

"ALL SQUARE!" A Tale of the Wild West, by Gordon Wallace, in This Issue!

# The BOYS' FRIEND 2a

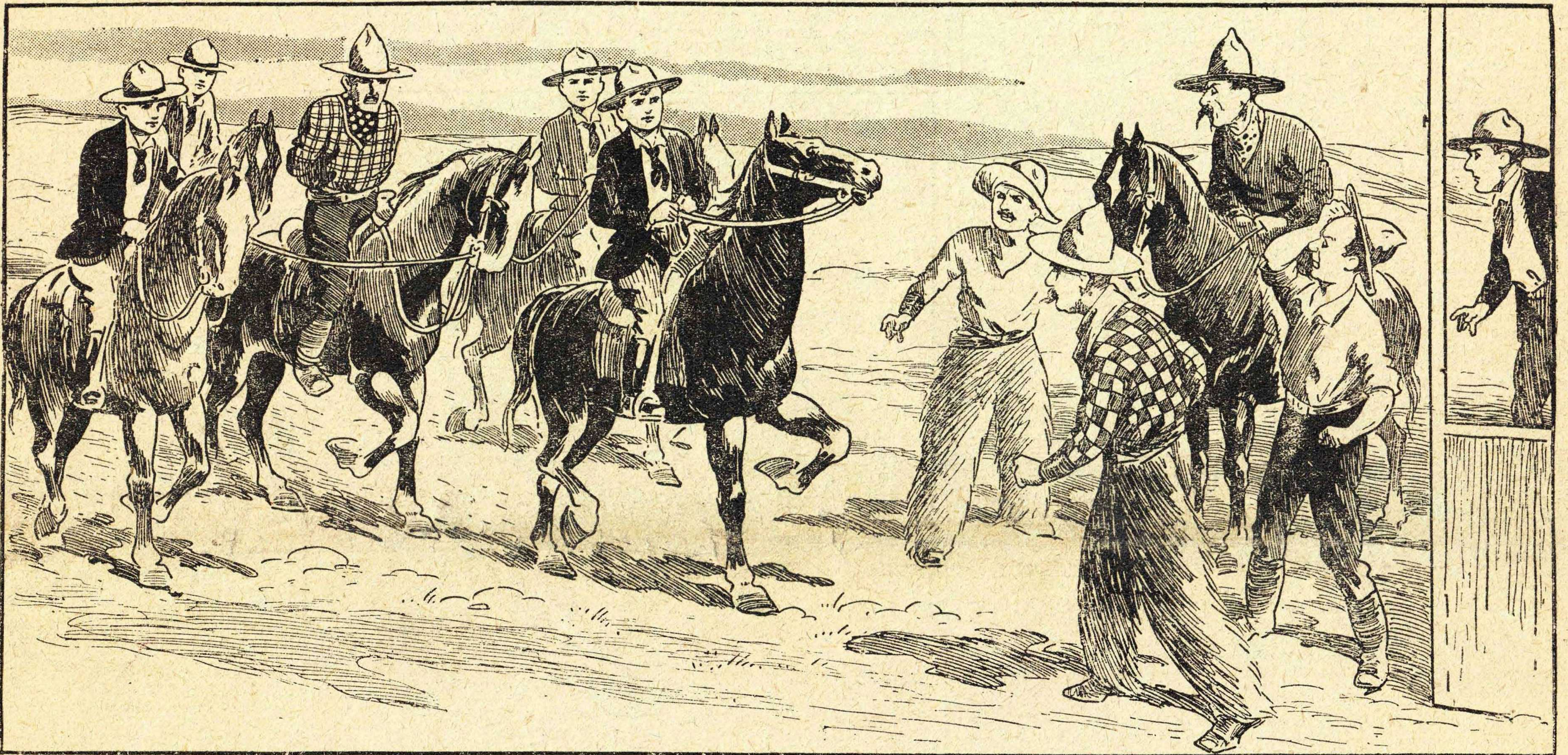
SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending May 5th, 1923.]

## The 'Tenderfeet' Make Good! -- BY -- OWEN CONQUEST.



### A SURPRISE FOR THE COWBOYS!

There was a roar from the cowpunchers as the Rookwood cavalcade rode up. "Pequod, the horse-thief! They've got him!" cried Pete Peters in astonishment. "Young Silver's riding Blazer!" yelled Skitter Dick. "Bravo, tenderfeet!"

