

“THE RUSTLERS OF COYOTE CREEK!” A Great Story of Jimmy Silver & Co.
Out West in This Issue!

The BOYS' FRIEND 2c

SIXTEEN BIG PAGES!

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THE BEST BOYS' PAPER IN THE WORLD!

[Week Ending July 7th, 1923.]

“SIDE-STEP” MILLIGAN!

By WALTER EDWARDS.



A WONDERFUL WELCOME IS ACCORDED THE FRENCH CHAMPION BY HIS COMPATRIOTS!
(A stirring incident from the great Boxing Yarn complete in this issue.)

ANOTHER STIRRING ADVENTURE OF JIMMY SILVER & CO. OUT WEST!



The Rustlers of Coyote Creek!

By OWEN CONQUEST.

(Author of the Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Popular.")

Coyote Creek is a "Hornets' Nest," and the nefarious work being carried on there is discovered by Jimmy Silver and Arthur Edward Lovell!

The 1st Chapter. Just Like Lovell!

"Seen Lovell?"
Pete Peters grinned.
"I guess I've seed him!" he admitted.
"Well, I want to see him, too," said Jimmy Silver, rather puzzled by the wide grin of the foreman of the Windy River Ranch. "We were going for a ride. Where he is?"
"I guess you won't see him any more," said Pete Peters, shaking his head.

And from two or three of the Windy River cowpunchers there came a loud chuckle.

"How's that?" asked Jimmy.
"He's riding Buster."

"Oh!"
"The silly ass!" said Raby. "Lovell knows jolly well that he can't ride Buster, and he will do it."
"Do you mean that Buster's run away with him?" asked Newcome.
The ranch foreman nodded, and chuckled.

"Lit out as though he was sent for," he said. "I guess you won't see him any more!"
"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the cowpunchers.

Jimmy Silver did not laugh, however. Arthur Edward Lovell believed that he could ride Buster, because Jimmy Silver could ride Blazer—which was not logical, but just like Lovell. Lovell was a good rider on a safe mount; but Buster was far from safe. The Windy River outfit evidently regarded the matter as a joke. But Jimmy remembered that Lovell had had a fall from Buster already, and he was worried.

"Which way did he go?" he asked.

Pete Peters waved a large hand southward.

"I guess Buster was going to Red Deer," he said. "He might go on to Calgary. Gee-whiz! He might go right on to the States, for all young Lovell will have to say about it. Lovell was sittin' on him when he started. I dessey he's hanging on by his tail, by this time."

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Better go after him," said Raby.

"Oh, you'll never catch Buster, with the start he's got," said Pete Peters. "Let him rip! He may stop at Grimes' ranch—that's a good ten miles. He'll pass it, anyhow, and one of the punchers may rope him in. Very likely he won't break his silly neck this time."

"Very likely!" in such a case was not good enough for Jimmy Silver. He hurried away to the corral for his horse.

In a very few minutes the three Rookwood chums were mounted, and riding away on the southern trail.

Jimmy Silver, on Blazer, quickly drew ahead of Raby and Newcome, and soon left them far behind.

He was anxious about Lovell. It was no use arguing with Arthur Edward, who was generally confirmed in his opinion by opposition. It was just like Lovell to ride Buster to show that he could, when in actual fact he couldn't. And Jimmy would not have been surprised, at any moment, to come upon his chum stretched on the prairie, possibly with a damaged limb.

Blazer was the fastest horse at Windy River, and Jimmy Silver got his best speed out of him. There was no sign of Lovell to be seen ahead, and the trail was not plain enough for Jimmy to follow riding; so he headed straight for Grimes' ranch, as Pete Peters had declared that Buster would pass there.

Only on his chum's account, however, would Jimmy have ridden to the Grimes' ranch. He had heard a good deal of talk at Windy River about Grimes, who was known locally as Grudger Grimes, and said to be a miser. There was something like a feud between the Grimes' outfit and the men of Windy River, and when they met in the township of Mosquito, it was not infrequent that trouble resulted. Mr. Hudson Smedley had counselled his guests to keep clear of the Grimes' Ranch, and his counsel had been followed—but if Lovell was being borne thither on a runaway horse, there was no choice about the matter for Jimmy Silver.

He rode Blazer hard, and was soon out of sight of Raby and Newcome, who galloped on far behind him.

Jimmy Silver swept the prairie ahead of him with anxious eyes. The wide green grasslands shimmered in the summer sun of Alberta. A wire fence ahead of him, at last, marked the boundary between Windy River and Grudger Grimes' land. Beyond the fence lay Coyote Creek Ranch.

Jimmy did not pause there.

If Buster had gone that way, Buster would not have stopped at the wire fence, and Jimmy did not stop. He put Blazer to the leap, and cleared the fence, and rode on.

On the further side of the fence, he noted a Stetson hat lying in the grass. He had no doubt that it belonged to Lovell, and had dropped there from his head after Buster had jumped. Jimmy was relieved that Lovell himself was not lying there.

He bent down in the saddle as he passed the hat, and picked it up without stopping—a feat he had learned from the cowpunchers of Windy River. He hooked it on to his saddle, and galloped on, looking out for Lovell.

Ahead of him now the Grimes' ranch-house and buildings were in view.

They had a very different aspect from that of Mr. Hudson Smedley's ranch at Windy River.

Bunkhouse and cookhouse, barns and sheds and fences, had a worn and broken look, as if badly in need of repair. There seemed to have been no new paint about the place for years. Grudger Grimes was, apparently, worthy of his local nickname.

The whole place looked poor and stunted and dilapidated.

A group of men stood by the bunkhouse, talking and laughing, and they turned to look at Jimmy Silver as he rode up. They were a rough-looking crowd, with one exception—a rather tall, lithe, dark-skinned fellow, who was dressed with almost dandified care and neatness, and wore gold earrings in his swarthy ears. He was obviously not a Canadian, and Jimmy guessed that he was a Mexican—Spanish Kit, the foreman, of whom he had heard the Windy River men speak.

