with a bitter smile. "You've only got to repeat your impertinence, my good fellow."

Lattrey clenched his hands with rage.

"Go for him!" called out Peele.

"I'm not fightin' with pageboys," said Lattrey. "I'd just as soon fight with Tupper in the boot-room."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you did I fancy Tupper would give you as much as you could carry home!" grunted Arthur Edward Lovell.

"Funk!" snorted Higgs.

Montmorency came closer to Lattrey, with his fists clenched. Lattrey backed away, showing the white feather only too plainly. He was not of the stuff of which heroes are made.

"You will fight me, whether you like it or not, if I have any more of your insolence!" said Montmorency.

"I won't fight you," said Lattrey.

"You're too good a man for me in that line. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll see that the Head knows that your name is Huggins, and that there's a boozy blackguard in Coombe who used to be your fellow-servant at Goby Hall. That will bring you down off your perch, you cheeky cad!"

And Lattrey turned and walked quickly out of the Common-room.

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

All eyes were on Montmorency.

The general impression in the Common-room was that Lattrey had gone to the Head's study to give away the half-kept secret of the upstart of Rookwood.

If the fellow really was a pretender, surely it was time now for him to blench?

But, to the surprise and perplexity of the juniors, Montmorency only cast a scornful glance after his enemy, and sat down again. He crossed one elegant leg over the other as before, and looked quite at peace with himself and all the world. Townsend and Topham exchanged dubious glances,

wondering whether they had made a mistake, after all.

"By Jove! The fellow's got a nerve!" murmured Newcome.

Undoubtedly Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency had a nerve!

It was a quarter of an hour later that Bulkeley of the Sixth looked into the Common-room to shepherd the Classical Fourth away to their dormitory. Nothing had happened in the interval. Apparently Lattrey had not, after all, gone to the Head.

"Bed-time!" said Bulkeley.

"Now, then!"

Montmorency rose to his feet with a slight yawn.

"I say, Bulkeley—"

"Hallo!" said the captain of Rookwood, glancing at him curiously.

"Do you mind if I detain you a minute? There's a fellow in the village—a fellow who calls himself Lurchey—"

Every eye was on Montmorency again. The Fourth-Formers waited with almost bated breath for what was to follow.

"I've seen him," said Bulkeley curtly. "You mean that low blackguard who came here claiming to know you—"

"Yaas. He thinks he knows me, and he doesn't," said Montmorency easily. "It's rather a rotten position for me. He spoke to me in the village the other day, and I don't like to get mixed up in a row with such a character, or I'd have knocked him down. As head-prefect, I'm askin' you what I ought to do in the matter."

"Oh!" said Bulkeley.

"It's really amountin' to a sort of persecution," continued Montmorency, while the juniors stared blankly. "The fellow takes me for some sort of a rank outsider he knows named Huggins."

"I know that."

"It can't go on," said Montmorency. "Would you advise me to go to the police-station about it, Bulkeley?"

"I don't know that that would do any good," said Bulkeley. "But if the fellow persists in speaking to you—"

"He does."

"And you don't really know him?"

"I've said I don't," said Montmorency, raising his eyebrows.

"Very good," said Bulkeley quietly. "In that case, the fellow must certainly be stopped from persecuting you. I will see him tomorrow, if you like, and warn him off."

"You're awfully good!" said Montmorency. "That's exactly what I should like, if you'd take the trouble."

"Then I'll do it. Get off to the dormitory now," said Bulkeley.

And the Classical Fourth marched away to their dormitory, in a state of wonder. Even Arthur Edward Lovell was beginning to doubt whether he had been too hasty in condemning the pretender. As for Townsend and Topham, they were in a most unhappy state of doubt. Was Montmorency the "real goods," after all? And had they displayed the cold shoulder to a genuine scion of a blue-blooded house, who was also rolling in money and expensive motor-cars? It was really a most painful state of dubiety for Towny and Tuppy. And in the dormitory they melted towards their former chum, and bade him good-night in cordial tones, with a vague idea of being on the safe side, as it were.

But Montmorency was not to be so easily placated. He answered their good-night with a cool, steady stare, and turned his back on them.

At which Towny and Tuppy coloured uncomfortably, and felt more than ever that they had made a mistake.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Very Interesting Occasion!

"You coming, Jimmy?"

"Oh, rot!" grunted Jimmy Silver.

"Nearly all the Fourth's going!"

grinned Lovell.

"More asses the Fourth!" said Jimmy.

"Well, dash it all, it's interesting, isn't it?" demanded Arthur Edward Lovell. "I'm blessed if I can make the fellow out at all! If he's a spoofer, where does he get the nerve to call Bulkeley into the matter?"

"Perhaps he isn't a spoofer," said Jimmy Silver. "Anyhow, it's not the bizny of the end study. Let him rip!"

"But we're interested," argued Newcome. "If the fellow's a spoofer, he's got no end of a nerve! I want to see Bulkeley tackle Lurchey."

"I'm going," said Lovell decidedly. "Nearly all the Form's going. You come, too, Jimmy. We may hear the whole history of the noble Mont-

morency, who was once a boy in buttons."

"Lurchey is sure to shout it out if Bulkeley tackles him!" chuckled Newcome. "I'm going!"

"What about the cricket?" said Jimmy. "It's a half-holiday, and we want to play cricket. Do you want St. Jim's to beat us?"

"We can spare an hour for Huggins, and still beat St. Jim's when the match comes off. Come on, Uncle James!" grinned Lovell, catching Jimmy by the arm. "Bulkeley will be starting soon, and all the fellows are hanging round waiting for him." And the reluctant Jimmy was marched away by his chums.

"Bulkeley of the Sixth was always an important person at Rookwood, as head-prefect and captain of the school. His doings were of great interest; his lightest opinion was regarded with respect. But it is safe to say that never had Bulkeley's doings excited so much interest in the Lower School of Rookwood as they did that afternoon.

Bulkeley was going down to Coombe to see the dingy blackguard who persisted in "knowing" Montmorency of the Fourth and in addressing him as "George Huggins" and "Gentleman George." Bulkeley was going to "warn him off the course," as Mornington expressed it in his slangy way. And if Lurchey was telling the truth with regard to Cecil Cuthbert, it looked as if the interview would be a very interesting one. If Lurchey was defiant or insolent, as was very probable, it was more than likely that Bulkeley would proceed to "handle" him, which would be worth watching. In any case, it was probable that interesting details with regard to Cecil Cuthbert would be made known—perhaps shouted out by the angry rascal. And Cecil Cuthbert was by this time such an object of interest to the Fourth Form that the juniors' curiosity was really excusable.