#### The 1st Chapter. Exasperating!

Mr. Hudson Smedley looked keenly, and rather suspiciously, at Jimmy Silver & Co., his guests at the Windy River Ranch, in Alberta.

The four juniors were standing in a group on the ranch-house veranda, enjoying the morning sunshine, and talking quite busily, until the rancher came along.

They ceased suddenly as Rancher Smedley came into hearing.

Apparently the Rookwood chums had been discussing some matter that they did not care to confide to the Canadian rancher, and they coloured a little under his keen gaze.

"Well?" said Hudson Smedley.

"Lovely morning, isn't it, cousin Smedley?" said Jimmy Silver, with a rather embarrassed smile.

"I guess it is," assented the rancher.

"It's topping," said Arthur Edward Lovell.

"I'm sending a batch of steers away to Mosquito this morning," said Mr. Smedley. "If you kids would care to ride with the cowboys—"

"Oh!"

"Ah!"

"Um!"

Apparently Jimmy Silver & Co. didn't want to ride with the batch of steers to the township that morning. The rancher grinned.

"Something else on?" he asked.

"Well, you—you see—"

"I see," assented Hudson Smedley.

"I see more than you think, perhaps."

"Oh!"

"Hem!"

"Well, I guess you will find something to do while I'm gone," said the rancher good-humouredly. "So-long!"

Hudson Smedley swung out of the veranda with a smile on his sun-browned face. The juniors watched him mount his horse and ride out on the range. The horseman disappeared beyond the corrals, and Jimmy Silver & Co. resumed their interrupted discussion.

"Couldn't let Mr. Smedley know!" remarked Raby.

"No jolly fear!" said Newcome.

"I don't know whether he would chip in," said Jimmy Silver thoughtfully, "but he might. Anyhow, it's better with cousin Smedley off the scene. He mightn't like a scrap between his guest and one of his cowboys."

"We'll give him half an hour to get clear, as he's going to Mosquito," suggested Lovell.

"Good!"

The juniors chatted on the veranda. Jimmy Silver was not sorry to be resting. He was still feeling the effects, to some extent, of his fatigues of the previous day.

The Rookwood chums were enjoying their holiday "out West." But there were some drawbacks.

Every man on the ranch—even Mr. Smedley himself—seemed to be under the impression that the "tenderfeet" from the Old Country were as green as the greenest grass. Jimmy Silver & Co., fresh from school in England, were, of course, inexperienced in the ways of the West; but they were by no means the helpless greenhorns they were supposed to be.

More than one adventure had already fallen to their lot, and they had acquitted themselves creditably; but, to their surprise and indignation, they found themselves suspected of drawing the "long bow" in the account they had given of those happenings.

The long bow seemed to be a favourite instrument in the great West. They had already heard yarns among the cowpunchers, of which they certainly did not believe more than ten per cent. But it was rather exasperating to find their own veracious accounts subjected to the same discount.

It was not uncommon for a tenderfoot to seek to cover up his ignorance and inexperience by boasting. But Jimmy Silver & Co. were not that kind of tenderfeet—a fact which they wished to impress upon all at Windy River Ranch, from Hudson Smedley down to Kentuck, the youngest of the cowpunchers.

Pete Peters, the foreman of the ranch, came riding in from the plains, and dismounted at his cabin near the bunkhouse. The juniors left the veranda and intercepted Mr. Peters at his cabin door. The burly Canadian foreman gave them a nod and a grin.

"I guess I ain't found him," he said.

"Blazer?" asked Jimmy.

"Yep. That horse has gone for good, I reckon."

"We're going to find him," said Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pete Peters.

The Windy River foreman seemed immensely tickled by the idea of the

tenderfeet finding a lost horse on the boundless prairie. He laid back his head and roared.

"What's the joke?" demanded Lovell warmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, you'll see!" snapped Lovell.

"But never mind Blazer now. Where's Kentuck?"

"You want Kentuck?" asked Mr. Peters, still grinning.

"I've got a scrap on with him," explained Jimmy Silver. "I punched him yesterday, and I'm going to fight him to-day. Of course I don't want to butt in when he's at work. I only want to speak to him now, and fix it up. I haven't seen him about the ranch this morning."

"I guess I catch on!" assented the grinning foreman. "That's why the boss was pertickler to take Kentuck with him this morning to Mosquito, I guess."

"Oh, my hat!"

"I reckon Mr. Smedley figgered it out what you was up to," said Mr. Peters, "and he didn't want you chawed up by a wild man from Kentucky."