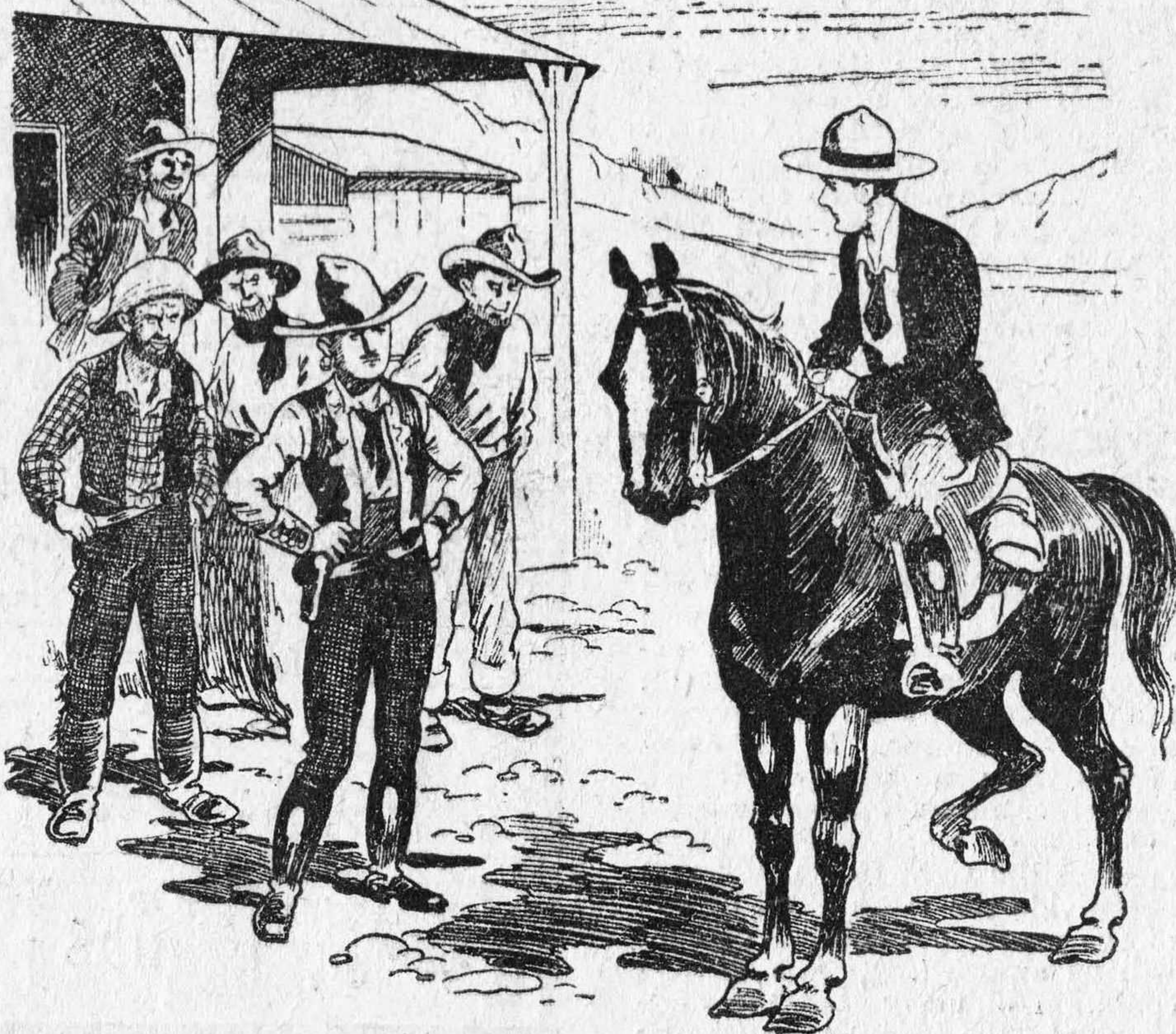
"Here is another!" said the Mexican, as Jimmy pulled in Blazer, and there was a laugh.

The foreman stepped towards Jimmy.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Looking for my friend, who came this way," said Jimmy. "His horse ran away with him, I think."

"You must have jumped the wire fence, the way you came."



LOOKING FOR LOVELL! Spanish Kit stepped towards Jimmy Silver as the Rookwood junior drew rein. "What are you doing here?" he asked. "Looking for my friend, who came this way," said Jimmy. "His horse ran away with him, I think."

"Yes."

"We do not want visitors from Windy River here, senorito."
"Sorry," said Jimmy. "I'm not exactly a visitor—I'm looking for Lovell. Where is he?"

"How should I know?"

"He is here, isn't he?" exclaimed Jimmy.

"If he is here, you can see him, I suppose."

"Do you mean to say he's gone on?" exclaimed Jimmy. "You might have roped in the horse, when you could see that it was running away with him."

"It is not our business to look after tenderfeet," said Spanish Kit, with a grin. "How do you know he came this way at all?"

"I picked up his hat on this side of the wire fence."

"Then you had better ride on and look for him!"

Jimmy Silver glanced round the grinning group. He was puzzled and irritated; but it was no use to bandy words with the Grimes' outfit. He rode on, looking round for Lovell.

Whiz!

Jimmy Silver knew that whiz. And he knew that as his back was turned, one of the cowboys had thrown a lasso. But the knowledge came too late. Before he could make an effort to escape the rope, the loop settled over his shoulders, and there

was a jerk—and Jimmy Silver was plucked from the saddle, coming to the ground with a crash.

The 2nd Chapter, In Rough Hands.

"Oh!"
Jimmy Silver gave a yell as he landed.

He was hurt, and all the breath was knocked out of his body by the concussion.

There was a roar of laughter from the Grimes' outfit.

One of the cowboys ran forward to catch Blazer by the rein, and the horse was secured. The rest gathered round Jimmy Silver as he lay sprawling and dazed on the ground.

"You rotters!" gasped Jimmy.

Spanish Kit grinned down at him.

"I told you we did not want visitors from Windy River," he said. "You asked for it."

Jimmy struggled to his feet and attempted to throw off the gripping noose of the lasso. The rope was jerked roughly, and he went spinning to the ground again.

"Put him in the barn," said Spanish Kit.

Two or three pairs of hands grasped Jimmy Silver, and he was hustled away. The lasso was taken off him, and he was pitched headlong into a barn.

The door was closed on him, and he heard a bar rattle into place.

He stumbled among straw, and fell, dazed by the sudden change from the bright sunshine without, to the semi-darkness of the interior of the barn.

"Jimmy!"

"You here, Lovell!"

Jimmy Silver picked himself up. He was feeling very bruised and shaken. In the dimness he made out Arthur Edward Lovell. The only

beggar with a face like a knife. He raved at me like a Hun."

"No wonder, if you bifed into him on a runaway horse."

"The horse wasn't exactly running away—"

"Ass! What have those brutes shoved us in here for?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver savagely. "I suppose this is their idea of a joke on tenderfeet. They don't look any too good to steal our horses; but I suppose they won't do that."

"They're a rough crowd, and no mistake," said Lovell. "That Spanish-looking chap is a regular brute. That's the man who was in trouble for using a knife in a row at Mosquito once, I've heard. The whole crew are a lot of rotters who'd never get a job on any other ranch in Canada, I've heard Peters say. I punched one of them when I was chucked in here."

Jimmy turned to the door.

He thumped on it and shouted, but there came no reply from outside. Once he heard a laugh from a passing man, but that was all.

"Let us out of this, you rotters!" bawled Jimmy Silver.

But it was in vain, and he desisted at last.

"Well, this is a go!" remarked Lovell. "I wonder how long they mean to keep us here?"

