

**"The Boss of Sunset Ranch!"** An Exciting Story of Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West In This Issue.

# The BOYS' FRIEND 2d

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

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FAMOUS FOR ITS TOP-NOTCH STORIES—THE "BOYS' FRIEND"!



ANOTHER SPLENDID STORY OF JIMMY SILVER &amp; CO. OUT WEST!



# The Boss of Sunset Ranch!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the  
"Popular.")Lovell's Romance in the West reaches a  
dramatic culmination.

## The 1st Chapter. Lovell's Mission.

Boss Smedley was wrathful. There was no doubt about it. Jimmy Silver & Co. observed it, and wondered. Pete Peters, the foreman of the Windy River Ranch, observed it; the cowpunchers observed it. And it really was surprising.

Generally, Mr. Hudson Smedley had a most equable temper. Frequently he wore a smile, and even when he was not wearing a smile his handsome, sunburnt face was cheery and good-humoured.

Now he was frowning blackly, and there was a steely glint in his eyes. For once the rancher was in what the Rookwood juniors would have described as a "royal wax."

Certainly there was cause for annoyance. A dozen valuable steers belonging to the Windy River Ranch had been "run off"—it was suspected, by a gang of half-breeds, who had taken to the foot-hills with their plunder. It was necessary for Mr. Hudson Smedley to throw aside other engagements and ride in search of those steers—and those half-breeds. But this occurrence, annoying as it was, hardly seemed to Jimmy Silver & Co. an adequate reason for Mr. Hudson Smedley's very evident wrath.

"He was only going to ride over to the Sunset Ranch this afternoon," Jimmy Silver remarked. "He goes there often enough—and he can go there any time. Nothing much in missing that."

"I'd rather have a ride into the hills, and a scrap with a gang of half-breeds," remarked Arthur Edward Lovell.

"What-ho!" said Raby and Newcome, in complete agreement. "But he's no end waxy," said Jimmy.

Which certainly was the fact. Mr. Smedley's voice resembled thunder as he ordered his horse to be saddled. When he came striding towards the group of Rookwood juniors his brow was dark, and they wondered a little whether they were going to have a share of the vials of wrath—guests at the Windy River Ranch, as they were.

"You kids busy this afternoon?" asked Mr. Smedley.

"Not too busy to come after the breeds with you, cousin Smedley," said Jimmy Silver at once.

"Rubbish!"

"Ahem!"

"I'm taking some of the punchers—as many as can be spared from the ranch," growled Mr. Smedley. "There may be shooting, possibly, if we run the rascals down. No work for schoolboys."

"We're not exactly schoolboys now," ventured Lovell; "and we're not afraid of shooting."

"We'd like it, in fact," said Raby.

"Bosh!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. had a great respect for Mr. Hudson Smedley's judgment as a rule. On this occasion, however, they considered him an ass. They refrained from telling him so.

"Well, we were going out in the canoe," said Jimmy Silver; "that is, Raby, and Newcome, and I were. Lovell wants to try the new horse you gave him. But if there's anything we can do—"

"Lovell, then," said Mr. Smedley. "If Lovell wants a ride, he can ride

over to the Sunset Ranch for me with a message."

"Pleased!" said Lovell.

"I was going over there this afternoon," said Hudson Smedley. "I—I had business there." He hesitated a moment. "You can take a letter from me, Lovell. I can't spare a hand from the ranch as I'm taking six men with me after the breeds."

"Any old thing," said Lovell. "I mean, I'm quite at your service, Mr. Smedley."

"You know the way? I've been going to take you kids over with me to call at the Sunset Ranch," said Mr. Smedley. "It's across the river, Lovell, and you follow your nose along the cattle trail."

"Easy enough, sir."

"Good!" said the rancher, seeming a little relieved.

"I—I suppose I couldn't attend to your business for you there, Mr. Smedley?" asked Lovell.

"Wh-a-at?"

"If it's anything I could do for you—"

"You young ass!"

"Eh?"

Mr. Smedley, to the surprise of the juniors, coloured under his bronzed skin, and then burst into a laugh. Lovell was rather nettled.

"I know you have a lot of business over at the Sunset Ranch, sir," he said.

"Oh, you know that, do you?"

"Well, I know you ride over there a lot, of course," said Lovell. "If it was some simple matter to-day, I dare say I could attend to it for you, as well as taking a letter."

The rancher grinned again.

"Well, you couldn't," he said shortly. "My business at the Sunset Ranch has to be handled by myself personally."

"Right-ho!" said Lovell. "I thought I'd make the offer. No harm done, I suppose?"

"Oh, no!"

Mr. Smedley went into the ranch-house, apparently to write the letter that Arthur Edward Lovell was to carry. Lovell looked at his chums.

"Your blessed cousin is keeping secrets, Jimmy," he said. "Seems to me something jolly mysterious about the way he's always butting in at the Sunset Ranch. I dare say he was only going over about horses, or cattle, or some such rot, and I could have done the business for him. I'm not exactly a tenderfoot now."

"I dare say it's something important, as he's in such a wax at being prevented from going," said Jimmy. "I shouldn't care to be those dashed breeds if cousin Smedley gets within reach of them."

Mr. Smedley came out of the ranch-house in a very few minutes with the letter in an envelope in his hand.

"Don't lose this, Lovell," he said. "No fear."

Lovell put the letter in his pocket at once.

"Well, good-bye," said Mr. Smedley.