"Do you think that lanky bounder could chaw me up?" demanded Jimmy Silver indignantly.

"Sure!"

"Well, you'll see differently later on. I suppose it's off for to-day, as he's gone to Mosquito," said Jimmy.

"Never mind, Kentuck will keep. Now, Mr. Peters, we're going out."

"Don't go out of sight of the chimney-stack," warned the foreman.

"You'll get lost, sure!"

"We're going to hunt for Blazer."

"Ha, ha, ha."

"Blazer ran away with me yesterday," continued Jimmy Silver. "He landed me in the foothills and dodged away there. A Blackfoot Indian pulled me out of the creek that Blazer pitched me into—"

Pete Peters held up his hand. "You're new here," he said, "but bust me if you don't spin a yarn as tall as the oldest hand in Alberta. How did you pick it up?"

Jimmy Silver eyed him. He had punched Kentuck for giving him the lie; but it was not feasible to punch the huge and muscular Mr. Peters, who towered over him. But Jimmy did not want to punch Mr. Peters. The foreman's scepticism was quite good-natured. He had been, as he had said, "raised on tall stories," and he was in the habit of believing about a tenth of what he heard in the way of personal exploits. Which, as a rule, was quite judicious of Mr. Peters, though a mistake in this particular case.

"Well, I'm not going to let Mr. Smedley lose a valuable horse," said Jimmy. "I'm going to ride to the foothills to-day and hunt for him."

"Pile it on!" said Mr. Peters.

"Oh, rats!"

"You see, sonny, you lay it on too thick," said Mr. Peters. "First day here you spin a yarn of meeting Pequod le Couteau on the prairie, and getting the better of the darndest horse-thief in the West—"

"So we did!" roared Lovell.

"Then you spin us a yarn of riding Blazer—the wildest horse on the ranch—as far as the foothills, and legging it twenty miles home, after

(Continued overleaf.)



# The Tenderfeet Make Good!

By Owen Coquest

(Continued from previous page.)

a statue on his horse. They saluted the cowpuncher in passing, and Spike waved his big Stetson hat. Then he suddenly galloped after them.

"Hello, you 'uns!" he shouted.

"Hallo!" called back Jimmy.

"Where are you 'uns bound?"

"Hunting Blazer!"

"Oh, Jerusalem crickets! Say, hadn't you better go home and fish in the crick?"

"Rats!"

"You reckon you're going to find Blazer?" roared Spike.

"Yes."

"Oh, holy smoke! Ha, ha, ha!"

Spike's roar of merriment rang in the ears of the juniors as they galloped on. Their ears were pink.

"Silly ass!" said Lovell.

"We'll show 'em somehow!" said Newcome.

"Sure!" said Lovell, who prided himself on already speaking the language of the country. "Some!"

Mile after mile vanished under the galloping hoofs, and the great mountains drew visibly nearer. The low line of the foothills was quite close at hand now, and Jimmy Silver scanned them keenly, seeking for the opening of the valley into which Blazer had carried him the previous day. Nobody on the Windy River Ranch would have supposed the "kid tenderfoot" capable of finding his way on the boundless prairie. But Jimmy was an observant fellow, and he was not at a loss. The sight of a slender stream trickling across the plain was a guide to him.

"Follow the creek!" he called out.

The quartet rode up the rough bank of the creek, and soon afterwards they were in the valley, with the pine-clad hillsides stretching to right and left. Up in the valley the creek was deeper and wider, and here and there its descending course was marked by foaming cascades. Jimmy Silver drew rein at last on the very spot where Blazer had pitched him into the stream the day before.

"This is the place where I was ducked," he said.

"And where's the giddy savage who pulled you out?" grinned Lovell.

"I know where to find his hut," said Jimmy. "I kept my eyes open yesterday. If he's at home it's all right."

"Lead on, Macduff!"

"Dismount here!"

The juniors alighted, and led their horses through the pinewoods. Under a great cliff they found the skin tepee of the Indian hunter. And to Jimmy's satisfaction, they found Cloudy Face, the Blackfoot, sitting on a boulder outside the wigwam, engaged in skinning an antelope.

The Blackfoot looked up, and evidently recognised Jimmy Silver. He gave a brief nod.

"That the chap?" asked Lovell, eyeing the red man curiously.

"That's the chap."

Jimmy raised his Stetson hat politely to the Blackfoot. Cloudy Face was plying his keen knife on the antelope without interruption.

"I've come to see you, Cloudy Face," began Jimmy.