"Goodness knows."

The juniors could only conclude that they were the victims of a rough joke on the part of the Grimes' outfit, but Jimmy Silver could not help feeling uneasy about the horses. Both Blazer and Buster were valuable animals, and the Grimes' outfit looked more like a gang of horse-thieves than anything else. Still, he reflected that it was scarcely possible that even that rough crew would venture upon so open a theft, even if they were tempted.

"Where's Raby and Newcome?" asked Lovell at last.

"They were following me," said Jimmy. "I fancy they'd stop at the fence, though."

"All the better for them; those brutes would rope them in and pitch them in here along with us."

"I suppose so."

Jimmy Silver moved restlessly about the barn, looking for a way of escape, but there was no way. The minutes passed on leaden wings, and lengthened into hours.

The dim, cobwebby window grew dimmer as the sun sank lower and lower in the west.

"What the thump can be their game?" exclaimed Jimmy angrily, at last. "They can't mean to keep us shut up here all night, I suppose?"

"Mr. Smedley would send to look for us," said Lovell.

"I suppose so. Thank goodness the other chaps kept clear of this!" said Jimmy.

It was clear by that time that Raby and Newcome had not jumped the Grimes' fence and followed on. That was a consolation, but it did not help the prisoners of the barn.

There was a sound of footsteps outside at last, and of fumbling with the bar at the door. Lovell jumped up from the straw.

"They're coming at last! Thank goodness!"

"We'll make them sit up for this somehow, later on!" growled Jimmy Silver.

"Yes, rather!"

The door was thrown open, and the red sunset glimmered into the dusky barn. It was not Spanish Kit or one of the cowpunchers who appeared in the doorway, however.

"It's the old fellow I nearly knocked over," whispered Lovell.

Evidently it was Grudger Grimes.

He was not a pleasant man to look at. His age was probably sixty, but he looked older. His face was thin and hard and leathery, and his little sharp eyes looked like a rat's. He was dressed in old shabby clothes, with a rag of a hat. He blinked at the two juniors.

"You can come out of that," he said, in a high-pitched, cracked voice. "You young rascals, come out of it!"

The two juniors emerged from the barn.

At a short distance, two or three men were standing, and they looked towards the schoolboys and laughed.

Grudger Grimes raised a skinny hand.

"Get out of it!" he said. "The boys told me they'd shut you up here as a warning to keep off my land. Quite right, too! If you come this way again, you'll get a trail-rope round your hides. Now get!"

"Is that your brand of hospitality?" asked Lovell, with sarcasm. The miser blinked at him.

"Get out!" he repeated. "Get off my land!"

(Continued overleaf.)

Next Monday's splendid tale of Jimmy Silver & Co. Out West is entitled—"The Raid on the Ranch!" Don't Miss It!



The Rustlers of Coyote Creek!

(Continued from previous page.)

"We'll go fast enough when we've got our horses!" said Jimmy Silver tartly. "Where are they?"

"I don't know! Get out!"

"We're not going without our horses!" bawled Lovell.

The old man looked round towards the grinning cowpunchers.

"Where are their horses, boys?"

"I guess they ran away down the trail, boss," answered one of the cowboys. "Half-way to Red Deer by this time, I guess."

"You've let our horses run away!" shouted Lovell.

"I ain't our business to look after Windy River horses, I guess."

"Quite right, Texas—it ain't!" said Grudger Grimes. "You kids can go and look for your horses, only get off my land, and be s'pry about it."

Jimmy Silver breathed hard.

"Better get!" he said. "Come on, Lovell!"

The two juniors tramped away. A mocking laugh followed them from the Grimes' outfit.

3rd Chapter. Saddle-Up!

The sun was setting, and there were ten miles of rough prairie-land between the juniors and the Windy River Ranch. But there was no help for it; and Jimmy Silver and Lovell tramped away together, with the mocking laugh of the Grimes' outfit ringing in their ears. Jimmy's face was set and savage. So far, although he had heard a good deal of the trouble between Windy River and Grimes, he had seen nothing of the latter crowd till to-day.

His first encounter with them had not been an agreeable one. He remembered talk at Windy River of missing horses and steers, which the cowpunchers suspected, at least, could have been accounted for by Grudger Grimes' rowdy crew. And Jimmy did not believe in the least that the juniors' horses had been allowed to run free, and were lost on the prairie. He was quite assured, in his own mind, that they were inside the corrals at Coyote Creek.

"What a go!" mumbled Lovell, after the first mile. "We shall be out all day to-morrow, looking for those gee-gees, Jimmy. They may have wandered as far as the foothills."

"We sha'n't have to look any further than Grimes' ranch, I think," granted Jimmy Silver.

"You don't think they've bagged them?"

"Yes."

Lovell whistled.

"It's too thick, Jimmy. Old Grimes is a miser and a beast, but he's a rancher, of sorts; not a thief, anyhow."

"Not old Grimes," assented Jimmy. "But Coyote Creek is run by that Mexican foreman and his gang, and they're not too good to hold a man up on the trail and go through his pockets. I've heard Pete Peters say that Grimes' ranch is a sort of plague-spot. They've stolen our horses right enough."

"And we're going to leave them there?" ejaculated Lovell.

"What can we do, fathead?"

"Nothing, I suppose," admitted Lovell. "But it's pretty rotten. If they've really got the gees, I don't see how they're to be got back—they can keep them out of sight. Mr. Smedley couldn't have their corrals searched without a sheriff's order, or something."

"I suppose not."

"Looks like good-bye to Blazer and Buster, then," said Lovell dismally. "They'll run them far enough away before a sheriff's order can be got, if they're really sticking to them."

Jimmy Silver tramped on in silence. He was deeply worried about Blazer, his own horse—he was fond of Blazer. But there was no help for it, and the juniors tramped on in the gathering

dusk, with their backs to Coyote Creek.

Darkness fell when they were still miles from Windy River. It was fortunate that Jimmy Silver had learned his way about the plains, and cultivated the habit of taking note of his surroundings. Otherwise the two chums certainly would have been lost on the dusky plains that night.

"Bear to the right here, I think," said Lovell, as they came on a clump of trees about three miles from Windy River.

"Left!" said Jimmy laconically.

"Now, look here, Jimmy—"

"Fathead!"

Arthur Edward Lovell, as usual, was quite certain that he was right. He reluctantly yielded the point, and

And he proceeded to relate the afternoon's happenings, Lovell interrupting him once or twice to explain that Buster hadn't exactly run away, but had only been judiciously given his head. Mr. Smedley did not heed Lovell's interruptions, however. He listened very keenly to Jimmy's story, his sunburnt face growing grim and stern.

"Let's have this clear," he said at length. "I don't want trouble with neighbours, if it can be helped—though Coyote Creek is a pesky bad neighbour. You think the horses are still there, Jimmy?"