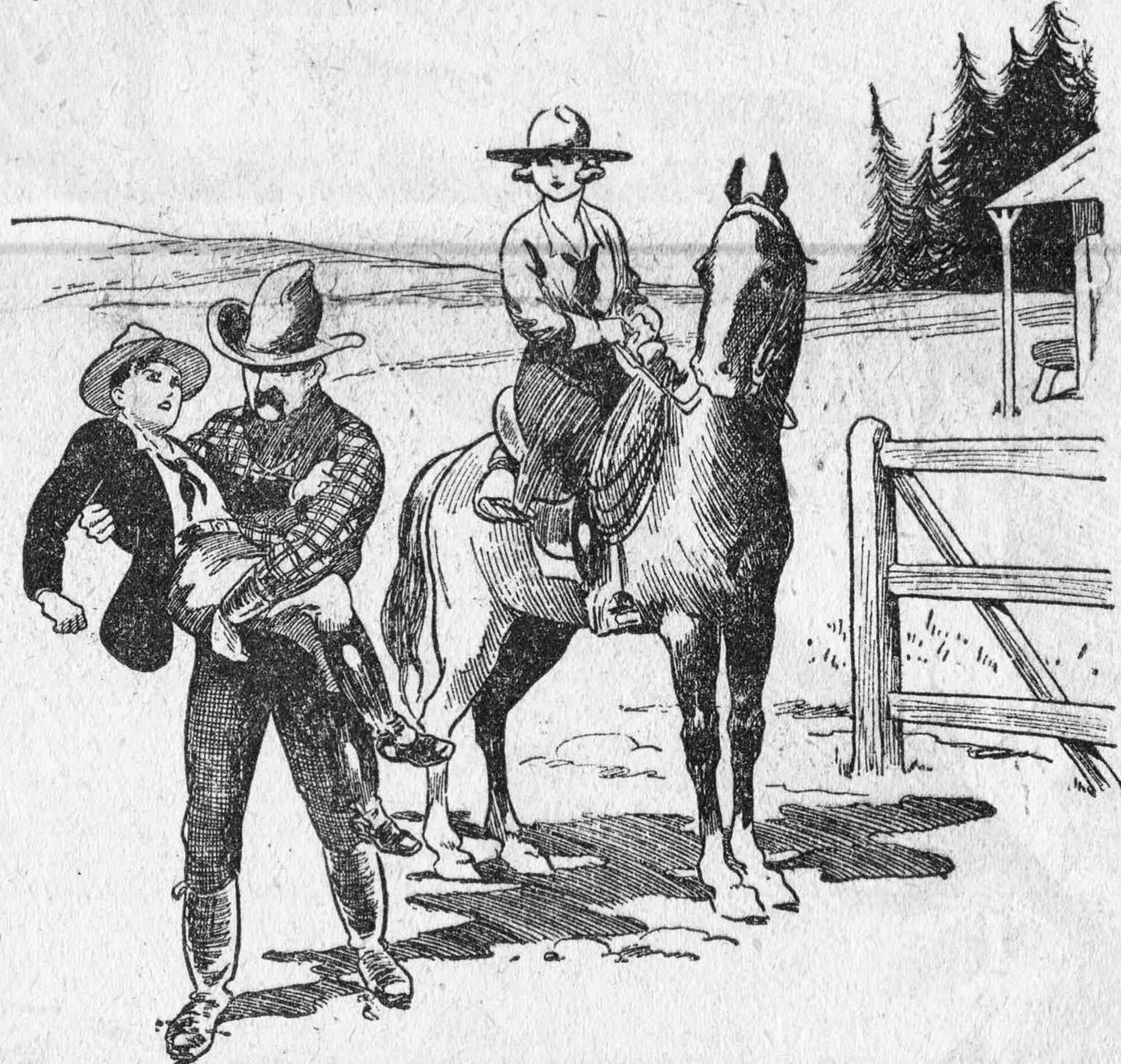
He jumped on his horse and rode away westward with Pete Peters, Skitter Dick, Spike Thompson, and some more of the Windy River outfit. Jimmy Silver, and Raby, and Newcome walked down to the river to push out the canoe. Arthur Edward Lovell mounted his new horse, rode over the stream at the ford, and took the cattle trail to the Sunset Ranch

with Mr. Hudson Smedley's letter safe in his pocket.

## The 2nd Chapter. Buster's Day Out!

Arthur Edward Lovell enjoyed his ride—for the first half-hour. It was a glorious summer's afternoon, with scarcely a cloud in the blue sky of Alberta that stretched overhead. It was hot, and Lovell was glad of the shade of his big Stetson hat.

He was also pleased with his new horse. The horse, Buster, was a rather lively quadruped. Mr. Smedley had had doubts about letting



**LOVELL HAS TO GO!** Although Lovell resisted furiously, the big foreman lifted him from the saddle and carried him bodily into the ranch-house.

Lovell have that horse; but Lovell had had no doubts at all. Jimmy Silver was able to ride Blazer, the worst buck-jumper on the ranch, and what Jimmy could do, Lovell could do a little better—that was a conviction firmly fixed in the mind of Arthur Edward Lovell. Having ridden Buster several times, Lovell had satisfied the rancher—he did not need to satisfy himself. But now, out of sight and sound of the ranch, safe from the lassoes of the cowpunchers, Buster began to develop a will of his own.

Fortunately, he did not buck-jump, for Lovell, in spite of his firm conviction to the contrary, could never have handled a buck-jumper as Jimmy Silver had done. But Buster, after trotting peaceably for half an hour on the Sunset trail, decided to turn off and do a little exploring.

Lovell dragged him back into the trail.

Buster looked round at him, and trotted on again, and Lovell congratulated himself on having crushed an incipient rebellion.

But apparently Buster was only thinking the matter out in his equine mind.

Presently he turned out of the trail again, and started on an easy gallop to the north. Sunset Ranch lay north-east.

Lovell tugged on the reins. Buster did not heed; he trotted on regardless.

"Whoa!" roared Lovell.

Buster declined to "whoa!" "You horrid beast! Come up!" gasped Lovell, tugging for all he was worth.

Neither would Buster come up!

Leaving the cattle-trail on his right, Buster stretched across the rolling prairie, heedless of the tug on the rein. It began to dawn upon Arthur Edward Lovell that Buster was master of the situation; and that if Buster chose to gallop on as far as Mackenzie, or as far as the Arctic Circle, for that matter, his rider would not be able to stop him.

Tugging did no good. Buster was obviously impervious to tugs. Arthur Edward Lovell's last resource was the whip.

Lovell objected to whacking a horse on principle, if it could be helped. He preferred to master the beast by firmness of character—to "witch the world with noble horsemanship," so to speak. But noble horsemanship—Lovell's variety—was absolutely without effect upon the obdurate Buster.

So Lovell was driven to using the riding-whip, to thrash Buster back and he put vim into it.

Whack, whack!

The result was unexpected.

Buster gave a shrill squeal, more of indignation and contempt than pain, and stretched into a rapid gallop. And he still went on his own way—not Lovell's.

Lovell was getting excited now.

He laid on the whip as if he were beating a carpet. But every whack only caused Buster to increase his speed—in the wrong direction.

Buster's heels beat the prairie in a rapid tattoo, his wild tail flew in the wind, his mane was spread out

It was quite certain that Lovell never would arrive at the Sunset Ranch with Hudson Smedley's letter. Where he would arrive was an interesting problem; but from Buster's rate of progress, it looked as if Arthur Edward might find himself on the Yukon sooner or later.

Gallop, gallop!

Lovell clung on desperately, blind to his surroundings now, all his efforts being to hold on and save his neck.