"The little white man and his brothers are welcome to the lodge of the Blackfoot."

"Oh, good!" murmured Lovell, much taken by the red man's stately mode of speech. He decided to answer in the same exalted strain.

"We are honoured by the welcome of the great Blackfoot chief."

"We want you to help us, Cloudy Face," said Jimmy. "We've come to hunt for the horse that stranded me here yesterday. You can follow a horse's trail."

"The Blackfoot made a lofty gesture. "Cloudy Face is a great hunter," he said. "He can follow the trail of the west wind on the mountains."

"Some trailer, then!" murmured Lovell.

"Well, will you help us hunt down Blazer?" asked Jimmy Silver.

The Blackfoot eyed him thoughtfully.

"The Blackfoot is a hunter," he said. "He has been away from his lodges for many moons, and his warriors look for his return. But the Blackfoot will serve the little white chief. What you give Blackfoot?"

The last question was scarcely in accordance with the great chief's lofty mode of address. It was evident that the warrior was a business man as well as a hunter.

"Ten dollars!" said Jimmy Silver.

The Blackfoot considered, and then shook his head. How long the task might prove, and what the worth of it might be, Jimmy Silver had no idea, and he had spoken at a venture.

"Twenty!" said Cloudy Face.

"It's worth it if we find the horse," said Raby. "I heard Peters say it was worth two hundred dollars."

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"I agree!" he said. "Point out the horse to us, Cloudy Face, and it's twenty dollars!"

"I have spoken!" said the Blackfoot, with dignity.

He rose from the boulder and lifted the carcass of the antelope into the tepee, closing the entrance with a great rock. In a very few minutes the Indian's preparations were completed. He slung on his rifle and made a movement to start. The juniors followed him back to the bank of the mountain creek.

Without a word the Blackfoot began to make an examination of the stony soil, the juniors watching him curiously.

They had heard and read a great deal of the skill of the red men in picking up a trail, and it was interesting enough to watch the

"What a long-winded way of saying yes!" murmured Lovell; and Raby and Newcome grinned.

The Indian kept on, and the riders followed. The trail—unseen by the juniors, but plain as the print in a book to the eyes of the Indian hunter—turned northward away from the hills again, and then again turned westward. Possibly Blazer, in his flight, had known by some instinct that by keeping on across the open plains to the east he would land himself at the ranch again and be recaptured. The present trail led towards the foothills, approaching them at a spot five or six miles from the creek valley.

Jimmy Silver & Co. were more than ready for lunch by that time, for it was long past noon. But they did not wish to stop. They helped themselves from the buckskin bags, and ate while they rode. Cloudy Face, untrifling, without a single halt, loped on ahead.

"The giddy gee-gee went into the hills again, at this rate," remarked Lovell, as the juniors found themselves riding up a grassy valley.

"Looks like it," said Jimmy.

The Blackfoot halted at a pool of clear water. The juniors stopped, also, and waited for him to speak.

"Horse stop here," said the Blackfoot. "Sleep at night."



**DESPERATE MEASURES!** Jimmy Silver's club caught Pequod le Couteau full in the face and, with a shrill scream, he toppled off the branch and went whirling to the ground.

Blackfoot at work. So far as Jimmy Silver & Co. could see, there was no trace of Blazer to be discovered. The ground showed faint tracks here and there, but these were made by the Rookwooders' horses. But the Blackfoot was evidently at no loss, for after a few minutes he started down the bank of the creek at a steady, loping trot. The juniors mounted their horses to follow him.

The Blackfoot led them out of the valley into the prairie without a halt.

"I say, he's jolly clever if he's on the right track!" said Lovell in a low voice. "Blessed if I can see anything to follow!"

"Same here!" said Raby.

"And the track he's following is twenty-four hours old, too!" said Newcome. "I—I suppose he isn't stuffing us, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver shook his head. "I'm sure not!" he answered.

The foothills were left behind, and the tireless Indian continued to trot over the plain, his eyes on the ground before him. The horses had occasionally to break into a trot to keep pace with him. Three miles were covered in almost a direct line towards the distant Windy River. Then the Blackfoot, turning suddenly, set his face towards the hills again. Jimmy spurred nearer to his guide.

"The horse turned back to the hills?" he asked.

"My little brother speaks the truth."