When Bulkeley came out of the School House, with a stick under his arm, at least twenty pairs of eyes were fixed on him from various directions.

Lovell blissfully surmised that that stick was intended for the shoulders of Mr. Lurchey—in which case, the expedition could not fail to be full of interest and excitement.

Montmorency came out with Bulkeley. He held his head high, as usual, and seemed unaware of the general interest taken in him and his companion. Apparently the dandy of the Fourth was to accompany Bulkeley on his expedition, and face Mr. Lurchey in his lair, as it were.

Lattrey eyed him evilly. Lattrey believed the worst of the fellow who had smacked his face in the Common-room—the worst he could imagine. But he was staggered now. If Montmorency was a humbug, he was playing out his peculiar game with a nerve that was amazing. And Lattrey, revengeful as he was, hesitated more than ever about making his threatened communication to the Head. He determined to see this affair through first, at all events.

Bulkeley of the Sixth turned out at the gates with Montmorency, and at least twenty juniors turned out after him.

Fortunately, it did not seem to occur to Bulkeley that he was followed, for he did not look back as he strode along the leafy lane towards Coombe. Nearly all the Classical Fourth, and some of the Moderns, followed him.

"We're going to be in at the death!" chuckled Lovell. "That fellow Lurchey is always leaning against a post outside the Bird-in-Hand in the afternoon. It will be an al fresco entertainment!"

"And Montmorency has got the nerve to face him in Bulkeley's company!" said Mornington. "I'm blessed if I know what to think! What do you think about it, Jimmy?"

But Uncle James of Rookwood shook his head.

"My dear chap, I'm too busy thinking about my own affairs to think about Montmorency's," he answered. "What does it matter, anyhow?"

"Oh, rats!" said Mornington.

Jimmy Silver was the only fellow in the Fourth, apparently, who took that lofty, detached point of view.

The other fellows were frankly curious; and perhaps even Jimmy, at the bottom of his heart, was a little curious, too. Certainly it would have been interesting to know the exact facts about Montmorency.

There was quite a buzz of excitement among the Fourth Form contingent when the Bird-in-Hand Inn appeared in sight.

That disreputable establishment was out of bounds for Rookwooders, of course. The place looked very sleepy and deserted in the warm

summer's afternoon. An ostler sat on a fence, meditatively chewing a straw. And against a post before the inn leaned the ungainly and untidy figure of Mr. Horace Lurchey, smoking a cigar.

"There he is!" murmured Lovell. Bulkeley of the Sixth strode up directly to the dingy loafer. Mr. Lurchey removed his cigar, and stared at him insolently. Montmorency, with his hands in his pockets, regarded the loafer through his eyeglass with perfect self-possession. And the Rookwood juniors, gathering round breathlessly within earshot, looked on with eager interest.

The 4th Chapter. Quite a Surprise!

"Afternoon!" said Mr. Lurchey affably, and he replaced his cigar in his mouth, and blew out a cloud of smoke.

"I want a word with you, my man," said Bulkeley of the Sixth quietly.

"A dozen, if you like, young feller," answered Mr. Lurchey, still affable. "I ain't no objection to a chat, I'm sure."

"Cheeky cad, talking to Bulkeley like that!" murmured Arthur Edward Lovell indignantly.

"You have been making yourself objectionable, my man," said Bulkeley, still very quietly. "I'm here to tell you that it's got to stop. You

"Oh!" said Bulkeley, rather nonplussed.

The captain of Rookwood had been prepared for defiance and insolence, and the stick under his arm had been intended to convey a lesson to Mr. Lurchey in that event. This complete change of face on the part of the dingy loafer was startling.

Jimmy Silver & Co., who heard every word, exchanged glances. Townsend and Topham looked quite sickly.

After Mr. Lurchey had swallowed his own statements in this way, there was no further doubt in their minds. They had made a mistake—they had turned down a pal who was well 'worth knowin'.' Towny and Topy could have kicked themselves.

"I really beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Lurchey, glancing rather queerly at Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency. "I jest made a mistake, sir, and I'm sorry for it. I'm leavin' Coombe this week, and I ain't troubling you any more. A man can't say more than that."

"I pardon you," said Montmorency loftily. "I simply want to hear nothin' more of your nonsense!"

"Then the matter's ended," said Bulkeley, still a little nonplussed. "I'm glad there's been no trouble."

"Same 'ere, sir," said Mr. Lurchey affably. "I'm sure that I don't want any trouble. Thinkin' the young gent was my old pal George, a-turning his back on me, naturally riled

make Lurchey eat his words, and he was willing to let us see, so as to set Huggins right with the Form."

"Huggins?" said Lovell, with a stare. "I think it's pretty plainly proved now that Montmorency isn't Huggins."

Morny shrugged his shoulders. "Dash it all, Morny!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "The man's withdrawn every word he said."

"I know."

"He's heard from George Huggins, who's in a job at Reigate," said Raby. "I should think that makes it clear enough."

"Almost too clear," said Mornington, with another shrug; and he walked away without explaining himself further.

Jimmy Silver looked round for Montmorency. That elegant youth was polishing his eyeglass, preparatory to putting it in his eye again. Montmorency did not seem in the least surprised by the result of the interview. Perhaps he had his reasons. Jimmy hesitated a few moments, and then crossed over to the gilt-edged youth.

"I'm sorry, Montmorency," he said frankly. "I suppose you know that I believed that rotter's yarn, more or less?"

Montmorency put the eyeglass in his eye, and surveyed the captain of the Fourth with lofty superiority.

"Thanks!" he drawled. "I may mention, however, that I don't care

stood cleared in the eyes of the Fourth of all imputations of humble origin, whatever Morny chose to think. Montmorency's little ways had not made him beloved, and there was few who rejoiced to see him "set right" with his Form.

The 5th Chapter. All Serene!

"Get out!" Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency uttered those words quietly, but threateningly, as Lattrey looked into Study No. 5 an hour or two later.

Instead of getting out, however, Lattrey got in, and closed the door after him.

"You prefer to leave this study on your neck?" asked Montmorency, pushing back his spotless cuffs a little.