"I'm almost certain of it," said Jimmy Silver. "They shut us up in the barn all the afternoon, and spun us a yarn of the horses wandering away. I'm sure it was all bunkum. They look like a crowd of thieves."

"Some of them are, that's certain," said Mr. Smedley. "There are stories going about of the half-breed dealers getting horses and cattle from Coyote Creek that never were bred there. It's not Mr. Grimes' fault; that Mexican galoot runs the whole show. There are men there who have been fired from other ranches for stealing—I know that; rowdy galoots from over the border. I guess there isn't one Canadian in the whole bunch—Mexicans and bad men from Montana,

watched them from the window, not taking the hint to get off to bed. Peters went towards the bunkhouse, where most of the Windy River outfit were preparing to turn in for the night.

There was a buzz of voices at the bunkhouse, and some shouting. What Pete Peters had said to the "boys" seemed to have aroused enthusiasm. The whole outfit came crowding out, in a state of considerable excitement. Mr. Smedley came back into the ranch, and, without noticing the juniors, unlocked a drawer, took out a revolver, and secured it in a holster to his belt. The sight of it gave the Rookwood chums a thrill. Evidently there was going to be serious business that night under the moon.

"Cousin Smedley—" began Jimmy Silver.

"You not in bed yet?"

"You're going over to Coyote Creek?"

"Sure!"

"Let us come!"

"You're better out of it," said the rancher. "It's quite on the cards that there may be some scrapping. There's a lot of feeling between this outfit and Grimes'."

"Do you think we can't scrap?" demanded Lovell indignantly.

Lovell crimsoned, but he made no rejoinder. He was mounted now upon a quiet steed, much more amenable to reason than the festive Buster.

Mr. Hudson Smedley came out of the ranch-house and mounted. Over the ranch the moon sailed in a velvety sky.

"Ready, boss?" called out Pete Peters.

"Ready to wipe Coyote Creek off'n the face of the airth, boss!" chimed in Slim Johnson.

"Hold on!" said Hudson Smedley. "We're not going over to Coyote looking for trouble, boys!"

"Oh, ain't we?" murmured Spike.

"I guess it's not sure that the hosses are there! But we want to know!"

"Missing hosses have been found at Coyote before now, boss," remarked Red Alf.

"I know. That's why we're going. But Mr. Grimes is a neighbour, and we want to be civil. Bear that in mind, boys!"

"It's your say-so, boss!" said Peter Peters.

And the cavalcade started.

With a jingle of bridle and stirrup, the bunch of horsemen dashed away across the prairie in the moonlight. It was an exciting ride to the Rookwood juniors. Jimmy Silver and Lovell were tired after their long tramp, but in the saddle they forgot fatigue.

Thud, thud, thud, thud! Jingle, jingle! Under the moon, the Windy River outfit rode at full gallop, and mile after mile fled under the galloping hoofs.

The 4th Chapter. The Horse-Thieves!

"Halt!"

Grimes' ranch lay before the riders in the moonlight. They had reached Coyote Creek by way of the Mosquito trail, and before them was the big timber gate, set in heavy posts between the lines of wire. The outfit would have jumped their horses over the gate, but Hudson Smedley gave the word to halt.

The cowpunchers clattered to a standstill.

"You can open the gate, Jimmy."

"Right-ho!"

Jimmy Silver dismounted, and went to the gate. Beyond it he could see the ranch-house—a black mass in the moonlight—and the ranch buildings. From the bunkhouse came a gleam of light. Spanish Kit's crowd were not gone to bed, evidently.

The bunkhouse door was thrown open, and a stream of ruddy light came out from it.

The lithe figure of the Mexican foreman showed in the doorway. He had a cigarette in his mouth and a "deck" of cards in his hand. The trampling hoofs at the gate had interrupted a poker game.

Spanish Kit came striding down to the gate.

"What's this game?" he called out.

"Windy River, by gosh!" came a rough voice, as the crowd followed the Mexican out of the bunkhouse.

"Is that Hudson Smedley?" asked the Mexican, staring over the timber gate.

"Yes. I want to see Mr. Grimes."

Spanish Kit laughed.

"I guess you'd better come around to-morrow, then!" he answered.

"The boss has gone to bed long ago."

"My business won't wait," said Hudson Smedley coolly.

"I guess it will have to! Let that gate alone, kid!" snapped the Mexican.

"It's fastened, Mr. Smedley," said Jimmy.

"I guess it's staying fastened, too!" grinned Spanish Kit. "You 'uns are not wanted here!"

Hudson Smedley rode up close to the gate.

"Hand out the two horses belonging to these boys, and we'll get!" he said.

"No hosses of yours here."

"That won't do!"

"I guess it will have to do!" said Spanish Kit. "No Windy River galoot is coming in here."

"Will you open the gate?"

"No."

"Jump it, boys!"

"You bet, boss!"

The Windy River outfit backed away for distance, and then rode at the gate at a gallop. The Mexican muttered savagely as the horsemen came leaping over, one after another.

Hudson Smedley rode direct to the door of the ranch-house, taking no further heed of the Mexican. The Coyote Creek crowd gathered round

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



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every few minutes pointed out to Jimmy that they must be getting further and further away from Windy River—till the lights of the ranch-house came in sight, and then Lovell suddenly dropped the subject.

Thoroughly tired, the two juniors tramped up to the ranch-house. They found Raby and Newcome in the porch.

"Thank goodness you're back!" said Raby. "We were getting jolly anxious, Jimmy."

"Where are your horses?" asked Newcome.

"Stolen, I think."

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let's get in to supper," said Lovell. "I'm simply famished!"

And they tramped in.

Supper was over at the ranch, but Woo Sing, the chore-boy, brought in fresh supplies. Jimmy Silver and Lovell did them more than justice. Mr. Hudson Smedley was absent, at the Sunset Ranch across the river; but he came in by the time the juniors had finished their late supper.

The big Canadian rancher eyed the two juniors curiously as he came in.

"I hear from Skitter Dick that you came back without your horses," he said. "Anything happened?"

"Lots!" said Jimmy.

mostly. But I reckon we're not going to lose two good horses so easily as that."

"I—I was thinking—" said Jimmy.

"Well?"

"Blazer's trail ought to tell us something. You've got men here who can pick up trails like the Redskins. If we got over there, we could figure it out whether Blazer left or not, perhaps."

"I guess it's possible."

Hudson Smedley walked to the window and looked out. The summer night was clear and fine; a crescent of moon showed over the prairie. For some minutes the rancher was deep in thought.

The juniors watched him silently.

They were keen to make an attempt to get back the horses, or, at least, to make sure whether they were still at Coyote Creek. But it was for the rancher to decide.

"There'll be bright moonlight to-night," said Mr. Smedley at last. "I reckon a ride under the moon won't hurt the boys. You kids had better get off to bed."