He was dimly conscious, after a time, of a riding figure on the prairie—a rider that loomed up from somewhere, and was apparently riding in the same direction. Lovell hardly saw the figure, but he knew it was there, and he hoped fervently that it was some cowpuncher who could and would rope in his runaway horse.

Thud, thud, thud!

Hoofbeats behind Lovell, and a little to his right, drew closer—the stranger was riding hard.

There was a whiz.

Lovell felt, rather than saw, the noose of a lasso settle over Buster's head, and fasten round the neck.

Still Buster did not stop.

A sudden drag on the rope would have stopped him by hurling him over, but that would have sent Lovell crashing to the earth. The lassoer held on to Buster with a stiff pull on the rope that gradually drew in the runaway, and forced him to reduce his speed.

Slower and slower!

The wind no longer stung and cut Lovell as before. In a few minutes now he knew that he would be safe.

But Buster, enraged by his capture, made one more effort, wheeling aside and bursting into sudden speed. The rope on his neck dragged him over then, and he fell on his knees.

Lovell hardly knew what happened next.

He had a dim consciousness of flying through the air, and landing on a hard earth that seemed to rush up at him—and that was all he knew.

## The 3rd Chapter. Lovell's Rescuer!

"Better?"

Arthur Edward Lovell opened his eyes dizzily.

He was lying on the grassy prairie, under the blazing sun, his head resting on something soft and helpful. He realised that that something was a knee.

He blinked up. A face was bending over him—a face that was startling to see on the wild prairie.

Lovell's vague impression had been that some cowpuncher had roped in Buster. But the face that bent over him was a girl's—a kind, pretty face, with brown, bobbed hair under a wide-brimmed hat. The face was full of gentle sympathy, though there was a smile in the eyes.

"Better, my dear boy?"

"Oh! Yes!" gasped Lovell.

"That's good!"

Lovell stared round dazedly. Buster was quietly cropping the grass, tethered by the lasso that had roped him in. Buster, his little frolic over, had settled down to feed, doubtless feeling that he had earned some refreshment. Another horse, a handsome black, stood close at hand—evidently the mount of the girl who had rescued Lovell.

"My hat!" gasped Lovell.

The girl smiled.

"Don't move in a hurry," she said. "I'm afraid you've given your knee a knock."

"Ow! I think I have."

Lovell blinked at the pretty face above him. He wondered where that lovely young lady had sprung from in the wild prairies of the West of Alberta.

"I—I say, thanks awfully!" he articulated. "I—I—I suppose you roped in that blessed horse?"

"Yes."

"Saved my neck, I shouldn't wonder."

"I am glad I saw you."

Lovell crimsoned. Sometimes, in imaginative moments, Arthur Edward Lovell had pictured himself as the heroic rescuer of beauty in distress. He had never pictured himself as in distress rescued by beauty! It really was rotten luck for things to work out like that!

"I—I think I can get up now, miss," he said.

"Don't hurry. You are one of the boys at the Windy River Ranch, are you not?"

"Yes. You know Windy River?"

The girl laughed. "It is the next ranch to mine," she said. "Yours!" ejaculated Lovell. "You're not a rancher!"



"Why not?"  
"Oh!" gasped Lovell.  
"I am very glad to meet you," the girl went on. "I have asked Mr. Smedley to bring you over, with your friends."  
"Yes," said Lovell. "I say, the next ranch to Windy River is the Sunset, isn't it?"

"Yes—my ranch!"  
"Oh! Then—then I was coming to see you," gasped Lovell. "At least, I suppose so. I had a letter for the Sunset Ranch."  
"I was expecting Mr. Smedley this afternoon."

"He's gone after some cattle-thieves, and he sent me with a letter. It's jolly lucky I met you, then. I— I suppose you are Miss Luttrell?"  
"That is my name—Clare Luttrell," said the girl, with a smile.  
"Oh, my hat!" said Lovell.

He had heard of Miss Luttrell, of the Sunset Ranch, once or twice, without much interest. Certainly, he had never imagined that Clare Luttrell was anything like this. She looked a mere girl—though, as a matter of fact, the lady rancher of Sunset was known through Alberta as an extremely capable woman, quite equal to administering the ranch she had inherited from her father.

"You may give me the letter, if you like," said Clare Luttrell. "I will read it while you rest!"

Lovell felt for the letter and handed it over.

The girl read it, while the school-boy looked about him. He had a big bruise on his knee, and a pain there—though he did not intend to mention the pain to Miss Luttrell. He was feeling utterly rotten at having got into danger, and having been rescued by a girl—one of the weaker sex. Lovell's private opinion of girls was that they didn't amount to very much, anyhow, and were rather a worry generally. He was not sure that he approved of a girl running a ranch just as if she were a man!

But he had to admit that he would have fared badly, had not this particular member of the weaker sex happened to see him and come to his help! There was no gainsaying that.

Miss Luttrell was soon finished with the letter. She looked smilingly at Lovell, and he made an effort to rise.

"I'm all right now," he said.  
"I will help you?"  
"No, don't trouble."  
"Nonsense!" said Miss Clare Luttrell decidedly.

She helped, or rather lifted, the junior from the ground, and it dawned upon poor Lovell that he could not have got into the saddle without her assistance. She placed him on her own horse, when he made the further discovery that Miss Clare did not use a side-saddle in riding.

"Black Beauty is quieter than your horse!" she explained.

"I—I'd rather—" gasped Lovell.  
"You must not take any more risks with your knee hurt."  
"It's not hurt much."

"Now, be a good boy, and do as you are told," said Clare smiling. And she mounted Lovell's horse.

Buster gave her one look out of the corners of his eyes, and submitted like a lamb. Buster knew a master-hand when he felt one.

"I'm going to take you to my ranch," said Miss Clare, as the horses started. "It is only three miles from here—and more than ten to the Windy River. I will send a message, and the buggy can be sent over for you!"  
"I could ride home," said Lovell.  
"You couldn't."

Lovell knew that he couldn't; he was too tired and dizzy still, and the pain in his knee was too severe, for the ride even of three miles to be comfortable. He knew, too, that he couldn't have sat Buster for three minutes. But it was very exasperating. Lovell would have thoroughly enjoyed rescuing Miss Clare from some terrible danger; but the present state of affairs seemed all wrong somehow.

"Here is the ranch," said the girl at last, and they rode up an avenue of trees to the ranch-house porch.

She called out, in her clear voice.

"Buck!"  
A big loose-jointed man appeared from somewhere. Lovell learned afterwards that he was Miss Luttrell's foreman.