## The 3rd Chapter. Tracked Down!

Jimmy Silver & Co. followed the Blackfoot, with interest growing keener and more eager. How long the missing horse had remained on that spot they did not know, but they felt that they were closer on the track now. It had really been a great idea to call on the services of the Blackfoot; without his skillful aid the juniors certainly never would have approached anywhere near the elusive Blazer. They might have searched through Alberta from Mackenzie to the "Line" without getting any "forrarder," and they were aware of it. They were hoping for success now, and it was very agreeable to picture the astonishing at the Windy River Ranch when they should ride in leading the recaptured Blazer.

The valley they were following narrowed to a mere rocky gorge. The juniors were compelled to dismount and lead their horses. On the rocky soil, they wondered that the Blackfoot could find any sign to guide him; but their guide, though moving more slowly now, did not halt. He had not stopped since leaving the pool in the valley, a mile behind. Arthur Edward Lovell began to wear a doubtful expression.

"It's jolly odd for a horse to follow a way like this, isn't it?" he murmured. "A horse would naturally look for grass. He might clear off the plains, because he would know the cowpunchers would look for him there. But why—"

The Blackfoot glanced round. There was the faintest trace of a smile on his bronze face.

Evidently his hearing was remarkably keen, and he had caught Lovell's muttered words.

"Horse run away from white man," he said.

"What?"

"White man follow horse."

"Oh!" exclaimed Lovell. "You mean the chap whose tracks you found by the pool was after Blazer?"

The Blackfoot nodded.

"Following him on foot?" asked Jimmy.

"Another nod."

"I see. Keep on."

The juniors understood, but they were a little puzzled. The sign had told the Blackfoot that some man wearing boots, and therefore not an Indian, had come on the horse resting at the pool. The man had attempted to get hold of the horse, and followed him in his flight up the gorge. Blazer's flight up that rocky way was explained if there were someone on his track, trying to rope him in. But who could the stranger be? It was uncommon enough for a white man to be stranded in the country without a horse. Any man belonging to the Windy River or a neighbouring ranch would naturally have been mounted.

"Some dashed tramp, perhaps!" said Lovell. "A 'hobo,' they would call him here. He was on foot, and thought he would like to get a mount for nothing. We'll jolly soon put a stopper on him if we come across him!"

"Yes, rather!" said Jimmy Silver emphatically.

The gorge narrowed still more, so that it was not easy to walk beside a led horse. But suddenly it opened out in front of the party into a wide, green, verdant valley. It was what is called a "locked" valley, shut in on all sides by steep hills. So far as the juniors could see, there was only one entrance to the valley—the narrow gorge by which they had arrived. The locked valley looked about half a mile in extent each way, and in the distance a lake glimmered in the sun, fed by a stream that tumbled down the hill-side.

"My hat! What a lovely spot!" exclaimed Lovell breathlessly. "Who'd have thought of hitting on a little Eden like this in the very heart of these stony hills?"

"If Blazer's there, we've got him," said Raby confidently. "There's only this way of getting out. We can watch that he doesn't give us the slip here."

"But is he here at all?" murmured Newcome.

Cloudy Face halted at the end of the rocky gorge. He raised an arm to point down into the locked valley.

"You see?" he said briefly.

The juniors eagerly followed the direction pointed out by the Blackfoot. Across the green valley, near the lake, they caught sight of a moving figure—the figure of a quadruped. It was a horse, contentedly



Jimmy gave Arthur Edward Lovell an expressive look.

"I haven't time to punch your silly head now!" he said, breathing hard.

"Look here—"

"Shut up, Lovell, old chap!" said Raby. "What's happened, Jimmy?"

Jimmy Silver hurriedly explained.

"Phew!" murmured Lovell.

"Well, I suppose you couldn't help it, Jimmy."

"Of course I couldn't, fathead! I was jolly lucky to get away alive!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"If I'd been there—"

"Lucky you weren't! I shouldn't like to see you stuck like a pig, silly as you are!"

"Look here—"

"Oh, dry up, Lovell!" said Jimmy crossly. "The question is, what's going to be done? We could clear off now, while that brute is busy with Blazer, but—"

"But we're not going to," said Lovell. "We don't want to be grinn'd to death at the ranch."

"There's four of us," said Newcome. "Four fellows can handle even a ruffian like that half-breed."

"If you fellows are game—" said Jimmy.

"Oh, we're game!"

"Yes, rather!" said Lovell emphatically.