The rancher strode out, and a minute or two later was in talk with Pete Peters at the door of the foreman's cabin. Jimmy Silver & Co.

Mr. Smedley laughed.

"The more the merrier, anyhow!" urged Jimmy Silver. "Besides, Blazer knows my voice. If they've got him there, he'll make himself heard if I call to him."

"Something in that," said Mr. Smedley. "I don't want to keep you kids in a bandbox, I guess. You can get out your horses."

"Oh, good!"

The juniors rushed out of the ranch-house. They were only too glad to be included in the party for Coyote Creek, and the prospect of a possible "scrap" with Spanish Kit's gang did not worry them.

Outside the ranch the Windy River outfit were gathering, evidently in a joyous mood. So far from objecting to trouble with Coyote Creek, the Windy River crowd welcomed it joyously. A dozen cowpunchers were saddling up, and the juniors joined them with their horses.

"You 'uns coming along?" grinned Skitter Dick.

"You bet!" said Lovell.

"I guess Coyote Creek won't have a look in this trip!" remarked Spike Thompson. And there was a laugh.

"Mind that hoss don't run away with you, young Lovell!" called out Red Alf.

their leader, eyeing the invaders savagely.

Spanish Kit was evidently at a loss. The invaders meant business, and were only to be stopped by force. But numbers were equal, and Windy River were a dangerous crowd to tackle. The Coyote Creek gang were a desperate set, but they hesitated.

Bang, bang!
The butt of Mr. Smedley's riding-whip crashed on the ranch-house floor.

A light gleamed from a window above in a few minutes.

Bang, bang!
The window was thrown open, and the head of Mr. Grimes, surmounted by a woollen nightcap, was thrust out.

"What's this row?" he yelled, in his high-cracked voice. "Can't you let your boss get a wink of sleep, you ornery cowpunchers?"

"Tain't us, boss," called out Spanish Kit. "It's the Windy River crowd."

Mr. Grimes snorted. "What do you want here, Hudson Smedley?"

"Only a word or two with you, Mr. Grimes," said the rancher politely. "Won't you come down?"

"No, I won't!"

"I guess—"

"Are you taking up ranch-raiding at night, Hudson Smedley?" yelled the miser from the window. "I guess I can talk to you from here," said Hudson Smedley, without answering that question. "Two of my boys rode over here to-day, and were shut up in a barn—"

"Serve them right! I'll order my men to give them a dose of the quirt if they trespass on my land again!"

"That isn't the question, Mr. Grimes. Their horses were taken away from them. We want those horses!"

"The horses ran off. Didn't you tell me the horses ran off, Cactus?" yelled Mr. Grimes.

"They did, boss," answered the man.

"You hear that, Hudson Smedley?"

"I hear it, but I don't take any stock in it, Mr. Grimes. Your outfit are a bit too well known. Have we your permission to look round the corrals?"

"You can look round the corrals all night, if you like, and be jiggered to you!" yelled back Grudger Grimes, and he slammed the window shut.

"That's good enough!" said Hudson Smedley, and he wheeled his horse round.

Between the Windy River riders and the corrals, however, the Grimes' outfit had gathered. They stood in a crowd, with heavy quirts in their hands and savage and defiant looks.

"You heard what your boss said, Spanish Kit?" said Hudson Smedley quietly.

The Mexican shrugged his slim shoulders.

"I guess I run this show for Mr. Grimes," he answered, "and your crowd aren't butting into our corrals."

"Run them off'n the ranch, boys!" shouted Cactus.

Hudson Smedley ran his eyes over the crowd.

"We're going through those corrals," he said. "If your galoots try to stop us, Spanish Kit, there'll be trouble."

"I guess we'll give you all the trouble you want," answered the Coyote Creek foreman insolently.

"Are you standing out of the way?"

"No!"

"Then we shall ride you down!"

"Wade in, boys!" yelled Skitter Dick.

The Windy River horsemen spurred on their horses, brandishing their quirts. Spanish Kit and his men broke under the rush, leaping and scrambling aside.

The Mexican, with a fierce blaze in his eyes, whipped out a revolver. The moonlight gleamed on the barrel as it came up to a level.

"Back!" he shouted. Or—
Oh!"

A whip-lash curled round the revolver, and jerked it from his hand. Skitter Dick caught it deftly, and grinned at the Mexican.

"Not this trip!" he chuckled.

Hudson Smedley, with a grim look, jerked his revolver from the holster at his belt.

"I guess I'm going to drop the next man that shows a weapon!" he said. "Boys, go through the corrals!"

The Windy River outfit dismounted. The Rookwood juniors

held the horses, while the cow-punchers unbarred the corral gate. In the bright moonlight, the interior of the corral was almost as light as by day.

There were not more than twenty horses to be seen, and Pete Peters soon "roused" them out, and they were scanned in the moonlight. There was none that looked like either Blazer or Buster.

From a short distance, the Coyote Creek crowd looked on with surly, savage faces. But it was clear that they did not care to enter upon a determined conflict with the Windy River outfit.

"Not there, boss!" said Skitter Dick. "I guess they may be shut up in a barn, though."

"You can search the outbuildings if you like, while you're so busy," called out Spanish Kit scoffingly.

Jimmy Silver looked at the Mexican.

The Coyote Creek foreman seemed to have decided that there was nothing to be done, and to have made up his mind to let the Windy River outfit have their way. But it struck Jimmy that he had been keen to prevent a search of the horse-corral, and that it was only after the search of the corral had failed to discover the stolen horses, that he decided to take things philosophically. Jimmy wondered whether, after all, Blazer and Buster were hidden in the corral

The 5th Chapter.
Fired!

There were loud exclamations as the Windy River cowpunchers gathered round the disguised Blazer. It was Blazer—though, even at a foot's distance it was hard to recognise him. He had been through the hands of a skilled horse-thief, and was disguised from nose to tail. But it was Blazer.

Hudson Smedley knitted his brows as he looked at the animal. He had suspected that there were horse-thieves at Coyote Creek; but he had never looked for this. It is an old trick with the horse-thief of the prairie, to disguise a stolen horse, in order to get it away in safety; and Blazer had been through the process. But for Jimmy's whistle, the horse would have remained in the corral under the eyes of the Windy River cow-boys.

"I guess they're some crowd hyer, boss," said Pete Peters. "I reckoned there was hoss-thieves on this hyer ranch, but this looks like a regular business! This is the way Old Man Grimes makes his money, I calculate!"

Hudson Smedley shook his head. "Old Man Grimes has nothing to do with it," he said. "It's the foreman and his men—they're running this game under their boss' nose. Old Man Grimes never knew the horses were here."

"I guess so!" said Skitter Dick. Half a dozen of the cowpunchers went into the corral, examining each of the horses very closely. There was a shout when Buster was discovered. He had been a brown horse when Lovell had ridden him away from Windy River. He was a black horse now, with a white nose and fetlocks.