A few words from Miss Clare, and the big man lifted Lovell from the saddle, and carried him bodily into the ranch-house. Lovell resisted.

"Put me down!" he muttered fiercely. "I can walk!"  
"I guess not."

"Look here—"  
"Perky young ass!"  
Lovell, in the arms of the huge Canadian cattleman, was as powerless as a baby. He had to submit to his fate.

Buck Williams, with a grinning face, bore him in, carried him upstairs, and proceeded to attend to his bruised knee. Lovell found some relief in that, at all events.

He was still further pleased, a little later, when he found himself in a beautiful room, bright with fresh flowers, in which Miss Clare dispensed tea and cake with smiling hospitality. She had changed from her riding costume, and looked lovelier than ever in her indoor dress. Lovell watched her about the room with fascinated eyes. Somehow, he no longer felt resentful at having been rescued by Clare Luttrell.

"Now, I am going to send a message to Mr. Smedley," she said presently. "If you really think you can make the journey, you shall go home in the buggy. But I think you would do more wisely to stay over to-morrow at least. I will ask your schoolboy friends to come over and see you. Do you like the idea?"

Did Lovell like the idea?  
He beamed.  
He mumbled something about a lot of trouble, but his smiling hostess cut him short.

"It will be a real pleasure, I

"Oh, my hat!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Raby.  
"And Lovell asked him if he could do his business there for him! I noticed he grinned!"  
"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Lovell—always shoving his jolly old hoof into it," chuckled Jimmy Silver. "That's it, I fancy! It's the glad-eye bizney that takes Mr. Smedley that way so often. Mind, not a word about it—I dare say he'd rather we didn't know."

"Not a giddy syllable!" grinned Newcome. "But I hear we're to ride over to Sunset to-morrow and see Lovell. I expect we shall find him like a bear with a sore head."

"Sure to!"  
Mr. Hudson Smedley did not return to the Windy River Ranch that evening. But, in the morning, Skitter Dick rode in, dusty and tired, with the news that the rancher and his companions were on the track of the stolen steers. He was expected back later in the day; but he had not put in an appearance by the time Jimmy Silver & Co. prepared for the ride over to Sunset to see Lovell.

The juniors had heard of Miss Luttrell of Sunset before, but they had had a vague impression in their minds of a buxom and middle-aged dame. Now that they had learned that the lady rancher was young and pretty, they felt it necessary to dress

much, his chums sometimes thought—fell silent.

"How's the old leg?" asked Jimmy.

"Eh?"

"Haven't you busted a knee or something?"

"Oh, a bruise!" said Lovell carelessly.

"Getting on all right here?" asked Raby.

"Fine!"

"Bit of a bore, I suppose?"

"Fathead!"

"Eh? I suppose you don't like being stuck indoors with a gammy leg, do you?" asked Raby in astonishment.

"Ass!"

"I hope you've got better manners than this for Miss Luttrell?" grinned Raby. "She looks a nice girl."

"She's topping!"

"Glad you can see it," said Newcome. "You're generally a bit of a pig where girls are concerned, aren't you, old bean?"

"If you can't help being an idiot, Newcome, you might shut up," suggested Lovell.

"Hallo! What's the row now?"

"Blessed if I wanted a gang of rowdy fags butting in," grunted Lovell.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Try to behave yourselves, any-

"How old do you think she is?" asked Lovell, after a long pause.

"Blessed if I know!" said Jimmy.

"Haven't thought."

"Well, think now," said Lovell, with a touch of irritation.

"What does it matter?"

"It doesn't matter; but think."

"Eh! About twenty-five, I suppose," said Jimmy.

Arthur Edward Lovell stopped, and fixed his eyes on Jimmy Silver with overwhelming scorn in his look.

"I always knew you were a silly idiot, Jimmy Silver," he said, in slow, deliberate tones.

"Did you, old bean?"

"Yes. But I never knew you were such a crass chump as that," said Lovell witheringly. "I should say about seventeen."

"What rot!" said Jimmy, staring at him. "It's no business of ours; but I suppose she wouldn't have her property in her own hands till she was of age."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lovell.

"What does it matter, anyhow?"

"Possibly she got it at once, under her father's will," said Lovell.

"Twenty at the outside."

"She'd think it a jolly cheek, discussing her age," said Jimmy Silver.

"If you ask me, Lovell, it's pretty bad form."

"Oh, you don't understand!" snapped Lovell.

"What is there to understand?"

"Fathead!"

This was puzzling and unsatisfactory. Jimmy Silver wondered what on earth was the matter with his chum. He was accustomed to Arthur Edward being an ass, but this seemed more than asinine.

"Say eighteen," said Lovell.

"Say anything you like," said Jimmy resignedly.

"I shall be sixteen next birthday."

"What about that?" asked Jimmy, startled by this sudden and irrelevant change of subject.

"Oh, nothing!"

Jimmy looked at his chum anxiously.

"I—I say, Lovell, you aren't ill, are you?" he asked.

"No, you ass!"

"You didn't give your head a knock, or anything, when you pitched off Buster?"

Lovell glared at him.

"You crass dummy!" he said.

"Well, you're talking jolly queerly," said Jimmy seriously.

"First about Miss Luttrell's age, and then about your own. I don't see the connection."

"You wouldn't!" said Lovell, moodily and scornfully.

"Well, what—"

"She's not so very much older than I am," said Lovell, getting that statement out with a breathless gasp.

Jimmy looked at him. The colour deepened in Lovell's conscious face, and grew into a deep and beautiful crimson. Slowly comprehension dawned upon Jimmy Silver.

"Great jumping Jehosaphat!" he stuttered. "Lovell, you—you're not— Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" yelled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked Jimmy Silver.

He roared. He did not mean to, but he really could not help it. Lovell in love was too rich. Jimmy Silver staggered against a cedar, gasping with merriment.

Lovell glared at him with fury.

"You cackling ass!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You burbling jabberwock!"

"Oh dear!" Jimmy Silver wiped away his tears. "Oh crumbs, Lovell! Ha, ha, ha! Oh, my hat! Ha, ha!"

Lovell made a wild rush at him, and Jimmy, still laughing, fended him off. Raby and Newcome ran up in astonishment.

"What the thump—"

"Ha, ha, ha! Yarroop!" roared Jimmy Silver, as the infuriated Lovell's fist came with a crash on his nose. He sat down suddenly, and his laughter ceased with equal suddenness.

Lovell gave his chums a glare, and stalked away. Jimmy Silver sat and gasped. Raby and Newcome, utterly amazed at this sudden row, stared after Lovell, and stared at Jimmy.