"Then we'll fight it out with the rascal," said Jimmy Silver. "I wish to goodness we had a gun! Anyhow, we're not giving him hest. He thinks I'm alone here after that confounded horse. And, of course, he thinks he has nothing to fear from a schoolboy. We're going to tackle the rotter and down him. And if we get the best of him we'll make him a prisoner and hand him over to the police. He can be charged with attempted murder as well as stealing a horse."

"Let's get after him now!" said Lovell, at once.

Jimmy shook his head.

"We've got to be careful," he said. "It's no good making out that we can handle a desperado like that easily, because we can't do it."

"Four of us—"

"There wouldn't be more than two or three of us after a fight with knives with that murderous villain."

"Well, what's the idea, then?" asked Lovell. "We're jolly well not letting him get away with Blazer, I know that!"

Jimmy, keeping in cover of the rocks, stared back into the locked valley. The shadows were deepening into darkness, and there was no sign to be seen of the half-breed now.

"I've thought it out," said Jimmy. "If he tries to leave the valley with the horses he will have to come through this gorge. If we stop here we shall stop him, with the advantage on our side. We can cut cudgels with our knives, and rush him all at once, with a jolly good chance of downing him."

"That's so. But suppose he stays where he is? He's not likely to start travelling at nightfall."

"If he stays in the valley we shall find it out, and we'll get at him somehow when he's camped. He won't be looking for an attack, thinking that he has only a schoolboy to deal with. If he thinks about me at all he will suppose I am legging it as fast as I can. We've got to wait and watch."

"I'd rather go for the rotter!" grunted Lovell.

"Fathead!"

That was all the reply Jimmy Silver deigned to make. Lovell gave a snort, but he acquiesced, and on reflection—which always came rather late with Arthur Edward Lovell—he admitted that Jimmy's plan was the best. With the odds against him the half-breed might have been overcome in a fierce fight with deadly weapons, but it was pretty certain that success would have to be purchased with the lives of one or two of the Rookwood party. It was evidently a case for strategy, so long as strategy was possible.

The juniors concealed the three horses in a narrow ravine, and tethered them there. Then they cut thick cudgels from the trees for use as weapons when the struggle came. By that time it was deep night, and the stars were glimmering over the foothills and the waving pines. In the narrow gorge the four Rookwooders watched and waited, ready to tackle the half-breed if he came.

But, as Lovell had said, it was unlikely that the ruffian would take the trail at nightfall. If he came up the gorge with the horses, ignorant of an ambush, it would be easy enough to rush him and beat him down with the cudgels before he even saw them in the gloom. But their task was not to be so easy as that.

They watched and waited, and

suddenly from the darkness of the locked valley, there came a ruddy gleam of light.

"That's a camp-fire!" said Raby.

Jimmy nodded.

"It's Pequod's camp," he said.

"He's lighted a camp-fire. That means that he's camping there for the night."

"Let's go—" began Lovell.

"Fathead!"

"Look here, Jimmy Silver—"

"Shut up, Lovell!" implored Raby. "Jimmy's leader. Besides, you know you're an ass!"

Lovell grunted.

"We'll wait till about midnight," said Jimmy quietly. "We've got a chance then of catching him off his guard, perhaps asleep! We don't want to come to knifing if we can help it."

And the juniors waited. They ate their supper in the dark, sitting on the boulders in the gorge. Then they watched the ruddy gleam of the half-breed's camp-fire across the valley.

The ruddy light died down at last.

There was still a faint glow to be seen, and the juniors could guess that the breed had banked up the fire, to burn on while he rolled himself in his blanket and slept.

Jimmy Silver made a move at last.

"Come on!" he said. "It's close on midnight now."

"I know I'm getting sleepy!" grumbled Lovell.

"You would!" assented Jimmy.

"Look here—"

"This way, and don't jaw! Give your chin a rest till we get back to the ranch, old scout! Quiet!"

The juniors, gripping their roughly-cut cudgels in their hands, crept down from the gorge into the locked valley. Their hearts were beating fast. They realised clearly enough the deadly danger before them, but they did not falter.

Overhead the stars glittered in a velvety sky. Through the darkness of the valley the dull glow of the camp-fire was like a beacon to guide them.

Over the hilltops a crescent moon sailed into sight.

There was a rustle and a bark in the thicket, and the juniors stopped with thumping hearts. But it was only a coyote, and the animal, more startled than the juniors, backed away stealthily and fled. Jimmy Silver & Co. pressed on, closer and closer to the dim, burning glow of the banked fire.

It was in the little wood, close to where he had met Jimmy, that the half-breed had camped.

Treading softly and cautiously, feeling every inch of the way before they made a step, the juniors approached the camp.