"Hold on a minute!" said Lattrey, with a bitter grin. "I've just a few words to say. I know your game. Do you think I'm blind, even if all the other fellows are? You've squared that rotter at the Bird-in-Hand, or your precious uncle's squared him. He's been paid to hold his tongue, and I fancy he's being paid regularly, or he would soon open his mouth again. It was fixed up before you asked Bulkeley to chip in, you knowing jolly well that the rogue was going to take back what he'd said, and he's being paid to go away from Coombe—"

Lattrey watched Montmorency's face intently as he spoke, fully expecting to read there some confirmation of his surmise.

If Montmorency's heart sank at finding himself read so easily and so keenly, he gave no sign of it.

Only a smile of contemptuous amusement appeared on his face.

"I'm not finished yet," said Lattrey, with an evil look in his eyes. "You may or may not happen to know that my father is a private inquiry agent—"

"I'm sure I don't care a rap!"

"I'm going to write to him," continued Lattrey. "I'm going to ask him to let me know what he can about Goby Hall, and a servant that used to be kept there, named Huggins, and whether he changed his name to Montmorency when he came into money."

Montmorency gave a slight start. "Ah, that touches you, does it?" sneered Lattrey.

"Not at all," drawled Cecil Cuthbert. "You're quite amusin', old bean. But I'm tired of your peculiar brand of conversation. Will you get out?"

"Not yet. I—"

"You will!"

Montmorency threw the study door open, and strode towards Lattrey. A moment more, and the cad of the Fourth was grasped in a pair of hands that, though white and exceedingly well-kept, were very powerful. There was a yell from Lattrey as he went spinning through the doorway.

Crash! "By gad!" Townsend and Topham were coming to the study, and they jumped back as Lattrey crashed at their feet.

Lattrey picked himself up, his eyes gleaming. For a moment he seemed about to rush furiously at the handsome, disdainful junior standing in the study doorway. But he changed his mind, and with a black brow strode away down the passage.

Towny and Topy came into the room, and Towny coughed. Montmorency took no heed of the two nuts.

"Monty, old man—" murmured Townsend.

"Monty, old top—" breathed Topham.

"Comin' out for a stroll before tea, old fellow!"

"Do, Monty!"

And Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency relented, and deigned to receive his nutty pals into favour again. And once more Rookwood School was treated to the gratifying sight of three elegant and lofty youths strolling arm-in-arm in the quadrangle.

But the outward serenity of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency, the aristocratic calm which he carefully maintained in public, went no deeper than his skin. The threat of Mark Lattrey still rang in his ears, and within the skin of Cecil Cuthbert Montmorency George Huggins quaked. For one danger had only been averted to give place to another, and his footsteps were still upon slippery paths. Outwardly all was serene, but inwardly there was doubt and dark foreboding for the upstart who was living a lie.

THE END.

(You must read "Danger Ahead!" A splendid long, complete Rookwood School tale in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND. By the way, there is also a long, complete Rookwood yarn in the "Popular" next Friday.)



HAVING IT OUT! The school captain strode up to the dingy loafer. "Why have you been persecuting this boy Montmorency, and calling him by the name of Huggins?" he demanded. "I beg 'is pardon, sir," replied Lurchey. "It was all a mistake—took 'im for a cove named George 'Uggins, I did, but now I've seen more of 'im I know the difference!" The plot had thickened with a vengeance!

have been persecuting this boy, Montmorency, who has asked me to interfere. You have been calling him by a name that is not his, and spreading yarns about him, and generally making yourself unpleasant. It's got to stop."

There was a pause, and the Rookwooders were quite breathless. Now was the moment for Mr. Lurchey to blurt out the whole story—if there was any truth in his statements.

But he did not.

He chewed his cigar meditatively for a moment or two, and his manner was quite civil when he spoke again.

"I called the young gentleman George Huggins, sir," he said. "Feller I used to know. Gentleman George we called him, such a gentleman he was, with his 'aughty airs in the servants'-all. You could 'ave knocked me down with a feather, sir, when I saw this young gent; he's so like Gentleman George. But now I've seen more of 'im I can see the difference."

Bulkeley eyed the man.

"You mean that you took Montmorency for some other person, and you understand now that you made a mistake?" he asked.

Mr. Lurchey nodded.

"That's it," he assented. "I don't blame myself for the mistake, seeing as they're so alike. But I've 'eard from George since; he's got a job as boots in a public-house down Reigate way. I'm sure I beg the young gentleman's pardon for my mistake!"

me. But now I know he ain't George, I don't mind owning up as I've made a mistake, and begging his pardon."

And Mr. Lurchey, with unusual and surprising politeness, touched his rakish bowler-hat, and lurches away into the bar of the Bird-in-Hand.

Bulkeley turned away, satisfied with the result of the interview, so far as that went, yet, somehow, not quite satisfied in his mind. He came face to face, as he turned, with a score of Rookwood juniors, of whose presence till then he had seemed unaware. Bulkeley gave them a grim look.

"Well?" he said.

"Ahem!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

"What do you fags want?"

"Just—just walking around, you know, Bulkeley," stammered Lovell.

Bulkeley passed through the crowd of juniors, and strode away up the road towards Rookwood, still strangely unsatisfied in his mind. Somehow, though Mr. Lurchey had said and done all that could possibly be expected of him, his recantation did not ring true. Bulkeley could not help feeling that there was something behind it—something he did not "catch on" to. But the matter was closed now, and he was glad of it.

"I half-expected old Bulkeley to wade in with lines, for following him here," said Lovell, greatly relieved.

Mornington laughed. "He knew we were here all the time," he said. "He expected to

a dash what you believed or didn't believe!"

And he walked away, with his noble nose in the air.