"What on earth's the trouble?" exclaimed Raby. "Miss Luttrell might have seen you."

"Ow! Ow!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver, dabbing his nose with his handkerchief. "Oh, my nose! I'll punch his head!"

"But what—"

Jimmy Silver chuckled, in spite of the pain in his nose. He gasped out

(Continued overleaf.)



**LASSOED!** Buster fell to his knees as the rope tightened about his neck and checked his further progress. Arthur Edward Lovell was shot from the animal's back and landed on the earth with a crash.

guess," she told him. "You shall tell me all about your school at home. I want to meet your friends, too. Will you stay?"

"What-ho!" said Lovell. "I—I—I mean, thank you very much. I'd like to no end."

"Then that's settled," smiled Clare.

And Lovell stayed.

#### The 4th Chapter. Amazing!

"Poor old Lovell!"

"Just like the old ass!"

"Oh, just!"

Thus Jimmy Silver & Co., when they heard the news at Windy River. They were concerned for Arthur Edward; but the assurance that his hurt was only slight relieved them.

"He was bound to come a mucker on Buster," said Raby. "If poor old Lovell could only do half the things he thinks he can do, he would be a giddy Admirable Crichton. I hope he'll be civil to Miss Luttrell. He's generally a bit of a bear with girls."

"Isn't she jolly old?" asked Newcome.

"No; I asked Pete Peters about her, and he says she's a daisy!"

"Good-looking?" asked Newcome.

"Pete seems to think so."

"My only hat!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver suddenly.

"Hallo, what's biting you, Jimmy?"

Jimmy chuckled.

"I wonder if that's the reason why cousin Smedley has so much business at the Sunset Ranch?" he said.

the part, as it were, when they made their call. The three juniors prepared very carefully for the visit, and certainly they looked very nice when they came out for their horses. Baldy, the cook, gave them a grin.

"You 'uns goin' to a wedding?" he called out.

The juniors laughed and rode away.

They trotted cheerily along the trail to the Sunset Ranch, and reached that spot early in the afternoon. As they rode up the avenue of cedars and poplars they heard the sound of music from the open window of a large room in the front of the ranch-house. Evidently there was a piano at the Sunset Ranch, and it was being played very well indeed, and a sweet, clear voice was singing.

"That's Miss Luttrell, I suppose," murmured Jimmy.

"There's Lovell!"

Arthur Edward Lovell was standing by the open window.

He was not looking out—he did not see his chums. His gaze was fixed upon some unseen person in the room—evidently the musician. There was a curious rapt expression on his face that rather puzzled the Rookwooders.

A Chinese servant admitted the three juniors, and a minute later they were making their best bows to Miss Clare.

Lovell introduced them to his hostess; but he did not seem so glad to see his chums as they had expected. Miss Clare left the juniors together to give some directions about tea, and Lovell, who generally had plenty to say for himself—too

how. You're not in the Fourth Form passage at Rookwood now."

"After we've ridden over to see you—" began Raby indignantly.

"Oh, rot!"

"Look here, Lovell—"

"Shush!" murmured Jimmy Silver. Miss Clare reappeared, and the juniors shushed accordingly. Lovell's peculiar humour puzzled his chums, but on reflection they attributed it to his "gammy" knee, and forgave him.

Tea was a very pleasant meal at the Sunset Ranch. Miss Clare led the juniors to talk about Rookwood, and naturally they had plenty to say on that topic. Lovell had much less to say than usual, however; but Jimmy noticed that his eyes followed Clare Luttrell everywhere.

After tea, the Fistical Four of Rookwood had a ramble round the Sunset Ranch on their own, Lovell going with his comrades. In the cedar avenue Lovell drew Jimmy Silver aside.

"How do you like Miss Luttrell?" he asked.

"Ripping!" said Jimmy Silver heartily.

"Isn't she?" said Lovell, his eyes shining. "I was a bit annoyed at first at being rescued by a girl, you know."

"You always were a bit of an ass, old chap."

"I know I was an ass—now."

"Oh!" said Jimmy, rather taken aback. He had never expected Lovell to recognise that fact, though it was fairly obvious to his chums.





# The Boss of Sunset Ranch!

(Continued from previous page.)

ranch to make themselves very useful when the foreman was short-handed. Most of that day they were on horseback on the plains, and they came in to supper fairly tired, and with very healthy appetites. As Mr. Smedley was still away, they joined the crowd of cowpunchers round the cookhouse for supper, which Baldy, the cook, handed out hot and steam-

"Rot!" Lovell led his horse away to the corral, and did not rejoin his chums. After supper, and a chat with the cowpunchers, the Co. went up to the ranch-house to go to bed. Lovell was not indoors. "Seen Lovell, Woo Sing?" Jimmy Silver asked the Chinese chore-boy. "Me see!" answered Woo Sing, with a grin. "Where is he?" "Walky in garden," said Woo Sing. "Me tinkee Misty Lovell no feel quite light." "Quite what? Oh! Quite right!" said Jimmy Silver. "Why not? He isn't ill." "Looke velly stlange," said Woo Sing. "Talk to himself while he walkee, and lookee up at sky! Velly funnee!" "Oh, my hat!" said Jimmy. Raby and Newcome went up to bed, but Jimmy Silver looked into the garden for Lovell. He had quite

preternatural gravity. In the dim light Lovell could not see the twinkle in his eyes. "Jimmy!" murmured Lovell. "Yes, old chap." "I—I say, Jimmy—" "Well?" said Jimmy Silver encouragingly. "I—I say—" "Go on!" "Did you notice her eyes?" "Whose?" "Hers!" snapped Lovell. "Oh, yes—fine!" said Jimmy Silver. "The stars seem to remind me of them," said Lovell in a low, thrilling voice. "Do they?" said Jimmy blankly. "Did you notice her little hand?" "I thought she had two." "You silly dummy!" "Oh!" Lovell stalked away. "Aren't you going to bed?" asked Jimmy persuasively. "Go and eat coke!"