"Hyer's Buster!" grinned Skitter Dick, leading him out. "Gosh, boss, I wonder how many more stolen critters there are in Old Man Grimes' corrals?"

"That's for the sheriff to look into," said Hudson Smedley grimly. "I guess there's a good deal here for the sheriff to look into, now; bring them along to the house."

The two stolen horses were led away to the ranch-house, and the butt of Hudson Smedley's riding-whip crashed on the door again. Spanish Kit and his comrades looked on with lowering faces. Horse-stealing had been brought home to them beyond a doubt; and horse-stealing was a serious offence on the Western prairies.

Bang, bang, bang!
The window opened at last.

"Can't you let a man rest?" roared Old Man Grimes, from above. "We've found the horses here, Mr. Grimes!"

"Waal, take 'em and go."
"They're got up with horse-thieves

Slam!
The door closed. "I reckon Old Man Grimes is mad, some!" chuckled Skitter Dick. "He will have a bad time explaining to the sheriff."

"We're finished here," said Hudson Smedley. "Mount!"

Jimmy Silver mounted Blazer, glad to be on his own horse again. Lovell would have mounted Buster, but was gently but firmly restrained by Pete Peters.

"I guess we've had enough trouble with you riding Buster, young 'un," said the Windy River foreman, with a grin.

"Look here," began Lovell wrathfully, "if you think I can't ride Buster—"

"Haw, haw, haw!"
"I'll jolly well—"

"There's your hoss," said Pete Peters; and he led Buster away, thus ending the argument.

A sullen crowd watched the Windy River outfit as they rode down to the gate. The gate was opened, and the horsemen poured out, with two led horses.

Spanish Kit and his followers were muttering together. They had no doubt that Old Man Grimes meant every word that he had said; the whole outfit was to be "fired." The game the gang had played for a long time of stealing horses and cattle, and using Old Man Grimes' ranch as their headquarters, was finished for good. Black and lowering were the looks they cast after the Windy River riders.

Heedless of their black looks, Hudson Smedley rode away with his men in the moonlight.

From the direction of the ranch buildings there came a sudden report that rang and echoed over the prairie. Hudson Smedley gave a start as his Stetson hat spun from his head.

"Gee-whiz!" ejaculated Skitter Dick.

The rancher caught his hat, and coolly replaced it on his head.

"That's one more item for Kit Pelayo to answer for when the time comes!" he said. "Ride on."

"Ain't we going back to wipe 'em out?" demanded Skitter Dick hotly. "Ride on."

And the Windy River outfit rode on in the moonlight, home to the ranch.

The 6th Chapter.
The Rustlers!

Jimmy Silver & Co. slept soundly during the remainder of that eventful night. They were late down in the morning, and the smiling Woo Sing brought them a late breakfast. After breakfast, Jimmy went out to look at Blazer. The horse was looking his old self again now. Arthur Edward Lovell followed his chum to the corral.

"I'm going to take Buster out," he remarked.

"You silly ass!" ejaculated Jimmy Silver.

"If you think I can't ride Buster, Jimmy—"

"Ass!"

"Looking for Buster?" asked Pete Peters, with a grin, as Lovell came up to the corral. "He's been sent away to Mosquito this morning."

"Sent away?" exclaimed Lovell.

"Just that!" grinned the foreman. "The boss has selected a nice, quiet hoss for you, if you want to ride."

"I don't want a quiet horse!" growled Lovell. "I say, Jimmy, would you like to let me have Blazer?"

"Are you insured?" asked Jimmy.

"Insured? No!"

"Then I can't let you have Blazer."

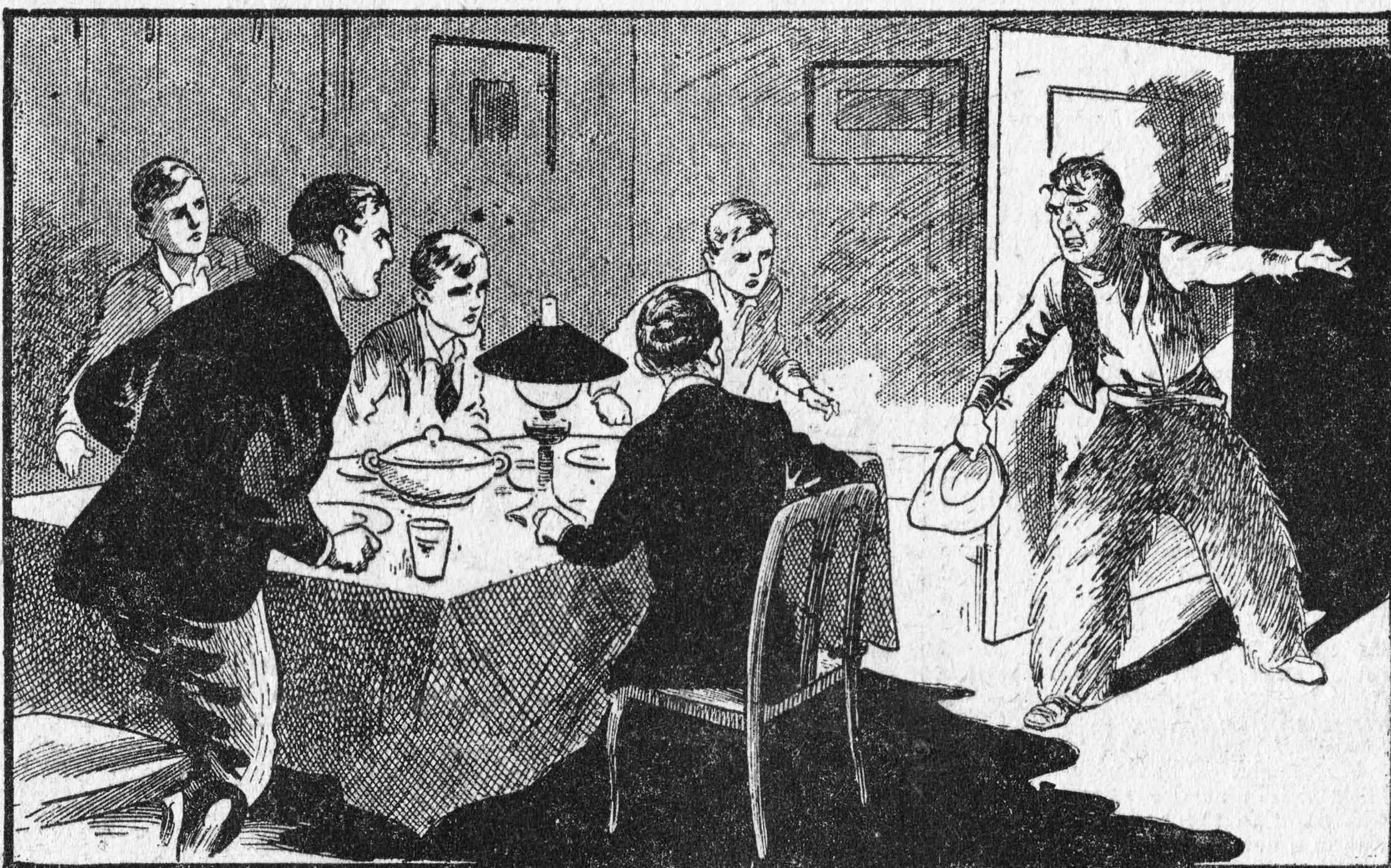
"You silly chump!" roared Lovell.