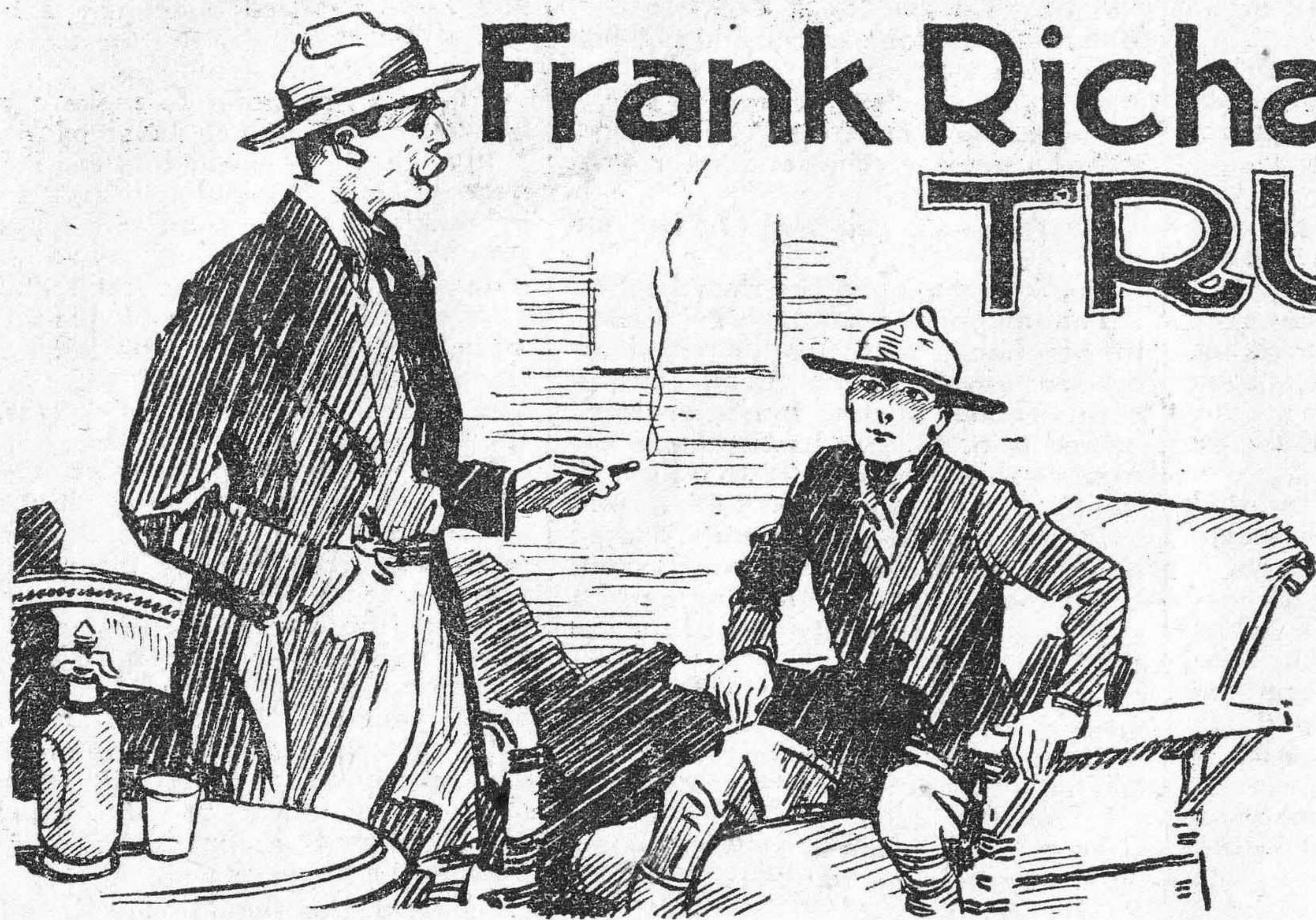
Jimmy Silver stared after him, wrath rising in his breast. He was sorely tempted to rush after the lofty youth, and plant a kick on his elegant person, which would have put a sudden end to his lofty swagger. But Jimmy restrained himself.

"Just like Jimmy!" grinned Lovell. "Don't you know by this time that the fellow's a rank cad, Jimmy Silver, whether he's a Huggins or not. He's the kind of chap you want to touch with a barge-pole, if you touch him at all!"

"Br-r-r-r!" grunted Jimmy Silver. "What the thump have we been wasting our time on the fellow at all for? Let's get back to the cricket, for goodness' sake, and get the taste out of our mouths!"

And the Co. grinned, and walked back with their great leader to the cricket. The Rookwooders took their homeward way, most of them feeling rather disappointed. The interview with Mr. Lurchey had been tame—very tame—as Putty Grace remarked. The fellow hadn't been cheeky, and Bulkeley hadn't laid into him with the stick. The juniors had really had their walk for nothing. No startling details of the career of George Huggins—Gentleman George—had come to light. Instead of that, the Huggins' story was disposed of for good and all, and Montmorency

A SPLENDID LONG COMPLETE YARN OF FRANK RICHARDS.



Frank Richards' TRUST!

BY
MARTIN
CLIFFORD

A Novel
Story of a
Schoolboy's
Adventures
in Western
Canada.

The 1st Chapter.

The Man Who Watched!

In the warm summer morning the Gold Brick Hotel was very quiet. In the wooden veranda, Frank Richards sat in a long cane chair, at his ease, resting. Lord St. Austells sat opposite him, smoking a cigar. Frank was looking away towards the peaks of the Cascade Mountains, at the foot of which lay the camp of Gold Brick.

Frank was thinking of the hardships and perils he had passed through, in the foothills of the Cascade range; and wondering, too, whether he would see anything more of the desperate gang of rustlers he had so narrowly escaped from—the Black Sack Gang.

His companion seemed to be buried in thought.

At intervals some "pilgrim" tramped along the sunny street past the lumber hotel. From somewhere in the distance the clang of a miner's pick could be faintly heard. Frank Richards was quite content to sit and look at the play of sunshine and shadow on the hills, and rest; he felt that he had earned a rest.

He glanced lazily at a bunch of horsemen who rode into the rugged, unpaved street, and stopped at a short distance from the hotel. There were four horsemen, in red shirts and Stetson hats, and they looked a rough crowd. But that was not at all uncommon in Gold Brick—rather the reverse. The horsemen dismounted and tethered their beasts, and three of them lounged into a cabin. The fourth, a tall and powerful man with a hard, dark face and short, black beard, came on to the hotel, and passed under the veranda into the bar-room.

Frank Richards gave him no further attention.

But he would have been interested in the black-bearded man if he could have seen that individual's further movements.

The man stopped at the bar, called for a cocktail, and then lounged carelessly into the smoke-room.

There, out of sight of the Chinaman at the bar, he looked round quickly and cautiously.

The room was empty; a wide-open door gave upon the veranda, and towards that door the black-bearded man moved silently on tiptoe. He did not emerge into the veranda, however. He caught one glimpse of Frank Richards' back, and of Lord St. Austells' profile, and backed quickly out of sight.