"But, I say," gasped Jimmy, "what the— Whoooop!" A terrific punch on the chest sent Jimmy spinning across the landing, and he sat down with a crash. Arthur Edward Lovell, with a glare at his chums, stalked down the stairs. Raby staggered up, still rubbing his head. "He's off his rocker!" he gasped. "He's getting dangerous! Ow! My napper! Wow, wow!" "Oh dear!" gasped Jimmy Silver. "What's the matter with him?" "Potty, I tell you! I just asked him if he'd proposed to Miss Luttrell—ow!—and he fairly jumped at me—wow!—and banged my napper on the floor! Grooogh!" "Ha, ha, ha!" roared Newcome. Jimmy Silver grinned as he picked himself up. Evidently it was not safe to talk to Arthur Edward Lovell about his love affairs! There were somewhat wrathful looks when the Fistica! Four gathered to breakfast that morning. Lovell did not look in the least conciliatory. He glared at his chums, and left the breakfast-table quite early. But a trampling of hoofs outside the ranch-house turned the thoughts of the Rookwooders from Lovell. Mr. Hudson Smedley had returned, and the juniors rushed out to greet him. The rancher looked tired and dusty, but he gave the Rookwooders a cheery nod. "All serene?" asked Jimmy Silver. "I guess so. We've got the steers back; but the pesky breeds legged it in the foot-hills," said the rancher. "I guess we'll have them another time, though. What I want now is a bath and a feed. Take my hoss, Jimmy."

an explanation, and Raby and Newcome, after a blank stare, burst into a roar. "Ha, ha, ha!"

### The 5th Chapter. Poor Old Lovell!

Jimmy Silver & Co. rode home in the sunset—three of them. It had been supposed that Lovell's knee was well enough, now, for Lovell to ride. But it appeared, almost at the last moment, that such was not the case. It seemed necessary for Arthur Edward Lovell to remain another day at the Sunset Ranch.

The Co. guessed Lovell's motives quite easily, in the light of their new knowledge; but Clare Luttrell certainly did not. Her hospitality was unbending; and she was quite pleased for the Rookwood junior to remain another day, or as many days as he liked, for that matter.

So Jimmy Silver, Raby, and Newcome rode back to Windy River without Lovell.

They grinned as they rode. Lovell caught their grins as they started, and shook his fist after them. Which added to the merriment of Arthur Edward's chums.

"The ass!" said Raby, when they were out on the prairie trail.

"The silly ass!" said Newcome.

"The awful chump!" said Jimmy Silver.

"We always knew that Lovell was an ass," remarked Newcome, "but we never knew that he was such an ass as this. You never really do know what an ass a fellow can be till you find out."

"Miss Clare's a ripping girl," said Jimmy Silver. "But she would be waxy if she knew. Shouldn't wonder if she boxed Lovell's ears."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lovell in love!" gasped Raby.

"Oh, it's too rich!"

And the chums of Rookwood roared again.

How long Lovell's infatuation was likely to last his chums could not guess; it was probable that it would not be long-lived. Even a silly ass might be expected to realise, in the long run, what a silly ass he was, and to "chuck" it.

But for the present moment there was no doubt that it was an awfully serious matter to Arthur Edward—though his friends declined to take it with any seriousness at all.

Mr. Smedley was not at the ranch when the juniors returned. The hunt for the missing cattle had taken him far afield.

The next day they found that he had not returned. Pete Peters had come back, and the juniors asked him about it.

"I guess the boss won't let up till he's roped in them steers," said the foreman; "not if he has to follow them all the way across the Rockies into British Columby. But he'll turn up to-morrow, I expect. You 'uns can make yourselves useful, if you like, with so many hands away."

"You bet!" said Jimmy Silver cheerily.

"Where's Lovell?" asked the foreman.

Jimmy grinned.

"He had a tumble from Buster, near the Sunset Ranch, and Miss Luttrell has taken him in," he answered. He did not add that Lovell had required Miss Luttrell for her kindness by falling in love with her. Lovell's amazing secret was his secret, and his chums did not want to make it the joke of Windy River.

"Pesky young ass!" grunted the ranch foreman. "Waal, you three will be useful."

And that day Jimmy Silver & Co. were very busy. They had picked up enough knowledge of the work of the

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Here is a splendid cricket competition which I am sure will interest you. On this page you will find a history of the Notts County Cricket Club in picture-puzzle form. What you are invited to do is to solve the picture, and when you have done so write your solution on a sheet of paper. Then sign the coupon which appears under the puzzle, pin it to your solution and post it to "Notts Cricket Club," Competition, BOYS' FRIEND Office, Gough House, Gough Square, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than THURSDAY, July 5th.

The FIRST PRIZE of £5 will be awarded to the reader who submits a solution which is exactly the same as, or nearest to, the solution now in the possession of the Editor. In the event of ties the prize will be divided. The other prizes will be awarded in order of merit. The Editor reserves the right to add together and divide the value of all or any of the prizes, but the full amount will be awarded. It is a distinct condition of entry that the decision of the Editor must be accepted as final. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

This competition is run in conjunction with the "Gem," the "Magnet," and the "Popular," and readers of those journals are invited to compete.

ing. They sat on the benches in the open air to eat with the cowboys, under the red sunset, feeling quite like experienced cowpunchers themselves.

"Here's Lovell!" murmured Raby.

The three chums suppressed a chuckle as Arthur Edward Lovell rode in. He was mounted on a horse belonging to the Sunset Ranch.

"Hallo! Where's Buster?" asked Pete Peters.

Lovell coloured.

"Left him at the Sunset," he answered. "Miss Luttrell didn't want me to ride him back, for some reason. Of course, I could have ridden him quite easily."

"Of course! I guess!" grinned Mr. Peters.

"Sit down and feed, old chap," said Jimmy Silver, tactfully interrupting. "This pie is a corker—one of Baldy's best."

"I don't want any supper."

"What rot! Sit down and pile in."

Lovell looked moody.

The course of true love never did run smooth, according to the poet; and apparently it was keeping up its reputation in Lovell's case. Raby whispered to his comrades that Lovell looked as if he had proposed and been rejected—a suggestion which was too much for Jimmy Silver and Newcome. They burst into a howl of laughter.

Lovell stared at them gloomily.

"What's the joke?" he asked sarcastically.

"Oh dear!" gasped Jimmy. "Nothing, old chap. Do sit down and have some supper."

I enter "NOTTS CRICKET CLUB" Competition and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.  
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forgiven the tap on the nose at the Sunset Ranch, and he felt that his chum required looking after, in this peculiar state of affairs.

He found Lovell walking up and down a path under the trees. Lovell did not see or hear him coming. He was deep in a reverie. Every now and then he stared up at the stars and sighed. Jimmy Silver repressed a strong inclination to laugh. He did not want any more punching of noses.

"Coming in to bed, Lovell?" he asked.

Lovell gave a start, and blinked at him. Jimmy's voice had brought him back to common earth again, as it were.

"Eh! What!" he ejaculated.