Lovell had to be satisfied with the quiet horse for his morning's ride. As a matter of fact, he found his new mount much more comfortable than the old; Buster had been a tough handful for Arthur Edward, though he declined to acknowledge the fact.

The juniors trotted away from the ranch for a ride over the prairie. Jimmy Silver was thinking of Coyote Creek and of Old Man Grimes. He had no doubt that Mr. Grimes meant every word he said when he had "fired" Spanish Kit and the whole outfit. The horse-thieves had probably involved him in legal troubles; though Jimmy believed that Mr. Grimes had been quite in ignorance of the rascally game that had been played under his nose on his ranch. But Spanish Kit and his friends were a rough crowd to "fire," and if they chose to cut up rusty, Old Man Grimes was quite at their mercy. Jimmy was thinking of that, when a rider came in sight on the prairie.

"Grimey, by Jove!" exclaimed Lovell.

(Continued on page 16.)



STARTLING NEWS! Jimmy Silver & Co. were at supper with Hudson Smedley when there was a trampling of hoofs outside and Spike Thompson rushed in breathlessly. "Skuse me, boss," he gasped, as the rancher rose to his feet. "Them hoss-thieves have driven off a hundred head of steers from Lone Pine."

somewhere. It did not seem possible—every corner of the space, enclosed by the corral fence, was open to inspection in the bright moonlight—every horse that was there could be seen by the cowpunchers. But Jimmy preferred to trust his own eyes, and he stepped into the corral to look for himself.

"Not there, kid," said Skitter Dick. "I guess I've looked at every hoss there!"

"No harm in looking," said Jimmy, and he went in.

"The tenderfoot's goin' to root 'em out!" grinned Spike Thompson. "Look in the rabbit holes, Jimmy?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver did not heed. He scanned the horses, which were moving about in the corral, startled by the disturbance of their slumber. Then he gave the whistle with which he was accustomed to call Blazer. Blazer had learned to answer his master's whistle, and Jimmy was sure that if he was within hearing, he would come.

The whistle rang out shrill in the corral.

A grey horse, with black fetlocks—utterly unlike Blazer to look at—lifted his head with a whinny, and came trotting towards Jimmy Silver.

For the moment Jimmy did not understand, till he felt Blazer's muzzle snuggling under his arm.

"Blazer!" he exclaimed.

"That ain't Blazer!" grinned Skitter Dick. "Gee-whiz! Don't you know your own hoss by sight, Jimmy?"

"It's Blazer—painted!" shouted Jimmy.

"Great Scott!"

Jimmy led the horse from the corral.

"I reckon he'll have to answer for what his men do on his ranch?"

"That's so!"

The Coyote Creek crowd were exchanging looks. Spanish Kit lighted a fresh cigarette, with a look of indifference.

Hudson Smedley turned to the Mexican foreman.

"That's one of the horses," he said. "He's been got up—by some old hand at the game!"

"I guess I've never seen that hoss before," said Spanish Kit.

"You can spin that yarn to the sheriff. Boys, go through the corral again, and look for Buster—you'll find him disguised!"

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TO-DAY!

The Rustlers of Coyote Creek!

It was Grudger Grimes. He was mounted upon a skinny, bony old horse, that was proceeding at an easy walk, apparently undirected by the rider. Something strange in Mr. Grimes' aspect caused the juniors to ride towards him, and they soon discerned what the matter was. Old Man Grimes was sitting in a saddle to which he was tied, and his feet were tied by a cord under the old horse.

He shouted to the juniors as they came riding up:

"Here! This way! Help!"

"My only hat!" ejaculated Raby. The juniors dashed up, and drew in their horses round the old miser of Coyote Creek.

"How on earth did you get into this fix, Mr. Grimes?" exclaimed Jimmy Silver.

"Let me loose!"

"Oh, certainly!"

Jimmy Silver opened his knife, and cut through the cords that bound Mr. Grimes to his horse. The old man was shaking with rage.

"They fixed me up like this," he gasped—"Spanish Kit and Cactus and the rest! Thunder! I've been on this hoss since dawn. Oh thunder!"

The juniors tried not to smile. "What is it—a joke?" asked Newcome.

Old Man Grimes clenched his hands. "They roused me out at dawn," he gasped. "I told 'em the whole crowd was fired! They turned on me! Fixed me up like this and set me going on the pesky prairie—me, their boss!"

"Great pip!"

"And they're off!" howled Grudger Grimes. "Off to the foothills, the whole gang of them. Horse-thieves, the lot of them! I never knew. I left it all to Kit, the villain!"

"They've cleared off?" asked Jimmy Silver.

"Yep. And I guess they've taken every hoss and steer about the place that they could lay their hands on in the time!" groaned Old Man Grimes. "I'm ruined!"

"Not so bad as that, I hope," said Jimmy Silver, with a smile. "You ought to have picked your men a bit more carefully, Mr. Grimes."

"They came cheap," muttered the miser. "There never was any trouble about wages. Now I know why, the skunks! I know it all now. I guess that all the cattle and horses that have been missing in these parts for

(Continued from page 7.)

years passed through their hands. Now they've cleared out, and cleared out the ranch!"

"Like us to see you home?" asked Jimmy politely. He felt some sympathy for the wretched old man, whose miserliness had been so severely punished.

Grudger Grimes did not answer. But now that he had control of his horse he started at a trot for Coyote Creek. The Rookwood juniors rode with him.

There was an air of desolation and desertion about Coyote Creek Ranch when they arrived.

Even at a distance they could see that the outfit was gone. Spanish Kit and his gang had not cared to wait till the sheriff called. The cunning game they had long played in security was up at last, and the rascals had lost no time in getting clear.

Only the Chinese cook remained, and he looked out of the cookhouse as the juniors and Grudger Grimes rode up. The door of the bunkhouse stood wide open as well as that of the ranch-house, and the corrals were empty.

"Allee gonee!" said the cook, with a grin. "Lightee out velly quick. Takee all hoss."

Grudger Grimes jumped down, and ran into the ranch-house. The juniors heard his high-cracked voice raised in lamentation as he moved from room to room. Apparently the fleeing gang had taken away anything that seemed valuable enough for them to lay their hands on.