Lord St. Austells was speaking. Frank turned his glance from the sunny hills to his companion. Neither was aware of the black-bearded man just inside the doorway, within a few yards of them, listening and watching.

"It's time we had a little explanation, I think, Richards," said Lord St. Austells, removing his cigar.

"Yes," said Frank. "We've had a good rest here—and I needed it, by gad!" said his lordship. "I fancy I've had enough of exploring the foothills; I want to see nothing more of such gentry as the Black Sack Gang. I'm going on to Fraser to rejoin the friends I've been travelling with."

"Yes," said Frank again. "We met under rather curious circumstances, Richards. You dropped in, like a bolt from the blue, and rescued me from the Black Sack Gang. I needn't say how astonished I was to find that you were Frank Richards, the friend of my nephew Vere Beauclerc, at Cedar Creek. I have heard a good deal about you

and your cousin Bob Lawless. I understood that all three of you were at Cedar Creek, the backwoods school in the Thompson Valley."

"We were, until lately," said Frank, colouring.

He dropped his eyes. The explanation had to come, but he felt a strong inward shrinking from telling Vere Beauclerc's uncle in what circumstances he had left Cedar Creek School. But it would not be helped.

"You are a hundred miles from Cedar Creek now, and apparently quite by yourself," said Lord St. Austells. "I expected to make your acquaintance, my boy, when I arrived in the Thompson Valley, on the visit I intend to make to my brother. How is it that I find you here—far from your friends, and leading a life of hardship and danger?"

"I'm on my own now," said Frank. "I—I had to leave Cedar Creek—"

"But your uncle Mr. Lawless has not abandoned you?"

"Oh, no!" "I can only conclude," said his lordship gently, "that you have run away from home, Frank. You have followed some foolish impulse, and left your friends. Will you come back with me?"

"I—I can't!"

"You have quarrelled, perhaps?"

"No, no!" "I think you ought to tell me how matters stand," said Lord St. Austells quietly. "I shall be in the Thompson Valley in a few days, and naturally shall refer to the fact that I have met you up here in the mountains."

"I'll tell you," said Frank, his colour deepening. "You'll hear the story soon enough when you get to Thompson. I had to leave Cedar Creek. I—I was suspected—"

"Of what?" "Of—of—" Frank's voice faltered. "Miss Meadows, our schoolmistress, was robbed of a hundred and ten dollars."

"Richards!" "It was supposed that—that I—" Frank was crimson now. "I needn't tell you that it was a mistake; that I was innocent."

"I hope not," said Lord St. Austells, very gravely. "But surely you would not be condemned without the most complete evidence—"

"There was evidence," said Frank desperately. "The hundred-dollar bill was not found, but the ten-dollar bill was found—in my pocket."

"Oh!" "How it got there I don't know. Of course, the thief must have put it there," said Frank. "But I was turned out of Cedar Creek, and my uncle decided to send me away to Vancouver—"

"He believed you guilty?"

"Yes," said Frank, wincing. "Did no one believe in you?" asked Lord St. Austells, his grey, keen eyes fixed on Frank's crimson face.

"My friends did," said Frank. "Vere and Bob—they trusted me against all the evidence. Nobody else, I'm afraid."

Lord St. Austells smoked his cigar for a few minutes in silence. Frank sat quiet.

What was passing in his lordship's mind, he could not guess; but he felt that Lord St. Austells, a stranger to him, could scarcely accept his bare word that he was innocent. He had told his story frankly, and there was nothing more to be said. Lord St. Austells had to form his own opinion. Inside the smoke-room, the black-bearded man stood silent, listening, with a peculiar expression on his face.

Lord St. Austells spoke at last.

"That is why you will not come with me to the Thompson Valley?"

"Yes. It's impossible."

"Your uncle—"

"He believes me guilty," said Frank. "But he would keep me in his care; my father sent me out to Canada to be in his charge. But I can't accept anything from him—not unless he believes in me. And I can look after myself."

"If I had heard this story at Thompson, without having seen you, I think I should probably have taken your uncle's view," said Lord St. Austells.

"I—I suppose so."

"But I cannot forget that you risked your life to save me, a stranger," continued his lordship. "That was not the action of a dishonourable character. I believe in you, Richards. I think you have been the victim of a terrible mistake. And I must help you, somehow, to put matters right."

Frank shook his head sadly.



AN UNEXPECTED MEETING!

As Frank Richards quitted the post-office, he heard the clatter of hoofs, and turned towards the sunny road. Two youths were riding towards him whose faces he knew well. They were his old chums from Cedar Creek, Bob Lawless and Vere Beauclerc.

"I don't think it's possible," he said. "I left Cedar Creek with a stain on my name, and I can't return."

"I shall see, when I arrive at Thompson," said Lord St. Austells, with a smile. "At least, I may be able to convince your uncle, which will be a great step gained."

"But—" said Frank. He hesitated. "I—I don't want Mr. Lawless to know where I am. He would have me searched for, and he has authority to have me taken back. I am determined not to return unless my name is cleared!"

"I shall be discreet," said Lord St. Austells, with a nod. "You need fear nothing on that score. I leave this afternoon. And you will remain here?"

"No; I'm getting out of the mountains," answered Frank.

"You will write to me at Fraser, then, at the post-office, and keep in touch with me?"

"I'll be glad to!" said Frank.

"And I am going to ask a favour of you before we part," continued his lordship. "I have a great deal of money about me, and, after what has happened already, it is scarcely safe until I reach more settled regions. I wish you to take charge of a portion of it."

"Oh!" ejaculated Frank.

"I shall hand you bank-bills for five thousand dollars, which you will return to me later, when we meet again," said Lord St. Austells. "You, a boy, will not be suspected of carrying such a sum, and it will be safe if you keep it concealed. Do you agree?"

"Certainly!" said Frank. "I can put it into my belt, with my own money. But—"

"That is settled, then."

"But, after what I've told you," stammered Frank, "you—you're willing to trust me with a thousand pounds?"

Lord St. Austells smiled.

"Quite!"

"Oh, sir!"

Frank's face was very bright now.

"Come to my room, and I will place the money in your hands," said his lordship, rising. "We cannot be too careful in such matters!"

In the smoke-room, the black-bearded man trod away softly, silently, but rapidly. He was gone by the time Frank Richards and Lord St. Austells passed through the room into the house. Save for one casual glance in the street, Frank had not seen him, and he little dreamed how near to him had been the captain of the Black Sack Gang.