"It's bed-time," said Jimmy.

"Is it?"

"Yes. How's your old knee?"

"Eh! It's all right."

"Good! Come in to bed."

"I don't feel sleepy."

"Have you had any supper?"

"Eh! I don't know."

"My hat!" murmured Jimmy Silver. Matters were evidently getting serious, if Lovell did not know whether he had had any supper or not.

Lovell looked at him in the starlight. Fortunately, Jimmy kept upon his face an expression of almost

So Jimmy Silver went to bed, leaving Lovell to the stars, which reminded him of Miss Luttrell's eyes.

### The 6th Chapter. Lucky Man!

Bump!

Crash!

"Yooop!"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

It was morning, and Jimmy had nearly finished dressing to come down, when he was startled by that terrific uproar on the landing outside his room. He tore open the door.

"What—"

"Yaroooh! Draggimoff!" yelled Raby.

"Oh crumbs!"

Raby was on his back on the landing in the ferocious grasp of Arthur Edward Lovell. Lovell was banging his head on the floor. Newcome, half dressed, stared out of his doorway.

"Draggimoff!" shrieked Raby, in anguish.

"Lovell!" gasped Jimmy Silver.

He rushed at Lovell and caught him by the shoulders and dragged him back.

Lovell gave a roar of wrath.

"Leggo, you idiot!"

"Look here—"

"Ow, ow! Wow, ow!" gasped Raby, sitting up and rubbing his head. "Hold him a minute till I gerrat him! I'll smash him!"

"Let go, Jimmy Silver!" roared Lovell.

But Lovell apparently wanted to talk. He joined Jimmy Silver and walked by his side, and opened his mouth several times and closed it again.

"Coming out for a ride?" asked Jimmy at last.

"No."

"Hem!"

"I—I've been thinking," said Lovell.

"Time you did!"

"What?"

"I—I mean, all right! What have you been thinking about, old chap?" asked Jimmy Silver hastily.

"Mr. Smedley's back?"

"Yes. He's at brekker now, I think."

"I'll speak to him after breakfast," said Lovell thoughtfully. "I—I say, Jimmy, we—we're supposed to be going back to Rookwood School after our stay's up here?"

"Yes, of course."

"I'm not going back."

"Eh?"

"I've thought it out," said Lovell doggedly. "I'm going to be a rancher. I'm sticking to Canada for good."

"Good place to stick to," said Jimmy, deciding to humour Lovell. He had read somewhere that lunatics ought to be humoured to keep them quiet, and it seemed reasonable to try that method with Lovell in his present frame of mind.

"It's a splendid life!" said Lovell.

"Ripping!" agreed Jimmy.

"My people think of sticking me in the Army," said Lovell. "I'm going to be Army Class at Rookwood—at least, I was. But it's all rot!"

"You're suited for the cavalry, old man!" murmured Jimmy Silver.

Lovell gave him a suspicious look, but Jimmy's face was quite grave.

"Man can't afford to marry in the cavalry," he said.

"Oh, my hat! Hem! Yes! Of course!" gasped Jimmy. Lovell's imagination was evidently taking extended flights.

"Besides, what's the good?" argued Lovell. "Everybody knows that the next war will be in the air, and that the cavalry will be no good."

"Quite so," agreed Jimmy.

"I'm going to be a rancher. I—I want to write a letter home telling them I've decided."

"Hem! Your father might expect to be consulted," hinted Jimmy.

"Fathers have a way of butting into these things, you know."

"I suppose you know that Canadian ranchers take apprentices sometimes," said Lovell, unheeding.

"You pay so much, you know, and

(Continued on page 732.)







# The Boss of Sunset Ranch!

(Continued from page 720.)

"Will you—will you see Miss Luttrell?" Hudson Smedley glanced at him and smiled.

"I guess so," he answered. "Well, what is it, sonny? What did you want to say before I go?"

Lovell hesitated. His heart was beating fast. He had a horrid feeling that Mr. Smedley might guess how the matter stood, and regard him as a silly young ass—as undoubtedly he was, if only he could have realised it.

"I hear," went on Mr. Smedley as Lovell did not speak, "that you had a tumble from your horse, and Clare—Miss Luttrell—took you in and looked after you, while I was away in the foot-hills."

"Yes!" gasped Lovell. "Feel all right again?"

"Oh, yes, thanks!" "That's good," said Hudson Smedley. "How did you like Miss Luttrell, kid?"

Lovell flushed. "I—I thought she was an angel," he stammered.

Hudson Smedley laughed. "You're a good judge," he said. "If there's any young lady in Alberta who really is an angel, it's Miss Luttrell of the Sunset. I've been going to mention something to you kids—"

He paused, and, to Lovell's surprise, coloured under his tanned skin.

A strange feeling of apprehension seized upon Lovell. He did not realise what he apprehended; but he knew that he felt uneasy.

"I intended to take Jimmy and his friends over to the Sunset, to make Clare's acquaintance," went on Mr. Hudson Smedley. "You've done that without my assistance, as it happens. You may as well know that Miss Luttrell and I are engaged."

"Eh?" "Engaged?"

The room spun round Lovell for a moment. He blinked at the rancher.

Fortunately, that gentleman had turned aside to speak to Woo Sing, who had looked in to announce that the horse was at the door. Otherwise, he most certainly would have noticed something extremely peculiar in poor Arthur Edward's looks.

Lovell put his hand on the table to steady himself. The news had fairly knocked him over for the moment.

His chums had guessed that there was something of the sort in the wind, since they had seen the charming Miss Luttrell, remembering Hudson Smedley's very frequent "business" at the Sunset Ranch. But the thought had not crossed Lovell's mind; he had been too busy thinking about himself.

"Engaged!" he said at last, in a faint voice. "D-d-did you say you were engaged to Miss Luttrell, Mr. Smedley?"

"Sure!" Lovell braced himself. "May I congratulate you?" he gasped. And then he fled.

"Hallo! Didn't you have something to say to me, kid, before I went?" called out the rancher.

Lovell heard it, but he heeded not. He only wanted to get out of sight just then.

And Mr. Hudson Smedley, dismissing the Rookwood junior's unimportant existence from his mind, went out to his horse, and rode cheerily away on the trail to the Sunset Ranch.

Arthur Edward Lovell was not seen by his chums for some hours afterwards. When they saw him again, Lovell's face was a little pale, but he was cool and composed. He nodded cheerily to the Co.

"Coming out for a ride after dinner?" asked Jimmy Silver. He wondered how the interview between Lovell and Mr. Smedley had gone, but was careful not to inquire.