Grudger Grimes came out of the house again, wringing his hands. He roamed into the empty corral. There was not a horse to be seen.

"Every critter gone!" he gasped. "I'll set the sheriff on them. I'll set the Mounted Police after them."

"Best thing you can do," agreed Jimmy Silver. "I suppose they're in the foothills by this time, though."

"Anything we can do for you, Mr. Grimes?" asked Lovell. "Like us to stay to lunch and keep you company?"

"No," snapped Old Man Grimes. "Then we'll get off."

The old man yelled to the juniors as they rode out at the gate.

"Tell Hudson Smedley! Tell him to send a messenger to the sheriff."

"Right-ho!" called back Jimmy Silver.

Leaving Old Man Grimes lamenting his misfortune, the Rookwood chums rode back to Windy River. They reached the ranch in time for dinner, and found Hudson Smedley there.

Jimmy Silver told his news, and delivered Old Man Grimes' message. "Might have reckoned on that,"

said the rancher thoughtfully. "I wonder what their game is now? It's Grimes' own fault. His outfit was made up of the peskiest rogues between Mackenzie and the Line. I guess he's paid for it now! I fancy those galoots will sell the horses they've stolen to the half-breeds in the foothills, and light out for the States. But there may be a chance of laying them by the heels. I guess I'll send a message to Sheriff Dawes, anyhow."

And the rancher hurried out.

There was a good deal of excitement at Windy River when the news was known of the flight of Spanish Kit and his crowd. But there was little sympathy for Grudger Grimes. The cowpunchers chuckled when they heard that the fleeing outfit had cleared off all his stock that they had had time to lay hands on.

"I guess he asked for it," said Skitter Dick. "Old Man Grimes has got what he asked for. And the Mounted Police will soon lay those galoots by the heels."

But Skitter Dick was wrong in his surmise.

Spanish Kit and his gang had vanished into the trackless foothills of the Rocky Mountains, and the Mounted Police hunted for them in vain.

For a week there was no news of them at Windy River.

Then news came in an unexpected form. Jimmy Silver & Co. were at supper with Hudson Smedley at sunset one day, when there was a trampling of hoofs outside, and Spike Thompson rushed in breathlessly.

"Skuse me, boss!" he gasped. "Them galoots—"

Hudson Smedley rose quietly.

"What's happened?"

"Them hoss-thieves!" gasped the cowpuncher. "Spanish Kit and his gang. They came on me at Lone Pine, and when I lit out they was driving off a hundred head of steers."

"Phew!" murmured Jimmy Silver. The Rookwood chums exchanged glances. It was exciting news, such news as had seldom been heard in the prairie ranches of Alberta.

Hudson Smedley compressed his lips. "So that's the game," he said. "Spanish Kit is starting in business as a rustler. He fancies he's back in Mexico or Texas. I guess he will soon learn that he can't play that game in Canada."

The Windy River ranch buzzed with excitement when Spike Thompson's startling news spread. There were "old hands" on the ranch who remembered the days of ranch-raiders—days that were long gone.

"I guess it's like old times!" said Pete Peters, to the crowd at the bunkhouse. "But it ain't lasting. That gang are up against a snag! The Mounted Police will rope them in inside a week."

But the week passed, and Spanish Kit and his gang were still loose in the foothills, and there were wild days coming for that section of Alberta where the Windy River flowed down from the Rocky Mountains.

THE END.

(The magnificent story of Jimmy Silver & Co. out West in next Monday's BOYS' FRIEND is entitled "The Raid on the Ranch!" Don't miss it. Order your copy of the "Green 'Un" to-day!)

In Your Editor's Den



Our 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 RAID ON THE RANCH!"

As the wisecracks have held for years past, the unexpected always happens. So they say. There may be exceptions to this good old rule, but if there are you won't find any in next week's grand yarn of Jimmy Silver & Co. in the West. It is the unexpected all along. The story bristles with excitement. The wasp-nest of rustlers up at Coyote Creek found the place too hot to hold them. The dangerous gang made tracks. But where did the rogues get to? That you will discover in the coming rattling tale of pluck and peril. When the cat's away, etc. But Boss Smedley is no cat, but a straight-from-the-shoulder cowpuncher. He is absent, and things fall out mighty strangely at the ranch, where the Rookwooders find themselves in a precious awkward situation, along with Baldy, the cheery cook, and Woo Sing, the smart little Chinese chore-boy. They are face to face with a truculent foe who stops at nothing. It is a great yarn.

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This is a story of a rare old chase, for Side-Step Milligan has hopped it for reasons which seem sufficient to him. Philip Branscombe, Arthur Gilson, and "Peggy" Danvers do their best to come up with the pugilistic fugitive, but they miss him altogether. Walter Edwards has woven a first-class story dealing with the pursuit of Milligan. The pursuers do not find their quarry aboard, but they do make a startling discovery when they are well afloat, and the surprise is closely connected with Morrison Bantock, the arch-triguer who is hand and glove with the missing boxer. There is a row on the boat which would take a lot of beating.

"PICKED FOR THE COUNTY."

This is a topping cricket story by that firm favourite, Howard Grant. It has all the ingredients which go to make up a clinching tale of the summer game. And remember this—Howard Grant is a first-line authority.

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It is some time since we have had one of Peter Foy's capital yarns of Danesbury School. Next week's screamingly funny tale, which bears this title, will serve to make up for time lost. It is a gem of a narrative, and you will laugh long over its amusing incidents.

"THE GOLDEN BUDDHA!"

There is thrilling mystery in next week's instalment of this powerful story of the magic East. Just about the biggest motive which could conceivably influence any gang of conspirators is found here. Look out for some amazing adventures of the Polruan favourites.

Maybe it is not necessary for me to say that our other serial, "Don Darrel on the Turf!" is booming. There is an invincible attraction about this fine story of the race-course side, and it is written by a man who is a wizard at the game.

As to next week's record issue, we have J. W. Hearne's life story, which, as usual, may be relied upon to rivet the interest of all cricket lovers, while the Cricket Competition goes one better than ever.

RESULT OF SURREY CRICKET CLUB COMPETITION.

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Margaret Kirkham, 48, Kenilworth Road, Wallasey; William Dinns, 19, West Terrace, Bomarsund, Stakeford, Northumberland; W. Sidwell, 15, Broadmead Road, Folkestone; Frances Morton, 7, Eyre Street, Pallion, Sunderland; F. Bissell, 11, Gt. Sloop Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Rose Cooper, Ivy Cottage, Wordsley Green, Wordsley, Stourbridge; Albert Woodcock, 9, Warton Terrace, Bootle, Liverpool; Vincent Hilling, 4, 56, Albans Road, Treherbert, Glam.; D. A. Fowler, 17, Syr David's Avenue, Cardiff; J. Board, Dowell Street, Honiton, Devon.

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