"I guess it's O.K."

It was the black-bearded man who spoke, as he strode into the cabin where the three horsemen had stopped, in the rugged street of Gold Brick.

The three ruffians were sprawling about the room, smoking and playing poker, while they waited for the man who was evidently their leader.

"All serene, cap'n?" asked one of the gang.

"But I reckon I've got on to a soft cinch, all the same. I heard them talking. The kid's staying in Gold Brick after the pesky nobleman goes, and he's leaving later—on his own."

"I guess I'd like to drive lead into him, cap'n, for the trick he played us, but I reckon he ain't worth our trouble."

"You haven't heard it all yet, Red Pete. His lordship is handing him his money to take care of, in case the Black Sacks drop down on him again. He reckons it won't be suspected that a schoolboy kid has got five thousand dollars hidden about his duds."

The trio of ruffians leaped to their feet as if electrified.

"Five thousand dollars!" exclaimed Red Pete.

"Sure!"

"By Jerusalem!"

"I heard them talking it over," said the captain coolly. "And I reckon we can afford to let his lordship slide, and keep our eye on the kid. He's going to pay for butting into our game and getting the Jim-dandy out of our hands, and it's worth five thousand dollars to us. He hasn't done with the Black Sacks yet."

The 2nd Chapter. In Direst Peril!

"Good-bye, Frank!"

"Good-bye, sir!"

The time had come for parting between the two who had met so strangely in the wilds of the Cascade Mountains of British Columbia.

Lord St. Austells would gladly have taken Frank Richards with him, but that the wandering schoolboy steadily refused.

His lordship was bound for Thompson, and Frank was determined that he never would set his foot in the valley again until his name was cleared.

Frank had resolved to stay for a couple of days longer at Gold Brick. He had lost his horse in the adventure with the Black Sacks, and he had to buy another, and he was in no hurry to take the trail again; his time was his own for the present.

But Lord St. Austells was anxious to rejoin the party of his friends who had gone on to Fraser. His lordship

started from Gold Brick in a buggy, with a party of miners who were going on the same trail. His narrow escape from the Black Sack Gang had taught him caution.

Frank Richards waved him good-bye as the buggy and the horsemen vanished down the rugged trail.

Deep in thought, Frank Richards passed the lumber hotel, and walked on up the rugged street of Gold Brick.

At a quarter of a mile from the hotel the street ended in a hoof-printed trail, winding away into the foothills.

Miners' cabins were dotted here and there, and rough shacks and zinc sheds; but the farther the schoolboy went, the fewer grew the buildings, and, ahead of him at last were the bare hill-slopes.

There Frank Richards turned to

(Continued overleaf.)

walk back. He came almost face to face, as he turned, with a thickset, squat man, whose harsh face was adorned by a red beard and moustaches. Frank glanced at the man, realising by a sort of instinct that he was being watched.

His heart beat faster. He remembered the Black Sack Gang. When the rustlers had removed the disguising black sacks they wore on the trail, there was nothing to prevent them from walking the street of Gold Brick unsuspected. Something cautious and watchful in the red-faced man's look warned Frank that the fellow had been following him.

With a quick glance, too, he noted a black bruise on the man's forehead under the rim of the Stetson hat. He wondered whether this was the ruffian he had stunned with a clubbed revolver in the fight at the rustler's retreat in the hills.

Although now outside the mining camp, Frank was in full sight of the street, and he felt that he was too near the camp for the ruffian to attempt open hostility, if his intentions were really hostile.

He walked back into Gold Brick, keeping a very wary eye open in the direction of Red Pete, without appearing to do so.

He was not surprised when the ruffian swung round and followed him back into the town.

Frank passed into the Gold Brick Hotel, and Red Pete dived into the bar, and called for a drink.

From the veranda, a few minutes later, Frank saw him loaf away to a cabin a stone's-throw distant—the cabin where he had seen the four horsemen stop that morning.

He joined the black-bearded man in the doorway, and they went in together.

Frank Richards stood very still in the pinewood veranda, thinking hard.

His suspicions were more than aroused now.

The red-faced man had been following and watching him; he was assured of that. If he had gone far beyond the limits of the town he would have been attacked, if his suspicions were well-founded. The only conclusion was that the four horsemen he had seen were members of the Black Sack Gang—undisguised now. What did they want?

Lord St. Austells was gone, and as they had not followed him, it seemed pretty clear that they had given up their design of kidnapping the English nobleman and holding him to ransom.

Frank had baffled them in that design once, and they were not renewing it, though pretty certainly they would have done so if his lordship had ridden alone out of Gold Brick.

Now they were hanging on in the camp, and watching Frank Richards. Was their object simply revenge for the defeat he had inflicted on them?

Whatever their object might be, Frank realised that he had to be very wary.

Fastened up in his belt were his own four hundred dollars and the five thousand dollars in bank-bills that Lord St. Austells had entrusted to his keeping.

At the bare thought of losing that sum of money Frank felt a sinking of the heart.

Lord St. Austells had shown his firm faith in him by entrusting the dollars to his charge; but if the money was lost, what might not the earl think in that case?

Frank set his teeth. If the Black Sack Gang succeeded in getting their piffling hands on Lord St. Austells' money, it would not be while Frank Richards was alive to defend it.

But it was necessary to be sure beyond the shadow of a doubt that his enemies had ventured to follow him into the camp, and that they were on the watch.

After thinking the matter out, Frank descended the steps of the veranda, and walked up the street, passing before the door of Red Pete's cabin.

He walked on to the end of the street, and stopped to look on where a perspiring man in shirtsleeves was nailing corrugated iron on a shack in course of erection.

While he watched carelessly the building operations, he glanced back along the street with the tail of his eye, as it were.

The black-bearded man had emerged from the cabin, and was strolling towards him, smoking a cigar.

He did not pass Frank, but stopped to look on at the building, as if interested in the operations.

Frank remained there ten minutes or more, and the black-bearded man remained at a little distance, smoking one cigar and then another.

Frank walked back into the camp.

The black-bearded man walked back also.

Frank went into the lumber hotel, satisfied now that his suspicions had not led him astray.

He was watched—and he had four enemies to deal with, for evidently the four in the cabin were the same gang.