They heard a faint stirring, and, peering ahead in the dimness, they made out the figures of two horses lying in the herbage, tethered to saplings. One was Jimmy's horse and the other was Blazer. Between the horses and the glowing fire a figure lay rolled in a blanket, the feet towards the embers.

The juniors felt their hearts beat faster as they discerned it.

It was the half-breed.

He was sleeping, that was clear. Not a hint of danger was in his mind. Jimmy Silver alone would scarcely have ventured an attack upon the horse-thief's camp, and of his companions the ruffian knew nothing. An occasional tongue of flame shot up from the fire and revealed the sleeping figure of the half-breed clearly as the juniors crept closer.

But the half-breed, though he slept, slept like a man accustomed to incessant peril. Blazer, scenting the approach of the juniors, stirred uneasily, and jerked at his tether. The half-breed's head was raised, and his black eyes swept round suspiciously.

The juniors stood quite still. They were among the trees now, not six yards away from the horse-thief, and the dimness hid them. Pequod le Couteau muttered savagely at the horse that had disturbed him, but caution was second nature to him. He reached out and seized a loose stick, and thrust it at the fire, stirring the banked-up wood into flame.

Ruddy flames shot up, lighting the camp and dancing among the surrounding trees.

"At him!" panted Jimmy breathlessly. He knew that the juniors would be seen in an instant now.

Like an arrow from a bow Jimmy Silver rushed forward, his comrades close at his heels.

The half-breed leaped to his feet with the agility of a tiger. His hand was on his knife, and it flashed out in the bright firelight.

But he had no time for more. Jimmy Silver was upon him, and his cudgel swept down.

Pequod sprang back, throwing up his arm at the same moment, and the blow landed upon his forearm instead of his head. A yell of pain and rage broke from the half-breed.

"Down him!" shrieked Lovell.

Pequod sprang farther back and back, changing his knife to his left hand. His right arm was nerveless from the heavy blow. The juniors rushed right on.

Crash, crash!

The knife went clattering to the ground as Lovell's cudgel crashed on the half-breed's shoulder. Raby and Newcome got in with their cudgels the next moment, and Pequod was stretched on the ground.

He made a desperate effort to rise, but Jimmy Silver struck again, and, with a groan, the ruffian rolled over.

Jimmy snatched up his knife and hurled it far into the trees. Then he fairly jumped on the struggling ruffian.

His knee was planted on Pequod's chest, and the breed clutched at him like a wild beast. Jimmy swung up the cudgel.

"Will you give in?" he said savagely.

And, as the half-breed still clutched, the cudgel came down with a crash, and Pequod le Couteau's struggles ceased. His head fell heavily on the ground, and he lay stunned.

"Good!" panted Lovell. "That does it!"

"Get hold of the lasso!" said Jimmy breathlessly.

"Right-ho!"

and yawned. The juniors dipped their faces in the creek, by way of ablutions, and then prepared breakfast at the camp-fire. Pequod le Couteau watched them with black eyes that scintillated with hate, but he said no word. When the juniors offered him a share of the meal he ate sullenly and in silence; and they fed him, not venturing to untie his hands. Pequod was too slippery and dangerous a customer to be trusted loose.

Breakfast over, the heroes of Rookwood prepared for departure from the locked valley. Pequod was mounted on the horse Jimmy had ridden the day before, and his legs were secured to the animal with lengths cut from the lasso. Jimmy was going to ride Blazer, buck-jumper as he was. But the horses were led as the juniors made their way back to the gorge.

In the gorge the horses belonging to Lovell, Raby, and Newcome were still tethered. They were released and fed and given water, and then the juniors led them away down the gorge. The half-breed broke his savage, sullen silence at last.

"Where are you taking me?" Jimmy looked at him.

"To the Windy River Ranch," he answered.

"Confound you!" Jimmy held up his riding-whip.

"That will do!" he said. "Shut up!"

And Pequod le Couteau relapsed into sullen silence again, and did not speak a word further during the journey.

gasp'd Spike. "I guess I'm telling them this at the ranch, some!"

And Spike put spurs to his horse and dashed away to the ranch at top speed to spread the wonderful news. Jimmy Silver & Co. grinned with satisfaction. Pete Peters was not likely to talk of "tall stories" when he saw them ride in with Blazer and the half-breed, both captured.