"Oh, yes!" said Lovell. "By the way—"

He paused, with a last twinge. "Well?"

"Mr. Smedley mentioned something to me this morning, which I think I may as well pass on to you fellows."

"What's the news?" "He's engaged to Miss Luttrell at the Sunset."

"Lucky man!" said Jimmy Silver. "Yes, isn't he?" said Lovell, with exaggerated indifference. "I say, it's dinner-time: I'm jolly hungry."

He went into the ranch-house. Jimmy Silver & Co. exchanged a look, but they did not say a word of their thoughts to Lovell. Tacitly they allowed the whole affair to fall into deep oblivion.

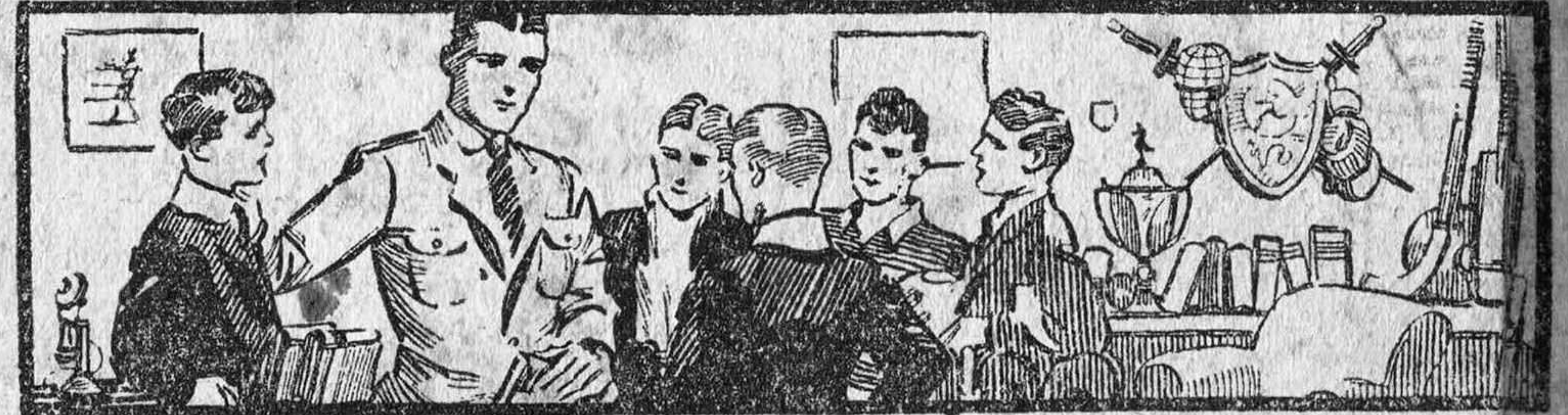
Lovell's heart did not appear to be broken—at all events, his appetite was not affected, and he made up at dinner for what he had missed at breakfast. He looked very thoughtful that day—less thoughtful the next—

and on the next after that his chief purpose in life seemed to be to convince his chums that he could ride Buster. So all was well that ended well!

THE END.

(You will be thrilled when you read "The Rustlers of Coyote Creek"—next Monday's magnificent story of the further adventures of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West. Order your BOYS' FRIEND in advance. And don't forget to introduce the old "Green 'Un" to all your pals!)

# In Your Editor's Den



Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers upon any subject. Address your letters to: Editor, "Boys' Friend," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

## "THE RUSTLERS OF COYOTE CREEK!"

Next week's story of Jimmy Silver & Co. in the West presents a ticklish problem. The scene is placed at Coyote Creek, and some mighty strange reports float round concerning the place. For Coyote Creek gives itself out to be a harmless sort of camp, all honest and above board. But all the same the whole district round is alarmed and uneasy, thanks to the actions of a lively gang of rustlers. Where do these rustlers have their lair? The whole matter needs looking into, and Jimmy Silver and his chums join up with the investigating party. Coyote Creek is in for it. Discoveries of a surprising nature are made. The Rookwooders distinguish themselves in spirited fashion in the course of the expedition, which sheds a flood of light on the modus operandi of the "rustling" gentry, who are out to reap profits without work.

## "SIDE-STEP MILLIGAN!"

Walter Edwards has another great yarn fresh and hot from the land where the "pile-drivers" come from. Milligan proves a highly interesting figure. The author gets in some rare, rugged stuff in this tense and realistic narrative of the Ring, and he is all out to describe a few of the peculiarities of the game.

## "HIS LEFT-HANDED LORDSHIP!"

Lightning tactics with a "gun" make good reading in this startler for next Monday. It is a topping yarn, but the real big news is that Arizona Jim, an old and tried favourite reappears. You will be keen about the left-handed marksman, who is as slipper as he is unexpected, but the chief honours go to our old friend from Arizona, who "sees through" a very intricate and mighty dangerous business.

## "THE GOLDEN BUDDHA!"

It is a pleasure to record the continued success of Maurice Everard's serial. The fortunes of the Polruan comrades get linked up in a very curious way with the golden emblem,

which in itself crystallises much of the mystery of the East. Next week's instalment is thrilling; not a second of hesitancy about it, but just one rush of crisp sensation.

## "DON DARREL ON THE TURF!"

Another signal triumph can be set down here. The popularity of Victor Nelson's boy millionaire is something too evident to be insisted upon. Next Monday Darrel plunges into fresh adventures, and he finds himself in neck-or-nothing opposition to an absolutely unscrupulous gang, which is out for big gain. But in Don Darrel they have a handful. Look out for the next issue of the BOYS' FRIEND for some dramatic happenings.

## CRICKET.

Those thoroughly interesting and well-informed reminiscences of J. W. Hearne, of Middlesex, are carried on next week in the most fascinating style. These jottings are a real treat to all cricket enthusiasts. They will enthral everybody. Of course, I must link up my reference to this much-appreciated feature with a word or two about our grand Cricket Competition. There is a very fine problem set down for the coming issue of the old "Green 'Un," so don't miss ordering in advance, as nobody cares about being left out of a good thing.

## VERY SUPERIOR.

A chum writes to me to complain about a pal of his. "He used to be all right," says my correspondent, "but of late he has adopted a very superior air. He thinks he knows better than anybody else; he criticises everybody, even fellows years older than himself." I do not think there is much need to worry about the matter, for it is just a phase. The victim to swank will grow out of it, and the world will help him. There's nothing like a spell of hard knocks in the common-sense school of life for correcting conceit. For conceit it is!

Your Editor.

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