He had intended to buy a horse in the camp, and ride out of Gold Brick in a day or two openly on the trail. That plan was abandoned now. He knew that as soon as he quitted the camp the Black Sacks would ride after him, and once out on the lonely trails, he would be at their mercy.

He thought of visiting the sheriff, but gave up that idea. He had no proof to offer that the men in Red Pete's cabin were the rustlers who on the mountain trails disguised themselves with black sacks and held up hapless passengers.

The landlord of the Gold Brick Hotel came into the veranda to smoke a pipe as the sun went down, and Frank talked to him for a time, and learned what he could of the cabin down the street and its occupants.

It belonged to Red Pete, who was generally absent "prospecting" in the mountains. The other men there were his comrades, and also prospectors.

Sometimes they brought in "dust" to sell at the store, and sometimes a horse to sell, and the landlord winked as he made that statement, implying that Red Pete & Co. were not particular where they obtained a horse when they sold it.

They were a rough crowd, the landlord informed him, and better kept clear of; but evidently he had no suspicion that they were connected with the Black Sack Gang.

Generally when they were in camp they were good customers at the bar-room of the Gold Brick, and sometimes the sheriff had had to deal with them for kicking up shindies. That was all the landlord knew or cared to tell.

But it was enough for Frank. He was aware of the kind of prospecting that Red Pete & Co. did in the mountains.

As the sun sank lower, the landlord went to his business, and Frank was left alone to think out his problem.

His enemies were close at hand, and what their next move might be he could not guess. But he knew that the night before him would be one of terrible peril.

The 3rd Chapter.

A Night of Terror!

Frank Richards retired to his room that night at an early hour.

He had glanced into the bar-room and seen the black-bearded man there, with Red Pete and two other companions. They were playing poker at a table in the corner, and smoking and drinking, and apparently had settled down till closing-time.

But when Frank glanced in again later, he noted that one place at the poker-table was vacant. Red Pete had gone out.

In his room at the back of the lumber building Frank fastened the bolt of the door, and set down his candle.

There was one window to the room—innocent of glass, which was an unknown luxury in the windows at Gold Brick.

It was closed by a wooden shutter that fastened with a bolt, and it was about five feet from the ground. Forcing the window would have been child's play to anyone operating from outside.

Was that the intention of the rustlers?

He knew that they were on the watch, and that he could not leave the hotel without being observed. He looked from the window into the dim moonlight on the waste ground behind the building.

If he had stepped from the window, he knew that a bullet might have sped from the shadows. It was not only his money-belt, but his life that was sought by the revengeful rustlers, he was assured of that.

He fastened the window-shutter, and sat down on the plank-bed to think. The bed was of a primitive kind—a plank with a couple of blankets on it, and a sack of straw for a pillow.

To sleep was out of the question, and Frank shivered at the thought that he would have turned in to sleep without misgiving but for the discovery he had made that afternoon.

He extinguished his candle at last, as the thought came to him that he might be watched through some chink in the rough pine shutters.

That there were plenty of chinks was evident, for as soon as the candle was out glimmers of moonlight showed at the window.

Frank rolled up his own blanket and

placed it, with his wallet, in the bed under the two blankets there, arranging the whole to look like the form of a sleeper.

Then he retired into the furthest corner of the room, and sat on the pinewood stool that was almost the only other article of furniture.

He sat and waited. The hour grew later, but the suppressed excitement in his breast banished all desire for sleep.

The din from the bar-room grew fainter, and at last ceased altogether, and there was a sound of shutting and barring doors.

The lumber hotel had closed for the night.

Still Frank Richards waited, wrapped in darkness, with his revolver in his hand resting on his knee.

Faint sounds came through the night—the deep snore of some fellow-guest in an adjoining room, the howl of a hungry dog looking for garbage in the waste ground by the building.

Frank started suddenly, with a thrill at his heart.

Outside his shuttered window came a faint but unmistakable sound—that of a cautious footfall.

He had not been mistaken.

The Black Sacks knew which room he occupied. They had ascertained that during the day, and now that the place was sleeping they had come.

His heart throbbed at the thought that four desperate ruffians were lurking without in the shadows, and that only the frail pine shutter separated him from their vengeance.

But his hand was firm upon the butt of his revolver. He was not sleeping, as they believed; he was wakeful and ready.

He made no sound, but listened intently.

There was a movement of the shutter at last.

His eyes had long grown accustomed to the dimness. He caught the glimmer of a broad blade thrust in to force the clumsy wooden bolt that secured the shutters.

Creak!

The sound would not have awakened him if he had been sleeping; but now, to his straining ears, it seemed almost like thunder in the dead stillness of the room.

Creak!

Cra-a-ck!

The shutter swung softly open.

Faint moonlight streamed in at the opening, and fell across the plank bed.

But it did not reach Frank, in the further corner, where he sat in deep shadow.

A Stetson hat showed up, shadowy, in the opening, and two glittering eyes looked into the room. Dim as the light was, Frank made out the black beard of the man he suspected to be the captain of the Black Sack Gang.

"All O.K., cap'n" came a faint, husky whisper from behind.

"I guess so, Pete."

"He's thar?"

"I can see him in the bed."

"Good!"

Frank Richards smiled grimly. The black-bearded man made out the outlines of the dummy sleeper in the bed, and he was satisfied.

His arms came over the pinewood window-frame, and he climbed quietly in—very quietly for a man of his bulk. The pinewood creaked, and that was all.

Beyond him, Frank caught glimpses of three fierce faces, with eyes that caught the moonlight and glittered.

Frank drew a deep breath. Still unseen, he raised his revolver, and the muzzle bore full upon the black-bearded man as he climbed in.

The ruffian stepped into the room.

There was a knife in his hand that gave a cold, ghastly glistening as the moonlight caught it. The rascal made one step towards the bed. At the same moment Frank Richards pulled trigger, aiming low.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

He pumped out four bullets in as many seconds.

There was a fearful yell in the silence of the night, and the crash of a heavy fall, as the black-bearded man went down, his legs riddled with bullets.

The firing and the yelling of the wounded man rang through the lumber hotel from end to end.

Outside the open window there was a buzz of startled and confused voices.

"He's awake—"

"Captain—"

"By thunder—"

As the black-bearded man lay groaning on the floor, Frank turned his revolver upon the open window, and fired twice again, rapidly.

Crack! Crack!