Spike got in well ahead of the Rookwooders. By the time they rode up to the ranch every man who was within call had gathered to stare at them. Hudson Smedley stood in the porch of the ranch-house with an astonished face, Pete Peters sat on his horse, and Red Alf, Skitter Dick, and a dozen other men were grouped before the bunkhouse or by the corrals, all amazed by Spike's amazing news, and not believing a word of it till the Rookwood cavalcade rode into sight.

Then there was a roar from the cowpunchers.

"Pequod, the horse-thief! They've got him!"

"Young Silver's riding Blazer!"

"Jerusalem crickets!"

"Bravo, tenderfoot!"

The Rookwooders rode up to the ranch-house. Hudson Smedley came to meet them, quite an extraordinary expression on his bronzed face.

"Jimmy!" he stuttered.

"I hope you don't mind our clearing off like that?" said Jimmy.

"You see, we felt bound to hunt down Blazer."

"I guess I was mad when I came back from Mosquito and found you gone," said the rancher; "but— but— Holy smoke! This caps the stack, I guess! How did you rope in that breed?"

"He came for me with a knife, and he stole my horse, so we thought we'd rope him in," said Jimmy, with exaggerated carelessness.

"Oh, Jimmy!"

Hudson Smedley seemed able to say no more. The juniors dismounted, in a mood of great satisfaction with themselves and things generally. Pete Peters came over and clapped Jimmy Silver on the back.

"I guess I'm sorry, sonny!" he said. "I guess I take back some things I've said, and a lot more that I've thought! You've got me beat!"

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"All serene, old scout!" he answered.

"Cheers for the tenderfeet, boys!" shouted Red Alf.

And the cowpunchers gave a thunderous cheer that made the rafters of the Windy River Ranch ring again.

Jimmy Silver & Co. had made good, and no one grudged the "tenderfeet" their triumph.

THE END.

(Plenty of thrills in "Foes of the Ranch!"—next Monday's stunning story of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West. On no account must you miss it. And don't forget to tell all your non-reader pals that they also should get a copy of next Monday's Boys' Friend.)

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**THE "POPULAR"—Out on Tuesday.**

Raby stirred the fire into a brighter blaze, and Lovell quickly found the lasso. The end of the rope was knotted round Pequod's wrists. Another length was cut off and knotted round his ankles. And only just in time. The half-breed's fierce black eyes opened as Lovell finished binding his limbs, and Pequod began to struggle again. But he was helpless now, and the juniors left him lying on the ground, to struggle as he liked.

Once out of the rocky gorge, the juniors mounted their horses and rode cheerily down to the plain.

Two ropes were attached to the half-breed's horse, held by Lovell and Raby, to lead him, one on either side. Newcome rode behind. Jimmy Silver for a time was busy dealing with Blazer, who had not overcome his objection to being ridden. But Blazer had apparently learned that Jimmy knew how to deal with him, and he ceased to buck at last and allowed himself to be ridden quietly. The contest ended in Jimmy Silver's favour, though he was careful to keep a wary eye on his mount and a tight hand on the rein. If the horse had been in his wildest mood, Jimmy was determined to ride him up to the ranch; but he was glad enough when Blazer decided to take it philosophically.

It was close on noon when the ranch-house chimneys came in sight. The first "hand" seen was Spike Thompson, who came careering across the prairie with blank amazement written on his bearded face at the sight of the cavalcade.

"What you got there?" yelled Spike.

Jimmy Silver chuckled.

"Blazer and a giddy horse-thief!" he answered.

"Pequod!" yelled Spike. "Oh, thunder! You 'uns have roped in Pequod le Couteau?"

"Looks like it—what?" grinned Lovell.

"Waal, carry me home to die!"

**The 6th Chapter.**

**Jimmy Silver & Co.'s Triumph.**

Dawn flushed up over the plains of Alberta and over the foothills and the locked valley in the heart of the hills. Jimmy Silver threw aside his blanket, and turned out and yawned. Through the night the juniors had kept watch in turn, and Lovell, who was taking the last watch, was sitting by the camp-fire on a log, with his eyes on the bound half-breed. He grinned at Jimmy.

"All serene, old top! What about brekker?"

"That's the next item," said Jimmy cheerily, "and then for the ranch! I fancy we shall surprise them when we ride in!"

"You bet!" grinned Lovell.

"We've got Blazer, and we've got the durndrest horse-thief in Alberta!"

"And we're not letting him get away this time!" said Jimmy Silver. "Now, then, turn out, you slackers!"

Raby and Newcome turned out

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B. F.

.....CUT HERE.....