A shrill howl answered the shots, and there was a trample of retreating feet. Three startled ruffians had fled, one of them wounded. The

lumber hotel was alarmed now—voices were shouting on all sides. It was time for the Black Sacks to flee. But there was one who could not flee—the black-bearded man, who lay crippled on the floor, unable to move. There was a crash at Frank's door, and the voice of the landlord roared to him:

"Say, what's this game? Let me in!"

Frank threw open the door hastily.

The landlord strode in, with a lamp in his hand, and five or six half-dressed guests of the hotel, mostly with weapons in their hands, crowded behind him. Frank hastily flung the window-shutter close. With a light in the room he was exposed to fire from without; and the next minute proved that his precaution was well taken. From the night came the ringing of a revolver, and a bullet crashed on the shutter.

"Waal, carry me home to die!" ejaculated the landlord, as he stared at the wounded man on the floor.

"What's this jamboree, young man?"

"You can see," answered Frank quietly. "He came in at the window with a knife in his hand—"

"By Jerusalem!"

"I believe he is the captain of the Black Sack Gang," went on Frank, "but, anyhow, you can see what he intended."

"By gum, that's clear enough! It's Black Jack Sanders!" said the landlord, staring down at the wretch at his feet. "I guess he was a bad egg—a real bad egg! But he's got the medicine he wanted now."

There was a deep groan from the black-bearded man. He turned a savage glare upon Frank Richards, and made a feeble motion towards the revolver in his belt. The landlord kicked his feeble hand back without ceremony.

"I guess not," he said. "Hyer, you, Bill, you go and wake up the sheriff. I calculate this is his business."

There was a crash of another bullet on the shutter. It was the last word of the Black Sack Gang. While Black Jack Sanders lay crippled and a prisoner in the camp calaboose, his three comrades dragged out their horses and rode away at top speed into the mountains to save their necks.

The 4th Chapter.

Old Chums!

It was some days later that Frank Richards quitted Gold Brick.

He was safe now from his foes; the captain of the Black Sacks was in safe keeping, and his comrades were many a long mile from the place. They were known now, and they were not likely to venture again within a day's ride of the camp.

Frank Richards, with a new horse and a light heart, rode out of Gold Brick on the southern trail, with Lord St. Austells' five thousand dollars safe in his belt.

Every mile that he placed between himself and the wild foothills increased his satisfaction.

He was glad enough when he reached the settlements again, where law and order reigned, and it was no longer necessary to go "heeled."

He had had good luck, upon the whole, at the diggings in the foothills, but he was glad to see the last of them.

He was anxious, too, to be rid of the large sum of money that he carried in his belt; it was a weight upon his mind so long as it was in his keeping. As soon as he "struck" a railroad town Frank stopped at the post-office, and thence he dispatched a letter to Fraser to the address Lord St. Austells had given him. In that letter was a draft for the five thousand dollars, and Frank was glad to see it go.

He gave his own address as "Post-Office, Albert Station," and put up at a cheap lodging to wait for Lord St. Austells' reply.

It was not long in coming. Frank called every day at the post-office for letters, and at last there was one for him.

It was from his lordship, and Frank Richards read it with considerable interest. It ran:

"Fraser, Continental Hotel.

"My Dear Richards,—I received your letter to-day, enclosing the draft for five thousand dollars.

I am very glad to hear that you are safe and sound, and that the money I placed in your keeping did not lead you into any danger."

Frank Richards grinned over this line. He had not related in his letter to Lord St. Austells any of the happenings at Gold Brick after his lordship had left. The letter continued:

"I am glad, too, that you have left the mountains, and are now in safer and more civilised quarters. I hope you will remain where you are until you hear further from me.

"Now I am going to make a confession. Although I believed every word of the story you told me in the hotel at Gold Brick, I felt that it was necessary to have some indisputable proof. That proof I have now obtained. The five thousand dollars I left with you was not placed in your hands merely for safe keeping—though doubtless it was safer with you than with me while I was in the mountains. I had another object.

"You were suspected at Cedar Creek of purloining the hundred dollars that were missing. I have now proof that you are incapable of taking a much larger sum. You were quite at liberty, if you had chosen, to keep the five thousand dollars I left with you. You have returned it to me of your own accord.

"I am going on from here to Thompson, and I shall call at once upon your uncle at the Lawless Ranch, show him your letter, and tell him what I know of you.

"I think this should have the effect of convincing him that you are incapable of the action attributed to you, and that a terrible mistake has been made. This will be the first step towards proving your innocence. When Mr. Lawless is convinced that you have been sinned against instead of sinning, he will certainly take measures to clear your name. At all events, we must hope for the best.

"I shall write again from Thompson as soon as I can.

"With kindest regards,

"ST. AUSTELLS."

Frank Richards read that letter over twice, sitting in the sunshine at Albert Station, with trains shunting on the track before him. His brow was wrinkled with thought as he read, but there was a new light in his eyes. It had not even occurred to him that Lord St. Austells, in placing the large sum of money in his hands, had been putting him to the test.

But he had been put to the test, and he had not failed. He had been weighed in the balance, and had not been found wanting.

Frank Richards was not out of the wood yet, but he felt that the clouds were lifting.

After thinking the matter out he determined to remain at Albert Station until he heard again from Lord St. Austells. His money was diminishing, and he looked for a job on the railway to keep him going while he waited. "Doing the chores" at a rough siding on the Canadian Pacific railroad was a hard life; but Frank was glad to be taken on, and he did the "chores" industriously and conscientiously. And every day he called at the post-office for the expected letter.

The letter did not come. But one day, as Frank quitted the post-office, he heard the clatter of hoofs, and looked along the sunny street. And his heart leaped. Two youths were riding up the street whose faces he well knew. They caught sight of him at the same moment.

"Frank!"

"Bob!" gasped Frank Richards.

"Beauclerc!"

"Franky! Hurrah!" roared Bob

Lawless.

The next moment the two riders had leaped from their saddles and rushed at him, and Frank Richards was fairly hugged on the sunny sidewalk, under the eyes of a dozen astonished citizens of Albert Station. His old chums had found him at last.

THE END.

"DON'T GO TO LONDON, LAD!"



Buy your copy of this week's greatly enlarged issue of the "BOYS' HERALD" to-morrow, and start reading this powerful and original new story of a Lancashire Mill Lad's craving for the Lights of London. You'll find many other fine stories as well in the

BOYS' HERALD

GREATLY ENLARGED. PRICE 2d.
Out on Tuesday, June 28th.